

Resolution to Endorse a Strong Green New Deal

Proposed for the American Federation of Teachers National Convention,

July 2020

Whereas, the ongoing and ever-worsening climate catastrophe mandates an urgent response commensurate with its proven severity, geographical reach, and rapid onset; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Convention referred to the AFT Executive Council a Resolution on A Just Transition to a Peaceful and Sustainable Economy, which the AFT Executive Council adopted on February 3, 2017, and

WHEREAS, the above AFT resolution concluded that

“9. The AFT is committed to a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy; and

10. It is the policy of the AFT that as much as possible most fossil fuels should be left in the ground; and

11. The AFT will support legislation that enables a just transition for workers and communities directly affected by the transition to a renewable energy economy, and such legislation should include appropriate protections for workers in the fossil fuel industries and military industries;” and

Whereas, the AFT Executive Council on October 3, 2018 approved the Resolution on a Just Transition to 100% Renewable Energy, which stated: “THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the AFT reaffirms our commitment to a just transition to a peaceful and sustainable economy outlined in our 2017 resolution excerpted above;”

Whereas the AFT is a federation of over 1.7 million teachers, scholars, paraprofessionals, academic professionals, public employees and nurses who educate and generate knowledge regarding the climate crisis, who care for people injured by impacts of the climate crisis, and who mentor young people rightfully concerned about the more dangerous planet they will inherit; and

Whereas, the U.S. labor movement’s fight for a healthy environment for workers both in their workplaces and their communities pre-dates the modern environmental movement, and demands for a “Green New Deal” as the most just solution to the climate crisis have been made by labor advocates, including many AFT members, as early as 2007; and

Whereas, the national Green New Deal explicitly calls for protections for workers, including a just transition for those employed in carbon-intensive industries, a guaranteed living-wage job for all residents of the United States, strengthened protections of the right to unionize and collectively bargain free of coercion, intimidation, and harassment, construction of affordable housing, expansion of well-paying jobs with a focus on working class people and people of color, massive investment in healthcare infrastructure which will be needed to take on new virus

threats in the future, and a massive move away from racist incarceration and towards social service and education investments and other such provisions which are the bedrock of organized labor's principled goals for economic justice; and

Whereas, the Green New Deal addresses the long history of environmental racism and the disproportionate impacts of environmental problems on communities of color and working class communities, that are layered on top of the impacts of COVID and other public health threats, by calling for addressing inequities first amongst communities of color, economically marginalized people, and other oppressed populations on the basis of identity and class; and

Whereas, the Green New Deal calls for universal health care, which is a position already adopted by AFT; and

Whereas, the proposals for addressing carbon emissions and climate change embedded within the Green New Deal seek a harmony between the economic, social, political, and ecological; an

Whereas, the Pentagon is the largest single emitter of greenhouse gases on the planet, and the AFT has repeatedly endorsed the principle of reducing military spending (except for veterans' benefits) and using the money saved to create millions of jobs in a peaceful green economy, including transitioning many weapons production jobs to peacetime production jobs; and

Whereas, private investment for transitioning from fossil fuels has been completely insufficient and multinational corporate interests strongly oppose public efforts for a just transition, especially public financing and labor protections; and

Whereas, popular movements are already at the forefront of the fight for the climate by demanding (1) a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure, (2) a phasing out of fossil fuel infrastructure, (3) strong regulations for healthy, breathable air, (4) clean, 100% renewable energy with good local union jobs, (5) regenerative, sustainable farms and forests, (6) transportation justice and the expansion of accessible public transit, (7) protection of communities already experiencing a change in climate; (8) funding for a just transition for affected workers and frontline communities; and (9) cleaning up polluted stormwater runoff.

Therefore Be It Resolved, the AFT immediately endorses a strong Green New Deal, adding its name to a growing list of labor organizations; and

Be It Further Resolved, that AFT goes on record to request that the Green New Deal be funded by progressive taxes such as the wealth tax, an increase in the top marginal tax rates for the wealthy to 70-80 percent, and a significant reduction in military spending excepting veterans' benefits; and

Be It Further Resolved, that that the AFT support policies that enable local and regional communities to develop, produce and own renewable energy, as well as federal, state and local policies for improving and transitioning public transportation, and promoting greater fuel efficiency and energy conservation; and

Be It Further Resolved, AFT endorses the ongoing student climate strike(s) and encourages its members to excuse students' absence due to those activities; and

Be It Further Resolved, AFT will advocate within the AFL-CIO and in the U.S. labor movement broadly by joining others in supporting candidates and policies to address the ongoing climate crisis; and

Finally, Be It Resolved, that the AFT's Climate and Sustainability Task Force publicize and discuss the principles of this resolution among leadership and rank and file members of AFT locals.

We certify that this resolution was approved for submission to the AFT by the executive committee of the Professional Staff Congress on June 4th, 2020.

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