

Special Edition: Highlights of the 45th AFSCME International Convention

July 11-15, 2022, more than 150 delegates & alternates from AFSCME Council 5 joined thousands of our union siblings from around the country to come together, conduct the business of our union and enhance our skills as activists by attending the 45th International Union Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This year's theme, "All Together" is a testament to our will to be with one another, act as one union, and grow our union by doing this work TOGETHER.

Sunday, July 10

Jeff Birttnen, former AFSCME Local 517 member and current President of Minnesota Retirees United Chapter 5 representing more than 3,000 retired members of our union, was **resoundingly reelected to serve as Chair of the International Retiree Council**, and a member of the AFSCME International Executive Board. Congratulations!



AFSCME Retirees reelected by acclamation (from left) Sonia Moseley of California AFSCME Chapter 1199-UNAC; Jeff Birttnen Minnesota AFSCME Retiree Chapter 5; and Sue Conrad of Wisconsin AFSCME Retiree Chapter 32, as Retiree Council vice chair, chair and secretary, respectively. (Credit: Javeon Butler)



AFSCME President Lee Saunders addresses the Retiree Council meeting Sunday. Retiree Council Chair Jeff Birttnen looks on. (Credit: Terrell Halsey)

Monday, July 11

Monday was the official opening day of Convention! We listened to a powerful keynote address by AFSCME President Lee Saunders and our delegates were welcomed by and chatted with Council 5 leadership, including Executive Director Julie Bleyhl, President Eric Hesse, Vice President Carmen Brown and Secretary Joel Hoffman.

We heard speeches from Pennsylvania gubernatorial candidate Josh Shapiro, watched a beautiful tribute to the late former AFSCME President Jerry McEntee and we all got our groove on by dancing to the music of hip hop and rap star MC Lyte!

Following the close of Day 1, attendees assigned to committee meetings attended them and worked to strengthen our union!



AFSCME Council 5 members joined other attendees and had a great time dancing to the music of MC Lyte. Pictured: Jen Guertin (Local 2508) and Trish Diersen (Local 2829). Photo credit: Javeon Butler

Tuesday, July 12

On Day 2, attendees listened to a rousing speech by **AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Elissa McBride!** Under her leadership, AFSCME has revamped our financial standards code and ensured members' dollars are spent wisely and that we better train and develop leaders within our local unions to be strong fiscal stewards. We also heard an incredibly moving and passionate speech by **Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams**, where she was greeted with a massive standing ovation from the convention delegates as she spoke about voting rights, unions and justice.

On this day, **AFSCME Council 5 Secretary Joel Hoffman (Local 4001)**, took to the convention floor and spoke in favor of a resolution calling for massive investments in our infrastructure system. From rural Minnesota to the metro - all of us see the need for a robust and modernized infrastructure system that meets our needs.

AFSCME Local 151 President Dawn Flores prepared a speech in support of a resolution calling on our employers to use American Rescue Plan (ARP) federal dollars as they are intended to be used -as investments in our workforce. She wrote, "My local, Local 151, held our employer accountable when we walked the picket line in the middle of a snowstorm in downtown St. Paul with our fellow Ramsey County union siblings. We will continue to raise our voices and ensure ARP money is used to hire and retain workers, increase wages and more."

AFSCME Council 5 Shares Organizing Successes

On the convention floor, **AFSCME Council 5 Field Representative and member of Local 607, Annie Jakacki**, spoke to the full convention in support of a resolution highlighting the major successes of Cultural Workers United, our initiative organizing cultural institutions across the country.

In Minnesota, Annie shared some of the major victories that workers in Council 5 have achieved & our ongoing campaigns:

Walker Art Center-Almost 70 workers

Minnesota Historical Society-Nearly 300 workers

Anoka County Public Library-Nearly 70 workers (ongoing)

Cornerstone - Over 60 workers

And so many others that are very close to going public!

AFSCME Council 5 Wins Major Award!

