Laborers' International Union *of* North America

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Retiree Council Handbook

A guide to establishing a successful Retiree Council

Laborers' International Union *of* North America

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RETIREE COUNCILS

HOW THEY CAN BENEFIT AFFILIATES

Political Activities

Retirees can...

- Write letters to Congressmen and Senators concerning issues that are important to workers.
- Take part in pro-union demonstrations.
- Protest legislation that is bad for workers.
- Distribute pro-union legislation around the community.
- Distribute literature supporting worker-friendly candidates for political office.
- Assist with voter registration drives.

Organizing Campaigns

Retirees can...

- Join the VOICE (Volunteer Organizers in Community Empowerment) program and recruit new members.
- Distribute literature to workers.
- Talk to workers about the advantages of organizing.
- Advise organizers on what issues are important to workers.

Mentoring New Members

Retirees Can...

- Assist with new member orientation.
- Draw on their years of experience to advise new LIUNA members on contributing to their Local Union and District Council.
- Share their commitment to shape more dedicated and loyal union members.

Community Support

Retirees Can...

- Distribute pro-union literature around the community.
- Work with local agencies.

The Role of the Local Union and District Council

Although retirees will organize their own Councils and conduct their own programs, they will need the sponsorship of the Local Union or District Council - especially in the beginning. Union members, of course, must approve expenditures for such an endeavor before any funds can be allocated.

To secure approval, officers should be prepared to discuss the advantages of a Retiree Council not only to retirees, but to the Local Union or District Council as well. Since this presentation will involve a rather lengthy and complex motion, it should be drafted beforehand at the Executive Board meeting and presented on their behalf. The motion should authorize:

- The Local Union or District Council to sponsor a Retiree Council.
- A disbursement of funds in an amount sufficient to get the Council started.
- Appointment of a temporary Retired Members' Committee by the Business Manager.
- A pledge of continuing helps and support from the Local Union or District Council.

The Local Union or District Council can decide for itself what degree of financial support will be made available to the Retiree Council. It may be no more than a fifty dollar authorization, or it may be a specified monthly sum to put toward the Council's activities. Either way, finance is only one of the responsibilities the Local Union or District Council will have to retired members. The Union Hall should be made available for meetings. As far as possible and practical, the Council should have access to Union computers, copy machines, and other office equipment. Assistance should be provided, whenever possible, in distributing notices and newsletters. In larger Locals, it may even be possible to set up a drop-in center, where retirees can come to play cards or just unwind.

Retired Members' Committee

Once the Local Union or District Council has authorized the sponsorship of a Retiree Council, the Business Manager should appoint a temporary Retired Members' Committee. Since the Committee's first task will be to organize the Retiree Council, its membership should be open to both actively employed and retired members and their families.

As with any committee, success or failure will depend largely on the individual who heads it up. Select someone close enough to retirement to foresee the need for and advantages of a well organized Retiree Council.

The Committee Chairperson may, in turn, appoint a Sub-Committee(s) of retired LIUNA members to organize the Retiree Council. The best candidates for the job are recently retired members who have demonstrated a capacity for leadership, **including former officers and representatives.** Once this is done, the actual organization can begin.

Organizing a Retiree Council

The temporary Retired Members' Committee and/or Sub-Committees can be made up of both active and retired members, but it will probably be best to select a chairperson who is retired and has enough time to get the job done right.

After the Council is established, the temporary Committee(s) can be dissolved. The Committee itself does not have to be very large. Five or six motivated members can easily get the job done, as long as a clear line of authority is established.

The Mailing List

The first order of business should be to compile a mailing list. The Local Union Secretary-Treasurer can provide the names and addresses of retired members currently active in the Local Union, as well as those of members who have let their membership lapse. The Local Union pension office can provide a list of retired members to check against the membership list for the Local Union. The Local or District Council newsletter or bulletin board should provide an adequate medium for publicizing the initiation of a Retiree Council.

Recruiting

Once these steps have been completed, a time and place for the first meeting must be selected. If the Local Union or District Council hall is unavailable, most communities will allow public service organizations, including retirement clubs, to use local facilities such as libraries, schools, or recreation centers. In order to make it as convenient as possible for everyone to attend, the meeting should probably be scheduled sometime during the day. Many Councils like to meet on Saturday.

