UNITE HERE ELECTS NEW OFFICERS AND ADOPTS NEW GOVERNANCE RULES

UNITE HERE delegates unanimously elect John Wihelm and Sherri Chiesa to five-year terms as the union’s president and secretary-treasurer, respectively, and approve changes to the constitution that will ensure greater transparency and accountability of its governance and finances.

At the union’s second constitutional convention, delegates vote for decision-making governing bodies of the union between conventions—the executive committee and general executive board—to be composed of a voting majority elected locally and regionally. The new general executive board will have more power and accountability over the president and the other general officers than was the case under the union’s previous structure.

The president and secretary-treasurer positions are full-time, while three other general officers elected at the convention will remain with their local union positions in addition to the new roles. Convention delegates elected Peter Ward as recording secretary, D. Taylor as general vice president, and Tho Do as general vice president for immigration, civil rights, and diversity. Ward, New York Hotel Trades Council president, and Taylor, Culinary Workers Local 226 secretary-treasurer, have served on UNITE HERE’s executive committee.

The election of Chiesa and Do places two women among the top five general officers in the union. Chiesa, previously an executive vice president of UNITE HERE, also has served as western regional director of UNITE HERE. She had been secretary-treasurer of the former Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union from 2001-2004. Do also holds the elected position of secretary-treasurer of Local 2 in San Francisco.

In addition to creating the new position of general vice president for immigration, civil rights, and diversity, delegates also approved constitutional changes assigning three general executive board members to form a diversity committee. Delegates also amended the constitution to support working with Native American communities.

Delegates elected 14 international vice presidents to serve on the general executive board. An additional number of vice presidents, estimated to be over 20, will be elected through local elections based on regions and membership numbers. Commenting on the election, Wilhelm said it stands in stark contrast to a top-down structure. “I believe that UNITE HERE is starting an exciting new chapter in our history, and I am proud to be a part of a union that is led by its members.”