

# Stepping UP

American Federation  
of State, County and  
Municipal Employees,  
AFL-CIO

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ONE STRONG, UNITED VOICE FOR MINNESOTA WORKERS

COUNCIL 5  
AFSCME  
UNION LABEL



AFSCME Council 5 is a union of 43,000 workers who advocate for excellence in services for the public, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all working families.

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2018-2020**

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**Stepping UP**

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# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**AS THE STATE LEGISLATURE RACES TOWARD THE END OF THE 2019 SESSION, HUNDREDS OF BILLS ARE MAKING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE COMMITTEE PROCESS.**

**AFSCME COUNCIL 5 IS CLEAR ON WHAT WE DEMAND FOR OUR MEMBERS AND ALL WORKING PEOPLE: A FAIR AND HONEST BUDGET THAT FUNDS HEALTH CARE AND PUBLIC SERVICES, AND ADVANCES PROSPERITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL MINNESOTANS.**

## Here's what you need to know:

Back in February, Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan released their One Minnesota budget, focusing on education, health care, and community prosperity. The Governor's budget prioritizes working families while finding responsible ways to build Minnesota's brightest future. The budget boosts the Working Family Tax Credit, increases Local Government Aid (LGA) by \$30 million, and increases County Program Aid (CPA) by \$30 million every year. This provides better and more stable funding for Minnesotans who depend on city and county services, and for the AFSCME members who work hard every day to provide those services. The Governor's budget also repeals some of the tax cuts the Republican majority passed last year that overwhelmingly benefit corporations and the wealthy.

**The Governor's budget** includes long-term, sustainable revenue increases that will fund our priorities going forward. In order to pay for investments in transportation and education, the budget proposes an increase to the gas tax. Without increased revenue, Minnesota will not have the dedicated funding we need to repair our state's crumbling infrastructure. As state roads and bridges continue to deteriorate without new funding to fix them, it becomes more likely that future Legislatures will gut the general fund to address an infrastructure crisis, putting other key priorities – like health care, human services, and local government aid – at risk.

The DFL-controlled House released their own budget in March, which also invested heavily in education, health care, and building prosperity across the state. While similar to the Governor's budget, the House went even further to ensure greater tax fairness for working Minnesotans.

In stark contrast to DFL budget proposals, the GOP-controlled Senate released a budget that doesn't even fund core government services. If this budget passed

today, billions of dollars – and hundreds of public employee jobs – would be cut. Touting the usual rhetoric of 'living within our means,' Republicans in the Senate dismiss Governor Walz's proposals to raise revenue and refuse to repeal the corporate tax breaks they passed last session. Instead, their budget makes up the difference with drastic cuts to needed programs and services. It also relies heavily on Pawlenty-style accounting gimmicks and fuzzy math to make the numbers match the rhetoric.

This sets up an end-of-session showdown that will pit working people against big corporations and the wealthy few. While DFLers in the House advance a budget that funds our priorities and puts Minnesota families first, a few Republican leaders are working against what the majority of Minnesotans want to benefit their corporate friends and big donors.

**We can't pass a budget that puts Minnesotans first without you. Can we count on you to stand with working people?**

### Here's what you can do:

**Call your legislators and ask them to support the House's budget proposal. Tell them how cuts to critical programs would affect your job, your family, and your community. And keep calling right up until the Legislature adjourns at midnight on May 20<sup>th</sup>.**

