

1 **R-1 GADLAGE RESOLUTION**
2 **“REMOVING OUR POLL TAX”**
3

4 **Resolution:**

5 WHEREAS, we expect all lay members and clergy of the Annual Conference to "faithfully and fully"
6 participate in Annual Conference Sessions,
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8 AND WHEREAS, the Indiana Conference membership represents a myriad of socioeconomic
9 conditions,
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11 AND WHEREAS, the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church considers the right to vote a
12 basic human right, stating, "We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the
13 people to free and fair elections," (§164.A),
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15 AND WHEREAS, the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church also says, "We further assert
16 the right of historically underrepresented racial and ethnic persons ... to nondiscrimination in
17 voting" including "access to public accommodations," (§162.A),
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19 AND WHEREAS, the United Methodist Board of Church and Society states on their website: "In the
20 Book of Resolutions, 3378: "Racism and Economic Justice Against People of Color," The United
21 Methodist Church calls for a vision of beloved community founded on economic and racial justice.
22 The vision includes among many things, "re-instating and strengthening voting rights protections,"
23 in light of continued systemic racism that threatens to undermine provisions for fair and free
24 elections for all citizens."
25

[<https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/free-and-fair-elections>]
26

27 AND WHEREAS, the imposition of a registration fee may restrict some duly elected members from
28 faithful and full participation in Annual Conference Sessions,
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30 AND WHEREAS, hindering full participation disenfranchises clergy, and the local churches and
31 districts lay members have been elected to represent who cannot pay the registration fee,
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33 AND WHEREAS, imposing a registration fee is tantamount to the "Jim Crow" practice of imposing a
34 "poll tax" requiring persons to pay money in order to cast their otherwise legitimate vote,
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36 THEREFORE, The Indiana Annual Conference amends our Rules & Structure Document by way of
37 adding the following as point 3. in section D.1.h. Annual Conference Session Attendance
38 Expectation:
39

40 3. In order to best facilitate these attendance expectations and full, faithful participation, the Indiana
41 Annual Conference shall not impose any registration fee upon duly elected lay or clergy members
42 of the Annual Conference for attending Annual Conference Sessions.
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44 **Rationale:**

45 Attendance is the only method for a member of the Annual Conference to cast their vote or
46 participate in Annual Conference Sessions. Calling the fee a "registration fee" only changes the
47 title, not the results of the cost. Any fee for entry is a charge for attending and is an obstacle to
48 participation. While this is a comparatively small obstacle, it is an obstacle we imposed by choice.
49 Justice would demand we remove any obstacles we've placed in the way.
50

1 Expecting members of the Conference to participate "faithfully and fully" while charging them to do
2 so is antithetical to our Social Principles. Charging members of the Annual Conference a fee for
3 attending Annual Conference Sessions limits voices that have been duly selected to represent
4 districts and local churches or limits the voices who could serve in this capacity.

5
6 In the "Jim Crow" South this practice was called a "poll tax", and it was used to selectively silence
7 voices. We would rightly decry such a practice in governmental processes. So, we should not
8 justify the practice here simply because the divide is economic rather than racial.

9
10 If our rules expect full participation, we should remove every hindrance to full participation we can.
11 Smaller churches and economically challenged members of the Conference are being
12 underrepresented because the cost of attendance is higher than they can afford.

13
14 Moving Conference sessions out of Downtown Indianapolis dramatically reduced the cost of
15 attendance. Removing this 'tax' may not overcome every hindrance, but it will remove yet another
16 hindrance, and one we chose to put in place while we were meeting in Indianapolis.

17
18 **Financial Implications:** Yes

19 This resolution would NOT impose any new costs on the Indiana Annual Conference.
20 However, the loss of this 'revenue' would need to be countered elsewhere in the budget.

21

22 **Groups to forward/affirm:**

23 Rules & Structure Committee

24 Annual Conference Sessions Committee

25 Committee on Finance and Administration

26

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