

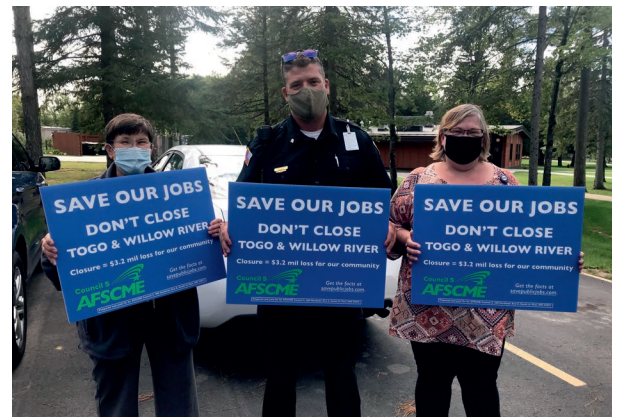
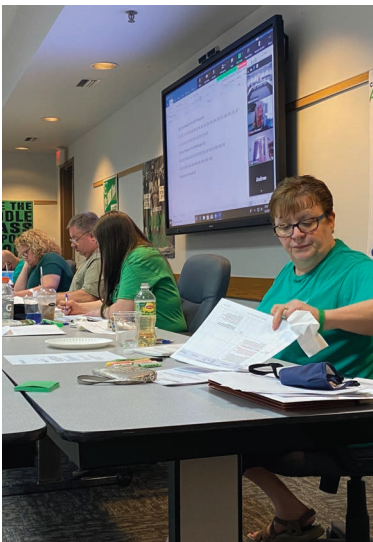
# 2021 AFSCME COUNCIL 5 YEAR END REPORT





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# OUR MISSION & VALUES

## OUR MISSION

We advocate for excellence in services for the public, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers.

## OUR VALUES

- We believe that there is dignity in all work, and there should be dignity and safety for all workers.
- We build power for all working families.
- We all do better when we all do better!
- We advance and defend the common good.
- We are leaders in building a movement for social and economic justice.
- We treat each other with respect and compassion.
- We believe an injury to one is an injury to all.
- We stand up to overcome any discrimination that divides us.
- We embrace our diversity and find strength in many voices.
- We value pride, passion, excellence, integrity and courage in all the work we do.
- We practice solidarity and member involvement.
- We mentor, motivate and inspire new leaders.
- What we do away from the negotiating table is more important than what we do at the table.

## OFFICERS

Eric Hesse, Local 404, President  
Carmen Brown, Local 977, Vice President  
Destiny Dusosky, Local 753, Secretary  
Jay Anderson, Local 66, Treasurer

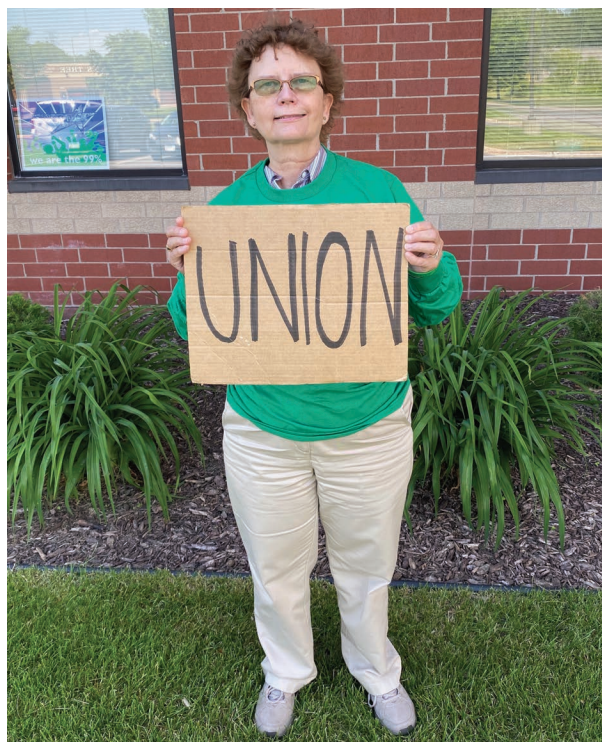
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## BOARD MEMBERS