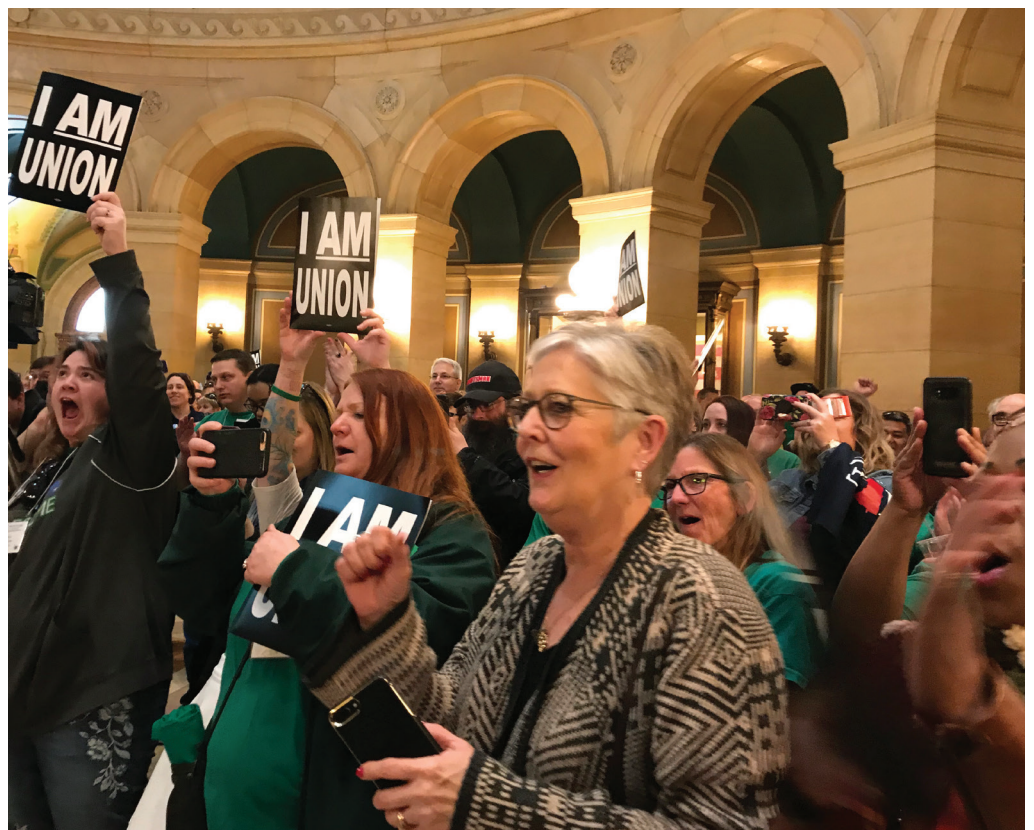
# DAY ON THE HILL





Opposite, clockwise from top: Local 3937's Margot Welschinger and daughter; AFSCME Council 5 chair officers Cherrene Horazuk, Destiny Dusosky, Carmen Brown and Pat Guernsey; Local 07's Tara Storey and daughter; members get fired up at the rally in the rotunda; General Session at the St. Paul RiverCentre.

This page, clockwise from left: Local 9 members at DOTH; members Rachel Lipkin, Rachel Loeffler-Kemp, Takeesha Coon, Emily Erpelding, Heather Lynch, Jill Erzar and Scuffy Paulson tell their stories during the morning session; members rally in the Capitol rotunda; Local 151's Zeyruk Ali and Jason Kamau cheer during the afternoon rally.



# DAY ON THE HILL

**N**early a thousand AFSCME members from across Minnesota converged at the State Capitol on March 26 for Day on the Hill, our biggest, most impactful event of the year.

This year's program was fresh and member-driven. The day began with a workshop on how bills become laws and why coming to the Capitol and talking to our legislators is so important. Following the workshop, members packed the St. Paul RiverCentre ballroom to hear stories from workers about the significance of our work, the ways in which public workers enhance and enrich our communities, and how our ability to provide crucial public services hinges on the support of our lawmakers.

Members cheered as the session opened and House Speaker Melissa Hortman joined Council 5 Executive Director John Westmoreland on the dais. "This is a monumental moment for us," said Westmoreland. "We have

never, as a guest at our Day on the Hill, had the honor of the presence of the Speaker of the House."

