

**An Open Letter from State Federation and CLC Leaders
To the Unions of the AFL-CIO and the Change to Win Unions
About Continued Solidarity at the State and Local Level**

As leaders of the central labor councils and state federations of the AFL-CIO, we need the good-faith efforts of all unions to re-establish the unity of our labor movement at the state and local level.

At this time in our history when working people are facing relentless attacks on their standard of living, when employers are intensifying their opposition to the efforts of workers to form unions and when our unions are confronting attempts to destroy their right to engage the political process on behalf of working families, we need now, more than ever, to maintain our solidarity on the front lines of our movement if we hope to preserve a free and fighting labor movement for working Americans.

We recognize the willingness of the Change to Win unions to continue to support our state federations and central labor councils. We are encouraged that so many local unions of the Change to Win unions in our states have expressed their willingness to participate in our organizations as well. We are convinced that the good faith commitments of these unions could provide the basis for maintaining the unity of purpose and equity of effort that can sustain and strengthen our labor movement in these challenging times.

We applaud the proposal of AFL-CIO President John Sweeney to the Executive Council to provide for the continued participation of local unions of the Change to Win unions in our central labor councils and state federations through Solidarity Charters. Although we have heard objections to some of the details of that proposal which may deserve further consideration, we view this offer as a good faith effort to allow for the continued participation of the Change to Win unions with full voice and vote in our local central bodies.

The very concept of allowing continued participation in our local central bodies by unions which have disaffiliated from the national AFL-CIO is as unprecedented as it is important. The details of providing for such participation in ways that are consistent with the constitution and organizational principles of the AFL-CIO as well as state and federal election laws are, understandably, quite complex. But the proposal from the AFL-CIO Executive Council offers a creative and positive attempt to resolve these complexities and to help re-unite our movement at the local level through the all important 2006 election cycle.

We continue to hear from all of our unions the desire to keep us stronger together at the local level. Where there is that will, there has to be a way for us to do so – just as there needs to be a way to re-unify the labor movement at the national level.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson urged us in Chicago to “keep your eyes on the prize.” That prize, we believe, remains within our grasp at our state federations and central labor councils. But that prize could slip from our grasp if we fail to resolve this issue.

We urge all unions to make serious, good-faith efforts to find a way to keep our movement together at the local level. We believe the concept of Solidarity Charters provides the basis for achieving this goal.

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Jeff Crosby, President, North Shore Labor Council
John Ryan, President, Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor
Tim Nesbitt, President, Oregon AFL-CIO

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David Newby, President, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO
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