

Governor Walz takes Executive Action to Prevent Spread of COVID-19

Governor Tim Walz issued a series of Executive Orders over the past two weeks to help Minnesotans deal with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Here's what AFSCME members need to know about these executive actions:

In Executive Order 20-02, Walz directed schools to close from March 18 to March 27. Governor Walz said this week that it is likely the school closure mandate will be extended. Free child care within school districts is available for emergency personnel whose children are 12 or under.

Emergency Order 20-07 affects AFSCME state executive employees. This order provides guaranteed paid leave for all executive agency staff and ensures everyone, even new employees, has access to health care. State employees secured these protections by banding together across agencies and fighting for financial security through these uncertain times. They stood together - and they won.

Though the AFSCME members who work in Minnesota's Judicial Branch do not fall under the jurisdiction of EO 20-07, members have also fought for a stronger paid leave program and enhanced workplace safety protections. Judicial Branch employees secured the ability to work remotely unless directed to report to a facility, which will enable workers to balance their job duties with caring for themselves and their families through this pandemic.

As another result of EO 20-07, state



Governor Walz and MDH Comm. Jan Malcolm provide an update on COVID-19. [Photo via MPR]

employees may be asked to step into new types of work, if they are able. State employees can help this process move smoothly by keeping their Employee Self Service portal (accessible through the Minnesota Management and Budget website) updated.

Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl and MAPE Executive Director Lina Jamoul released a joint statement - you can read it at afscmemn.org.

On March 25, Gov. Walz issued Emergency Order 20-20, known as the "Stay at Home" order. This EO directs Minnesotans to limit movements outside of their homes beyond essential needs. By limiting social interactions, we can decrease the chance of transmission of COVID-19 and help our health care sector prepare for increased demands. Check out mn.gov/stayhomemn for more information about this order.

Other executive orders have prohibited price gouging and placing a moratorium on evictions.

As AFSCME members, we know we are all in this together. We are working closely with elected leaders at all levels of government to protect our members and the communities we serve. Through this difficult and

Tell Congress: Support State and Local Governments Now

Over the weekend, AFSCME Council 5 joined with our siblings at AFSCME Council 65 to ask local leaders for help in pushing Congress to provide substantial financial support to states and municipalities for local communities.

The two Councils seek the following support from Congress:

A robust general assistance grant program to states and municipalities in supporting local communities.

- Increase FMAP funding (the federal share of Medical Assistance) to assist states with the steep medical costs incurred by the virus.
- Push the Federal Reserve to help stabilize the municipal bond market, where interest rates are rapidly rising.
- Pass laws requiring that every worker in America be protected by OSHA safety standards and protections if they work in a high-risk industry, and that all workers should have access to vital personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Expand paid leave coverage for all employees.

We need all AFSCME members to do their part!

Contact Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Tina Smith, and your Member of Congress and ask that they support workers in their local communities immediately.

unprecedented time, we are grateful to have strong partners at the state level in Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan.

**Members Win Precedent-Setting
 COVID-19 Workplace Protections**

In these unprecedented times, members have been stepping up for the communities they serve. But they have not stopped fighting for safe working conditions for themselves and their labor family all across the state.

Here are just a few AFSCME wins from the last two weeks. These victories set the standard, not just for AFSCME members, but for all workers.

Hennepin County:

Before Governor Walz had even declared a state of emergency, the Hennepin County policy committee was hard at work pushing County Commissioners to protect their members. Their demands included the immediate closure of public-facing facilities, union representation on planning committees, and paid leave for all workers, regardless of whether they are able to work from home.

In response, Hennepin County Board Chair Marion Greene declared a state of emergency for Hennepin County, closing all public-facing services and allowing for some emergency paid leave for workers.

Hennepin County workers continue to advocate for their full list of demands to be met and implemented.

Ramsey County:

On the other side of the river, Ramsey County workers also joined forces to push County management and Ramsey County Commissioners to ensure safe workplaces. After extensive negotiations, Ramsey County locals reached a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that includes Paid Extraordinary Pandemic Event Leave (PEPEL) and an agreement from management to work with AFSCME members to address any issues that arise.

“This is a good start,” local presidents wrote to members, “but we need to work together as union siblings to address any issues that arise in the weeks ahead.”

University of Minnesota:

When colleges began to close, AFSCME members at the University of Minnesota began talks with members to form a list of demands that protect workers during this time of crisis. So they banded together and wrote a joint letter to U of M President Joan Gabel demanding safe workplace safety, paid pandemic leave, and the ability to work from home. The also demanded that the University include anti-discrimination protocols in their response to COVID-19 to protect AAPI employees from being targeted.

After member demands were presented, President Gabel then announced that most staff could work from home and directed management to ensure all employees (including student workers) will remain whole through the COVID-19 crisis.

All of our locals across the MinnState and University of Minnesota systems are continuing to hold their employers accountable to ensure the health and safety of all employees.

Still Fighting:

Many AFSCME locals continue to fight for the safe working conditions and economic security they deserve. St. Louis County locals are encouraging its members to sign a petition demanding that St. Louis County do more to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Similarly, Washington County locals are asking workers to call the Washington County Board of Commissioners and show they care about workers by allowing remote work, flex schedules, and emergency paid leave for workers who are unable to work remotely.

At the City of St. Paul, locals have agreed to an MOA providing for



Minnesota's elected leaders are encouraging people to stay home to stop the spread of COVID-19. You can help by sharing the #StayHomeMN campaign on social media!

paid leave for most city employees. AFSCME members will continue to discuss working conditions with city leaders and can ask for meet and confer sessions to address unmet needs during this unprecedented crisis.

Most recently, employees in school districts across the state are coming together to demand that the Minnesota Legislature pass the “School Closure” bill to ensure hourly school workers get paid during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. School employees: call your legislators and tell them to support the “School Closure” bill (HF 4415)!

Our solidarity is our strength. Throughout this pandemic, remember: when we fight, we win!

Resources for Members

These days, things are changing fast. Stay up to date on all the latest news by following AFSCME Council 5 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; and for new guidance and resources at afscmemn.org under the COVID-19 tab. We encourage all members to widely share the resources we have put on our website and social media.

Look for action alerts via email and text so you know when to take action to protect working families.