Together, Speaker Hortman and Westmoreland listened to the stories of seven AFSCME members from different walks of life. "This morning, we're going to hear some of our members talk about the values we shared throughout the course of 2018. Then you'll have an opportunity to hear from the Speaker of the House on how our values and the values of the House of Representatives are in the same place," Westmoreland told the crowd. Speaker Hortman took the podium to reaffirm the importance of our work and her support for our union and values.



Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman and AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director John Westmoreland

**“We have so much in common. What our work is grounded in is respect and dignity for each and every person,”** said Speaker Hortman. **“And the value of organizing and accomplishing things together that we can't do by ourselves, and we so completely share your values.”**

## SHARING OUR VALUES

***Seven AFSCME members from across Minnesota shared their personal stories with House Speaker Melissa Hortman and more than 1,000 members of our AFSCME Council 5 family. The workers came from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, but their stories shared one solid thread: their AFSCME values and the value of the services we provide that make Minnesota happen.***



AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director John Westmoreland and Melissa Hortman with member speakers from the Day on the Hill general session.

# SHARING OUR STORIES

**R**achel Lipkin is a Career Probation Officer at the Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation and member of Local 552. She also serves as a Family Court Services Mediator/Evaluator for Hennepin County. After witnessing a childhood friend's struggle to cope in an abusive family, she pursued a career that would allow her to help families get through trauma. Lipkin says her work is constantly under threat of privatization - putting the quality services she and her coworkers strive to provide for struggling families.

"The private sector cannot provide the same level of services for the most vulnerable in our communities. Counties that have eliminated positions like mine have increased Court calendars and costs, longer legal processes, and more families not receiving vital services," Lipkin told Speaker Hortman and the audience.

"The need for our public mediation and evaluation services is great, the work hard, but so is the importance of AFSCME union workers like me working towards community safety, positive child development and support for parents to provide their children the love and care they need."

**S**pirit Valley YMCA Health and Wellness Coordinator Takeisha Coon and Rachel Loeffler-Kemp, the Community Services Director at the Duluth United Way, are both members of Local 3558 in Duluth, which is made up of bargaining units from different organizations that function as a partnership between private and public entities.

Loeffler-Kemp, who grew up in a union household, spends her days connecting working families with the community



**AFSCME members pack the St. Paul RiverCentre ballroom for the Day on the Hill general session**

resources they need. She emphasized the value of shared responsibility and contribution to our communities, imploring legislators to support crucial programs like the one she coordinates. "I can't do this work alone. The organizations, agencies and people I work with each day rely on our state government for the resources and services they need. As elected officials, your support for these programs and the working families they support is crucial," Loeffler-Kemp said.

Coon's testimony reflected those same values. She shared her personal story of being a single mom of four and moving to Duluth for a more secure future for her family. "This work is important because of the opportunities it brings to people out there who are looking for a better way of life like myself and my children. We are only able to do this work with the support of our lawmakers and our union."

**J**ill Erzar of Local 2508 had the audience riveted as she recalled her experiences as a zookeeper at the Como Zoo and Conservatory. "There is nothing better than watching a child the first time they get to feed a giraffe, or see a bison up close," Erzar said.

"Kids around the world don't have what we have right here in St. Paul," she added, and pointed to our union as one of the main forces making that possible. After working at several non-union zoos and struggling to make ends meet, Erzar shared, she's finally found financial security as an AFSCME member at Como. "I no longer have to work two to three jobs just to survive, I can put all of my energy into my career, I'm a safer zookeeper and I'm able to better engage with the public because of it. We can do our best work because of AFSCME."

# SHARING OUR STORIES

University of Minnesota Child Development Center (CDC) teachers Emily Erpelding and Heather Lynch, members of Local 3937, spoke to the value of affordable, quality early childhood education and childcare for all Minnesotans. “I get to play a role in the lives of children. I see them grow and develop in so many ways. Knowing what I do impacts their life is a huge reward and a burden at the same time,” Lynch said. Erpelding, accompanied by her two-year-old daughter Stella, agreed, lamenting the fact that early education work is undervalued. She asked for lawmakers’ support and solidarity with our union, pointing to recent events at the CDC as evidence.

