



**UNITED STEELWORKERS**  
CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION



# RESOLUTIONS

## Resolution No. 25

### Education and Membership Development

**WHEREAS**, since the early 1900s labor education working with broader movements for social and economic justice has served to transform workers' lives on the job and in their communities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers, Brookwood Labor College in the 1920s, the Antigonish Movement in the 1930s, and the Highlander Research and Education Center in the 1930s and 1940s, created spaces where workers were free to think for themselves, and

**WHEREAS**, in the U.S. the Bryn Mawr, Brookwood, and Highlander schools prepared the organizers who led the CIO during the 1930s and enshrined that history of education in the unions it created; and in Canada and Quebec, the Antigonish Movement and community, social-justice, and international solidarity movements created a rich history of popular education that inspired and influenced labor education, including in the USW; and

**WHEREAS**, industrial unionism and particularly the USW is founded on a set of principles including to unite all workers into one organization regardless of creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, ability, language, or nationality who are eligible for membership; to work to increase wages and improve conditions of employment by legislation and joint agreements; to secure old-age pensions, worker's compensation and unemployment insurance; to secure laws to protect workers' safety and the right to organize; to enforce just laws and secure the repeal of those that are unjust; and

**WHEREAS**, the USW continues to stand on these principles today; and

**WHEREAS**, remembering the best of our past inspires our action today; and

**WHEREAS**, worker education is centered on the idea that those most impacted by problems have the knowledge and solutions to address them; and

**WHEREAS**, the mission of labor education is to empower our members with the self-confidence, beliefs, knowledge and skills they need to build a strong union, and to foster passion, activism, innovative thought, and solidarity; and

**WHEREAS**, education is central to our ability to maintain our strength to represent our members, to organize new members and to expand our power in the interest of social, economic and legislative justice on behalf of the working class; and

**WHEREAS**, education challenges participants to think critically about the role and mission of our union, political structure and economy, and to envision and plan for a more equitable and worker-friendly economy and society; and

**WHEREAS**, education empowers us to demand a legislative environment that will equalize the power relationship between labor and capital, expand job opportunities and build worker friendly communities; and

**WHEREAS**, education also empowers rank and file members to have voice and to bring equity between workers and management on the shop floor; and

**WHEREAS**, training provides the skills to negotiate contracts, to process grievances, to conduct arbitrations, to education and mobilize members, to advance worker safety and equity, and to represent and advocate for workers' interests; and

**WHEREAS**, the strength of the union is in a broad, empowered and educated membership; and there is a role for both education and training in the labor movement; and

**WHEREAS**, in keeping with our historical mandate, the membership of the USW is today broadly diverse in terms of sector, race, gender, age and other characteristics; and

**WHEREAS**, education must be focused on equity and belonging of all those in our communities; and

**WHEREAS**, education must begin on the day of hire and continually meet the needs of our members; and

**WHEREAS**, we must also continually educate our staff and leadership; and

**WHEREAS**, our member and officer training focuses on challenges that our members face in the workplace and at the bargaining table where the issues we face continue to increase in complexity and difficulty; and

**WHEREAS**, our union values and delivers education based on popular education methods which draw on our members' experiences and knowledge to develop concrete strategies for mobilization and which builds activism, and equips members to challenge inequities and make positive social change in the workplace and in the wider world; and

**WHEREAS**, our union values education that helps us name the biases we've been raised with and replace those biases with attitudes that truly allow us to stand in solidarity with our union family and friends; and

**WHEREAS**, we recognize the important contributions that courses on gender identity; Indigenous culture, rights, and history; mental health; and taking action on gender-based

violence have made in opening our union up to our full membership and taking on the tough issues plaguing our society; and

**WHEREAS**, our USW education program helps members take on long-standing roles like steward and Local Union president and also new and emerging roles that keep our union in the forefront, roles such as women's advocates, equity advocates, "Be More than a Bystander" spokesmen, and good neighbors and allies with Indigenous peoples; and

**WHEREAS**, in the face of powerful adversaries, educating our members on the critical issues facing workers and mobilizing them for action has made the crucial difference in building our power; and

**WHEREAS**, we must meet our members where they are; and

**WHEREAS**, we learned much during the pandemic about how to do online education in a format that engages, informs, mobilizes, and empowers; and

**WHEREAS**, smarter is stronger; and

**WHEREAS**, education takes many forms in our Union including: department-specific trainings, district and national conferences and educational programs, Women of Steel and Civil Rights and Human Rights courses, Leadership Scholarship and Rapid Response, and staff development; and

**WHEREAS**, the Education and Membership Development Department in the U.S. and the Education and Equality Department in Canada serve a variety of roles: helping to develop curriculum, coordinating educational programs with districts, consulting with other departments on curriculum, producing a range of communications to educate members including the Steward's Corner and Facilitator Resource Page, and looking for new ways to offer educational opportunities to our members; and

