



A Union of Professionals

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

WHEREAS, we are proud members of the American labor movement, and we understand that collective action gives us the power to ensure justice, fairness and opportunity for all; and

WHEREAS, our union was founded 100 years ago to establish a voice for teachers as workers so they could combat factory-like conditions in our schools, advocate for fair pay and better working conditions, and stand up for greater autonomy as professionals and advocates for their students; and

WHEREAS, from our very beginning, our union has stood on the side of social justice, fighting racial discrimination, advocating for school desegregation, expelling our own segregated locals, advocating for equal pay and rights for women, defending the rights of those with disabilities, and securing bargaining protections for gay and transgender workers; and

WHEREAS, today, 1.6 million members strong, the American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do; and

WHEREAS, we are fighting a battle of immense proportions that threatens to destroy all we and others in the labor movement have worked for. This battle is ultimately over who holds the power in our economy and our democracy. It is a battle to reclaim the promise of America; and

WHEREAS, to combat those who wish to undermine unions, we must strengthen the bond with all members. We must show them that workers are the union. We must engage in a collective conversation about the challenges we face, the aspirations we have and the strategies we must implement. We must create the collective will and shared avenues for our members, along with community partners, to fight those obstacles and reach those aspirations:

RESOLVED, that our union will double the number of member activists to 10 percent, triple the number of members who engage in any union activities to 70 percent, and—in this our 100th year—reach out and speak to 100% of our members. And while less than 10 percent of those we represent are agency fee payers, we will reach all of them, with the goal of their choosing to have their voices heard as union members; and

RESOLVED, that we will be accountable to each other—activists and leaders on the local, state and national levels—to achieve these goals; and

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Lorretta Johnson
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mary Cathryn Ricker
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • 202-879-4400 • www.aft.org



RESOLVED, that the AFT's officers and the organizing committee, in consultation with our state leaders, will put forward an implementation plan that honors and allows for the different local and state exigencies and conditions among and between different states and local unions. Such a plan will be considered by the Executive Council in our October meeting and, building from this, individual state and local unions shall develop and implement their plans; and

RESOLVED, that the national union will support this recommitment, to our members, to our families, to our communities and to our ideals in every way possible; and

RESOLVED, that we look forward to taking what was to be—as the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry called it—a “fatal spear through the heart” of labor and transforming that into a revival of the soul of this union, our members. Our soul, our heart, our courage and our power lie with our members and our communities, and always have. Through this journey of engaging with our members and potential members across the country, we will honor and build on the proud history of our union, counter the forces attacking our democracy and our labor movement, and continue to reclaim the promise of America for all of us.

BACKGROUND

The promise of America means that, with a good education and a level playing field, you have a shot at achieving your dreams. It means that your babies and young children can grow up in safe, nurturing environments that prepare them for life and learning; that you can send your children to a great neighborhood public school; that you can give your kids the advantage of a college education without incurring crippling debt; that you can get good, affordable healthcare and take a day off when you or your family get sick; that you will be treated fairly at work and get a real raise every once in a while; that you can retire in dignity after a lifetime of work; and that you can live in safe communities, free from physical harm and from discrimination and stereotyping, whether based on race, gender, immigration status, physical disability, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

The reality of America is—after deindustrialization, globalization and the last recession—our economy isn't working for everyone. Too many are out of work or paid unfairly. Too many are saddled with crippling debt or faced with unaffordable housing. For too many, the American dream is out of reach. Meanwhile, the rich are getting richer and our government is growing increasingly gridlocked as money drives politics.

We know that when unions were at their strongest, the middle class was at its height. And today, even with the sharp decline in union density, union members make 28 percent more than nonunion workers.

Corporate-backed politicians want to preserve the status quo and, understanding that unions give working people power, have launched an all-out assault on unions—from statehouses to courthouses. Presently, they are trying to overturn 40 years of legal precedent, challenging the right of public sector workers to organize and raise wages and challenging our unions wherewithal to operate.

Our affiliates also understand that we only succeed through collective power. Thus, we are engaging our communities, advancing proven solutions, and organizing and mobilizing members to repel those attacks and grow a strong middle class.

As a result of this organizing and mobilization, the AFT passed the 1.6 million mark last summer. Nurses affiliated with our union. Charter school teachers and adjunct professors organized. Agency fee payers converted. And the rank-and-file membership continues to grow, as the connection between members and our union is strengthened.

Where our affiliates are doing this work—side by side with their communities and in line with every level of the union, local, state and national—the connection between the union and its members is strong. We have each other's back.

<https://leadernet.aft.org/resolution/member-engagement>

<http://www.aft.org/resolution/member-engagement>