Both Erpelding and Lynch were active in a fight to keep their facility open when the University revealed a plan to shutter the one-of-a-kind child development center. The workers won - and credit the victory to the power of collective action and union solidarity. “Without our union we would not have had the resources and support to fight for our center. We would have been out of work and dozens of families would have been without care for their children. Working at the facility as unionized employees gives us the opportunity to negotiate for better pay and benefits,” Erpelding said. She added that being an active union

Suffy Paulson is a Rochester MnDOT worker from Local 868 and AFSCME Council 5 Executive Board member. He began his speech by firing up the crowd of more than 1,000 AFSCME members with a request for a round of applause for all of the Department of Transportation workers who strived to keep our roads and bridges clear of snow and ice all through the harsh winter and are now spending their days (and nights) patching potholes, repairing roads and inspecting old bridges across the state.

**“The importance of what AFSCME members do is, we’re the ones that keep Minnesotans moving, and we’re the ones that make this whole thing happen.”**

Paulson told us what it was like behind the wheel of a snowplow during Minnesota’s recent polar vortex. “As we’d bust the road open we’d hope to God there wasn’t a car in there,” he

recalled. “White out conditions - it was a bad situation. We made it all the way out to where we turned around, we picked up seven cars on the way out. With people in there - kids, grandmas and grandpas, everyday Minnesotans,” Paulson said. “The importance of what AFSCME members do is, we’re the ones that keep Minnesotans moving, and we’re the ones that make this whole thing happen.”

As the last member speaker of the morning, Paulson took the opportunity to wrap up the session by making one final point. “This is a hell of a group of people sitting up here and the main focus of me speaking today is to make sure you understand that we can’t rob one to fix the other,” Paulson told Speaker Hortman. “That’s the most important part that needs to be realized.”

*Each of these stories touched on the significance of the work AFSCME members do and shined a light on our investment in our families, our coworkers and our communities. The members drove home the point that our ability to do the work that makes Minnesota happen relies on lawmakers’ support of our contracts and of legislation that benefits working people like us - not the rich and powerful. The members also spoke of how our AFSCME family and our shared union values give them the support they need in order to provide these crucial services to Minnesotans across the state.*



AFSCME members listen intently as workers share their stories during the morning general session at Day on the Hill.

member is about more than building a solid foundation for her own family. “I believe that once we’re able to obtain higher wages and more respect for the teachers in our center, we will be able to work toward these goals for all teachers and workers in this essential field,” she said.



# A RALLY TO REMEMBER

This year's rally in the rotunda did not disappoint. In another major first for our Council, our sister union, MAPE (Minnesota Association of Professional Employees) and AFSCME held a joint midday rally. Union members packed all three floors, filling the rotunda to its brim.

MAPE's Executive Director, Lina Jamoul, opened the rally by declaring, "Together, we are 60,000 workers strong. That's 60,000 workers committed to workplace democracy and a just economy that works for everyone, not just those few at the top."

AFSCME members were thrilled to welcome some major names to the stage. We were honored to have Governor Tim Walz – Minnesota's 'organizer in chief' – address the roaring crowd of union members. Gov. Walz drew on his own experience as a union member and reaffirmed his commitment to supporting the collective bargaining rights of Minnesota's public workers.

Walz said, "I was recently asked an interesting question. They said, 'will the Governor stand with unions or with the people of Minnesota?'

We all know that's a false choice. When you stand for the right to collectively bargain with unions, you are standing with the people of Minnesota." Amid cheers, he continued, "So many people who aren't here today are living better lives with more dignity because of you."

All three of Minnesota's Constitutional Officers – State Auditor Julie Blaha, Attorney General Keith Ellison and Secretary of State Steve Simon – also took to the stage, voicing their support for working Minnesotans, collective bargaining and the labor movement as a whole.