Dan Gorman, Local 600, State  
Najib Jamac, Local 404, State  
Bryan Kirsch, Local 221, State  
Jessica Langhorst, Local 1092, State  
Scuffy Paulson, Local 868, State  
Sabrina Search, Local 1092, State  
Dawn Flores, Local 151, County  
Carmen Langevin, Local 66, County  
James Sanchez, Local 306, County  
Willie Snyder, Local 707, County  
Wendy Wohlwend, Local 66, City  
Sharyn Carrington, Local 2512, Private/Special  
Renaé Pereira-Webb, Local 668, Private/Special  
Marla Zappa, Local 56, K-12 Schools  
Dennis Frazier, Local 66, NE  
Christina St. Germaine, Local 1092, NE  
Joel Hoffman, Local 4001, West  
Patrick Pearce, Local 638, South/SE  
Tia McDougale, Local 599, Central  
Jenna McCullough, Local 2508, E Metro  
Tabitha Mitchell, Local 1842, E Metro  
Theresa St. Aoro, Local 2829, E Metro  
Deb Konechne, Local 34, E Metro  
Grace Baltich, Local 34, W Metro  
Anna Koktan, Local 1988, W Metro  
Brian Lindholt, Local 221, W Metro  
Latonya Reeves, Local 552, W Metro  
Anthony Ware, Local 2822, W Metro  
Sven Erik Olsen, Local 3800, U of M

# A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **JULIE BLEYHL**

First and foremost, on behalf of our union I want to thank all of you for the bravery, tenacity, and diligence you have shown over the last year and a half. Doing your work, even in 'normal' circumstances, is often challenging and sometimes dangerous, let alone during a global pandemic that has claimed the lives of millions including several dear members of our union. In spite of these challenges and a lack of personal protective equipment for months, you continued to do your job and risked exposure to the virus by going into work and doing your job. AFSCME members kept Minnesota working during the most challenging times we have experienced in generations. For that we are all grateful and will continue to fight alongside you to ensure we rebuild our new future rooted in your lived experiences, perspectives, and expertise.



The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated and continues to shine a spotlight on the structural issues and inequities in our workplaces and public policy. The forward direction of our union is to unify and seize upon all opportunities to reform public policy and fight for workplace investments that will rewrite the wrongs that have been highlighted throughout the pandemic. Access to paid family and medical leave for all, increased public service investments and in the lives of the workers who deliver them, increasing access to unemployment benefits to more workers in case of layoff or furlough, and more.

Through our newly-created Council 5 liaison structure working with field representatives, our legislative team and political staff, we are ensuring more seamless communication between policy committees, staff sector liaisons, and other staff to ensure the voices of our members are brought forward to our employers and are directly connected to testifying at the legislature to change public policy and Minnesota law.

That's the union difference; We may be outspent at the Capitol by corporate-funded lobbyists, but they are no match for our 'people power' and the direct connection we have to the diversity of union siblings across our state who share the values of fully funding our work, safe staffing in all workplaces, creating a new tax code that makes the wealthy and profitable corporations pay their fair share, and ensuring our work is not privatized or outsourced. Our One AFSCME approach will ensure our successes continue as we build our new future - together!

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie A. Bleyhl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

# AFSCME COUNCIL 5 GOALS

No matter our race, gender, sexual orientation, zip code, religion, economic status, or political identity, we are connected to one another as AFSCME members and workers who deliver critical services to millions of Minnesotans. You have and continue to carry us through some of the most difficult times we have experienced in generations and you have

done so with grit, determination, and heart - often in dangerous working conditions and contracting the COVID-19 virus. We will achieve our Council 5 goals of increasing membership, building solidarity and member activism, strong contracts and more by working together.

As an AFSCME Council 5 family, we must stick to our shared values that transcend our differences and not give any power to forces actively seeking to divide us. We need strong contracts that treat workers with respect and dignity, demand respect and adherence to our contracts and the work you do, protect our right to collectively bargain, implement strong workplace safety plans, fight for safe staffing in every workplace, and strengthen and protect our health care and defined-benefit pensions. Our only path forward is unity to build upon our progress.

## 1. INTERNAL/EXTERNAL MEMBER ORGANIZING

Support and grow ongoing significant organizing campaigns for external and internal membership and solidarity growth. Show the strength and power of our online membership cards that are easily accessible on our website, paper membership cards, voice authorizations through the MAC, and one-on-one member organizing in growing our union.

## 2. ADVOCACY

Strengthen advocacy at the Capitol, county boards, city councils and in legislative districts. Expanding Safe Staffing and Protecting Pensions campaigns, as well as our Respect Us campaign (respect for our rights under our contracts i.e. seniority, grievance procedure, hours of work, etc.).