Once a time and place has been set, the people on the mailing list should be contacted. Let them know LIUNA is organizing retired members, stimulate their interest by mentioning some of the activities the Council will sponsor, then tell them where and when the first meeting will be held. Invite everyone to attend.

The best way to do this may be to send a leaflet to each address a couple of weeks in advance, following up with a phone call a few days before the meeting to confirm success. The Retired Members' Committee should be able to handle this task on their own but, should they need any help, the Local Union or District Council should be prepared to supply it.

The First Meeting

By the time of the first general membership meeting, the Organizing Committee should have:

- Sent notices to everyone on the mailing list.
- Announced their intentions at the Local Union or District Council meeting.
- Phoned key people -- the kind that makes any organization click -- to remind them to be at the meeting.
- Arranged transportation for those who need it.
- Arranged for plenty of refreshments.
- Prepared ballots for use in electing officials.
- Invited the Local Union or District Council Business Manager to be on hand to make the appropriate welcoming remarks.

The purpose of the first meeting is to get the Council organized and its members acquainted. The Chairperson of the temporary Retired Members' Committee will take the chair until permanent officers are elected. After the members have had time to mingle and enjoy the refreshments, a suggested order of business is as follows:

- Welcome by Chair. Introduce yourself and the members of the temporary Retired Members' Committee; make a brief statement as to the Council's purpose and objectives.

- Brief welcomes and remarks by the Business Manager, President, or other Local Union and District Council representative.

- Call for the nomination of officers.

- Appointment of judges and secret election of officers.

- Temporary chair installs new President and turns gavel over.

- President installs other officers.

- President calls for general discussion of current or especially pressing issues affected retired members.

- On the basis of the discussion, President appoints such committees as are needed to get programs of Retiree Council under way.

- President announces time of next meeting and calls for the motion of adjournment.

- Social period, at which time members can get more acquainted and enjoy light refreshments.

After the first meeting, the Council can follow the same order of business Local Unions do. As a matter of good practice, the presiding officer should try to keep the business part of the meeting short and to the point. The way to insure a good meeting is to plan ahead. The President, therefore, should be sure to meet with the Board of Directors and all Committee Chairpersons before subsequent general meetings.

Future Meetings

Meetings should be scheduled regularly, but every Council should decide for itself how often. The more worthwhile the activities are, the more often members will want to attend. Informal socializing, with light refreshments provided should always follow formal business meetings.

Dues

Since retired members are usually living on reduced incomes and, in many cases, tight budgets, monthly dues in Retiree Councils should be relatively low. For example, if the Retiree Council charters a bus to the State Capitol to protest against anti-union legislation, the Local Union or District Council may help defray the expense. Obviously, this will be a Local Union membership decision. In all likelihood, the decision will depend on how well the Retiree Council does for its members. A Retiree Council that is active concerning issues that relate to the Union will clearly generate more Union support than one that does little for the community.

Retiree Council Programs

A Retiree Council that doesn't do anything won't last long. In addition to holding regular meetings and social events, an active Retiree Council should be concerned with the challenges retired members' face in their daily lives.

Community Services

Soon after a Council is established, United Way should be contacted for a list of agencies providing services for senior citizens. Many federal agencies also have programs that benefit older people. Councils can also contact LIUNA's Retiree Council Coordinator or visit www.liuna.org for current LIUNA news, benefit information, links, etc. Any well-organized Retiree Council ought to have a list of such programs for the benefit of its members.

Social Activities

Retiree Councils should also provide day-to-day recreational activities. A bowling league might be organized, for example, or an annual golf tournament. Where possible, Retiree Councils could arrange a Senior Citizens' night at the ballpark.

If space permits, the Local Union or District Council could set aside a room in the Union Hall that would service as a drop-in center for retired members, a place to unwind and mingle with other retirees, furnished with board games, book shelves, and perhaps even a television set. Of course, only the largest Local Unions will be able to afford to assign such a space, but most communities now have retirement centers that should be able to accommodate the Retiree Council if the Local Union can not. In any cases, it is important to provide a place for retired members to go if they want to.