AFSCME and MAPE members fill the Capitol rotunda to the brim for a joint Day on the Hill rally with Governor Tim Walz, State Auditor Julie Blaha, Secretary of State Steve Simon and Attorney General Keith Ellison

**"When you stand for the right to collectively bargain with unions, you are standing with the people of Minnesota."**

Blaha, a former math teacher and lifelong union activist, said, "The best part of my job is getting in the weeds. But I look at those numbers for you because you are in every number. You are where the rubber meets the road."

Secretary of State Steve Simon echoed those sentiments. "Everyday Minnesotans know that our system is well-run. And who are the people running those elections? Public employees! Elections don't run themselves; they're run by people. People who are well-trained, honest, ethical, thoughtful, and diligent. That's you. And I thank you for that."

Attorney General Keith Ellison wrapped up the rally with fiery energy. "It is so critical that we are assembled here in this place, raising our voices as one, because there are folks who don't like working people fighting for safer working conditions, better pay, and better benefits together. I want to say to all of you: you have a right to a good life. Your children have a right to a good life. We will win when we come together."

# MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

Day on the Hill gives AFSCME members an opportunity to learn about the legislative process, then use that knowledge to engage in meaningful conversations and build relationships with the people we elect to represent us at the Capitol. It's a chance to come together as one and have a real impact on the decisions our elected officials make about our work and our lives. Remy Huerta-Stemper (Local 34) says talking to our legislators is a crucial part of making sure workers' voices from all parts of the state get heard. "It's important to participate and see the big picture," Huerta-Stemper says.

AFSCME members fanned out across the Capitol campus and had face-to-face conversations with their legislators. They talked to them about the issues that impact working folks like us: safe staffing, respectful workplaces, our collective bargaining rights, keeping health care affordable and fixing our roads and bridges.



Local 66 child welfare workers Patty Olson Feldt and Sandy Daniels-Milton join Rep. Dave Pinto, also an AFSCME member, testify to get more child protection grant funding for St. Louis County during their Day on the Hill trip to the Capitol



St. Paul AFSCME members meet with Rep. Carlos Mariani during their Day on the Hill legislator meetings.

Kenneth Garnier (Local 34) says that big picture is about the power of unions to lift up all workers. "We work together and live in the same neighborhoods," he explains "Why not work with your coworkers to build a better life for everyone?"

St. Louis County child welfare workers Patty Olson Feldt and Sandy Daniels-Milton, found themselves in the right place at the right time. They happened to be in the building when House File 2217, a bill to provide more grant funding for their work, was being heard in committee. Both Local 66 members were attending Day on

the Hill for the first time, but they felt energized and empowered knowing they had the support of our union backing them up. "If there's something we can do, as child welfare workers, it's worth it. We're part of their support system," said Daniels-Milton. Olson Feldt agrees. "It was nerve-racking, but it felt good. You could see it in their hearts." The workers decided to put their work and values ahead of their nerves and joined Rep. Dave Pinto, who is also a member of AFSCME Local 8, in providing testimony in favor of the bill.

Sharyn Carrington (Local 2512) says building relationships with our legislators during Day on the Hill empowers members to continue their conversations, following up with their representatives and senators and holding them accountable. "I really like the idea of being able to communicate with lawmakers when we come to Day on the Hill," she says. "It makes it easier to start those relationships." Those relationships with our fellow AFSCME members and with our legislators can have real, meaningful impact on our work, our lives, our families and our communities.



# Taking on the opioid crisis together

This March, AFSCME East Metro Retirees heard a presentation from Washington County Attorney Pete Orput on a timely topic: the opioid crisis. Members heard harrowing details about the addictive power of opioids, and what members can do to protect themselves and their families from opioid addiction.

“If you take doses of hydrocodone, oxycodone – any of that – for eight straight days, you’re dang close to getting that monkey on your back,” said Orput, a member of AFSCME Local 2938. “Some people are in the hospital for a week and they come out and immediately start going through withdrawal. It doesn’t take much.”

