

# American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



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July 28, 2005

## MEMORANDUM

To: Principal Officers of State Federations  
Principal Officers of Area and Central Labor Councils

From: John J. Sweeney, President

Re: Moving Forward from the Convention to Build a Stronger Labor Movement at the State and Local Levels and Maintaining Organizational Integrity

In the months leading up to the AFL-CIO Convention, the AFL-CIO Executive Council, the Committee on State and Local Strategies, and state federations and central labor councils worked together on new initiatives to strengthen state federations and central labor councils and enhance their ability to run coordinated, effective programs at the state and local level. The seriousness of the Federation's commitment to strengthening and supporting the role of state federations and central labor councils is reflected in the adoption of Convention Resolutions 1, 60, and 61, among others, and Constitutional Amendments 2 and 33. The delegates to the Convention have endorsed a bold plan to strengthen our movement at the state and local levels and have made a commitment to provide the resources necessary to carry out the organizational and political mobilization program that can help working families win.

The disaffiliation of two major unions and their rhetorical appeals for selective "partnerships" on their terms with Federation bodies at the state and local level present a direct challenge to the principles of unity and solidarity that form the foundation of a movement that can most effectively advance workers' interests, as well as the organizational integrity of the Federation at the national, state and local levels. We must reject efforts to pick and choose the places and terms of "partnership" and support. These unions are proposing a form of free ridership: No financial or other support for the national AFL-CIO, no responsibilities or obligations under the AFL-CIO Constitution, but selective buy-in at central labor bodies of their choosing.

The Federation and its affiliated unions have always worked, and will continue to work, with other organizations within and outside the labor movement on issues of common concern. This

includes unaffiliated unions, community organizations, and other allies. State federations and central labor councils are encouraged to continue such collaboration and should participate in solidarity campaigns, issue mobilization campaigns, legislative initiatives and other actions with allied organizations. Executive boards and delegate bodies should be involved in making decisions about these collaborations.

The unions of the AFL-CIO are proud to be members of the AFL-CIO at all levels of the Federation. They are committed to supporting the Federation and its work on behalf of working families at the national, state and local levels.

The actions to strengthen state and local labor movements adopted by the delegates to the Convention will initially be implemented as follows:

1. I am asking every state federation and central labor council to provide an impact statement for its jurisdiction that includes the following information:
  - a. A report on the number of members in the disaffiliated unions within your jurisdiction, and the financial impact on your organization caused by the disaffiliation of those unions.
  - b. A report on all AFL-CIO unions within your jurisdiction, including the number of members on whom each union is paying per capita tax, the effective per capita tax rate, and the number of members on whom unions are currently known to be, or estimated to be, not paying per capita tax.
2. The Federation will assist state federations and central labor councils through:
  - a. Utilization of the special fund created by the additional four cents in per capita tax approved by the Council and the Convention on July 27, 2005;
  - b. Utilization of delinquent per capita taxes collected from those international unions that were delinquent in their per capita tax as of the start of this Convention; and
  - c. Implementation of the constitutional amendment adopted at this Convention that calls upon the Executive Council to implement the policy of full and fair affiliation with state federations and labor councils, developing a sustainable, long-term plan to achieve full and fair affiliation by all affiliated unions.
3. I will appoint a Central Labor Council Advisory Committee and State Federation Advisory Committee in accordance with Constitutional Amendment 2. The Committees will meet in September to review the impact statements submitted by state federations and central labor councils and to develop recommendations for the Executive Officers and Executive Council.
4. The Executive Council will meet in September to review this issue and to decide on the actions needed to support state federations and central labor councils.

The Federation's Constitution and standing rules governing affiliation and participation in state federations and labor councils will continue to apply:

1. Only locals of national unions that are affiliated with the national AFL-CIO may affiliate with or pay per capita (or per capita equivalents) to a state federation or central labor council or participate in its governance, including voting. State federations and central labor councils may not accept per capita payments (or per capita equivalents) from unaffiliated unions. State federations and central labor councils may (and should) collect per capita tax from locals of the disaffiliated unions that is due for the period through July 2005.
2. No member of a national union that is unaffiliated with the national AFL-CIO can run for, or serve as a delegate, officer, or spokesperson of a state federation or central labor council. A member of an unaffiliated union who currently holds such a position must resign his or her office, unless he or she is also a member of an affiliated union.
3. No state federation or central labor council may provide access to membership lists to any union that is unaffiliated with the AFL-CIO.
4. No union that is unaffiliated with the AFL-CIO may participate in candidate screenings or decision-making on state federation or central labor body political endorsements.
5. Under federal election law, no union that is unaffiliated with the AFL-CIO may participate in the AFL-CIO's political program to educate and mobilize members of AFL-CIO unions in support of pro-working family federal candidates. Many state laws impose similar rules for state and local elections.
6. Unions that are unaffiliated with the AFL-CIO may not use the AFL-CIO's name or logo.

I recognize and appreciate that hundreds of local unions of the disaffiliated internationals have excellent working relationships with their brothers and sisters in our local labor councils and state federations. The disaffiliation of their unions is not their fault and does not make them any less committed to the ideals and principles of our movement. While upholding the principles and discipline of a democratic organization, we want to find ways to work together to build our movement and win for working families. Working together with our central labor councils and state federations, I am confident that the unions of the AFL-CIO will do so.

I look forward to working with you as we move forward to build a stronger movement on behalf of working families.

JJS:lr

cc: AFL-CIO Executive Council  
All National and International Unions