Committees

Retiree Councils can have housing committees, consumer committees, and other committees to advise retirees on financial matters and health issues in their daily lives. These are just a few examples of the services a Retiree Council could provide for its members. Every Council will, of course, decide for itself what kind of services meet their needs. Either way, it is important to remember that a good Retiree Council will serve not only itself, but the Local Union, District Council, LIUNA and the good of the overall community as well.

Political Action

One of the greatest assets retired members bring to the Local Union is their knowledge and concern about political issues affecting all working people. It is essential for Retiree Council members to keep informed and active on legislative and political issues. Retiree Council members should work for legislation that will not only benefit retirees, but also advance the welfare of working people, the labor movement, and the community as a whole.

The Relationship Between the Local Union and the Retiree Council

One of the results of a successful Retiree Council is that the retired members will become more interested and active in Local Union affairs. This raises a question as to the extent to which they may determine local policies. Article VII, Section 6 of the Uniform Local Union Constitution states that a retired member shall have voice and vote at Local Union meetings only on matters of direct concern or interest to retired members.

The Local Union or District Council also has specific responsibilities to maintain good communications with the Retiree Council. They are:

- To appoint an officer or representative to attend Retiree Council meetings and events whenever possible.

- To provide time for a report of Retiree Council activities at Local Union or District Council meetings.

- To sponsor special pre-retirement programs to help older members prepare for the challenges of pension living.

- To encourage new retirees to join the Council and to notify the Council when a member qualifies for retirement.

The Local Union has a responsibility to keep abreast of retirement issues and act for the well being and just treatment of retired members. They have worked hard and long to advance the goals of the labor movement, and now is the time to help make their retirement an enjoyable one.

HOW TO OFFICIALLY CHARTER A RETIREE COUNCIL

Following is a sample resolution, constitution, and officers' reporting form which affiliates should use in officially establishing a Council. Once the resolution and constitution is presented and passed by the membership, it must be forwarded to the Regional Office for a report and a recommendation to Headquarters. After review by Headquarters, a formal charter will be issued to the appropriate Retiree Council. It is important that the officers' reporting form be forwarded to Headquarters each and every time an election is held, including the initial installation of officers, for an accurate accounting of Retiree Council Officers.

(***SAMPLE)***

LABORERS' RETIREE COUNCIL RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, there are many retired members of [Local Union_____ or _____ District Council] who have made great contributions to this [Local Union or District Council], the Laborers' International Union of North America, the labor movement generally and to the community at large;

WHEREAS, these members still wish to remain active in the labor movement and their community;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT the [Local Union or District Council] Retiree Council be made up of all retired members of this [Local Union or District Council] who wish to join;

THAT the purpose of the Retiree Council be to serve such social and political interests as the members shall determine to be appropriate, but the Council shall not represent employees in connection with employers concerning wages, hours and other terms or conditions of employment;

THAT the Retiree Council shall be run on a not-for-profit basis;

THAT the Retiree Council is not an agent of the International Union, or of this [Local Union or District Council] and is not authorized to act for, or to otherwise bind, the International Union or this [Local Union or District Council] except where prior approval, authorization, or direction is given in writing by the International Union, or where the International Union or this [Local Union or District Council] ratifies in writing acts performed by the Retiree Council after notice thereof. However, in no case is the International Union or this [Local Union or District Council] liable or responsible for autonomous acts of the Retiree Council; and

THAT the Retiree Council may be dissolved at any time by the Executive Board or the membership of this [Local Union or District Council].

UNIFORM LIUNA RETIREE COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

AS AMENDED

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name shall be Retiree Council NUMBER-R, CITY, STATE.

ARTICLE II. OBJECTS

The objects of this organization shall be:

- To maintain fraternal ties of Laborers' International Union of North America retirees during retirement years.

- To provide Laborers' International Union of North America retired members an opportunity for social and recreational activity.

- To keep Laborers' International Union of North America retired members informed of our Union's programs and policies and up-to-date on changing political, economic and social developments which affect them.

- To enlist the support of retired members in promoting progressive programs and other Laborers' International Union of North America political objectives.

- To bring the special problems of retired members to the attention of the Laborers' International Union of North America, its Local Unions and District Councils.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be open to retirees who are members of the Laborers' International Union of North America.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS

The officers of this Council shall be President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Recording Secretary and three (3) Trustees, who shall be elected by the membership.