AFSCME International presented our union, AFSCME Council 5, with the **2022 AFSCME PEOPLE Together Award** for our outstanding member-led political program that holds elected officials accountable to our shared values as union members and for raising separate funds to support pro-worker lawmakers who support our members, loved ones and neighbors. AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl accepted this award on behalf of our 43,000 members Who Make Minnesota Happen!



Council 5 Secretary Joel Hoffman (Local 4001) speaks at the microphone on the convention floor, flanked by nearly 20 Council 5 members in support of a resolution. Photo credit: Max Hall



From left: Felicia Wilson (Local 151), Tammy Mhanna (Local 151), Christina St. Germaine (Local 1092), Dawn Flores (Local 151), Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl, Latonya Reeves (Local 552), Abdul Omar (Council 5). Photo credit: Max Hall

Learning New Skills

Every day, delegates attended workshops to hone and develop their skills as organizers, treasurers, stewards and political activists!



Wednesday, July 13: Council 5 Day!

Many members of our union's convention delegation gathered for a group photo with newly designed t-shirts and lapel pins provided to delegates and alternates (*top photo*)

Convention business included debate on resolutions, sector caucus meetings, listening to speeches, and after adjournment, delegates and alternates attended several of dozens of available workshops to gain new skills and bring them back to our local unions!

Local 722 President Dalia Baez

prepared a speech in favor of a resolution calling for our union to continue being a "big tent" union that welcomes all and affirms our strong position of fighting for racial and gender equity. The entire Council 5 delegation got up and physically stood behind Dalia in solidarity as she went to the microphone.

AFSCME President Lee

Saunders stopped by & gave a rousing speech at our Upper Midwest Delegate Reception, followed by taking photos with any/all delegates who wished to have a photo with our incredible international president. We also talked about the importance of our partnership between the International Union and Council 5. Under President Saunders' leadership, AFSCME Strong was created to sign up our co workers for membership so we can fight for the strongest contracts possible & increase our activism in all ways

Council 5 members took to the convention microphone to declare that our union believes that single payer universal health care is a human right and shall be guaranteed to all. No worker should ever have to cancel or push back much-needed medical procedures or check-ups due to a lack of health insurance. (*photo on right*).

Chapter 5 Retirees United President and Chair of the International Retiree Council, Jeff Birttnen,

also took to the floor to speak on a resolution that he, among others, introduced to call on our union to strongly support expanding Medicare to cover basic healthcare needs such as dental and hearing. Jeff declared, "It is long past time that Medicare cover these basic healthcare necessities for millions of older Americans!"



*Pictured from left: Tamika Hannah (Local 34), Grace Baltich (Local 34), Dawn Flores (Local 151) and Terri Horak (Local 1349).
Photo credit: Max Hall*

RALLY TIME at PMA!

Thousands of AFSCME members gathered on the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) to demand the employer settle a strong contract with its AFSCME workers after nearly two years of stalling!



Wednesday, July 13

AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl and AFSCME Council 65 Executive Director Shannon Douvier, flanked by dozens of members of both Councils in solidarity, took to the microphone to speak in favor of ALL workers having the right to join a union and be members of our great union and labor movement. They declared: No worker should be excluded or feel uninvited from the labor movement and our AFSCME family. We are unwavering in this position. We are proud to represent social workers, correctional officers, 911 dispatchers, prosecutors and public defenders, Capitol Security, librarians, public works and transportation workers, general maintenance workers, clerical workers, direct care and treatment workers, hospital intake workers, bookstore clerks and so many others who need a voice on the job and they know that **AFSCME IS THEIR UNION OF CHOICE!**

Local 552 President Latonya Reeves also took to the microphone on this same topic, while proudly holding up her badge declaring she is a probation officer and member of the public safety/law enforcement/criminal justice community who believes in all workers having the right to join a union and no one should be excluded.

