

Rules Governing Committees on Political Education of Area and Local Central Bodies

The following rules are an amendment of and are supplemental to the Rules Governing AFL-CIO Area and Local Central Bodies and are issued by the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO pursuant to the authority of the Constitution of the AFL-CIO. They shall govern all area and local central bodies and all their Committees on Political Education. They supersede the COPE bylaws previously issued and revised.

1. Each AFL-CIO area and local central body shall have a Committee on Political Education (COPE) which shall be a standing committee of the central body and shall be responsible to the central body. Each central body COPE shall be governed by the applicable provisions of the Constitution of the AFL-CIO, by the Rules Governing AFL-CIO area and local central bodies, including these Rules, by the Constitution and Bylaws of the central body and by such special bylaws as may be adopted by the central body COPE which are not in conflict with the Constitution, rules or bylaws of the national AFL-CIO or of the central body. Such special bylaws shall be approved by the central body in accordance with its established procedures.
2. The central body COPE shall be composed of the officers and other members of the executive board of the central body, the central body COPE director if there is one, and such other members as may be prescribed by appropriate bylaws duly adopted pursuant to Rule 29. It shall not be a delegate body, but shall function as a committee.
3. The president and the chief financial officer of the central body shall be the chairperson and chief financial officer, respectively, of the central body COPE.
4. The central body COPE shall be responsible for developing and executing approved programs of sound political education to encourage union members and their families to exercise their full rights and responsibilities as citizens and to take their rightful place in the political life of the local, state and national communities.
5. In addition to such other duties as may be assigned by the central body, the COPE shall be responsible for planning, initiating, stimulating and assisting campaigns to:
 - (a) Encourage the qualification and registration to vote of members of affiliated unions of the AFL-CIO and their families;
 - (b) Ensure maximum voting participation on Election Day;
 - (c) Encourage qualified candidates to seek public office;
 - (d) Educate members and their families and develop community educational programs on the political issues of the day through study, discussion and other appropriate means;
 - (e) Support or oppose candidates and ballot propositions in both primary and general elections, pursuant to procedures set forth in Rule 39; and
 - (f) Assist, within its geographical jurisdiction, in the effective solicitation of individual voluntary contributions to the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education Political Contributions Committee.
6. The central body COPE shall have the power to establish an administrative subcommittee of which the chairperson and the chief financial officer shall be members, to carry on the non-policy functions of the central body COPE and to expedite the routine functioning of the central body COPE.

7. The central body COPE shall meet at such times as it may determine and shall also meet on call of the chairperson. The chairperson shall also call a meeting of the committee upon request of 25 percent of the committee members.

8. The central body COPE shall implement programs designed to achieve full participation of trade union members in the activities of the central body COPE.

9. Files and membership lists are subject to Rule 23 of the Rules Governing AFL-CIO Area and Local Central Bodies and shall not be inspected or given to anyone except in conformity with said rules and upon written authorization of the central body COPE Chairperson.

The endorsement procedure of the central body shall be as follows:

a) Action by the local central body to support or oppose shall be limited to (1) candidates in primary and general elections for local offices (municipal, county, school board and other local offices) within the territorial jurisdiction of the central body, and (2) local ballot measures.

(b) Action to support or oppose candidates and local ballot measures and to make recommendations to the state COPE as provided for in paragraph (d) of this rule shall be taken at a regular or special meeting of the central body acting on the report of the central body COPE.

(c) It shall be the responsibility of the central body COPE to prepare appropriate recommendations concerning candidates and ballot measures for consideration and action by the central body.

(d) It shall be the responsibility of the central body, after considering the report of the central body COPE, to make appropriate recommendations to the state COPE regarding candidates for (1) the state legislature or a state constitutional convention, and (2) for Congress, from districts wholly or partially within the territorial jurisdiction of the central body.

(e) Recommendations to the state COPE regarding candidates for the state legislature or a state constitutional convention shall be made only after first considering the records of the candidates and the information available from the state AFL-CIO and the state COPE. It shall be the responsibility of each central body to cooperate with other central bodies which share the same state legislative district to secure a joint recommendation, if possible.

(f) Recommendations to state COPE by local central bodies regarding candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives shall be made only after first considering the records of the candidates and the information available from the national AFL-CIO and the national COPE. It shall be the responsibility of each central body to cooperate with other central bodies which share the same congressional district to secure a joint recommendation, if possible.

(g) The central body shall support the action of the national AFL-CIO on candidates for President and Vice President of the United States, and the state AFL-CIO's action on candidates for the state legislature, delegates to a state constitutional convention, the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, governor and all statewide offices and ballot measures. No central body shall make any endorsement, direct or implied, with respect to any of the offices enumerated in this paragraph other than the recommendations provided for in paragraphs (c), (d), (e) and (f) of this rule.

(h) An action to support or oppose candidates or ballot measures and on recommendations to the state COPE by the central body shall require a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. In the absence of a two-thirds majority either to support or oppose or to recommend to the state COPE, the central body shall be neutral except that the central body shall support the final action of the national AFL-CIO and the state AFL-CIO on candidates and issues covered by paragraph (g) of this rule.

(i) An action to support or oppose a candidate or a ballot measure may be revoked by the central body if that body so decides by a majority of the votes cast.

(j) The Executive Council recognizes the dilemma state and local AFL-CIO central bodies sometimes confront in determining whether to endorse candidates for political office. In certain contests if the best candidate shows a degree of commitment to labor's legislative goals that is questionable, or his/her record is at best marginal on key AFL-CIO issues. In light of that situation, the central body may make a "limited endorsement" in order to express a preference between two or more candidates in a manner that specifies a limit in the central body's endorsement and effort for the candidate so endorsed.

10. Officers and members of the central body COPE shall conform their activities with regard to candidates and ballot measures to the position of the state AFL-CIO or the central body as the case may be.

11. The central body COPE shall be financed by the central body and such funds, if any, as re provided by the state and/or national COPE, for all its educational activities and programs, subject to applicable federal, state and local laws.

12. The financial records of the central body COPE shall be subject to the reporting and auditing provisions of the constitution of the central body, the Rules Governing AFL-CIO Area and Local Central Bodies and applicable federal, state and local laws.