



UNITED STEELWORKERS
CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION



RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 24

Environmental Responsibility: Acting Today to Protect USW Jobs Now and in the Future

WHEREAS, the U.S., Canada, and the global economy continue to experience great economic and environmental challenges, yet these challenges also present great opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the challenges come with the unbalanced trade policies, and unfair trade practices that have led to significant job losses in the manufacturing sector and the many sectors that support it as companies seek lower cost jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, irresponsible employers have created serious environmental problems in the communities here and abroad in which they operate – one of several ways they have treated their workers unjustly; and

WHEREAS, responsible employers who have invested in pollution control and efficiency technologies have increased their ability to compete in the global marketplace; and

WHEREAS, global demand for manufactured goods produced with less emissions is growing; and

WHEREAS, the clean energy economy presents a tremendous opportunity not just for the global environment, but for American and Canadian workers in the manufacturing, construction and service sectors; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. and Canadian manufacturing sectors have served as a vital path to the middle class, and have been the backbone of each of our countries' economy that have helped to grow a robust energy sector; and

WHEREAS, the losses in American and Canadian manufacturing capacity and jobs pose a threat to both the economic and environmental sustainability of our nations; and

WHEREAS, well-designed energy and environmental policies and investments in clean technologies can make our communities healthier, create and maintain family-sustaining jobs

in the U.S. and Canada, drive innovation and help manufacturers be more energy efficient and globally competitive; and

WHEREAS, updating and improving the water, electricity, communications, and transportation infrastructure systems in the U.S. and Canada are necessary to ensuring economic growth and environmental safety and health in our communities, workplaces and nation now and in the future; and

WHEREAS, a strong, clean energy manufacturing infrastructure in our countries will create and maintain family-sustaining jobs and supply the many component parts used in clean energy technologies such as: carbon capture and management, nuclear, wind, solar, biomass, hydropower, geothermal, hydrogen, and liquid fuels; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that American and Canadian workers play a role in both designing energy, environment and manufacturing policies and in the clean energy economy itself; and

WHEREAS, workers can ensure the added economic and environmental benefits of these policies by helping policy-makers to focus their economic development efforts on communities that have been devastated by job loss and facility closures, but have a ready and skilled workforce; and

WHEREAS, environmental programs, such as pollution control, carbon dioxide and methane mitigation, toxic use reduction, safer chemical processes, recycling, energy efficiency and improved maintenance also have the potential to create and maintain millions of jobs; and

WHEREAS, reliable and verifiable scientific evidence has confirmed that human use of traditional fuels is contributing to climate change, causing rising sea levels, droughts, extreme weather events, changes in climate patterns and threats to coastal areas, communities and business operations; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least mid-century under all emissions scenarios considered which would have a devastating effect on the global economy, food supplies, human health and biodiversity; and

WHEREAS, at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015, 195 countries from around the world signed the first universal agreement to address climate change with the goal of limiting global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, which will necessitate deep reductions in CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades; and

WHEREAS, climate change is the most pervasive form of globalization because the atmosphere recognizes no borders and unrestrained growth in greenhouse gas emissions poses critical threats to both our economic and environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS, many environmental problems, such as climate change, acid rain, ozone depletion, tropical deforestation and the loss of biodiversity are global in scale, requiring unprecedented international cooperation if they are to be solved; and

WHEREAS, revitalizing our economy in pursuit of energy independence requires a strategic approach by the U.S. and Canadian governments, centered on domestic investment, domestic energy production and supply chains, that will ensure the retention of good jobs and the creation of new jobs in the energy, mining, and manufacturing sectors; and

WHEREAS, a clean energy job is any job that helps our countries achieve our goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting our environment; and

WHEREAS, the USW supports an "all-of-the-above" energy policy strategy that includes the cleaner production and use of traditional fuels, carbon pricing and the expansion of clean technologies, including nuclear power; and

WHEREAS, any consideration of greenhouse gas mitigation legislation or regulations must include a comprehensive program to address the unique circumstances of energy workers and of energy-intensive, trade-exposed manufacturers and industries; and

WHEREAS, such a program must include mechanisms for manufacturers such as a means price adjustment to equalize the carbon costs of domestic and imported products, transition assistance to industries to ensure that the reduction of carbon is met through increased efficiency, and robust worker training and community transition assistance in the event of unintended consequences; and

WHEREAS, "green chemistry" provides even further job opportunities due to advances in inherently safer technologies and safer chemical substitutions that promise to create and maintain thousands of jobs producing and using less toxic and less polluting alternatives to the chemical products and processes in use in our workplaces, hospitals and schools; and