## 3. DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We value and welcome ALL workers of ALL backgrounds and lived experiences in our union from ALL geographic locations. Council 5 is moving forward with our Racial Equity 2030 plan as submitted to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. We are re-engaging our state-wide diversity, equity and inclusion committee within our state agencies and will expand in sectors throughout our union.

## 4. ONE ON ONE CONVERSATIONS AND PEOPLE GOALS

We must continue to reach out in all ways to our members to build AFSCME Council 5 solidarity and member activism and involvement. This includes talking about signing them up for membership and for the PEOPLE program.

## 5. TRAININGS AND RESOURCES

Continue to build upon Council 5's offered trainings as well as available resources for organizing committees, sector liaisons, local communications' capacity, political and legislative advocacy, contract negotiations structure and strategizing, etc.

## 6. ARBITRATION AND GRIEVANCE PROCESS

We have successfully worked through the case backlog and will continue to assess incoming grievances for merit. Continue to implement our successful new process as established in December 2020 and build-in helpful new features as we move along.

**When we educate, organize and mobilize all members of AFSCME Council 5 as a One AFSCME team and working together, nothing will stop us from building our new future rooted in the lived experiences of the working-class. Minnesota works because we do!**



# OUR WORK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC & HONORING THOSE WE LOST

All of us pulled together throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to do the best we can to protect the health and safety of our co-workers and those we serve. From the beginning of the pandemic, time-after-time we have witnessed something we knew all along: Every public service worker is vital to our state functioning and these workers deserve our respect and admiration for their bravery and integrity in getting us on the other side of the pandemic.

More than 695,000 Minnesotans and our most vulnerable residents have contracted the COVID-19 virus and more than 8,000 have passed away due to COVID-19 related complications, including several members of our AFSCME Council 5 family. And numbers keep going up rapidly.

We will always remember and honor the lives and legacy of Brandy Roberts (Local 638, Mankato State University), Doorga Hanuman (Local 744 Minneapolis Veterans Home), Dr. James Lee Burnett Jr. (Local 552, Hennepin County Probation and Parole), Brent Anderson (Local 3937, University of Minnesota Coleraine Campus) and others who passed away due to COVID-19 related complications.

Your union fought for and secured the right of many workers in our state to access workers compensation benefits in the event these workers contract COVID-19. The law immediately presumes that workers such as security counselors, correctional officers, firefighters, nurses and others contracted the virus as a result of their work and places the burden on employers to prove they didn't. This presumption was a critical step forward in protecting public service workers. This was a significant victory at the Capitol for many thousands of workers. That's the Union Difference!



When in the beginning of the pandemic, thousands of workers lacked any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) because of the global shortage, AFSCME Council 5 members took it upon themselves to create homemade masks and ear guards to protect their fellow co-workers. We fought for and secured robust health and safety protocols in every workplace and continue to push for safe staffing levels in all facilities and departments to ensure we come out of the pandemic stronger than ever and ready to move our state forward together.



# ELECTING PRO-WORKER LAWMAKERS

—“—  
We all  
do better  
*when*  
we all do  
better.  
—”—

SENATOR PAUL WELLSTONE  
1944-2002

Workers' rights, our path forward during the pandemic, and more were all on the ballot in the 2020 election and AFSCME Council 5 members took action to protect our rights.

More than 300 volunteer shifts were filled by members who made more than 75,000 phone calls to AFSCME members across our state to elect pro-worker candidates who share our values as union members: retirement security, collective bargaining rights, defined-benefit pensions and health care we can depend on.

We delivered Minnesota's 10 Electoral College votes for President Joe Biden and helped to elect the first female Vice President by electing Kamala Harris. Our union flipped 3 anti-worker Senate Districts to pro-worker lawmakers and we elected AFSCME members to the Minnesota House, Senate and local government county boards and city councils.

We must continue to stick to our shared values of inclusion, retirement security, safe staffing, health care we can depend on, fully funded public services, and investing in the lives of workers, and a new tax code that rewards workers and ensures the wealthy and large corporations pay their fair share. When we stick to our shared values by including every member of our union no matter our race, political affiliation, gender identity, sexual orientation or zip code, we will surpass our collective goals and hold lawmakers accountable to the values all workers share.

