

Resolutions

RESOLUTION #12

Honoring Margaret Blackshere

Submitted by: Delegates Dan Montgomery and Michelle Paul, Illinois Federation of Teachers Council

WHEREAS, Margaret Blackshere was a loyal and dedicated member of the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) beginning her career in public education in 1961, teaching Kindergarten in Madison, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, Margaret immediately saw the need for teachers to have union representation and instigated an organizing drive that led to the Madison teachers joining the IFT; and

WHEREAS, Margaret was a leader in her local and the IFT serving as president of the Madison Federation of Teachers, Local 763, and being elected as a vice president of the IFT in 1971; and

WHEREAS, Margaret's skills in politics and legislation and her overall leadership abilities led to her being hired as the IFT's first Assistant to the President for Political Activities in 1977; and

WHEREAS, Margaret's political expertise was recognized by state and national Democratic leaders, who chose her to run coordinated campaigns for democratic candidates in 1990 and 1992; and

WHEREAS, Margaret's leadership in the labor movement was recognized when she was selected Illinois AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer in 1993 by then AFL-CIO President Rich Walsh; and

WHEREAS, Margaret was elected the first woman president of the one-million member Illinois AFL-CIO in 2000, where she served with distinction until her retirement in 2007; and

WHEREAS, Margaret's efforts on key state legislation like raising the minimum wage, expanding health care, enacting card check for public employees, revamping unemployment insurance, protecting day laborers, revising workers' compensation laws, and making sure women in Illinois receive equal pay for equal work were invaluable to the labor movement; and

WHEREAS, Margaret's belief that women belonged in elective office at all levels led her to help found the nationally recognized training academy for Democratic women in this state, Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL); and

WHEREAS, one of Margaret's greatest contributions was her capacity to unify diverse groups and build coalitions, both within the Labor movement and between Labor, business and community and faith-based groups; and

WHEREAS, Margaret's international advocacy for workers was acknowledged when she was awarded the Israel Peace Medal from the state of Israel and the Labor Leader Award from the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement; and

WHEREAS, Margaret also received the Protector of Working People Award from the Illinois State Crime Commission, and was inducted into the Illinois Labor History Society's Union Hall of Honor; and

WHEREAS, the contributions that Margaret Blackshere made to labor and the human rights movements in Illinois, the United States and around the world will be felt for many years; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Illinois AFL-CIO remember and honor our sister Margaret Blackshere for her efforts throughout her lifetime to improve the lives and livelihoods of all workers and their families.