



2017 USW Constitutional Convention

RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 24

Charting a Path for our Future: Economic and Environmental Sustainability

WHEREAS, the U.S. and Canada continue to experience great economic and environmental challenges, yet these challenges also present great opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the challenges come with the consistent and significant attacks at the state, federal and provincial levels on workers and the laws and regulations that serve to keep our nations' air and water clean, and communities safe; and

WHEREAS, the challenges come with the unbalanced trade policies, and unfair trade practices - such as China's overproduction of goods - that have led to significant job losses in the manufacturing sector and the many sectors that support it; and

WHEREAS, over the last fifteen years, more than 60,000 manufacturing facilities and nearly 8,000,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in the U.S. In Canada, more than 600,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since 2006; and

WHEREAS, irresponsible employers have created serious environmental problems in the communities in which they operate – one of several ways they have treated their workers unjustly; and

WHEREAS, responsible employers who have invested in pollution control and efficiency technologies have increased their ability to compete in the global marketplace; and

WHEREAS, the clean energy economy presents a tremendous opportunity not just for the global environment, but for American and Canadian workers in the manufacturing, construction and service sectors; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. and Canadian manufacturing sectors have served as a vital path to the middle class, and have been the backbone of each of our countries' economy; and

WHEREAS, the losses in American and Canadian manufacturing capacity and jobs pose a threat to both the economic and environmental sustainability of our nations; and

WHEREAS, well-designed energy and environmental policies and investments in clean energy technologies can make our communities healthier, create and maintain family-sustaining jobs in the U.S. and Canada, drive innovation and help manufacturers be more energy efficient and globally competitive; and

WHEREAS, updating and improving the water, electricity and transportation infrastructure systems in the U.S. and Canada are necessary to ensuring economic growth and environmental safety and health in our communities, workplaces and nation now and in the future; and

WHEREAS, a strong, clean energy manufacturing infrastructure in our countries will create and maintain family-sustaining jobs and supply the many component parts used in clean energy technologies such as: carbon capture and sequestration, nuclear, wind, solar, biomass and hydropower; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that American and Canadian workers play a role in both designing energy, environment and manufacturing policies and in the clean energy economy itself; and

WHEREAS, workers can ensure the added economic and environmental benefits of these policies by helping policy-makers to focus their economic development efforts on communities that have been devastated by job loss and facility closures, but have a ready and skilled workforce; and

WHEREAS, environmental programs, such as pollution control, carbon dioxide and methane mitigation, toxic use reduction, safer chemical processes, recycling, energy efficiency and improved maintenance also have the potential to create and maintain millions of jobs; and

WHEREAS, reliable and verifiable scientific evidence has confirmed that human use of traditional fuels is contributing to climate change, causing rising sea levels, droughts, extreme weather events, changes in climate patterns and threats to coastal areas, communities and business operations; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms that the planet is currently on pace to experience global warming of up to 4 degrees by the end of the century which would have a devastating effect on the global economy, food supplies, human health and biodiversity; and

WHEREAS, at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015, 195 countries from around the world signed the first universal agreement to address climate change with the goal

of limiting global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius; and

WHEREAS, climate change is the most pervasive form of globalization because the atmosphere recognizes no borders and unrestrained growth in greenhouse gas emissions poses critical threats to both our economic and environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS, many environmental problems, such as climate change, acid rain, ozone depletion, tropical deforestation and the loss of biodiversity are global in scale, requiring unprecedented international cooperation if they are to be solved; and

WHEREAS, revitalizing our economy in pursuit of energy independence requires a strategic approach by the U.S. and Canadian governments, centered on domestic investment and domestic production, that will ensure the retention of good jobs and the creation of new jobs in clean energy sectors; and

WHEREAS, a clean energy job is any job that helps our nations achieve our goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting our environment; and

WHEREAS, the USW supports an “all-of-the-above” energy policy strategy that includes the cleaner production and use of traditional fuels, carbon pricing and the expansion of new clean energy technologies; and

WHEREAS, any consideration of greenhouse gas mitigation legislation or regulations must include a comprehensive program to address the unique circumstances of energy-intensive, trade-exposed manufacturers and industries; and

WHEREAS, such a program must include mechanisms such as a means price adjustment to equalize the carbon costs of domestic and imported products, transition assistance to industries to ensure that the reduction of carbon is met through increased efficiency, and robust worker training and community transition assistance in the event of unintended consequences; and

