

2009-2011 REPORT OF THE AFL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

Since the 2009 Convention, the AFL Political Action Committee (PAC) has met on seven occasions. The PAC meetings serve to discuss political events/changes and initiatives that can be undertaken by the AFL and its affiliates or in partnership with allied organizations (Friends of Medicare, Public Interest Alberta, and the Parkland Institute). The Alberta Health Act, the Wild Rose Alliance Party and the Alberta Party are all new pieces of the Alberta political landscape since the 2009 AFL Convention and the last provincial election.

In the fall of 2009, anticipating the Provincial Government would undertake significant cuts to public services, a new coalition was formed. What started as a “Common Front against the Cuts” developed into “Join Together Alberta” (JTA). The AFL leadership and staff have played a pivotal role in JTA with a wide range of supporting initiatives, publications, town hall meetings, research and polling. AFL participation in JTA planning and strategy development, as well as coordinating and mobilizing AFL affiliates contributed to the success JTA experienced. A new wave of JTA initiatives is currently in the planning phase, in anticipation of political party leadership races and a provincial election.

AFL Executive and staff have worked tirelessly to educate, energize and mobilize affiliates and the public to understand issues significant to workers and all citizens (e.g. political, economic, environmental, pensions, worker safety, education, health care, worker exploitation, unfair taxation, lost resource revenue). A wide range of

workshops, publications (including the new UNION Insight & Analysis), fifty press releases, editorial letters, province-wide media interviews and coverage are indicative of the high level of political action and advocacy undertaken by and with the AFL.

One MLA Lobby day was held in the fall of 2009 and 2010. In March 2011, an MLA Lobby day was coordinated with the Women’s Committee. Another full lobby day will be held in the fall of 2011. Increased participation by affiliate leaders and rank-and-file members has enhanced the overall success of the dedicated lobby efforts.

2009 CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS

At each PAC meeting the Committee reviewed the 2009 Convention Resolutions. The resolutions varied from advocating for electoral reform and transparency (Res. No. 501, No. 502); election preparation (Res. No. 503); natural resource revenue (Res. No. 1108); threats to public sector services and jobs (Res. No. 1112); to energy infrastructure & diversification (Res. No. 1133). The PAC reviewed and discussed ongoing or new initiatives to address the resolutions.

2011 PRE-CONVENTION

In February, 2011, PAC reviewed the Draft “Election Blueprint” developed as a broad long-term electoral/political strategy. The following is a summary of the proposed Blueprint:

Election Blueprint:

Background:

- Politics in flux in Alberta right now
- Political log jam is opening up – while it could be an opportunity for us, a new government could be even worse than the one we have now
- An appetite exists amongst labour activists to explore what we can do to take advantage of the political situation
- We currently have no political machine to find progressive candidates nor to get them elected
- While lobbying is necessary, it is not sufficient – we need to have people elected who are sympathetic to our values.

Plan – has 7 components and is predicated on 4 premises:

Premises:

- a) Politics matter
- b) Unions should be involved in politics
- c) We need to find a way to get sympathetic people elected
- d) This will be a long-term project.

Components:

1. We will develop a Labour/Progressive Platform
2. We will develop an election issues analysis to measure all parties against the issues that matter to us. This will be based on their records, not on their promises.
3. We will provide materials and information to our affiliates in a timely manner so that they can disseminate it to their members. Shannon Phillips will be working on materials as a special project during her maternity leave.
4. We will target constituencies where we have the best chance of winning. The decision regarding targets will have to do, in part, with union density in particular constituencies.

5. We will support certain progressive candidates. This will be support of candidates based on their credentials and commitment to our values, rather than based solely on their political affiliation. Support will come in the form of finances, volunteer support and other tangibles. Unions that are partisan will be asked to support candidates financially, but those that aren't will be asked to set up a donor network where members will be asked to individually contribute to specific candidates, but the donations will be managed through the AFL so that it is clear that the donation is coming from labour. Specific donation targets will be developed.
6. We will offer a suite of training courses for union activists including the campaign manager course we began offering at the Jasper school this year, a course for potential and nominated candidates and a course about communicating politics and policy.
7. We will do ongoing research and polling on the issues that matter to us and the best way to communicate them (i.e. messaging and language) and will invite progressive candidates and elected officials to an annual workshop to share that information with them. In so doing, we become a reliable resource to them and they become attached to us. The progressive candidates/officials would be determined through the issues analysis mentioned above.

This plan would require financial support from our affiliates.

- Do we ask for that support?
- If so, how much do we ask for?
- How do we ask?

Recommendation:

The Political Action Committee concluded that a dedicated stream of revenue will be

needed to implement the AFL's new political action plan. With that in mind, the AFL PAC sent a recommendation to the AFL Finance Committee calling on the AFL to increase its per capita levy to the Jobs, Justice and Equality from \$0.03 to \$0.15; with the added \$0.12 being set aside to fund the AFL's political action work. After consultation with the Finance Committee and the Executive Committee, it was decided that a better approach would be to fund the action plan through a dedicated and mandatory \$1 per member annual levy for political action. This will be the approach put to the delegates at the AFL Convention: and it is the approach that is supported by the Political Action Committee.

FUTURE GOALS FOR PAC:

- Establishing dedicated financial resources for political action;
- Continuing to expand participation and frequency of formal lobby events;
- Increasing union voter turnout;
- Getting more labour-friendly candidates elected;
- Building better long-term relationships with labour-friendly elected officials at all levels (municipal, provincial and federal); and
- Continuing to work on building lobby capacity in each of the constituencies in the province at the local level.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

AFL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE, 2009 – 2011

Heather Smith, Chair and Council Liaison	UNA
Imy Bhatta	PSAC
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Don Boucher	CEP
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Ken MacKenzie	IBEW 424
Greg McMaster	CUPW-Edm.
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Bev Dick, Alternate	UNA
Jerry Toews	AFL
Gil McGowan	AFL Resource
Nancy Furlong (information)	AFL

Committee members who served a partial term:

Geri Keith, Secretary	HSAA
Barry Salmon	IBEW 424
Nancy Venegas	UUWA
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