

# **Appendix C: Structure of the AFL-CIO**



## **APPENDIX C: STRUCTURE OF THE AFL-CIO**

The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) was formed in 1955 through the merger of the AFL, whose guiding principle was organizing workers in craft unions (carpenters, iron workers, cigar makers, etc.), and the CIO, which organized industrial workers (steelworkers, auto workers, rubber workers, etc.). Its affiliated national and international unions retain full autonomy over their own business as labor organizations.

At the national level the AFL-CIO sets policy on national and international labor issues. The quadrennial convention is the primary governing body of the AFL-CIO. National unions are represented at the convention by elected delegates of the affiliated unions in proportion to their membership.

The next highest authority is the Executive Council consisting of the president, secretary-treasurer, executive vice president and the 45 vice presidents. The Executive Council meets at least twice a year and is the governing body between conventions.

A General Board comprises the Executive Council, a principal officer of each affiliated union and each trade and industrial department, and four regional representatives of the state federations. It convenes at the call of the president or the Executive Council to decide policy matters referred to it.

IBEW International President Edwin Hill serves on the AFL-CIO Executive Council. In addition, the IBEW is represented on the boards of the trade and industrial departments and on the Industrial Union Council.

A per capita tax on affiliated unions and organizing committees supports the organization and its projects. The AFL-CIO conducts organizing campaigns, provides educational programs on behalf of the labor movement, settles jurisdictional disputes among its affiliates and supports legislation beneficial to working people.

Fifty-six national and international labor unions, including the IBEW, are affiliated with the AFL-CIO. These unions are grouped into constitutionally established trade and industrial departments:

- Building and Construction Trades
- Maritime Trades
- Metal Trades
- Professional Employees
- Transportation Trades
- Union Label and Service Trades

Each state, and Puerto Rico, has a **state federation**, for a total of 51 state federations. These bodies lobby on state labor issues of mutual concern. Local labor affairs and grass-roots campaigns are handled by 525 **central labor councils** (CLCs).

In 1999, the AFL-CIO undertook a new initiative to enable America's working families and their unions to meet the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to take a leadership role in the renaissance of the union movement in this nation. This initiative is called the New Alliance, and it provides for the reorganization of some central labor councils into **area labor federations**. The following is excerpted from a report by the AFL-CIO Executive Council, August 3, 1999, Chicago, Illinois:

### ***VIII. Re-Mapping CLC's State by State***

*Today there are more than 600 AFL-CIO chartered central labor councils in America's largest cities and in hundreds of smaller communities. Regardless of their size, or their resources, they remain today, by and large, critically important organizations for the unions and the union members in these communities -- and are becoming more and more critically important organizations for national unions and the national labor movement.*

*Today's resurgence of the union movement can be seen in national unions in every industry and occupation, at the state level, and in scores of cities and smaller communities across the country. Union members are organizing and agitating and making their voices heard for working families -- in support of organizing and contract campaigns and political efforts. "Union City" has become a badge of honor for dozens of central labor councils who are -- through their affiliated local unions -- making the voice of working people heard again in city after city.*

*The national labor movement understands that it needs these organizations to be both vibrant and effective but also rooted in the community and the local unions. Our strategy for rebuilding the labor movement has at its core an energetic and committed labor community -- in every community and in every state.*

*In order to balance the need to have both strong, well-resourced local organizations -- as well as organizations that are rooted in as many communities as possible -- we propose to re-create the central labor council structure for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by working to construct both strong area-wide labor councils in larger cities and regions, while at the same time insuring the continuation of central labor councils in smaller union communities.*

*The state-wide New Alliance Drafting Committee will propose a re-mapping of the state to accomplish these goals in a way that meets the needs of the labor movement in that state.*

***Area Labor Federations** will be established in urban areas encompassing a sufficient critical mass of union membership to support a minimum program -- probably a minimum of three full time staff. By redrawing the boundaries and combining current central labor councils where appropriate, the same resources can be reorganized to create more organizations that can support the level of activity needed for these urban areas.*

***Central Labor Councils** will be maintained in smaller communities where union membership was not sufficient to support such a level of activity. In these communities, the union movement will develop, where appropriate, partnerships with the state*

*federations in order to carry out the activities needed by the labor movement in the state among these union locals and these union members.*

*Each state will, of course, have different structures, but our goal is to have each union member and each union local be part of a strong and effective organized union movement in their community.*

*The New Alliance Planning Committee will consider both the geography of where members live and where members work in developing these proposed organizations. (A link to the complete report is provided in the “Useful Links” section of this chapter.)*

More recently, the Executive Council Report to the 2005 AFL-CIO Convention (Page 55) stated as follows:

*The goal of the union movement’s New Alliance initiative is to build strength for working families by growing and strengthening state and local union organizations. The New Alliance aims to bring all parts of the labor movement in a state together around a unified vision and program in support of working families. In some states, the New Alliance initiative includes strengthening local union movements by bringing together central labor councils to create larger and better-resourced Area Labor Federations. So far, seven states have forged New Alliances—Arizona, Colorado, Maryland/District of Columbia, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina and Oregon. (A link to the complete report is provided in the “Useful Links” section of this chapter.)*

Page 56 of the Executive Council report continues with examples of how the New Alliance program has resulted in new solidarity and strength in many of these states.