WHEREAS, the USW has been a leader in bringing environmental activism to the labor movement. Our Union has continued to affirm our commitment to environmental activism with the publication of the USWA's 1990 Report of the Task Force on the Environment, the USW's 2006 Policy Statement "Securing Our Children's World" and in our continued work on energy and environmental policies; and

WHEREAS, our Union has helped create alliances between union members and environmental activists, united in a commitment to good jobs and a clean environment, including the National Clean Air Coalition, the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, the Apollo Alliance for Good Jobs and Clean Energy, as well as dozens of regional and local coalitions. In 2006, the USW co-founded the Blue Green Alliance, a powerful strategic partnership with the Sierra Club to fight unfair trade agreements and to advance job-creating solutions to environmental issues. Today, this alliance consists of seven Unions and six environmental organizations bringing together working people and environmental activists around a common cause; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, our Union in Canada entered into the Blue Green Canada Alliance with Environmental Defense Canada to work together as advocates for working people and the environment in key areas of global trade, the use of toxic substances in commercial activity, the creation of green manufacturing jobs, and the development and implementation of strategies to address climate change and protect Canadian jobs and resources. Today, Blue Green Canada also includes Unifor, the Pembina Institute, the Columbia Institute, Clean Energy Canada, Environmental Defence Canada, and the Broadbent Institute.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

1. The USW will oppose all attempts to roll back the laws and regulations that protect our health, safety, and environment.
2. We will embrace and support balanced approaches to address climate change and pollution that maintain and create family-sustaining, union jobs and advance our societies toward energy independence.
3. Our Union supports international efforts, such as the process led by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which requires all nations to do their part in combating climate change and ensure justice for workers in the process, as we seek to reach net zero emissions globally by 2050.
4. We will advocate for industrial policies that embrace an economic development model that makes revitalizing manufacturing, building resilient supply chains, and trade reform the centerpieces of supporting and investing in the clean technology economy. We will support policies that expand economic development and job training in communities that have been devastated by job loss.
5. The USW supports the retention of all current generating options for electric utilities, including: traditional fuels, nuclear, hydro, wind, biomass, solar, geothermal, hydrogen, and other renewable energy sources.
6. We call on our governments to pursue strategic policies and investments for clean technology development and deployment that include funding for industrial energy efficiency and decarbonization; re-industrialization of nuclear sites and inclusion of nuclear power in clean energy initiatives such as Canada's Green Bond Framework; carbon pricing mechanisms; carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration technology (CCS) for both industrial and power generating facilities; enhanced oil recovery and advanced fossil fuel development; expanded combined heat and power; improvements to critical transportation, energy and water infrastructure; energy tax credits for consumer home improvements; domestic production of clean energy and transportation technologies; renewable energy; advanced nuclear technologies; direct air capture (DAC); fuels innovation, including clean hydrogen and biofuels; building resilient supply chains from raw materials to end-of-life; and procurement of cleaner building materials.
7. Our Union will continue to advocate for investment in public and private infrastructure, industrial energy efficiency, renewable energy, building retrofits, and public transit; and to increase domestic capacity to manufacture inputs to these projects. We support retrofitting public, industrial, commercial and residential buildings for greater energy efficiency as a means to create jobs and achieve energy savings.
8. Greenhouse gas mitigation programs must be enacted that are transparent, achievable and require all sectors to come to the table to reduce their carbon emissions to meet the economy-wide goal of net zero by 2050.

9. Any national climate change policy must provide worker, community and industry transition assistance and a cost adjustment mechanism enforced at the border through a trade regime, thus ensuring that this program does not result in the transfer of jobs and carbon emissions to other countries.
10. Our Union will continue to fight for effective environmental legislation that reduces the use of toxic chemicals and the production of toxic waste, prevents catastrophic chemical incidents, promotes recycling and the efficient use of energy, protects whistleblowers who report environmental crimes, guarantees worker training and income protection to workers who are displaced because of environmental policies, prevents pollution in communities, and establishes trade policies which protect the environment.
11. We will continue to advocate that our employers invest in new technology to remain globally competitive, reduce pollution, and employ our members long-term. We will work to incorporate environmental orgissues and create joint environment committees with our employers and work to obtain full disclosure to our Union of all corporate environmental data.
12. Our Union will seek to build worker power in the clean energy economy by assisting workers in clean energy jobs who want to join a union and collectively bargain with their employers.
13. We will continue to engage with labor federations, other unions, environmental groups and other organizations that share our vision and our values, to invest in climate solutions that create and sustain millions of jobs, achieve energy independence and leave a better planet and strong economic legacy for future generations.