

## Resolution

### To Divest from Fossil Fuels and Reinvest in Workers and Communities

- WHEREAS**, climate change represents an urgent and accelerating crisis, as extreme weather, forest and wildfires, infectious disease outbreaks, rising sea levels, and pollution wreak havoc on the ecosystems and societies in the US (where the cost of climate disasters doubled in 2020) and across the globe;
- WHEREAS**, the climate crisis exacerbates already-existing systemic injustices along racial, regional, social, and economic lines, concentrating harm in frontline communities (including Indigenous communities, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth);
- WHEREAS**, teachers, nurses, academic staff, public workers, and higher education faculty have taken leadership in educating students on the climate emergency, in forging alliances with climate movements, and in promoting action to reduce carbon emissions, notably:
- a. In 2017, the AFT Executive Council resolved to, “urge its locals, state federations and members’ retirement systems to ... review strategies to mitigate the risk of climate change in their investment portfolios, including, ... possible divestiture from other types of fossil fuel companies that contribute substantially to climate change...”
  - b. In 2017, the AFT Executive Council passed the “Resolution on a just transition to a peaceful and sustainable society” (referred from the 2016 AFT National Convention) and committed therein, “to a rapid transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy ... [such that] most fossil fuels must be left in the ground;”
  - c. In 2020, the AFT National Convention resolved, “that the American Federation of Teachers will fully participate in shaping the definition of ‘A just transition to a peaceful and sustainable economy,’ ... in accord with the latest climate science regarding the need for very rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;”
- WHEREAS**, shareholder resolutions and even director votes at fossil fuel companies - as alternatives to divestment - have never resulted in significant change at coal, oil or gas company nor lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from those companies' products;
- WHEREAS**, the fiduciary duty of retirement funds obligates them to consider divestment from declining assets or at high risk of being stranded, a category that Blackrock, Makeda, and the World Bank now believe includes fossil fuels;

**WHEREAS,** there are now more than 1500 institutions with assets over \$39 trillion that have committed to some form of fossil fuel divestment, including the following funds (many explicitly in order to reinvest in environmentally and socially responsible industries):

- a) the New York City Teachers Retirement System,
- b) the New York State Common Retirement Fund and the Maine State Retirement System,
- c) The City of Boston's and the City of Baltimore's investment funds,
- d) the London Pension Fund Authority
- e) the Banque Postale of France,
- f) the Caisse de Dépôt et Placement du Québec,
- g) the Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund and the Vatican,
- h) and the endowments of Harvard, Oxford, Rutgers, and the University of California, among other institutions of higher education;

**WHEREAS,** according to the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, each \$1 million reinvested from fossil fuels to green energy results in a net increase of five jobs - often unionized jobs in solar and wind farms or in other sectors suitable for organizing;

**WHEREAS,** Illinois' Climate and Equitable Jobs Act of 2021 and the federal Build Back Better Bill provide models for reinvestment in local, green jobs;

**WHEREAS,** AFT members participate in public and private pension plans totaling roughly \$5.8 trillion (of which an estimated \$255 billion are invested in fossil fuel corporations) and, therefore, possess significant financial means to address the climate crisis and promote a just transition for workers and communities;

**THEREFORE,** let it be resolved that the American Federation of Teachers urges boards managing the retirement funds of its members to divest their assets - in consultation with Pre K-12 members and their local unions - from all corporations or other entities that extract, transport, trade, or otherwise contribute to the production of coal, oil, and gas - and to reinvest those funds in projects that benefit displaced workers and frontline communities in the state or region of the given AFT members;

**THEREFORE,** let it be further resolved that AFT urges the board of TIAA to divest the retirement funds of higher education members - in consultation with their local unions - from all corporations or other entities that extract, transport, trade, or otherwise contribute to the production of coal, oil, and gas - and to reinvest those funds in socially responsible, climate-positive projects that benefit displaced workers and frontline communities;

**THEREFORE,** let it further be resolved that, before 1 October 2022, the AFT's Climate Justice Task Force shall convene as a body and initiate communication with local and member-trustees towards the goal of divesting from fossil fuels and reinvesting in workers and communities;

**THEREFORE,** let it finally be resolved that, by 1 July 2025 or sooner if possible, AFT will divest its own assets from all corporations or other entities that extract, transport, trade, or otherwise contribute to the production of coal, oil, and gas - and will reinvest those funds in projects that benefit displaced workers and frontline communities.

**Endorsed by**

1. AFT Guild, Local 1931 (the San Diego and Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College Districts, California)
2. Boston Teachers Union Local 66 Executive Board
3. E-boards voting on resolution
4. Rutgers AAUP-AFT, 22 February

REVISION OR COMMENTS

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ADOPTED \_\_\_\_\_

DEFEATED \_\_\_\_\_

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