**WHEREAS**, one of the core responsibilities of the Education and Equality Department in Canada is to train and support a cadre of member-facilitators who are fundamental to the success of the Back to the Locals education program because there are none better to understand and pass on skills to other workers; and

**WHEREAS**, one of the core responsibilities of the Education and Membership Development Department is to build rank and file leadership through the Leadership Scholarship Program; and

**WHEREAS**, since 2008, we have developed and provided member education and officer training in Spanish and French in addition to English; and

**WHEREAS**, the USW Leadership Scholarship Program has graduated hundreds of activists from the Program, with several hundred more working to develop their skills so that they can become the future leaders of our Union; and

**WHEREAS**, union members from Australia, Finland, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have participated in every level of the USW Leadership Scholarship Program; and

**WHEREAS**, in both the United States and Canada USW education departments create a variety of curriculum to meet the needs of members and work in the field to train members on a regular basis; and

**WHEREAS**, the Back to the Locals program educates thousands of members in Canada through a member-to-member education program and provides local union leaders with the skills to build strong local unions; and

**WHEREAS**, our members are far more likely to get involved when the union provides training specifically designed to help them win the struggles in which they are engaged.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that:

1. The USW endorses building bargaining power as a central purpose of all USW education and training activities, and commits to allocating the resources needed to continue mobilizing our members to strengthen the Union and to achieve our bargaining and legislative objectives.
2. The USW will continue to educate our members in the ways that have been effective in the past, but will expand our educational program to meet changing needs including the use of on-line training, new media and Local Union educators.
3. The USW will ensure that all USW education courses and materials are designed with a gender lens and a diversity lens in place, so that they reflect the full range of experience of USW members.
4. The USW will support activists and leaders in their work of engaging members and winning their loyalty for our union by seeking out and incorporating into our courses new approaches that help members see the relevance and value of our union, techniques for effective listening, and other tools for building the strength and cohesion of local unions.
5. The USW will ensure that USW education materials, settings, and processes are free from discrimination and instead promote solidarity and respect and reflect our diversity.
6. The USW will provide courses that equip Local Union activists with the specific communications skills necessary to deal with conflict and harassment between and among members, which unchecked, can erode solidarity within our union.
7. The USW will recognize the traumatic life experiences of many of our members, acknowledge that these can follow them into the classroom, and take this into account as we plan and run courses that focus on gender-based violence, racism, colonialism, workplace accidents or other traumatic topics, including having support people on hand during particularly difficult discussion and activities.
8. The USW will expand its ability to offer online training in all its formats to meet the broad range of our union's needs and interests.

9. The USW will strive to produce the highest quality educational materials we can for participants, including incorporating graphics, video, and music produced by unionized workers.
10. The USW supports the “Back to The Locals” program in Canada as a means of developing activists and building local leadership capacity, continuing to devote resources to training member-facilitators and upgrading their skills, and aims to develop a comparable program in the United States.
11. When recruiting members to send to courses and to be trained as member-facilitators, the USW will pay attention to the demographics of our union's membership and ensure our classrooms reflect that diversity.
12. The USW supports the continued coordination of the USW education and new media networks to clearly advance the Union's goals in ways that relate to the needs and concerns of our members, retirees and their families.
13. The USW commits to the goal of building activism by integrating legislative action, organizing, human rights/civil rights, history and economics education throughout the USW education program and conferences.
14. The USW will also provide educational programs, materials, and the Steward's Corner to promote our mission of internal and external organizing and to grow the Union and empower the membership.
15. The USW Education Department will continue its commitment to lead the development and maintenance of the Staff Toolbox and other resources that facilitate the work of the union.
16. The USW supports the Leadership Scholarship Program and other District-based programs specifically aimed at developing a diverse pool of future leaders and to equip them with the skills they will need at the bargaining table and in administering their labor agreements during the term of those contracts.
17. The USW will continue to welcome union members from across the world to participate in the Leadership Scholarship Program in an effort to build the global labor movement and to be involved in the Workers Uniting Leadership Program that brings together union activists from across Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and Ireland to build the skills necessary for global action.
18. The USW will make as a primary objective developing exceptional new member orientation materials in the interests of educating those just entering our facilities and promoting activism among new members.
19. The USW commits to building a more inclusive union by offering training in a variety of languages, encouraging minority group and sector participation, and assuring that all educational venues are welcoming to all members and all educational materials are inclusive of all sectors and members.

20. The USW affirms the central importance of equality and inclusion as a driving value of all our education work because it is the pragmatic, but more importantly, the principled thing to do.
21. The USW supports a recognition of the land on which we meet and the peoples who have lived on those lands at all USW educational programs.
22. The USW commits to growing the Lynn Williams Institute for Labor Studies and Activism in order to make sure we have a highly skilled cohort of future activists and staff that represent the broad diversity of the union.
23. The USW commits to continue to preserve and make public our history by the establishment of the USW Museum and our continued engagement with the academic organizations that maintain our archives.
24. The USW affirms the importance of supporting the AFL-CIO's constituency groups.