Elected officers shall serve a term of office equal in length to a term of office in the sponsoring affiliate.
The newly elected officers shall take the oath of office and be installed by the presiding officer at the first regular membership meeting after the election.

A combination of offices may be permitted provided, however, that such combination has been voted by the membership and provided that it is then submitted to the General President of the International Union for approval; all of said action to be had and taken prior to the nomination meeting.

In case of a vacancy in the office of the President, the Vice President shall automatically succeed. Other vacancies will be filled by appointment by the President with the approval of the board.

All elected officers must be in good standing and must remain in good standing within the Laborers' International Union of North America as a condition of holding office within this organization.

President: The President shall preside at all meetings of general membership and the Board of Directors. He or she shall appoint all committees and shall be a member ex-officio of all committees, with full rights therein.

Vice President: In the absence or incapacity of the President, the Vice President shall perform the duties of the President.

Secretary-Treasurer: The Secretary-Treasurer shall be the custodian of all funds.

Recording Secretary: The Recording Secretary shall maintain all record of all meetings of the Board of Directors and of the general membership and shall give notices of meetings.

Trustees: The Trustees shall oversee the financial funds and properties of the Council, inspect the books once a year and report to the Board of Directors on the conditions of the books.

ARTICLE V. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors shall consist of the following persons: The President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Recording Secretary and three (3) Trustees. The Board of Directors shall control and manage the affairs of the Council, shall fix the budget, shall authorize and effectuate agreed-upon expenditures, and shall

develop the organization's programs and policies consistent with those of the Laborers' International Union of North America.

There shall be no limitation on the number of times a person may be elected as an officer.

Meetings of the Board of Directors may be called at the request of either the President or a majority of the Board members, as needed.

Five (5) members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Board of Directors.

Any member of the Board who is absent from three (3) consecutive Board meetings or special meetings, without having been excused by the President, shall cease to be a member of the Board.

No member of the Board of Directors and no member may be paid a salary or fee for his or her work on behalf of the organization. Reimbursement for previously arranged expenditures by a member on behalf of the organization may be made with the approval of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE VI. LIMITATIONS

This Council is not organized for profit; and no part of its assets, income or earnings shall be used for dividends or otherwise withdrawn or distributed to any of its members. In the event of dissolution of the organization, the charter, assets and records must be returned to the sponsoring Local Union or District Council.

The liability of members of this Council shall be limited to duly authorized dues, fees, or assessments.

This Council is not authorized to enter into any contracts or incur any liability, directly or indirectly, which binds the Laborers' International Union of North America or sponsoring Local Union or District Council.

This organization shall not undertake activities, public statements or publications which run contrary to the policies of the Laborers' International Union of North America or the sponsoring Local Union or District Council.

This organization may be dissolved by the Executive Board or the membership of the sponsoring Local Union or District Council.

ARTICLE VII. AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by the General Executive Board of the Laborers' International Union of North America.

ARTICLE VIII. ELECTIONS

The officers and members of the Board of Directors shall be elected by the membership in a secret ballot election.

The Board of Directors shall fix the date of an election, and the SecretaryTreasurer shall notify the membership at least thirty (30) days prior to the date set.
The Board of Directors shall prescribe rules governing the printing, distribution, casting and counting the ballots.

No member's name shall be placed upon a ballot for any office unless he or she has previously indicated a willingness to accept the nomination.

ARTICLE IX. DUES

The amount of dues in each Council shall be determined from time to time by the Board of Directors and shall be subject to ratification by the general membership.

ARTICLE X. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

The Board of Directors may determine the number of membership meetings each year and the time and place for the meetings. While monthly meetings are considered most desirable, the Board of Directors may set a schedule of meetings, more and fewer, to correspond with the wishes and circumstances of the membership.

Special meetings of the general membership may be called by the Board of Directors when deemed necessary.

Notice of a special meeting shall be given by mail.

LIUNA RETIREE COUNCIL REPORTING FORM

Local Union/District Council:_____

Contact Person:_____

Date Council Formed:_____

Officers

Date Officers Elected: _____

President:_____

Vice President:_____

Secretary-Treasurer:_____

Recording Secretary:_____

Trustees:_____

_____

_____

Activities

When Council Meets:_____

Activities (i.e., Organizing, Political, Legislative, Mentoring):_____

_____

_____

_____