

AFSCME Members Fight Back and Win Big - Togo and Willow River Correctional Facilities Will Stay Open

This spring, major budget cuts at the Department of Corrections threatened to shutter the Togo and Willow River correctional facilities. But the tireless effort and our advocacy lead last week to the bipartisan passage of funding to keep these critical facilities open, saving over a hundred jobs and preserving the positive impacts on the broader community.

The facilities at Togo and Willow River are unique - they house the Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP), a program that has proven successful in preventing recidivism.

Keeping the doors open was essential for the employees who earn a living there, to the inmates who access proven solutions to rebuild their lives there, and for the community who benefits from the economic impact of these essential jobs. So when Commissioner Schnell announced that the facilities were slated to close, AFSCME members took action.

Hundreds of members signed a petition demanding that the Legislature take action to protect

public workers. They made phone calls, sent emails, and put out lawn signs declaring their support. Many joined a socially-distanced action at the Togo facility.

Dozens of workers shared their personal stories about their jobs, their families, and the harm a closure would cause. We heard from successful graduates of CIP who described how the program changed their lives. But after months of work, GOP leadership in the Minnesota House continued to hold a bonding bill hostage.

Then, after months of sustained advocacy and hours of debate, the House and Senate finally passed a bipartisan bill to fund sustained operations at Togo and Willow River.

Though this victory is a huge relief and a bright light in these trying times, we know there are more challenges



Signs across the Iron Range declared the community's support for Togo and Willow River workers.

ahead. COVID-19 infections are rising, and our state's budget deficit will bring more threats to our livelihoods in the coming months.

But this victory proves once again that we are stronger when we work together. Time and time again, members prove that we are willing to stand together when times get tough. Our solidarity is our greatest strength.

Time is Running Out - Make Your Vote Count!

We only have a few days left in one of the most important elections of our lifetimes. Have you voted yet?

Your vote is powerful, so make your plan to vote today - and help make sure your family and friends have a plan to vote too!

If you have already sent your ballot, track it all the way to "accepted" status at mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us/AbsenteeBallotStatus.aspx.

If you have your absentee ballot but have not sent it in yet, consider dropping it off at an early voting location near you.

If you haven't voted - or plan to vote on Election Day - remember that Minnesota law requires your employer to pay you for the time you need to vote if it falls within your scheduled work time. Lines may be long at your early voting or Election Day locations, so wear a mask and warm outdoor gear! Find your polling location at sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/vote-early-in-person.

Be sure to support candidates who support our union: find AFSCME-endorsed candidates in your area at afscmemn.org/2020-election-endorsements.

Don't let anything get in the way of your right to vote. Make your voice heard before polls close on November 3rd!

Are you signed up for your GOTV shift?

Don't wake up on November 4 and wish you had done more. Help us turn out every voter in the final stretch!

It's a fact that union members are among the most successful persuaders for working people. **Every vote matters, and we need your help** to make sure that everyone makes their voice heard in November.

We have a great opportunity to connect with AFSCME members and our Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan on Thursday, October 29 at 6PM. Sign up now to join us at forms.gle/DbMVeUeKVYDnmaJHA.

If you can't join the Lt. Governor for calls, check out a full list of actions between now and the time polls close at www.mobilize.us/mn2020victory/event/318537. Now is the time to leave it all on the field. Please sign up for every shift you can cover this week!

Every year, AFSCME members get it done for our endorsed candidates. Though COVID-19 has made this year unpredictable, AFSCME members have already made thousands of calls to voters across the state.

We need your help to get across the finish line. Sign up for your GOTV shift now!

MN Legislature Passes Historic Bonding Bill, Gov. Walz Signs into Law

After months of negotiation and tireless advocacy from workers across the state, the Minnesota Legislature passed a robust bonding and supplemental agency funding bill that will invest in making our workplaces safer, create tens of thousands of livable wage jobs, and protect the public services Minnesotans deserve.

This is the largest capital investment bill in our state's history, passed by a wide bipartisan margin in both the House and Senate.

Since the regular session adjourned in May, Walz has called lawmakers into special session each month. But until last week members of the House Republican caucus withheld their support for the jobs-creating infrastructure bill, hoping to pressure Walz into giving up his emergency powers during the pandemic.

But with the election looming, dozens of GOP legislators broke ranks and finally supported the bill. Gov. Walz signed the \$1.88 billion package of infrastructure investments into law from the floor of the Ironworkers Local 512 apprenticeship training center in a nod to the fierce advocacy of working people across the state.

The bill allocates \$16 million in supplemental spending for DHS Direct Care and Treatment, \$7.5 million for the Department of Corrections, bonding at the CABHS hospital in Willmar, and much more.

This would not have been possible without the sustained efforts of thousands of AFSCME members. Nearly 2,200 AFSCME Council 5 members and allies signed a petition calling on elected officials to put politics aside and invest in public services and our workforce. We showed up in numbers that were impossible to ignore - and we won.

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](https://www.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.



Union member action, including this socially distanced press event at MCF-Togo, created enough pressure to pass a historic bonding bill.