

2009 71st CWA National Convention

AFL-CIO Chapter of Rights of Working Women

The AFL-CIO Executive Council, at its recent Winter Meeting, took several actions related to International Women's Day. It called for establishment of a global charter guaranteeing the rights of working women around the globe.

Throughout the world, women are the hardest hit by the global economic crisis. Most women work in a low-skill and a low-wage job. They are paid less than men in nearly every country, and they work longer hours. Their work is often dangerous, and many women risk their lives every time they go to their jobs.

The council says the AFL-CIO "therefore focuses our work on major areas in which women's rights must be defended and enhanced worldwide."

Women work every day. No matter where they live, their economic activity is vital to the economy and society at large, their communities, their families and their personal autonomy and growth as human beings.

They care for the young, the sick and the elderly, often without due recognition of their work. They make up more than 40 percent of the global labor force. Whether they are teachers, sales clerks, pilots or plumbers, women fill many professions and perform many jobs. Although they speak different languages, they share the vision of a world founded on respect, peace, equality and solidarity, and without violence, harassment and discrimination.

To this end, the AFL-CIO will do all in its power to secure for women the rights set down in this Charter.

- **The freedom to organize and bargain collectively.**
 - Particular attention should be paid to organizing young women, immigrant workers and women in the informal economy, and to ensuring their full participation in trade union activities and responsibilities.
- **Access to employment and promotion.**
 - Equal pay for work of equal value should include any additional reimbursements with all social rights and benefits linked to the employment relationship.
 - Discrimination against women in social security schemes must be abolished, particularly provisions in pensions that penalize career breaks for maternity reasons or to provide care to dependent persons.
 - Employers must be held responsible for ensuring that women have a safe workplace free of all forms of violence and sexual harassment.
 - Governments should take effective measures to prevent and combat human trafficking by devoting particular attention to protecting women and children and by prosecuting the traffickers.

- Women and girls should have equal access to vocational guidance and training including on-the-job training in technical skills.
- Positive action programs and gender mainstreaming programs for women and men should be put into operation with a view to changing stereotyped attitudes and addressing the effects of discrimination.
- **Maternity protection.**
 - Maternity protection is a duty of society. Women must have the right and the opportunity to plan their families and to choose motherhood freely. These protective measures should not negatively affect women's promotion at work or their pension and retirement rights.
 - Women on maternity leave should be provided with cash benefits at a level allowing them to meet their own and their children's needs and to retain good health.
- **Family Responsibilities.**
 - Family responsibilities should be shared between women and men on equal terms. Reductions in and flexible working hours are needed to help parents combine working and family life.
 - The mother and father should have the right, before or after the maternity leave of the working woman or the leave for adoption of a child, to take parental leave without forfeiting any employment and related rights.
- **Education and training.**
 - Inequalities in access to education and training and programs must be eliminated, as should curriculum content that helps perpetuate the concept of a division of labor between women and men and thereby discriminates against women.
 - Access to free, good-quality public education is a prerequisite for the eradication of child labor. Parents need access to decent jobs and a living minimum wage.
- **Integration of women in trade unions.**
 - Actively promoting the goal of women's integration in union organizations and gender parity in trade union activities and decision-making bodies at all levels, appropriate constructs should be set up to analyze the problems facing women workers, propose solutions, eliminate discrimination and encourage participation.
 - A gender perspective should be incorporated in trade union work, including family-sensitive scheduling of union activities and child care at union meetings and events.
 - Training programs for women should be organized within unions with the goal of training women to take up positions at all levels.
 - Training on equal opportunities for men and women should be included in the training provided to activists.
- **Solidarity among diversity.**
 - As a driving force for promoting solidarity among women and between women and men, unions should initiate activities designed to remove the barriers that women face owing to factors such as civil conflict and occupation, race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, age, disability,

sexual orientation or socioeconomic class, or because they are indigenous peoples, immigrants, displaced women or refugees.

The AFL-CIO calls on its affiliated organizations and other progressive forces to commit themselves to the promotion and implementation of the principles set out in this Charter.

Action: CWA Women's Committee will be committed to enforce the recognition of fairness to women and our mission will be to protect and secure equal rights and economic opportunities for all women.

In Solidarity,

Vonda Hardy