

EDUCATION AND ACTION IN SUPPORT OF U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

WHEREAS, the AFT at its 2010 convention passed a resolution calling for “an end to our current open-ended military involvement in Afghanistan with a specific timetable for the rapid, orderly withdrawal of all armed forces and military contractors from Afghanistan, to begin immediately”; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. war in Afghanistan is now in its eleventh year and is the longest war in U.S. history, and there are still 91,000 U.S. troops present, as well as tens of thousand of U.S. military contractors (Michaels, Jim, “U.S. Deaths in Afghanistan Down,” *USA Today*, 03 January, 2012); and

WHEREAS, the 2011 NYSUT RA passed a resolution calling “on the U.S. government immediately to begin the withdrawal of all armed forces and military contractors from Afghanistan, a withdrawal to be completed by January 1, 2012”; and

WHEREAS, the current plan of the U.S. administration is to keep 65,000 troops in Afghanistan past the end of 2012, and maintain tens of thousands of U.S. combat forces in Afghanistan until December 31, 2014; and

WHEREAS, the senior U.S. commander in Afghanistan, General John R. Allen, suggested in December that tens of thousands of U.S. troops might stay in that country beyond 2014 (Rubin, Alissa J., "U.S. General in Afghanistan Says Troops May Stay Past 2014," *New York Times* 20 December, 2011); and

WHEREAS, the price paid by U.S. soldiers continues to rise (more than 2000 dead, over 16,000 wounded, and rising levels of post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide), while tens of thousands of Afghan civilians have perished or been crippled in the fighting; and

WHEREAS, according to U.S. intelligence reports, Al-Qaeda no longer has a significant presence in Afghanistan (Merkley-Lee-Udall Letter to the President to Bring Troops Home, Signed by 27 Senators); and

WHEREAS, the continued occupation of Afghanistan has increased recruits to the Taliban, has spread the war to Pakistan, and has not succeeded in eliminating acts of terrorism; and

WHEREAS, the quagmire in Afghanistan has already cost taxpayers more than \$370 billion since 2000, and the annual cost is now in excess of \$100 billion (Afghanistan Study Group, “A New Way Forward: Rethinking U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan,” 16 August 2010), while a study by Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes estimates that the total cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will reach between \$4 trillion and \$6 trillion (Bilmes, Linda, “How the Wars Are Sinking the Economy,” *Daily Beast*, 26 October, 2010); and

WHEREAS, these trillions in federal dollars would be better spent on improving education and health care – especially for the thousands of young people who enlist primarily to gain access to health care and a college education; creating more jobs; shoring up our infrastructure, and funding other vital domestic programs; and

WHEREAS, a major impetus of U.S. policy in Afghanistan is to gain control of access to Central Asian energy resources and Afghan mineral wealth and to maintain permanent military bases in the region – despite official claims that it is a war for democracy and the prevention of terrorism:

RESOLVED, that AFT, on the basis of this resolution and the resolution passed at the 2010 AFT convention, call on the U.S. government immediately to begin the withdrawal of all armed forces and military contractors from Afghanistan, a withdrawal to be completed by January 1, 2013; and

RESOLVED, that AFT report to members on the steps it has taken to advocate for this position, and that the AFT publish educational materials for its own membership on the importance of ending the war and the relation between the cost of the war and the deficits in state budgets; and

RESOLVED, that AFT publicize that the war, together with regressive tax policy – not the cost of public employees – is a major cause of the deficits faced by cities and states, and call for the funds that would be spent on the war in Afghanistan to be spent on projects that create jobs, with preference given to the two to three million recent veterans, who have particular problems finding employment, as well as urgently needed social programs and infrastructure both in this country and in Afghanistan.

Submitted by: Professional Staff Congress, Local 2334