2021 municipal elections in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, Bloomington, and all across our state, will determine the leadership and direction of our cities. Please visit our website [AFSCMEMN.ORG](https://AFSCMEMN.ORG) for endorsement information. We also have the upcoming 2022 election that will be quickly approaching. Collective bargaining rights, how our future is funded, safe staffing, our defined-benefit pensions and our health care are all on the ballot in next year's election for Governor, State House, State Senate and our congressional delegation. Anti-worker forces are actively working to divide unions and the labor movement, but we will stand together in unity and stick to the shared values that transcend political party, and bring us together as the working-class.



# ORGANIZING VICTORIES



Despite rapidly changing budgets and COVID-19 infections and policies at the state level, local governments, and the private/non-profit sectors, we secured many organizing victories that will build upon the legacy of our Council and position us to seize upon the opportunities we face together.

## HENNEPIN PARALEGALS:

Our first totally virtual organizing victory was organizing the Paralegals in Hennepin County, joining AFSCME Local 2938! A shout out to the Attorneys from Local 2938 and members on the Hennepin County Organizing Advisory Committee who helped welcome them into their union!

## WALKER ART CENTER:

Committed to the notion of One Union at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the workers built a strong work community that connected previously siloed departments and won voluntary recognition for their union which includes the contracted out museum gallery assistants. The success of organizing more than 60 Walker Art Center workers has been an important victory in a broader movement of workers organizing at cultural institutions across the country.

## HENNEPIN HEALTHCARE:

Radiology Technologist Seniors and the Engagement Site Managers at Hennepin Healthcare won union recognition, joining AFSCME Local 2474. We want to give credit to these workers and leaders in Local 2474 who helped welcome them into their union. The Radiology Department has been the part of the hospital with the lowest union density; However, this changes that with these unionized workers.

## MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD LIFEGUARDS:

AFSCME Local 3279 welcomed new lifeguard workers into their local (they left MPEA to join us) and they continue to build power by increasing membership and engaging unrepresented workers in conversation.

## ROSEVILLE CULTURAL LIAISONS:

Congratulations to the Cultural Liaisons (CL) at ISD 623 Roseville Public Schools who won their election for union recognition and joined our AFSCME family. The CLs join their siblings in AFSCME Local 1129 and will together have a stronger voice in their workplace. After an approximate 9 months process to get recognition (fueled by delays by the employer), the Cultural Liaisons were committed to unionizing to have a voice to elevate their concerns and those of the families that they work with.

One of our identified goals as a One AFSCME family is to internally and externally organize new members to join the AFSCME Council 5 family and build the labor movement that improves the lives of workers, our families, and communities. We are proud to welcome the more than 1,800 new members of AFSCME Council 5 since the beginning of 2021!





# STATE LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES



With the only divided state legislature in the country, Minnesota's legislative session in 2021 was a bizarre continuation of last year's; with seven special sessions in the months between the 2020 and 2021 legislative calendars and countless emerging or evolving issues caused or amplified by COVID complicating the path forward for the Legislature and the Governor, it was unlike any other in our state's history. Regardless, through the grit and determination of AFSCME members everywhere, and our shared promise to one another to "Never Quit!", we stepped up in ways we couldn't have imagined pre-pandemic and advanced the cause of working people through our One AFSCME approach.

## DAY ON THE HILL

Though the Capitol complex closed to the public during the early months of the pandemic and remained closed for the entire 2021 session, it did not stop AFSCME members from meeting with lawmakers. In fact, because of our ability this year to remotely connect members with their legislators, our virtual Day on the Hill was tremendously successful with more legislative meetings than ever before. This success was only possible because of the hundreds of AFSCME members who set time aside out of their busy schedules. Our strength is in our numbers and we showed our strength at our virtual Day on the Hill.

## AFSCME MEMBERS FIGHT FOR WORKING-CLASS PRIORITIES

Nearly all legislative proceedings were held remotely this year, including hearings. Nearly one dozen AFSCME Council 5 members from Corrections to Higher Education, Transportation and Human Services to Schools and Veterans Homes showed up to testify in support of AFSCME priorities. And we didn't just wait for Legislators to call hearings and invite us to speak, we participated in remote town halls and open forums to bring our priorities into the spotlight. AFSCME members called for fairness in our tax code (millionaire's tax!), safety in our worksites, equity in our unemployment insurance system, funding for our frontlines and Paid Family and Medical Leave to benefit all Minnesotans.

It was a rollercoaster of a year. At one point, state economic projections predicted a revenue shortfall in the billions; that deficit eventually turned into a budget surplus and because of our activism, we were in a position to achieve major wins. All state agencies, the courts, commissions, and boards received operating adjustments which led to strong contract wins. Among many other victories for working families, we successfully fought off privatization efforts, increased funding to reopen driver exam stations, expanded the Working Family Tax Credit, secured increased investments at the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State without a tuition freeze, secured investments for 3 new veterans homes throughout our state, and secured an agreement for at least \$250 million for frontline worker pay.

