

## IN SUPPORT OF A HEALTHY WORKPLACE AND AGAINST WORKPLACE BULLYING

Year: 2010

WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers resolution on Dignity, Respect and Justice in the Workplace (2009) defines workplace bullying as a "a pattern of coercive, insidious behavior used by one person to gain or exercise power and control over another person and creates a harmful work environment"; and

WHEREAS, workplace bullying has also been defined, by the Work Place Bullying Institute, as the repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons by one or more perpetrators, taking the form of verbal abuse, such as threatening and humiliating or offensive behavior that interferes with or sabotages and prevents the completion of job-related tasks (Work Place Bullying Institute, WBI); and

WHEREAS, according to a Zogby Survey (2007), 54 million or 37 percent of all Americans have reported incidents of bullying in the workplace, and another 12 percent have been a witness to it; and

WHEREAS, the same survey indicates that 45 percent of targets suffer health problems related to bullying, such as stress, loss of sleep, severe anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, reduced immunity to infection, stress-related gastrointestinal disorders, hypertension, pathophysiologic changes that increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and other such conditions; and

WHEREAS, the same survey indicates that targets can suffer economic harm through termination, demotion or denial of promotion, and, in 70 percent of cases, targets are forced to leave their jobs voluntarily or involuntarily ("Worry for a Living? Workplace Bullying Report on Abusive Workplace," *APA Monitor on Psychology*. Volume 37, No. 7 July/August 2006); and

WHEREAS, although 42 percent of bullied employees file a complaint with their employer, 60 percent of such complaints are ignored; and

WHEREAS, the majority of those victimized by this form of harassment are not members of a protected group; and

WHEREAS, workplace bullying, which is generally not prohibited by law in the United States, is four times more prevalent

than illegal harassment or discrimination based on sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, disabilities and veterans status; and

WHEREAS, fearing possible retaliation, as occurs in 52 percent of cases, victims often suffer in silence ("Worry for a Living? Workplace Bullying Report on Abusive Workplace," *APA Monitor on Psychology*. Volume 37, No. 7 July/August 2006); and

WHEREAS, every worker has a right to be treated with dignity and respect and to work in a safe and healthy environment, free of verbal and nonverbal abuse, intimidating body language, retaliation and any form of hostility; and

WHEREAS, the AFT's Resolution on Dignity, Respect and Justice in the Workplace (2009) affirms the AFT's core commitment to securing dignity and fairness for all in the workplace; and

WHEREAS, 17 states, including New York and Illinois, have introduced Healthy Workplace Bills to correct this injustice, and some have begun initial passage of the legislation—for example, New York, where the State Senate passed the bill in April 2010; and

**RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers, which has already resolved to draft legislation that would make workplace bullying illegal, continue to work to see this legislation enacted, if necessary, creating a coalition of support with the AFL-CIO and other unions; and**

**RESOLVED, that the AFT continue to provide examples of relevant contract language to its locals and that the AFT provide locals and state federations with examples of relevant state legislation, and that the AFT continue to provide information about workplace bullying to its local and state affiliates in order that they might pursue state and local remedies to correct legal victimization of our members and fellow workers.**