

Union Resolution on Marriage Equality

While members of labor unions have a variety of views about marriage according to their personal or religious beliefs, it is a fundamental, uniting principle of the labor movement that all people are entitled to equal rights.

Many union members have participated over the years in movements for equal rights for women, people of color, immigrants and people with disabilities—even when those equal rights were controversial at the time and opponents of working people were trying to use them as wedge issues to divide our strength. Similarly, union members and the labor movement have a long history of supporting equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) workers.

As unions, we have a particular responsibility to protect equal rights and promote economic justice in connection with collective bargaining, economic benefits and legislation that affect our members.

We recognize that the lack of access to legal marriage deprives LGBT working families of more than 3,000 benefits and responsibilities afforded heterosexual families, such as:

- spousal Social Security and pension benefits;
- medical decision-making authority;
- spousal health insurance;
- workers compensation death benefits;
- the ability to jointly adopt children, and the presumption of parenthood of children born to spouses;
- immigration rights; and
- many other federal, state and local protections, including rights in the workplace.

Whereas, We know that this denial of marriage equality hurts not just these families, but all the family members, neighbors and co-workers who care about the well-being of these couples and their children; and

Whereas, Though domestic partnership and civil union laws bring welcome recognition to these families, there is no substitute for marriage. No legal mechanism for protecting families is as widely accepted or has as clear legal precedent and meaning as does marriage. Denying access to marriage for loving, committed same-sex couples discriminates against them and relegates them to second-class citizenship.

Therefore, be it resolved: We join the NYS AFL-CIO in affirming the labor movement's commitment to equal rights for all union members, including our LGBT members; and

Be it also resolved: We will support loving, committed same-sex couples having equal access to legal marriage and oppose laws and constitutional amendments that deny that opportunity; and

Finally, be it resolved: We call on the New York State legislature and governor to enact a law providing marriage equality for all our members, and we will actively work to achieve that goal.

We will make it a legislative goal to ensure that all members enjoy equal rights and benefits and will determine where New York State elected officials stand on this issue prior to elections.