

Good Jobs, Healthy Communities, Shared Prosperity



2023-2024 Legislative Session

The NC State AFL-CIO and our affiliated unions believe that all working people should have the opportunity to build better lives for themselves and their families, to enjoy the fruits of their labor, and to live with dignity. This legislative agenda offers policy recommendations to create shared prosperity and a brighter future for all working people.

Good Jobs with Fair Wages

1. Invest in the creation, expansion, and retention of good jobs that pay family-sustaining wages:

- Require employers that receive tax incentives to provide jobs that will raise, not lower, the standard of living of working families.
- Expand the film and television industry by continuing to fund the grant program.
- Make employers that relocate call centers overseas ineligible for state subsidies and require that call center work contracted by or for state agencies be performed within our state.
- Invest in clean energy job creation including offshore wind production, electric vehicle production, EV charging stations, and supply chain development. Require wage standards and local hiring practices for all clean energy jobs.
- Standardize the definition of broadband and broadband speed benchmarks in the general statutes.
- Require labor standards over and above the requirements in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for broadband expansion and other infrastructure jobs.
- Invest in modernizing the electrical grid, including building out the infrastructure for offshore wind, SmartGrid technology, and updating substation technology and security.
- Grant municipalities more power over the procurement process for construction projects to create more regulation around safety, wages, and to encourage local hiring when public funding is used.

Good Jobs with Fair Wages

2. Eliminate barriers that prevent workers from accessing good jobs:

- Focus workforce development efforts on training that will enable workers to move into good-paying jobs with advancement opportunities. Expand registered apprenticeship programs while maintaining rigorous apprenticeship standards.
- Leverage state and federal funds to expand affordable, broadband access in rural communities.
- Expand childcare subsidies to offset costs of affordable, quality childcare for low-income workers and those pursuing education and training.
- Ensure low-wage workers have the flexibility to pursue better opportunities and higher pay by prohibiting non-compete agreements and anti-poaching policies in low-wage industries.

3. Help jobless people and our economy by restoring fairness and adequacy to our unemployment insurance system:

- Increase the maximum duration for receiving unemployment benefits to 26 weeks, which is in line with most states.
- Increase the weekly maximum benefit amount and index it to the state's wage growth.
- Increase the Earnings Allowance/Disregard so that more part-time workers can qualify for benefits.
- Establish a work-sharing option for employers to give workers and themselves more flexibility when faced with layoffs.
- Repeal waiting weeks for benefits.
- End overpayment collections when the claimant is not at fault.

4. Raise wages and increase the standard of living for all workers—whether white, Black, or brown:

- Raise the state minimum wage to \$15 an hour and tie the minimum wage to inflation. Eliminate the exemption of domestic and agricultural workers from minimum wage laws. Eliminate the tipped wage.
- Enhance our laws to prohibit employers from misclassifying workers as independent contractors. Create a joint employer standard that reflects modern workplace arrangements and keeps employers, including those using subcontracting arrangements, responsible to employees for compliance with worker protection laws.
- Empower municipalities to raise the minimum wage and other labor standards in their communities, particularly for contractors working for municipalities.
- Reinstate the state Earned Income Tax Credit that is refundable and set at 20% of the federal credit.

Safe Jobs

5. Keep workers safe and healthy:

- Expand Medicaid, which would increase access to healthcare, help rural hospitals stay open, and create thousands of jobs, especially in rural areas.

Safe Jobs

- Guarantee a minimum number of paid sick days for workers to care for themselves and their loved ones. Ensure an inclusive definition of family in any paid leave legislation.
- Provide adequate funds to the NC Department of Labor so they can fill vacancies and reduce turnover among compliance officers.
- Ensure that the workers who make our food are safe and sanitary by empowering state agencies to investigate unsafe conditions.
- Require employers to follow CDC guidelines for airborne infectious diseases and to provide optimal workplace protections (including N95 respirators and other PPE) in a public health emergency.
- Guarantee pregnant workers will be offered reasonable accommodations to work safely throughout their pregnancy.
- Maintain a stable workers' compensation system that pays adequate benefits to individuals who are injured or sickened on the job.
- Provide permanent funding for firefighter presumptive cancer benefits.
- Fund a study of post-traumatic stress disorder among first responders.
- Allow firefighters the same option as police officers to retire after 25 years.
- Require employers to provide all employees with a 30-minute work break during any six consecutive hours worked. Currently, the law does not require workers to be given any work breaks no matter how many hours worked.
- Ensure that long-term care facilities are adequately and safely staffed so that caregivers are protected and people are able to retire with dignity.

Empower Workers

6. Give workers a voice on the job and protect our freedom to join together in unions to improve our working conditions:

- Create civil service boards to hear city employees' grievances and resolve personnel issues in Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Durham, and other municipalities.
- Repeal General Statute §95-98 so that public employers and employees have the freedom to negotiate and enter into collective bargaining agreements.
- Repeal the "right to work" law, which makes it harder for working people to form a union and collectively negotiate for better working conditions.
- Repeal Section 20.5 of the Farm Act of 2017, which discriminates against farm workers by stripping them of basic rights to organize and has cost the state significant resources to defend in ongoing litigation.

Protect Consumers

7. Protect consumers from predatory lending:

- Oppose increased rates and fees on consumer loans.
- Oppose legislation weakening rent-to-own regulations or legalizing payday or car title lending.
- Support legislation improving legal protections against debt settlement companies.

Strengthen Democracy

8. Ensure all citizens have a voice in our democracy:

- Ensure every person can exercise their right to vote by expanding access to voter registration, voting by mail, and combating voter suppression which often targets communities of color.
- Reinstate public campaign financing so that working people, including union members, can afford to run for office.
- Establish an Independent Redistricting Commission to draw legislative and congressional boundaries and put an end to the gerrymandering that undermines the will of our citizens.
- Protect the right of citizens to engage in peaceful protest free from intimidation, illegal use of force, criminalization of protesting, and other means intended to undermine free public expression.

9. Address systemic racism in our criminal justice system and other institutions:

- End the unjust cash bail system, excessive court fees, and debtor's prisons.
- Extend voting rights to people on probation, parole, or post-release supervision for a felony conviction.

Who We Are

The North Carolina State American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (NC State AFL-CIO) is the largest association of unions of working people in North Carolina, representing over a hundred thousand members, working together for good jobs, safe workplaces, workers' rights, consumer protections, and quality public services on behalf of ALL working people.

We are a democratic organization governed by a constitution and accountable to our membership, which elects our leadership – one full-time president and an executive board representative of unions of working people across North Carolina.

Since our founding in 1957, our mission has been to build a bigger, more engaged, more powerful movement to win victories for North Carolina working families by growing our movement, engaging and mobilizing our leaders, members, and allies, and building independent political power for working people.

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