

2014 USW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

RESOLUTION



Resolution No. 4 - Our Union's Next Generation

WHEREAS, we are a Union that works because our proud traditions include mentoring, educating and empowering the next generation of activists and leaders to ensure a sustainable future; and

WHEREAS, the ongoing economic crisis has hit younger workers and their families particularly hard, with the U.S. unemployment rate for 19 to 29-year-olds averaging more than 16 percent and a Canadian youth unemployment rate of nearly 14 percent, compared with overall rates of 6.3 percent and 7 percent, respectively; and

WHEREAS, we are fighting to overcome unprecedented global austerity that is destroying our middle class, particularly harming young workers and families around the world, including efforts to cut safety net programs in the United States and Canada; record levels of childhood poverty in the United Kingdom; crushing unemployment across Europe and continued attacks against low-wage workers' human and labor rights worldwide; and

WHEREAS, crushing student debt in our nations is enriching banks and others by financially oppressing young people and their parents, many of them USW members, with the average college debt exceeding \$25,000 per student in Canada and \$29,400 in the United States; and

WHEREAS, well-funded corporate and political attacks continue to threaten the very future of our movement, the USW needs all of its members to be active and engaged politically, in their communities, and in the movement for social, economic and human justice around the world; and

WHEREAS, in the United States and Canada, the rights of workers of all ages are under attack from anti-union, anti-worker and anti-family legislation at the federal, state and province levels of government; and

WHEREAS, corporations concerned about profits above people, continue to try and break unions, drive down wages, erode benefits and push inequity with multi-tier and other divide-and-conquer strategies at the bargaining table; and

WHEREAS, we continue to stand up against multinational corporations and corporate politicians who are destroying domestic manufacturing and economic security with unfair trade deals, sweatshop labor and environmental destruction in the name of higher profits; and

WHEREAS, we understand that a strong, sustainable, global labor movement is the last line of defense against these bad policies because unions fight to win social, political and economic change that improves worker health and safety, blocks anti-worker legislation; demands equality and gives workers a fair shot to build a better life because union members earn a median of \$200 more per week than non-union workers – a difference of over \$315,000 in higher earnings over an average lifetime career; and

WHEREAS, the USW has shown leadership and courage by investing in its future by creating a permanent structure for the Next Generation program, including the commitment of staff and resources at the International, District and Local levels, including the appointment of Next Generation coordinators in every district in the United States and Canada; and

WHEREAS, the USW has made great strides since 2011 in helping our young and new members begin a lifetime of activism by helping them have a voice in bargaining, participate in our local unions, and be involved in other activist parts of our Union and communities, as well as to learn about our Union's deep and proud history and traditions; and

WHEREAS, the USW Next Generation has led our Union's efforts to address work-life balance challenges, including finding ways to make Union activities more family friendly; and

WHEREAS, the Next Generation has led efforts to promote the benefits of unions and project a positive image of our Union to children and others who have been fed lies by corporate-controlled media; and

WHEREAS, the Next Generation has become a force in the social media world, leading the way as we work to positively promote our Union, generate legislative and social change, and spark both online and off-line activism; and

WHEREAS, the USW Next Generation has worked closely with the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) and others to protect the promises made to our retirees.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

- (1)** The USW supports increased legislative, political, community and union activism at the local, district and International levels for USW members of all ages; and endorses the continued focus on developing our newest Steelworker activists to take on increasingly greater roles in our Union, their governments and their communities.
- (2)** We will continue to support the AFL-CIO's "Next Up" Young Workers Movement, including the appointment of an emerging USW leader to the AFL-CIO Young Workers Advisory Council to represent our Union in the federation's big picture efforts to grow the labor movement.
- (3)** Our Union pledges to support and create a respectful atmosphere for USW members of all ages at every level to be active in the labor movement throughout their lifetimes with the understanding that we need to work together in order to have the best union possible for current and future generations.
- (4)** We continue to support the integration and involvement of younger members into current programs in the United States and Canada, including Education and Membership Development, Rapid Response, Political Action, Legislative Action, Health, Safety and Environment, Civil and Human Rights, Women of Steel, United Steelworkers Press Association, and all other integral parts of our Union.
- (5)** We rededicate ourselves to the commitment that we will include Next Generation members in conversations about the important work of our Union, including bargaining, so that we unite to fight against injustice, including the multi-tier trap and attacks on retiree benefits that corporations push to try to divide and

conquer our movement. We encourage these conversations to include discussions about new and different ways of doing our work, including the use of modern technology.

(6) We support including Next Generation in our global efforts, including continued involvement in Workers Uniting, the global union, and other international endeavors aimed at lifting up all workers, such as the first Global Youth Exchange held in June 2014 with young trade unionists from the United States, Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Cuba.

(7) The USW will continue to develop USW Next Generation district coordinators in the United States and Canada, as well as complete a formal mentoring program, and together these leaders will endeavor to help every local union create a Next Generation committee within the next three years.

(8) Next Generation will lead our Union's involvement in the fight against oppressive student debt that is burdening so many, including our members and their children, through legislative, community and other action.

(9) We commit to training and empowering Next Generation members so that they may contribute in meaningful ways to growing and strengthening our Union through organizing, both internally and externally, and we support including Next Generation in union-wide efforts to welcome, educate and engage new workers from all ages, professions and backgrounds into our Union with open arms, including through new employee orientation programs.