On October 24, 2017, the AFL-CIO national convention, held in St. Louis, adopted a political resolution titled “An Independent Political Voice” that calls for a break with “lesser of two evil politics.”

“For decades, the political system has failed working people,” reads the resolution submitted by Lee Saunders, president of AFSCME, and Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. The resolution continues: “Acting on behalf of corporations and the rich and powerful, the political system has been taking away, one after another, the pillars that support working people’s right to good jobs and secure benefits. ... Against this, we have one choice. We must give working people greater political power by speaking with an unquestionably independent political voice, backed by a unified labor movement. The time has passed when we can passively settle for the lesser of two evils.”

Convention delegates also adopted a second resolution on the subject titled, “Exploring New Directions for Labor in Electoral Politics.” This resolution points out that, “in the national elections, whether the candidates elected are from the Republican or Democratic Party, the interests of Wall Street have been protected and advanced, while the interests of labor and working people have generally been set back.”

It goes on to resolve that, “in addition to the traditional support for electoral candidates who are friends and allies of workers, the AFL-CIO also pursues a strategy of advancing our core issues through referenda and ballot initiatives and propositions at the statewide and local level; studies the viability of independent and third-party politics; and explores other reasonable means of advancing the interests of labor in electoral politics.”

“Is It Time for a Labor-Based Political Party?”

The adoption of these two resolutions followed an open forum the night before — attended by 50 convention delegates — titled, “Is It Time for a Labor-Based Political Party?” The forum was hosted by the American Postal Workers Union and the Amalgamated Transit Union. Forum speakers were Mark Dimondstein, president of APWU; Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee; Donna Dewitt, past president of the South Carolina AFL-CIO; and Mark Dudzic, national organizer of the Labor Committee for Single Payer.

In his remarks, Brother Dimondstein noted that he has been calling for a Labor Party since the passage of NAFTA in 1994, which he said showed that both Democrats and Republicans are in the pockets of the corporate class. Brother Velasquez affirmed that the Democrats “are not doing us any favors, never have and never will.”

All agreed that, yes, we need to form a new labor-based political party. Brother Velasquez and Sister Dewitt proposed that pro-Labor Party union members could get the ball rolling today by participating in electoral politics with independent labor-community slates, but starting at the local and state levels.

Need to Seize this Political Opening

Advocates of independent working class political action need to seize this opening and run with it.

Bolstered by the formation earlier this year of a new political formation — the Movement for a People’s Party (MPP) — we believe the time is now to take some next steps toward this objective. Join us at this forum to discuss what these next steps could be.