# STATE LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

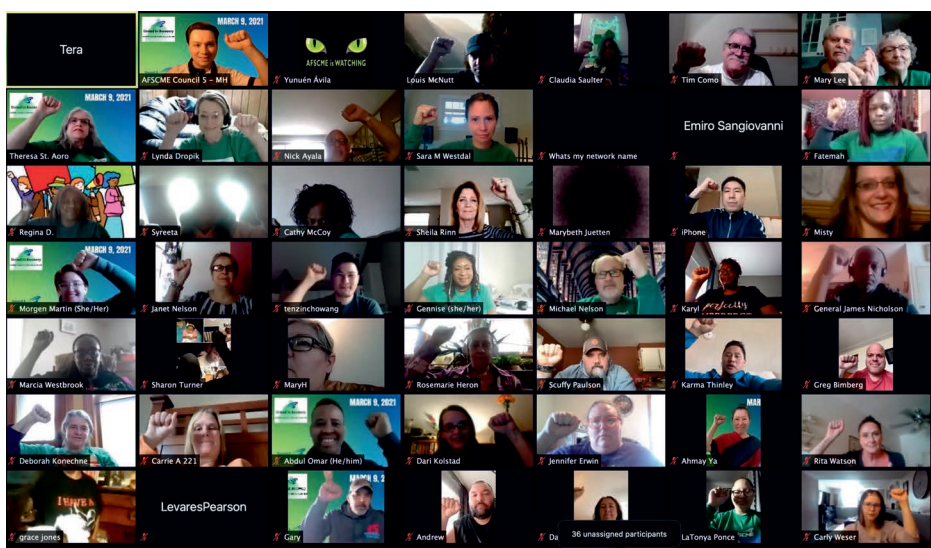


## NEW AND REVAMPED COUNCIL 5 LIAISON STRUCTURE

Executive Director Julie Bleyhl said, "A new addition and way to aid our legislative communication and workplace actions is our staff sector liaison structure which includes state, county, city and private/special sectors, leaving no member or sector behind. This structure allows for effective and quick communication between the affected budget area and our members who would be directly impacted by these decisions. This critical communication puts our legislative team, sector liaisons, staff, and AFSCME members in direct contact more than ever before to engage and educate our lawmakers on the work that you do through committee testimony, press conferences, and more. We delivered upon our legislative agenda and ensured frontline worker input is truly heard in the halls of power through this new process, including the new creation of a city/county staff liaison. This is a great example of the AFSCME Green Machine hard at work and creating new systems within our union that will be more effective and deliver upon our priorities!"

## MOVING FORWARD

But our work is not done! Together, as ONE AFSCME, we will continue our fight for working people; we will demand economic justice for all over the special interests of millionaires and billionaires. We will tax the rich and invest in our frontline workers, pass Paid Family and Medical Leave, treat healthcare as a human right and center the experiences of workers in policy and budget decisions. Our success depends on your individual commitment to our collective effort. We are stronger united.



*Hundreds of AFSCME Council 5 members held virtual meetings with more legislators than ever before during the 2021 legislative session. By meeting with lawmakers, our members and Chapter 5 Retirees continue to hold them accountable to our shared values and fight for our legislative agenda that advances the lives of the working-class.*



# FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES



AFSCME Council 5 members fought for the passage of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) that was the single largest investment in the lives of Americans in the history of our country. Among other positive benefits including stabilizing state and local government budgets and those of non-profit organizations, hospitals and others, the ARP is projected to cut childhood poverty in half.



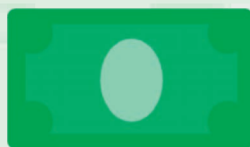
We launched a major campaign for its passage called “Fund the Front Lines” and our members responded. Members contacted Members of Congress more than 150,000 times to hold them accountable to our shared values - and to take note if they didn’t. AFSCME launched television and social media ads, organized press conferences highlighting the stories of correctional officers, road and bridge inspectors, child protection workers, clerical workers, bookstore clerks and others - Our members organized and mobilized; We proved the Union Difference and the power of your union membership.