Local 2829 member Trish Diersen also took to the microphone to declare her support for ALL workers' right to join a union, including those in law enforcement. Trish is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. AFSCME is PROUD to represent thousands of veterans and active duty heroes.



Front right: Latonya Reeves, Local 552, holding her badge proudly declaring her support for ALL workers' right to be in a union. Photo credit: Max Hall



Local 2829 member Trish Diersen. Photo credit: Max Hall



From left: Council 65 Executive Director Shannon Douvier and Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl. Photo credit: Crystal Kreklow.

Upper Midwest Delegate Reception

AFSCME Council 5 (MN), 65 (MN, SD, ND), 61 (IA), 692 (KY) and NAPE (NE) hosted an event for attendees to meet one another, play bingo for prizes, share their experiences and the new skills learned at convention workshops and committees and so much more. We wanted to thank all of our member attendees for stepping up and representing our Council at the International Union Convention!



Thursday, July 14

Local 1092 President Christina St. Germaine

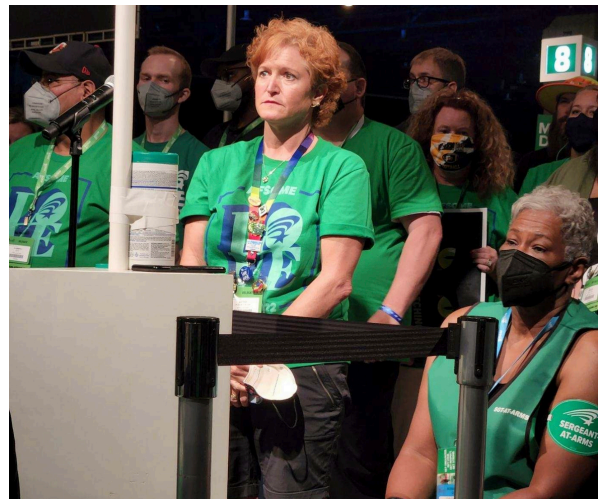
spoke to the convention about her experiences as a Security Counselor and that of her Correctional Officer siblings with forced overtime, under staffing and burnout. Christina honored the life and legacy of our fallen CO brothers Joe Gomm and Joe Parise and recommitted our union to never giving up the fight for safe staffing and ensuring that ALL workers go home safely at the end of their shift. No exceptions. Period.



Local 1092 President Christina St. Germain takes to the microphone.

Local 668 member Renae Periera-Webb spoke on the convention floor in support of a resolution calling for our union to support members of the trans community and the LGBTQI+ community as we build a more inclusive union that welcomes everybody and is a safe haven for those who need a home. AFSCME is their refuge. Renae spoke powerfully to the fact that we must always live our core union value that "an injury to one is an injury to ALL!"

AFSCME Council 5 remains a strong partner in the fight for social, economic and racial justice. No matter their zip code, background or lived experiences, all workers have a right to join a union, have healthcare they can depend on, live a dignified life, have strong due process rights in the workplace and retire with dignity and security. Local 1092 Vice President Jessica Langhorst was featured in a video highlighting her family and our union's strong legacy of political activism for many decades!



Local 668 member Renae Periera-Webb speaks to delegates.

Friday, July 15

Convention business resumed with another busy day that included the swearing in of newly-elected International Vice Presidents, departing speeches, videos featuring highlights of convention and more!



AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl said:

"To the delegates and alternates elected to attend the 45th International Union Convention: On behalf of our entire union, I want to thank you for being willing to step forward and participate in the strengthening of our union. Our democracy, union and communities only work when good people show up to make a positive difference. All of our members' service carries on our proud tradition of robust member engagement, activism and action."

The 18th AFSCME Council 5 Convention will be held September 29-October 1, 2022 in St. Paul, MN.

The 46th International Union Convention in 2024 will be held in Chicago, Illinois.

On left: AFSCME President Lee Saunders and Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl pose for a photo after discussing our strong partnership and shared vision for our union on behalf of those we represent across Minnesota and America.