## **Programmatic Departments**

The AFL-CIO contains 11 programmatic departments including the Civil, Human and Women’s Rights Department. This department strives to fully integrate women and minority members into the labor movement. This goal is being achieved by forming coalitions to fight inequality through the creation of nondiscriminatory contract language and to push for new legislation and regulations.

## **Sponsored Programs, Allied Organizations and Constituency Groups**

Programs sponsored by the AFL-CIO include the Union Privilege® Benefits Program, the National Labor College and the Working for America Institute. The A. Philip Randolph Institute, Coalition of Labor Union Women, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and Pride at Work are the organization’s constituency groups that promote union ideals and organize within communities of color and among women.

## **Mission and Goals of the AFL-CIO**

The mission of the AFL-CIO is to improve the lives of working families by bringing economic justice to the workplace and social justice to our country. To accomplish this mission, the AFL-CIO will build and change the American labor movement through a four-pronged strategy, consisting of organizing, political action, workplace participation, and community action.

### **Organizing**

The AFL-CIO will build a broad movement of American workers by organizing workers into unions. It will recruit and train the next generation of organizers, amass the resources needed to organize, and create the strategies to win organizing campaigns and union contracts. It will create a broad understanding of the need to organize among its members, its leadership and among unorganized workers.

### **Political Action**

The AFL-CIO will build a strong political voice for workers in the United States. It will fight for an agenda for working families at all levels of government. It will empower state federations. It will create a political force within the labor movement that will empower workers and speak forcefully on the public issues that affect our lives.

### **Workplace Participation**

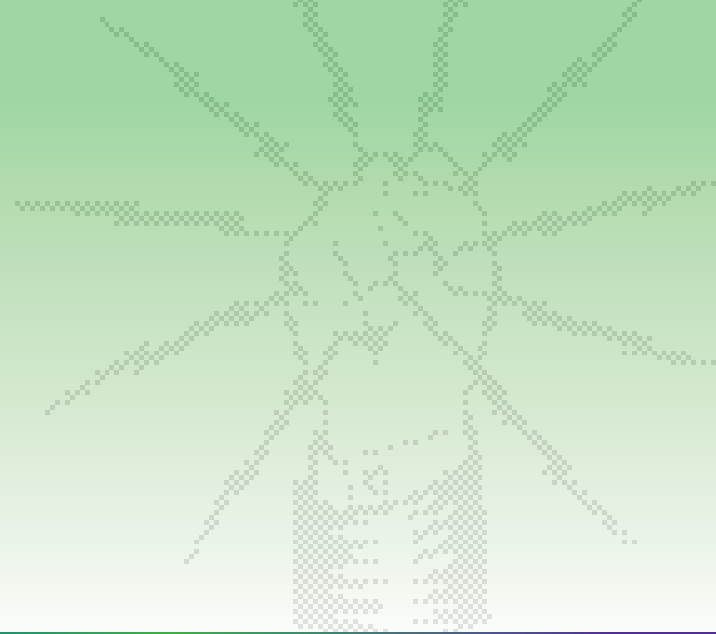
The AFL-CIO will change its unions to provide a new voice to workers in a changing economy. It will speak for working people in the global economy, in the industries in which workers are employed, in the firms where they work and on the job every day. It will transform the role of the union from an organization that focuses on a member's contract to one that gives workers a say in all the decisions that affect their working lives—from capital investment to the quality of products and services to how work is organized.

### **Community Action**

The AFL-CIO will change the labor movement by creating a new voice for workers in their communities. It will make the voices of working families heard across the United States and in our neighborhoods. It will create vibrant community labor councils that reach out to workers at the local level. It will strengthen the ties of labor to our allies. It will speak out in effective and creative ways on behalf of all working Americans.

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## **Useful Links**



## **USEFUL LINKS**

### **AFL-CIO State Federations**

[http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/jointheaflcio/upload/statedfed\\_clc\\_2.pdf](http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/jointheaflcio/upload/statedfed_clc_2.pdf)

### **AFL-CIO Central Labor Councils**

[http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/jointheaflcio/upload/statedfed\\_clc\\_3.pdf](http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/jointheaflcio/upload/statedfed_clc_3.pdf)

### ***What We Stand for: Mission and goals of the AFL-CIO***

<http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/mission/>

### **AFL-CIO Constitution**

<http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/constitution/>

#### **Objects and Principles**

<http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/constitution/art02.cfm>

### **AFL-CIO Organization Chart**

[www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/Organizationchart.cfm](http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/Organizationchart.cfm)

### **Executive Council Report to the 2005 AFL-CIO Convention**

[www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/convention/2005/upload/execcouncil\\_report.pdf](http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/convention/2005/upload/execcouncil_report.pdf)

### **Building a New Labor Movement in Our Communities: The New Alliance**

[www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/ecouncil/ec08031999.cfm](http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheaflcio/ecouncil/ec08031999.cfm)