**WHEN WE JOIN A UNION, AND WHEN WE STICK WITH OUR UNION EVEN IN  
-ESPECIALLY IN- MOMENTS OF CRISIS, WE CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING.**

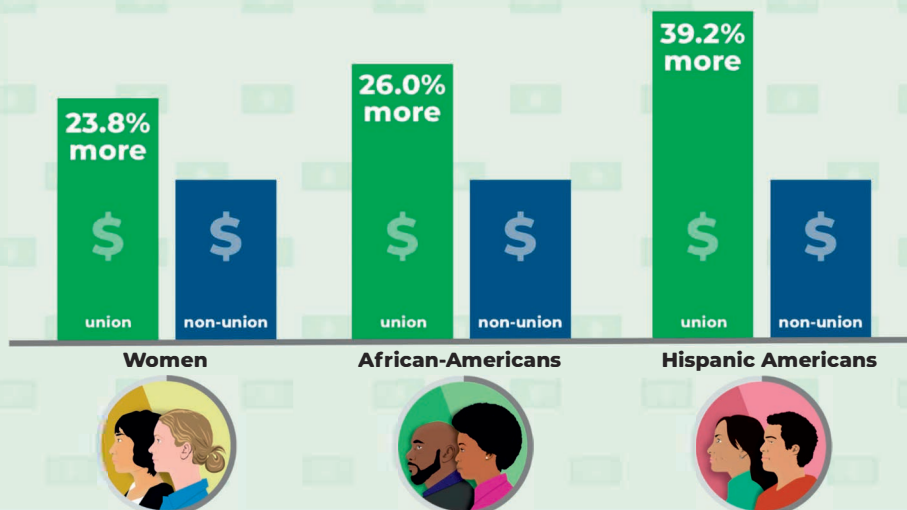
## Union Difference

Union members make

**19.4% more**



than  
non-union  
workers.



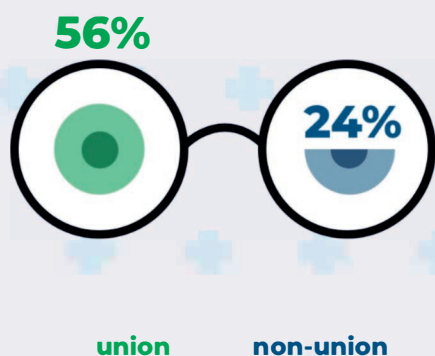
**96%**

of union members have  
access to a health care plan

**94%**

of union members have  
access to retirement  
benefits

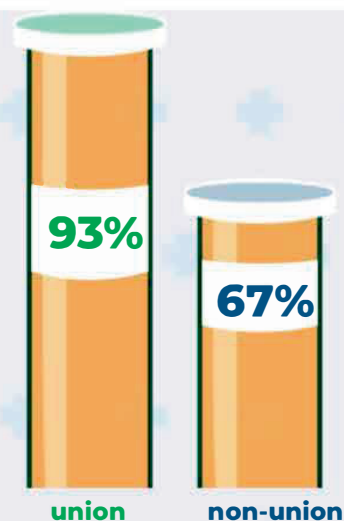
*Union membership provides a  
voice for all workers in the  
workplace, the halls of power  
and our communities!*



**Access to  
Vision Benefits**



**Access to  
Dental Benefits**



**Access to  
Prescription Benefits**

**These union benefits are only protected and strengthened when our union members stand together and we all continue to increase membership within our local unions. Together, we'll prove the union difference!**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics





# LOCAL EVENTS/ ACTION

## WE SAVED MCF-TOGO AND WILLOW RIVER

For the last seven years, Heather Hansen has worked as a Corrections Counselor at MCF-Togo, also known as the “Thistledeew Camp” and a proud member of AFSCME Local 3887, representing MCF- Moose Lake and the Challenge Incarceration Programs (CIP) at MCF- Togo and MCF- Willow River.

Offenders going through CIP do restorative justice work by providing assistance to the community and local non-profits, as well as jobs within the facility itself. The program teaches offenders how to be responsible, productive, and engaged in their journey to become rehabilitated and transformed. The CIP program has a proven track record of success and has saved our state millions of dollars.

