



2017 USW Constitutional Convention RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 25

Education and Membership Development

WHEREAS, the United Steelworkers is a powerful union with deep roots in North American labour history dating back to 1862 and founded in its current form in 1942; and

WHEREAS, numerous unions with vibrant and militant traditions merged to form the USW, including the Rubberworkers whose legacy dates back to 1880 and includes some of the earliest sit-down strikes; the Paperworkers whose legacy dates back to 1884 and who survived some of the most brutal attacks in history; the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers whose legacy dates back to 1878 and who were pioneers in health and safety; the Glass Workers whose legacy dates back to 1878 and who were some of the earliest to fight child labor; and more recently, the Telecommunications Workers whose legacy dates back to the early 1900s who during its history, resisted and met the challenges of deregulation of the telephone industry, while expanding its geographic reach and scope to represent members throughout Canada; and

WHEREAS, industrial unionism, and particularly the USW, is founded on a set of principles including to unite all workers into one organization regardless of creed, color, sex or nationality who are eligible for membership; to work to increase wage and improve conditions of employment by legislation and joint agreements; to secure old-age pension, workman's compensation and unemployment insurance; to secure laws to protect workers' safety and the right to organize; to enforce just laws and secure the repeal of those that are unjust; and

WHEREAS, the USW continues to stand on these principles today; and

WHEREAS, remembering and preserving our past inspires our action today; and

WHEREAS, education is central to our ability to adequately make these basic principles reality and to maintain our strength to represent our members, to organize new members and to expand our power in the interest of social, economic and legislative justice on behalf of the working class; and

WHEREAS, education challenges participants to think critically about the role and mission of our union, political structure and economy, and to envision and plan for a more worker-friendly economy; and

WHEREAS, education empowers us to educate others and to demand a legislative environment that will equalize the power relationship between labour and capital, expand job opportunities and build worker-friendly communities; and

WHEREAS, training provides the skills to negotiate contracts, to process grievances, to conduct arbitrations, and to represent and advocate for workers' interests; and

WHEREAS, the strength of the union is in a broad, empowered and educated membership; and there is a role for both education and training in the labour movement; and

WHEREAS, in keeping with our historical mandate, the membership of the USW is today broadly diverse in terms of sector, race, gender, age and other characteristics; and

WHEREAS, education must begin on the day of hire and must continually meet the needs of our members; and

WHEREAS, we must also continually educate our staff and leadership; and

WHEREAS, our education system does not offer education on labour history, the industrial relations process or social movements; and

WHEREAS, our member and officer training focuses on challenges that our members face in the workplace and at the bargaining table where the issues we face continue to increase in complexity and difficulty; and

WHEREAS, our popular education method draws on our members' experiences and knowledge to develop concrete strategies for mobilization; and

WHEREAS, in the face of powerful adversaries, educating our members on the critical issues facing workers and mobilizing them for action has made the crucial difference in building our power; and

WHEREAS, corporate power is global and our employers often employ those in other countries who are represented by other unions; and

WHEREAS, those workers share our desire for fair, safe and family supportive jobs and thriving communities; and

WHEREAS, education takes many forms in our Union, including: department-specific trainings, district conferences and educational programs, Women of Steel and Civil

Rights/Human Rights training, Leadership Scholarship, Next Generation, and Rapid Response; staff development; and

WHEREAS, the Education and Membership Development Department serves a variety of roles: helping to develop curriculum, coordinating educational programs with districts, consulting with other departments on curriculum and looking for new ways to offer educational opportunities to our members; and

WHEREAS, one of the core responsibilities of the Education and Membership Development Department is to build rank and file leadership through the Leadership Scholarship Program; and

WHEREAS, since 2008 we have developed and provided member education and officer training in Spanish and French in addition to English; and

WHEREAS, the USW Leadership Scholarship Program has graduated hundreds of activists from the Program, with several hundred more working to develop their skills so that they can become the future leaders of our Union; and

WHEREAS, union members from Australia, Finland, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have participated in every level of the USW Leadership Scholarship Program; and

WHEREAS, both the United States and Canada USW education departments create a variety of curriculum to meet the needs of members and work in the field to train members on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS, the Back to the Locals program educates thousands of members in Canada through a member-to-member education program and provides local union leaders with the skills to build strong local unions; and

WHEREAS, our members are far more likely to get involved when the union provides training specifically designed to help them win the struggles in which they are engaged.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

- (1)** The USW endorses building bargaining power as a central purpose of all USW education and training activities, and commits to allocating the resources needed to continue mobilizing our members to strengthen the Union and to achieve our bargaining and legislative objectives.
- (2)** The USW will continue to educate our members in the ways that have been effective in the past, but will expand our educational program to meet

changing needs including the use of online training, new media and Local Union facilitators and educators.

- (3)** The USW will continue the Back To The Locals program in Canada as a means of developing activists and building local leadership capacity, aim to develop a comparable program in the United States, and commits to ongoing development and support of member-facilitators to deliver effective and consistent education to our members.
- (4)** The USW supports the continued coordination of the USW education and new media networks to clearly advance our Union's goals in ways that relate to the needs and concerns of our members, retirees and their families.
- (5)** The USW commits to the goal of building activism by integrating legislative action, organizing, human rights/civil rights, history and economics education throughout the USW education program and conferences.
- (6)** At the same time, in the U.S., the USW will launch an initiative to drive steward training and other nuts and bolts courses to the sub-district level in order to increase the accessibility of these classes and to better train our workplace leaders.
- (7)** The USW will also provide educational programs and materials to promote our mission of internal and external organizing and to grow the Union and empower the membership.
- (8)** The USW supports the Leadership Scholarship Program and other District-based programs specifically aimed at developing a diverse pool of future leaders and to equip them with the skills they will need at the bargaining table and in administering their labour agreements during the term of those contracts.
- (9)** The USW will continue to welcome union members from across the world to participate in the Leadership Scholarship Program in an effort to build the global labour movement and to be involved in the Workers Uniting Leadership Program that brings together union activists from across Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and Ireland to build the skills necessary for global action.
- (10)** The USW will make as a primary objective developing exceptional new member orientation materials in the interests of educating those just entering our facilities and promoting activism among new members.
- (11)** The USW commits to building a more inclusive union by offering training in a variety of languages, encouraging minority group and sector participation as both learners and facilitators/educators, and assuring that all educational

venues are accessible and welcoming to all members and all educational materials inclusive of all sectors and members.

- (12)** The USW commits to building the Lynn Williams Institute for Labor Studies and Activism in order to ensure we have a highly skilled cohort of future activists and staff that represent the broad diversity of the union.
- (13)** The USW commits to continue to preserve and make public our history by the establishment of the USW Museum and our continued engagement with the academic organizations that maintain our archives.