



2017 USW Constitutional Convention RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 12

Organizing For Strength

WHEREAS, despite the force of anti-worker legislation that favors multi-national employers at the expense of working people, and tough economic conditions that have weakened the bargaining power of working people, over 200,350 new members have chosen the power of unity by joining our Union since we created our Organizing Fund at our 1998 Constitutional Convention. The Organizing Fund, built by a special addition to our dues, has been crucial, allowing us to significantly build stronger and more complex strategic organizing campaign further strengthening the power of all of our Union's members; and

WHEREAS, since our last Convention, we've welcomed more than 12,200 new USW members in a wide variety of sectors throughout Canada and the United States who organized for a voice at work and stronger bargaining power; and

WHEREAS, these newly organized members faced many substantial challenges when organizing their worksites due to well-funded anti-worker groups, individuals and politicians who are engaged in a systematic attack on the gains unions have won for working families over several decades and preach the need for "union avoidance"; and

WHEREAS, in the United States we face a time unlike any we have seen in a generation, where these anti-union forces have managed to push through unjust legislation in a majority of the states allowing non-members in our workplaces to take the benefits of union representation and the contributions of their brothers and sisters, but do not pay their fair share of the costs of such representation; and

WHEREAS, in Canada we have seen legislation in both the Federal Parliament and some provincial legislatures with the intention of rolling back workers' rights and hard fought gains; and

WHEREAS, our strength as a Union comes from our members, and the more members we have the more we can bargain strong contracts, hold our employers accountable to those contracts, and push legislators to pursue policies that benefit working people; and

WHEREAS, we are able to have more bargaining power in a given sector if most workers in that sector are members of our Union, and we are strongest in a Local Union if everyone in the bargaining unit is an active member; and

WHEREAS, we know that workers who have a union will better be able to provide for their families, contribute to their communities and improve the working conditions for all workers, and that most non-union workers want and need union representation; and

WHEREAS, there are strident anti-union and corporate forces in both our countries which have spent vast amounts of money, wielded powerful influence and conducted campaigns to damage and diminish the public image of unions and to minimize the tremendous positive impact that unions have on living standards; and to help combat the spew of anti-union rhetoric, our Local Unions and our members must be visible and help educate our communities about the positive role of organized labor, re-energizing our organizing efforts; and

WHEREAS, our Local Unions are most effective when all workers are active members of their Local Unions and understand that growing our ranks and giving voice to the millions of workers who wish to belong to a union is the path to rebuilding the middle class; and

WHEREAS, the International, Districts and Locals have recommitted to continuing the work of growing our Union in existing sectors and industries to build real bargaining power; and

WHEREAS, organizing the unorganized must be a top priority of our Union's members, Local Union's staff and officers.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

- (1)** The USW will continue the fight of organizing the unorganized and make organizing new members a top priority.
- (2)** The USW will champion legislation that serves to give a voice to workers and allows those who wish to organize to do so without fear or obstruction. Furthermore, we vow to fight and expend the resources necessary to defend against any legislation or action further restricting workers' rights to organize.
- (3)** We will continue to organize in our core industries and strategically target employers where we have an existing bargaining relationship to increase our bargaining power for existing members and raise the standards for all workers.

- (4)** Our Union will continue to build capacity in new and non-traditional sectors by continuing to organize workers in areas such as the public sector, higher education, telecommunications, non-profit and healthcare sectors.
- (5)** The USW will increase our public profile as a growing, progressive union – a union that helps working people change their lives for the better by unionizing. In that spirit, each Local Union will report on and publicize its “good works” through all appropriate communications channels within the USW.
- (6)** We will strategically target workplaces based on sectors and historical relationships placing emphasis on larger workplaces and potential units where we can build durable bargaining power. This will include coordinating organizers working in teams under carefully developed plans, providing stronger communications support to organizing campaigns, and providing all other necessary resources to build success in larger campaigns.
- (7)** Our Union will intensify our efforts to develop a more diverse group of organizer-activists and to address institutional barriers that can prevent talented members from having the opportunity to help grow our Union.
- (8)** The International Union, through the Districts, will re-dedicate itself to facilitate more formalized organizing partnerships with Local Unions, to provide training, guidance and funding for well-targeted organizing campaigns in our sectors and communities. The International Union will provide the guidance and expertise to Local Unions involved in such partnerships.
- (9)** Where none exist, our Union will make it a top bargaining priority to negotiate leave-of-absence and new employee orientation provisions into our collective bargaining agreements, to give USW activists the opportunity to organize the unorganized and to explain the structure, workings and value of the Union to our new members.
- (10)** In U.S. states where Local Unions are unjustly required to expend resources representing non-members who benefit from the Union’s work while contributing nothing to maintain the security of the Union, Local Unions working with their Districts shall continue to utilize and expand upon internal organizing programs to increase their percentage of members thereby increasing their bargaining power.
- (11)** Local Unions, with assistance from the International Union and through their Districts, will redouble our efforts to reach out to all non-members and newly hired workers in our workplaces with the goal of making every single USW workplace 100% union.

- (12)** The International Union, through the Districts, will continue to work with Local Unions to develop and deepen our relationships with other worker-friendly groups in our communities.
- (13)** We will continue to reach out to the many unaffiliated, independent unions in the U.S. and Canada whose members can benefit from the strength of our International Union.
- (14)** We will identify, develop and maintain good relationships with community organizations and allies that share a common goal of supporting workers in their workplaces and in their communities.
- (15)** We will expand the use of our Union's bargaining power and relationships in our communities to leverage organizing opportunities by negotiating neutrality agreements that require employers to give employees at non-union facilities the opportunity to decide whether they want to be represented, without interference from their employer.
- (16)** The International Union will restructure where necessary to ensure that all of its staff at all levels, and in all its departments and Districts will work in a cross-functional manner and in a collaborative and supportive way to make certain that its resources are all focused on making organizing the unorganized a top priority in their daily work.
- (17)** Our organizing staff and activists will expand our use of digital tools in our organizing campaigns and in our outreach to potential new members.
- (18)** We will ensure that, in addition to continued organizing in our current jurisdictions, our union will also build plans to increase union membership in workplaces and sectors defined as 'precarious' and will continue to change and adapt our organizing and bargaining plans to fit the needs of people working in these areas of our economy.
- (19)** We will ensure that our campaigns address the needs of groups that are showing relatively higher levels of support for union membership, including younger people, women, racialized workers and new immigrants to Canada and the United States.