Hansen said, “For the first time in my life, I was making a livable wage and able to provide good medical insurance for my family. Working here has given me a sense of purpose that I’d never thought I would experience. My ability to empathize has increased working with the offenders in the CIP program and I quickly learned how to hold the men accountable while also establishing appropriate boundaries to encourage growth and change through connection and compassion.” This program was slated to close, but the collective power of our union successfully fought back the proposed closures. **If additional closures are proposed affecting any part of our membership, our union will be ready to stand together in solidarity on behalf of all Minnesotans.**

Thousands of AFSCME members and allies signed petitions, wrote incredibly personal letters to legislative leaders and Governor Walz and put up hundreds of our union’s yard signs and window clings declaring “Save Our Jobs.” They also rallied their neighbors and attended public events. The good fight workers like Heather waged proves how the AFSCME Green Machine works when our members take action: We get results!

## STRONG CONTRACTS BRING US TOGETHER

State executive branch employees in the multi-unit, Unit 8 (Corrections) and Unit 25 (Radio Communications Operators) have all overwhelmingly ratified their contracts for the next two years containing wage increases, significant health insurance benefit increases and memorialized language that further protects the rights of over 20,000 members of our union. Judicial Branch AFSCME members also successfully fought to secure 6-weeks of paid parental leave, after years of AFSCME members fighting for leave parity with their other state employee co-workers.

AFSCME members in many cities and counties across our state secured deserved wage increases after our union helped secure the passage of the CARES Act and American Rescue Plan that provided critical funding to state and local governments to invest in their workforce and prevent further layoffs and furloughs. After many hours of negotiations and speaking directly with members about the significant victories in these various agreements, members spoke up in droves and voted to approve these contracts. The power and strength we have as a union is created and sustained by active members in every local in every part of our state.

As a card-carrying member of AFSCME Council 5, you are part of our collective and powerful legacy to improve the livelihoods of the working-class and our communities through contract negotiations, working together to have your voices, concerns, and ideas heard, testifying at the Capitol and in city halls and county boards, and organizing non-members in your workplace to join our union family. We will only continue to build upon our incredible successes and victories by all of us working towards our collective goals of member growth and increased activism.

Thousands of members across our union are in active negotiations now and/or preparing right to enter negotiations with their employer, including HCMC, Ramsey County, Hennepin County, local government units, Walker Art Center, and others. **When we remain united and steadfast in our work to reach strong contracts that recognize the heroic work AFSCME members do every single day, we will successfully build our new future rooted in the lived experiences of the working-class.**

## HENNEPIN COUNTY WORKERS FIGHT FOR A FAIR CONTRACT

Hennepin County AFSCME members gathered to celebrate the beginning of their contract negotiations, representing more than 5,000 members. Executive Director Julie Bleyhl was proud to speak at this event with hundreds of local leaders

and rank-and-file AFSCME members. Council 5 President Eric Hesse wrote a great letter in solidarity. Hennepin County AFSCME members’ contract campaign is titled “Respect Us, Value Us, Pay Us” - calling on the county to respect the work they do for all residents. Strong contracts bring us all together! With unity and solidarity across our membership, we will secure strong contracts that treat our members with the respect and dignity they deserve and demand.

## TWO HARBORS, MINNESOTA AFSCME WORKERS AVOID STRIKE

Local 1123 President Aaron Heim and local members delivered an intent to strike to the city over the employer’s awful health insurance proposal that would place an undue burden onto the workers going into the future. After the local negotiated with the city in good faith and made fair proposals, the employer would not budge. As a result, the local organized 3 successful informational pickets before and during the cooling off period with the assistance of Council 5’s field, political, and communications departments. After sustained public and behind-the-scenes pressure on the city by local members, the local entered a 20 hour straight mediation session that ultimately ended with one of the strongest tentative agreements the local has ever reached. Thank you to all of the courageous members of AFSCME Local 1123 representing the City of Two Harbors, MN and President Aaron Heim for all of your continued activism. This local is 100% membership and their actions prove that when we are united and stand in solidarity with one another, and our union provides critical resources to empower our local members, anything is possible. That’s the Union Difference!

## AFSCME MEMBERS MAKE MINNESOTA HAPPEN

AFSCME hospital workers at Hennepin Healthcare, Regions, University of Minnesota and others have borne an incredible burden during the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping our hospitals open and caring for our families. AFSCME paraprofessionals and clerical workers took care of tier 1 essential workers’ children and kept our schools functioning. AFSCME university workers kept our facilities clean and sanitary and our bookstores operational. AFSCME MnDOT workers kept our roads and bridges safe for all of us. And AFSCME workers continued to protect vulnerable elders and children from abuse and neglect and kept our court system, museums, group homes, behavioral health hospitals, public works departments, state 911 dispatch operations and more running during times of crisis. Minnesota only works because AFSCME workers do!

