

AFL-CIO**Convention Delegates Vow to Grow Labor Movement Through Diversity, Inclusion**

During the opening session of the AFL-CIO's quadrennial convention the afternoon of Sept. 8 in Los Angeles, delegates vowed to grow the labor movement through diversity and inclusion.

The delegates approved several resolutions intended to diversify the federation and its leaders. They focused on the need for the federation itself to continue its efforts to ensure the face of the union movement and its decision-making bodies reflect the face of today's diverse workforce in which women, people of color and young workers are the growing majority of workers.

At the beginning of the session, United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts, who chairs the convention's credential's committee, announced that 46 percent of some 617 delegates attending the convention are either women or persons of color. Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker added that women make up 20 percent of the federation's executive council, which is the governing body between conventions, while persons of color constitute 23 percent.

One resolution stated that women are half the workforce but despite more than a century of struggle and tremendous gains, "women still don't have equality." Over the next four years, it said, a "core set of values will drive the labor movement's agenda and define our strategy for women's equality."

The federation vowed to stand with women and seek equality in pay by raising the minimum wage and making wage standards transparent. It also will ramp up support for sick leave, family and medical leave and contraceptive equality.

Commitment to Young Workers. Another resolution pledged the federation's continued commitment to a young worker program, calling the Young Worker Advisory Council the "Young Worker Organization of the AFL-CIO," with the mission of empowering the next generation of labor leaders to "challenge, inspire, build and organize around issues that directly affect their generation."

The delegates also agreed to give a member of the group a seat on the federation's general executive board and give the group a "major advisory role" within the executive council in areas including organizing and

mobilization of the next generation of union members and young workers.

Delegates directed the federation to conduct a "comprehensive review of diversity in all parts of the labor movement," with recommendations completed by July 2014 for the executive council to consider at its summer meeting.

Jarrett Addresses Diversity Conference. Prior to the convention's afternoon opening, some 1,000 people including delegates, activists, and community allies attended a conference on diversity and inclusion in the labor movement.

Addressing that conference, Valerie Jarrett, a White House senior advisor, said President Barack Obama is "committed to fight on your behalf."

Obama, who had planned to address the convention in person, cancelled because of the situation in Syria, and now is supposed to make a video appearance the afternoon of Sept. 9.

In a wide-ranging speech, Jarrett acknowledged that there are "challenges that remain" in the Affordable Care Act and said "we intend to work to solve those problems, both big and small." She added that "we are committed to sit down and work it out."

Earlier this month, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said he was working with the White House and the Labor Department to fix some unintended consequences of the new law (168 DLR A-12, 8/29/13).

Jarrett also pledged that the administration will get the rule done on regulating silica dust. "We are going to get that rule done," she said. Jarrett also said the president believes that "now is the time to increase the minimum wage."

Last month, after a two and one-half year review process, by the Office of Management and Budget, the Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration released a notice of proposed rulemaking on workplace protections for silica (164 DLR A-11, 8/23/13).

Planned Protest Over Kaiser Attendance Cancelled. Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO avoided a scheduled leafleting by one of its member unions over plans to feature Kaiser Permanente at the convention.

Members of the National Union of Healthcare Workers, an affiliate of the California Nurses Association, sent a letter, obtained by Bloomberg BNA, to AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka Sept. 6 expressing alarm that "the AFL-CIO will be featuring Kaiser Permanente

and its trademarked 'Instant Recess' during the AFL-CIO's upcoming convention in Los Angeles, in effect holding Kaiser up as a model employer."

"Multiple affiliates of the AFL-CIO are currently in the middle of an epic struggle at Kaiser to defend standards that workers have fought decades to establish. We again request that you and the rest of the AFL-CIO stand with us and not with this multi-billion dollar HMO," the letter added.

The NUHW, CNA, Operating Engineers and UNITE HERE have conducted multiple strikes against Kaiser over what the letter described as "bad-faith bargaining and unlawful insistence on draconian cuts to caregivers' benefits" (165 DLR A-2, 8/24/12).

The letter also stated that in June, the California Department of Managed Health Care levied a \$4 million fine against Kaiser for committing multiple violations of state law that "placed thousands of mental health patients in jeopardy. The fine, which is the second largest in the state agency's history, reflects the seriousness of Kaiser's patient-care violations," the letter added.

NUHW Secretary-Treasurer John Borsos told Bloomberg BNA that members of his union had planned to leaflet outside the instant recess convention break, but he learned shortly before arriving in Los Angeles that Kaiser would not be at the convention.

"We appreciate that the leaders of the AFL-CIO stood with Kaiser workers and patients" and that they gave Kaiser the "time out they deserved."

During a pre-convention press briefing, Trumka was asked about Kaiser's planned presence at the conven-

tion in light of its problems. "There has been a Kaiser Permanente partnership for some time and many of the unions have worked through that. Does that mean it's perfect and there aren't problems? No, it doesn't mean that." He added, "Kaiser won't be here at this convention."

John Nelson, spokesman for Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 9, "Kaiser Permanente has a long and productive relationship with organized labor, and we are proud to employ more union workers than any other health care organization in the country."

"We have been in negotiations with the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) for well over two years, with little or no meaningful movement from the union on key economic issues throughout this time. Kaiser Permanente is committed to bargaining in good faith to reach fair and equitable agreements with all the unions that represent our employees, and we will continue to bargain in good faith with the NUHW," Nelson added.

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Text of all the AFL-CIO resolutions is available at <http://www.aflcio.org/About/Exec-Council/Conventions/2013/Resolutions-and-Amendments>.

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