



2017 USW Constitutional Convention RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 14

Rapid Response and Legislative Activism

WHEREAS, legislative and policy gains benefitting workers do not simply happen. They are the direct result of union members engaging in the process and pressing our elected officials to act; and

WHEREAS, our union has a longstanding tradition of advocating for better jobs, healthy workplaces, security in retirement and an economy that benefits us all, rather than a privileged few. This was true throughout the era that originally forged our union, and it remains true today; and

WHEREAS, in the United States, we regularly find ourselves defending many of those gains that helped build the middle class including laws that defined the 40-hour work week and overtime, established Social Security and Medicare, confirmed the right to form a union and much more. Meanwhile, we continue to engage around the ever-increasing challenges of corporate-driven trade and globalization, as well as specific issues related to our diverse workplaces; and

WHEREAS, in Canada, the election of pro-corporate, right-wing and centrist governments federally and in many provinces has undermined essential social programs for working Canadians and their families, including attacks on pension security, collective bargaining, workers' rights, progressive taxation, education and childcare funding, pay equity provisions and erosion of the public healthcare system; and

WHEREAS, in Canada, the manufacturing and forestry sectors have lost hundreds of thousands of jobs in recent years, and yet the government still has no industrial strategy and continues counterproductive corporate tax cuts and public sector cuts; and

WHEREAS, in Canada, the United Steelworkers and our labour allies have helped protect the middle class and working people at the bargaining table, in the courts, during elections and on the streets through our proactive initiatives, legislative and political activism and Steelworkers Vote mobilization; and

WHEREAS, the USW in Canada was a founding member and continues to be a strong supporter of labour's ally, the New Democratic Party, and has been committed to electing social-democratic candidates in Quebec; and

WHEREAS, whether our fights are proactive or defensive, federal or state/provincial, we are at our strongest when we are unified and raising our voices together through programs such as Rapid Response in the United States and Steelworkers Vote in Canada; and

WHEREAS, success cannot be achieved without Steelworker members' participation, which starts with education and leads to a resilient and vibrant voice that provides a critical counterbalance to the flood of corporate money and power that organizes to oppose us; and

WHEREAS, when locals commit to building a culture of engagement and activism through this work, they are also building the solidarity that is needed to negotiate good contracts and take on local challenges; and

WHEREAS, the need for USW members' involvement is more critical than ever as we face uncertain times.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

- (1)** We will remember our history and that our success has always resulted from the power of unity.
- (2)** We will defend our members' livelihoods, fight for good jobs and social justice and advance policies that bring prosperity for working families. We will fight corporate-backed assaults on our jobs and push for non-discrimination and an equitable economy where all workers can benefit.
- (3)** The USW will build upon more than two decades of legislative education and activism through Rapid Response in the U.S. and Steelworkers Vote in Canada that educate members on key issues, connect our members in the workplace and drive increased activism by engaging in government decisions on policy and legislation.
- (4)** We recognize that, in the United States, Rapid Response's success increases when we: build strong communication networks at locals utilizing one-on-one conversations to share information on our issues; act in a non-partisan, non-political way to advance our agenda amongst all elected officials, regardless of party affiliation; take on issues central to our workplaces and retirement security; and encourage participation in elections as a further way of holding lawmakers accountable.

- (5)** We will work in Canada for the defeat of pro-corporate governments and we will assist the pro-labour New Democratic Party and assist in the election of social-democratic representatives in Quebec.

- (6)** The USW will enhance our legislative power by establishing and building coalitions with other labor, social, community and political allies and recruiting the next generation of activists.