WHEREAS, “green chemistry” provides even further job opportunities due to advances in inherently safer technologies and safer chemical substitutions that promise to create and maintain thousands of jobs producing and using less toxic and less polluting alternatives to the chemical products and processes in use in our workplaces, hospitals and schools; and

WHEREAS, the USW has been a leader in bringing environmental activism to the labor movement. Our Union has continued to affirm our commitment to environmental activism with the publication of the USWA’s 1990 Report of the Task Force on the Environment, the USW’s 2006 Policy Statement “Securing Our Children’s World” and in our continued work on energy and environmental policies; and

WHEREAS, our Union has helped create alliances between union members and environmental activists, united in a commitment to good jobs and a clean environment, including the National Clean Air Coalition, the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, the Apollo Alliance for Good Jobs and Clean Energy, as well as dozens of regional and local coalitions. In 2006, USW co-founded the Blue Green Alliance, a powerful strategic partnership with the Sierra Club to fight unfair trade agreements and to advance job-creating solutions to environmental issues. Today, this alliance consists of eleven Unions and five environmental organizations bringing together more than 15 million working men, women and environmental activists around a common cause; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, our Union in Canada entered into the Blue Green Canada Alliance with Environmental Defense Canada to work together as advocates for working people and the environment in key areas of global trade, the use of toxic substances in commercial activity, the creation of green manufacturing jobs, and the development and implementation of strategies to address climate change and protect Canadian jobs and resources.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

- (1)** The USW will oppose all attempts to roll back the laws and regulations that protect our health and our environment.
- (2)** We will embrace and support balanced approaches to address climate change that assure diverse, abundant, affordable energy supplies, create and maintain family-sustaining jobs, and advance our societies toward energy independence, while preventing the loss of manufacturing jobs.
- (3)** We will support policies that expand economic development and job training in communities that have been devastated by job loss.
- (4)** The USW supports the retention of all current generating options for electric utilities, including: traditional fuels, nuclear, hydro, wind, biomass, solar and other renewable energy sources. As additional generation capacity is needed, we believe clean energy sources should be the preferred means to meet those additional needs.
- (5)** We will advocate for new industrial policies that embrace an economic development model that makes revitalizing manufacturing and trade reform the centerpieces of supporting and investing in the emerging clean energy economy.
- (6)** We call on our governments to pursue strategic policies and investments for clean energy development and deployment that include funding for industrial energy efficiency; re-industrialization of nuclear sites; carbon pricing mechanisms, carbon capture and sequestration technology (CCS) for both

manufacturing facilities and clean coal; enhanced oil recovery and advanced fossil fuel development; expanded combined heat and power, improvements to critical transit, energy and water infrastructure; energy tax credits for consumer home improvements; domestic production of advanced technology vehicles; renewable energy; and electric grid modernization.

- (7)** Greenhouse gas mitigation programs must be enacted that are transparent, achievable and require all sectors to come to the table to reduce their carbon emissions to meet the goal set out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to avert catastrophic climate change.
- (8)** Any national climate change mitigation program or action must have a clearly defined program to protect workers and communities, and a cost adjustment mechanism enforced at the border through a trade regime until all major developed and developing nations are participating, thus ensuring that this program does not result in the transfer of jobs and carbon emissions to other countries.
- (9)** We support retrofitting public, industrial, commercial and residential buildings for greater energy efficiency as a means to create jobs and achieve energy savings.
- (10)** Our Union will continue to fight for effective environmental legislation that reduces the use of toxic chemicals and the production of toxic waste, promotes recycling and the efficient use of energy, protects whistleblowers who report environmental crimes, guarantees worker training and income protection to workers who are displaced because of environmental policies, and establishes trade policies which protect the environment.
- (11)** We will work to incorporate environmental issues and create joint environment committees with our employers and work to obtain full disclosure to our Union of all corporate environmental data.
- (12)** Our Union will continue to advocate for investment in public infrastructure, industrial energy efficiency, renewable energy, building retrofits, and public transit; and to increase domestic capacity to manufacture inputs to these projects.
- (13)** Our Union supports international efforts, such as the process led by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which requires all nations to do their part in combating climate change.
- (14)** We will continue to engage with labor federations, other unions, environmental groups and other organizations that share our vision and our values, to invest in climate solutions that create and sustain millions of jobs,

achieve energy independence and leave a better planet and strong economic legacy for future generations.