

CLIMATE AND JOBS

Resolution #28

Submitted by the WSLC Executive Board

WHEREAS, working people and our communities have been under a broad and relentless assault from an economic, political, and climate crisis that has manifested itself in the form of extreme income and wealth inequality, loss of family-wage union jobs, a vanishing middle class, a failure to fairly tax the 1% and to broadly share prosperity, increasing health and environmental problems from excess carbon emissions and greenhouse gases (GHG), and disruptions in our economy, public health, and social safety net systems due to severe weather episodes due to climate change; and

WHEREAS, the same political forces that refuse to transform our economy through raising wages and benefits, and much needed public services are also responsible for preventing the enactment of laws, policies, and regulations that would cap and lower carbon emissions and other GHG that are responsible for climate change and oppose most other goals of the labor movement such as job safety and right to know legislation; and

WHEREAS, 85% of the public in Washington State believe that climate change is real and largely manmade and that 55% believe that climate change will negatively impact them; and

WHEREAS, climate change is responsible for nine of the hottest twelve years in recorded history in this new century, increasing rates and severity of forest fires, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, the closing of shellfish production in Puget Sound and Willapa Bay, accelerating glacial melting leading to increased flooding and storm water problems, increased frequency of droughts, and extreme storms like hurricane Katrina, Sandy and Yolanda in the Philippines; and

WHEREAS, Governor Inslee has declared much of Washington State to be in the grip of an economically devastating drought emergency; and

WHEREAS, the cost of extreme weather events, (e.g., there have been more than a dozen extreme weather events in the years 2010/2011 that have cost over \$1 billion, the cost of Hurricane Sandy cost at least \$50 billion, and the cost of fighting forest fires is averaging \$50 million a year in Washington State), diverts needed revenue from other public services – education, affordable housing, long term care, etc.; and

WHEREAS, all of the scientific research indicates that the problems created by climate change, impacting us all, will continue to grow, affecting our jobs, environment and health, and that to reverse climate change much of the world's proven oil reserves need to remain in the ground; and

WHEREAS, carbon and GHG pollution is responsible for an explosion of respiratory diseases in those most vulnerable – our children and seniors – and asthma-related expenditures have reached \$73 million per year annually in Washington State; and

WHEREAS, direct line workers in the fossil fuel industries and vulnerable populations in immigrant communities and communities of color are most susceptible to health problems caused by carbon pollution, with two to three times the rates of asthma than in other communities; and

WHEREAS, droughts worldwide are causing the forced migration of millions of people in search of food, water, and economic security, and droughts in the United States are having significant impact on food production and on workers and their families who depend on agriculture for a living; and

WHEREAS, equity must be at the center of principles and policies addressing climate change such that neither direct line fossil fuel workers nor vulnerable communities of color should bear the health or economic costs of moving from an economy dependent on fossil fuels to one primarily based on alternative renewable energy sources ; and

WHEREAS, equity in the transition to a renewable energy economy with a minimum of economic disruptions and to maximize employment of direct line fossil fuel dependent workers during the transition, requires a degree of compliance flexibility as fossil fuel dependent industries meet the new lower carbon emissions standards as well as policies to prevent the “leakage” of jobs and investments from these industries to other states, regions, or countries where carbon reduction standards don’t exist; and

WHEREAS, equity in the transition to a renewable energy economy requires direct line fossil fuel workers be provided with income and benefit support as well as family wage job opportunities and training if a truly “Just Transition” is to take place, at an appropriate time and equity requires addressing the needs of entire communities currently dependent on income from fossil fuel industries; and

WHEREAS, equity in the transition to a renewable energy economy requires that revenue raised through any carbon reduction program be invested, in part, in such a way that the benefits to vulnerable populations and communities of color must outweigh the policy’s economic burdens, including protection from rising energy costs during the transition, investing in public transportation and creating opportunities for jobs and training in green infrastructure development and the renewable energy economy to mitigate against climate change impacts and to improve the quality of life for low income communities; and

WHEREAS, to make sure that any carbon reduction program is actually meeting the carbon reduction goals, investing revenues in ways to protect vulnerable communities, creating infrastructure and renewable energy jobs, and providing a truly “Just

Transition”, an economic and environmental justice board with true representation from direct line workers and communities of color will need to be created; and

WHEREAS, during the transition to a renewable energy economy repairing our failing infrastructure will help create tens of thousands of family wage union jobs and lower our carbon footprint; and

WHEREAS, domestic sourcing our materials for both infrastructure projects and renewable energy projects will maximize domestic job creation and significantly lower the carbon footprint of the content for these projects; and

WHEREAS, the labor movement, in order to alter the current political climate in favor of labor rights and accomplish our own electoral and policy goals towards a more just and sustainable economy, must continue to build alliances and coalitions with faith based, environmental and social justice communities, to create one coordinated movement for change; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and its affiliated local unions and councils go on record supporting Washington State’s 2008 science based carbon emission reduction goals, by or before the dates set in statute, in order to do our part to lower carbon emissions and to reverse climate change while adhering to the principles of this resolution regarding protecting fossil fuel dependent workers during the transition to a renewable energy economy, using an equity lens to evaluate carbon policies, reinvesting carbon revenues in ways that protect and support workers and vulnerable populations, investing in repairing our infrastructure and building the renewable energy economy, using domestic content whenever available, creating an economic and environmental justice board, and providing a truly “Just Transition”; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, will evaluate and support science based carbon reduction goals and policies including, but not limited, to cap and invest, clean fuel standards, and energy efficiency viewed through the equity lens in this resolution.