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OF OFFICIAL
HUMAN RIGHTS
AGENCIES

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A District of Columbia
Nonprofit Corporation

2011 IAOHRA Conference

August 28-31, 2011

Sheraton Hotel

Austin, Texas

Resolution #11

Adopted by the

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF OFFICIAL
HUMAN RIGHTS AGENCIES

August 30, 2011

TITLE: LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

PURPOSE: MANUFACTURING AND UNION LABOR POLICY

WHEREAS, the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) is a professional association of over 140 state, county, and city governmental human rights commissions in the United States of America and several statutory human rights agencies in Canada that has as its purpose and jurisdiction the elimination of discrimination; and,

WHEREAS, unions have consistently led the struggle to provide a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, for better wages, benefits and advancement opportunities based on skills, knowledge, hard work and seniority rather than race, religion, cronyism or other discriminatory factors; and,

WHEREAS, the right of workers to join unions and to bargain collectively with employers is an internationally recognized human right and a cornerstone of a free and democratic society. With unions, workers have a voice on workplace issues and are able to negotiate collectively to achieve a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, gain healthcare, pensions and other benefits to protect their families and ensure safe healthy working conditions; and,

WHEREAS, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) was enacted in 1935, during the Great Depression, to protect the right of American workers to unionize. It plainly states that our national interest is best served by "encouraging the practice and procedure of collective bargaining and freedom of association;" and,

WHEREAS, over the years, the rights protected by the NLRA were diminished by aggressive employer sponsored anti-union campaigns, ineffective penalties for employers who violate the NLRA, and anti-union presidential appointees to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). As a result, it became nearly impossible for millions of workers to successfully organize by going through a Board-conducted election, and nearly as difficult to reach a first contract after winning a representation election; and,

WHEREAS, many employers-coached by an army of anti-union consultants — took advantage of loopholes in the National Labor Relations Act or simply violated the law to spy on, harass, pressure, threaten, intimidate, suspend, fire, deport, and otherwise victimize workers who attempted to exercise their right to unionize. Many manufacturing companies threatened and

intimidated workers in organizing drives by predicting the workplace would close or move if workers voted for the union; and,

WHEREAS, employer interference did not and has not ceased once a union had been chosen: one- third of workers who demonstrated majority support for union representation lacked a collective bargaining agreement one year later; and,

WHEREAS, as a result of these anti-union campaigns and our weak labor laws, the percentage of American workers who are unionized plummeted to an all time low. The loss of manufacturing jobs to a service-based economy which threatens the status of many middle class workers destroyed American's middle class and took a tremendous toll on the earning power and standard of living of racial and ethnic minority families; and,

WHEREAS, beginning in 2003, the labor movement mounted a major Congressionally focused educational campaign to enact the Employee Free Choice Act, to restore the right to workers to organize and bargain collectively, free from employer intimidation and coercion. The Act allows workers to choose to organize by a simple majority sign-up, without the employer-imposed delays and intimidation, provides for timely mediation and arbitration in the event bargaining for a first contract breaks down, provides stronger penalties for labor law violations and delivers much greater enforcement of the laws; and,

WHEREAS, according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research for African Americans in the 15 lowest-paying occupations, unionization raises wages by about 14%; for the same group of workers, unionization is also associated with a 20% greater likelihood of having health insurance and a 28% greater likelihood of pension coverage; and,

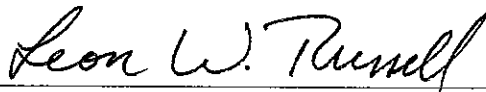
WHEREAS, 25% of all African American college graduates work in the public sector the majority of whom are union members; and,

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, full-time African American workers who are union members earn 31% more than their non-union counterparts (\$772 per week for union workers compared with \$589 for non-union workers); African American men who are union members earn 37% more than their non-union counterparts (\$829 compared with \$606); and African American women who are union members earn 27% more than their nonunion counterparts (\$729 compared with \$574); and,

WHEREAS, in 1961, when Martin Luther King Jr., addressed the AFL-CIO Fourth Constitutional Convention in Bal Harbour, Florida, he spoke of the "unity of purpose" between the labor movement and the movement for civil rights. He said: "Our needs are identical with labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children and respect in the community;" and,

WHEREAS, numerous prominent economists, including three Nobel laureates, have signed onto a statement in favor of the Employee Free Choice Act citing the recent unprecedented growth of inequality in household income and the urgent need to give workers more bargaining power, they said, "In recent decades, most bargaining powers have resided with management. The current recession will further weaken the ability of workers to bargain individually. More than ever, workers will need to act together. As economists, we believe this is a critically important step in rebuilding our economy and strengthening our democracy by enhancing the voice of working people in the workplace;" and,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that IAHORA will advocate for the protection of workers' right to engage in the process of collective bargaining; and,
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that IAOHRA, and it membership, will strive to restore the original intention of the National Labor Relations Act to encourage unionization and collective bargaining by guaranteeing workers the right to organize; and,
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that IAOHRA, and it membership, will work to educate our friends, family, the general public, and Congress about the continued need to strengthen the right of workers to organize, free from employer interference; and,
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that IAOHRA, and it membership, commit to support of the Employee Free Choice Act, to allow workers to make a personal choice to organize without relentless and often unlawful attempts by management to affect their decision by use of threat and intimidation; and,
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that IAOHRA, and it membership, and it members advocate for NLRA coverage for all private sector workers, including teaching and research assistants; and,
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that IAOHRA, and it membership, and its members support efforts in states to provide collective bargaining rights to all state and local government employees; and,
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that IAOHRA, and it membership state its opposition to attacks on any and all unions, whether in the public or private sectors, by declaring that workers have rights to be organized into unions and those unions' rights to collective bargaining are sacrosanct; and
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that IAOHRA, and it membership join in support of public and private employees and their efforts to maintain or preserve their rights to union representation and collective bargaining.



Leon W. Russell, President