



Corrections officers put their lives on the line every day. They deserve thanks, not a pink slip.

AFSCME Council 5 Opposes Proposed Plan to Close DOC Facilities

The Minnesota Department of Corrections announced this week that they plan to shutter two correctional facilities - Togo and Willow River - as early as next year.

If implemented, this plan will force one hundred AFSCME members out of their jobs - just when working families can least afford to lose their livelihoods.

"These workers are on our front lines and deserve our thanks and admiration for their work, not lay-off notices," said AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl.

Even DOC Commissioner Paul Schnell acknowledges that the timing of these layoffs is "brutal".

In addition, these closures will deprive inmates of the rehabilitation services that are the center of the programming at Togo and Willow River. Both facilities operate Minnesota's Challenge Incarceration Program, a minimum security boot camp program that allows non-violent offenders who qualify to earn early release. Transitioning these programs to other facilities will delay or even restrict inmates' access to the opportunity to turn their lives around.

"The Challenge Incarceration Program remains one of our state's most effective programs to reduce recidivism and prison re-entry," said Bleyhl.

The DOC reports that it faces a \$14 million budget deficit and uses this shortfall as justification for these closures.

This budget deficit exists because Republicans in the Minnesota Legislature refused to even consider a supplemental budget request during the last special session to close these funding gaps and ensure that public services for Minnesotans would continue uninterrupted.

This will not be the last time that government inaction harms working families. At the state and federal level, Republicans are refusing to take action to fund the front lines and ensure all Americans have the support they need during this challenging time.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic fallout will continue to force state and local governments to make hard choices.

But as we navigate these unprecedented times, we must not balance our budgets on the backs of public employees and the communities they serve.

"We will continue to mobilize our members to take action to prevent further layoffs or service delays," said Bleyhl. "Public safety and facility security are our members' number one goal."

Primary Election is August 11 - Have You Voted Yet?

Minnesota holds its primary election next Tuesday, August 11. Now more than ever, we need union members to make their voices heard at the polls to support candidates who share our commitment to working families.

Have you voted yet? AFSCME Council 5 has endorsed pro-labor candidates up and down the ballot, and **we need your help to elect them**. You can find a list of our endorsed candidates here to see who received our endorsement in your area at afscmemn.org/2020-election-endorsements.

If you requested a mail-in ballot, be sure to get it in the mail ASAP! Remember that your ballot must be postmarked on or before Election Day - August 11, 2020 - to be valid.

If you didn't request a ballot by mail, don't worry! Early voting locations are open across the state. Find an early voting location near you at sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting.

Don't live in a district with a competitive primary? Volunteer to get out the vote - virtually! AFSCME Council 5 is hosting virtual phone banks on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 6:00 PM and Saturdays at 1:00 PM. Sign up on our Facebook page at facebook.com/afscmemn5/events.

Voting has always been important - but it's more essential than ever to make your voice heard. **Make a plan to vote this week!**

Pressure Intensifies on Congress to Pass HEROES Act

For weeks, working families and their allies have been pushing Congress to pass the HEROES Act, a bold response to stabilize our economy and help families survive the health and economic harm caused by COVID-19.

The HEROES Act would provide nearly \$1 trillion in immediate and essential aid to American families and the public programs that serve them.

This aid is even more essential than it was when the House passed it a month ago. While Senate Republicans dragged their feet and wasted precious time, working families spent down their emergency savings and the economy moved closer to disaster.

Even when they finally got around to doing their jobs, the GOP proposal to address the COVID-19 crisis fell far short of what America needs.

“The economy is cratering. State and local governments are in a state of fiscal collapse. Public service workers are getting pink slips, even though their life-saving work is needed now more than ever,” said AFSCME President Lee Saunders.

“The Senate proposal introduced today does nothing to address these converging crises. It instead focuses on protecting corporations while abandoning working people, and is seemingly content to let state and local governments go bankrupt.”

As the situation becomes more dire, AFSCME members have only gotten louder. Across the country, our union siblings have called their Senators, written letters to local papers, and organized their coworkers and families to fight alongside them.

All of our organizing efforts are working; recent polling shows that **the vast majority of Americans support significant federal aid for states and localities to maintain vital public services.** No fewer than seven in 10 voters polled in seven swing states support \$1 trillion in federal aid to prevent cuts to public services. Capitol

Hill reporting suggests that vulnerable GOP Senators are worried that their party’s failure to lead is hurting their shot at reelection.

Our advocacy is working. We can’t let up now. **Send a message to the US Senate: do your job, or face the consequences in November.**

As public employees, we know how many of our neighbors rely on the services we provide. We can’t risk more lives by slashing essential public services. To beat the virus and put our economy back together, the federal government must act.

Tell the Senate to pass the HEROES Act now by texting FUND to 237-263.

AFSCME Council 5 Family Picnic Postponed

The AFSCME Council 5 Family Picnic Planning Committee has decided to postpone this year’s event due to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to protect the health and safety of all attendees. The committee has **rescheduled the picnic for Sunday, August 15, 2021** where we can come together as a union family and celebrate with one another. More details will be sent closer to the event and fliers will be distributed.

More Weekly Mental Health Check-Ins

After AFSCME members hosted six mental health summits earlier this year, they knew the work they started had to continue. So they organized a weekly mental health check-in that brings together union members and perfect



We’ll miss you this summer at the AFSCME Family Picnic. Can’t wait to see you all next year!

strangers to break down barriers, get to know one another, and share their stories.

Members now host weekly virtual check-ins every Tuesday morning at 9am and Tuesday evenings at 7pm. These meetings provide a safe and private space for everybody to come together and share their hopes of what a better, modernized mental health system can look like. They hope to expand to more days and times.

Please join us in this movement. You can go to the AFSCME Council 5 website here: afscmemn.org/mentalbehavioral-health for more information on their work and join the weekly check-in.

Resources for Members

Stay up-to-date on all the latest news by following @afscmemn5 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Get guidance and resources at afscmemn.org under the COVID-19 tab.

Look for action alerts via email and text so you know when to take action to protect working families. We are all in this together, siblings.