

Resolution for Marriage Equality

III-2

Whereas, although members of labor unions have a variety of views about marriage according to their personal or religious beliefs, it is nevertheless a fundamental and uniting principle of the labor movement that all people are entitled to equal rights; and

Whereas, many union members have participated over the years – both as union members and in their communities – in movements for equal rights for women, people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, seniors and others – even when those equal rights were controversial at the time and opponents of working people were trying to use them as wedge issues to divide our strength. Similarly, union members and the labor movement have a long history of supporting equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers; and

Whereas, as unions, we have a particular responsibility to protect equal rights and promote economic justice in connection with collective bargaining, economic benefits and legislation that affect our members; and

Whereas, the labor movement invented domestic partner benefits to respond to the real economic needs of unmarried union families, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members; and

Whereas, we recognize that the lack of access to civil marriage deprives gay and lesbian working families of more than 1,500 rights and benefits afforded heterosexual families, such as spousal Social Security and pension benefits, hospital visitation rights, spousal health insurance, immigration rights and many other federal, state and local protections, as well as rights in the workplace; and

Whereas, we know that this denial of marriage equality hurts not just these families but all the family members, neighbors and co-workers who care about the well-being of these couples and their children; and

Whereas, civil unions and domestic partnership laws, while well intentioned, create an unequal legal status for same-sex couples which extends state and local-level protections and benefits afforded “spouses” in heterosexual marriage, while denying them the more than 1,000 federal benefits of marriage; therefore be it

Resolved, that NYSUT affirm the labor movement’s commitment to equal rights for all union members, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members; and be it further

Resolved, that NYSUT supports the right of same-sex couples to access all the rights, responsibilities and legal commitment of civil marriage and oppose laws and constitutional amendments that deny those rights; and be it further

Resolved, that NYSUT will resist any attempt by anti-worker forces to use this issue in elections this year or beyond to divide working people in order to elect candidates with proven records of favoring special interests at the expense of working families; and be it further

Resolved, that NYSUT will make it a legislative goal to ensure that all members enjoy equal rights and benefits and will determine where New York State elected officials stand on this issue prior to the 2006 elections.