# AFSCME MEMBERS MAKE MINNESOTA HAPPEN



We proudly represent over 43,000 workers, many of whom are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. They work in group homes, long term care facilities, prisons and secure facilities, K-12 public schools and higher education institutions and hospitals. Many of our members plow our roads to keep us all safe, protect vulnerable children, adults, and the elderly from abuse and neglect and process crucial paperwork to keep our state functioning. Minnesotans need the services AFSCME members provide now more than ever before.

## AFSCME WORKERS CARE FOR OTHERS

Willie Snyder of AFSCME Local 707 has worked at Ramsey County's Lake Owasso Residence (LOR) for nearly 42 years and perfectly embodies the heart and soul public service workers put into the work they do every single day. Willie seeks to improve the lives of some of our state's most vulnerable population - those with developmental disabilities. Willie said, "Working here for almost 42 years gives me a unique perspective on the cycle of life and the need for stable, consistent housing and programming so our clients can live a dignified life."

Snyder mentioned that it's his clients that keep him going strong, loving his work, and wants his clients to have the very best services available to improve their lives. One client who has lived at Lake Owasso Residence for many years often says "thank you" while Willie tucks him into bed, dispenses his pills, cuts up his hot dogs, or takes the bone out of his pork chop. Willie said, "It's those moments that make it crystal clear to me that I am doing the work I was meant to do, even when some days are very stressful."

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the workplaces of all AFSCME members and Lake Owasso Residence was no exception. For three and a half hours each shift while donning his mask, gloves and face shield, Willie diligently sanitizes and cleans the group home of the 8 clients he cares for to protect them from the COVID-19 virus. Willie and his co-workers ensure the home is healthy and safe, and provides an environment that fosters their clients' growth, independence, and care.

## CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY'S HEROES

Victoria Johnson of AFSCME Local 744, Council 5 at the Minneapolis Veterans Home in Minneapolis, Minnesota experiences the COVID-19 pandemic every day she steps into work. Since the beginning of the pandemic, hospitals, group homes, secure facilities, and veterans' homes have experienced significant outbreaks of COVID-19, yet public service workers continue to go to work every day to care for and protect our fellow Minnesotans. Although they repeatedly don their masks, gowns, face shields and gloves, the COVID-19 pandemic is not getting any easier for front line workers, in fact it's getting worse. Minnesota continues to see spikes in COVID-19 positivity rates and deaths and front line workers are stretched to their maximum capacity.

Victoria and her co workers at the Minneapolis Veterans Home have experienced the devastating passing of veterans and their fellow co workers, including the tragic loss of Doorga Hanuman who was also an AFSCME Local 744, Council 5 member and cared for our veterans since 1989 and lost his life to COVID-19 related complications. As Kelly Lopez Gill of AFSCME Local 744 said in tribute to Doorga, "He just had that special gift of caring about people and making people laugh... I will miss you so much my friend and I'm so sorry your life was cut so short from us. I really am truly honored to have known such a great guy."







From upper left clockwise: Vice President Carmen Brown, President Eric Hesse, Executive Director Julie Bleyhl, Treasurer Jay Anderson, and Secretary Destiny Dusosky.

As we move forward and work towards our collective goals and the direction of our union, we will continue to educate, mobilize, and organize our members through grassroots activism and locals being empowered to take action and strengthen solidarity within the workplace.

Workers like you make our union great. When you join AFSCME, you gain the right to offer input, vote on your contract, run for union office and vote for union officers. And with your active participation, we can organize more workers to build power in the workplace, at the ballot box and the bargaining table.



# 2021 AWARDS



**Mike Beusing**  
Local Union Development Award  
AFSCME Local 722, Regions Hospital



**Eliot Seide Communications Award**  
AFSCME Local 1123, City of Two Harbors, MN



**Jerry Wurf Organizing Award**  
AFSCME Local 4493, Walker Art Center



**Rick Scott Political Activism Award**  
Victoria Johnson, AFSCME Local 744,  
Minneapolis Veterans Home

## UNITED WE ARE STRONGER THAN WE ARE ALONE.



### Metro Office

300 Hardman Ave. S  
South St. Paul, MN 55075  
651.490.4550

Toll Free: 800.652.9791  
Council5@afscmemn.org

### Hermantown Office

4172 Thunderchief Ln.  
Hermantown, MN 55811  
651-450-4990

### West Central Office

1350 1st St. S.  
Willmar MN, 56201  
651-450-4990

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