East Metro Retirees President Judie Atkins invited County Attorney Orput to present at the meeting. “I thought this was something that needs to be expounded on because it affects retirees and older people,” Atkins said.

Rates of opioid addiction have skyrocketed in recent years. In Minnesota, the number of opioid overdoses grew 66% between 2010 and 2016. Over 400 Minnesotans have died this year alone due to opioids. Nationally, opioid addiction kills 130 people every day.

According to experts, the driving force behind this crisis is the irresponsible marketing and overprescribing of opioids over the past decade. Four out of five new heroin users first became addicted to prescription opioids.

Orput’s presentation detailed the deceptive ways corporate drug manufacturers promoted and sold opioids in spite of clear threats to patient safety. “Manufacturers realized early on that opioids have a huge potential for addiction,” said Orput. “But what did they do? They hid it. Why? For the enormous profits they were making.”

As the East Metro Retirees met, legislators at the Capitol debated measures that would begin to address the opioid crisis in Minnesota. Earlier this month, the Minnesota House passed a measure to hold drug manufacturers accountable for the damage the irresponsible use of these drugs has done to Minnesota families and communities. The proposal would fund prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery initiatives by raising the annual registration fees for pharmaceutical manufacturers and wholesale distributors that sell opioids in Minnesota. The fees – which could raise \$20 million per year – would go into an Opioid Stewardship Fund. From there, an advisory council would recommend the most effective ways to spend it.

As advocates who lost loved ones to opioid addiction looked on, the bills lead author, Rep. Liz Olson, recounted stories of Minnesotans who became addicted to opioids in the health care system and lost their lives to an addiction they never imagined.

“There is one group who has benefits but has not stepped forward to combat the opioid epidemic – that is the opioid industry,” said Olson. “With profits in the hundreds of millions, these groups have still not come to the table.”

Rep. Dave Baker, a Republican from Willmar whose son died of a heroin overdose in 2011 after becoming addicted to opioid painkillers, spoke in support of the bill. But other Republicans opposed it; Minority Leader Kurt Daudt argued that the costs imposed on drug manufacturers were too high.

The House bill passed easily, but similar proposals have stalled in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Across the country, other states are taking similar steps to hold opioid manufacturers accountable for their reckless marketing of these highly addictive drugs. Recently, Purdue Pharma, the manufacturer of the painkiller OxyContin, reached a \$270 million settlement with the state of Oklahoma. The settlement funds will go toward establishing an addiction treatment and research center at Oklahoma State University. This lawsuit is just one of hundreds pending against Purdue Pharma and other manufacturers across the country.

For one AFSCME retiree, the topic of opioid addiction hits close to home. Mike Dasovic, a retired Local 2139 steward, attended the meeting on opioids and shared the struggle his daughter went through after she became addicted to opioids following a routine medical procedure.

“She went in for gallbladder surgery. She was given these painkillers, and she was on it for approximately nine months before it started affecting her life, her job, her marriage,” Dasovic said.

Dasovic said his daughter needed almost a year of intensive treatment to recover. Though she is back on track, she still receives regular outpatient treatment nearly two years later. “Every time I pick up a newspaper it catches my eye,” he said. “I probably would not be involved like this if I hadn’t gone through it.”

Across Minnesota, more and more families like Dasovic’s are forced to reckon with the opioid crisis as someone they love is affected. Even those who have not been personally impacted have paid a price, Rep. Olson noted. “As Minnesotans we have all paid greatly for this crisis, both in dollars as taxpayers and in lives lost.”

The East Metro Retirees’ meeting was important reminder that the opioid crisis affects thousands across Minnesota – regardless of income, background, or status. “If you have children or grandchildren, it could happen to them,” said Judie Atkins. “I think we all need to be aware of it.”

# Social workers call on County Board to stop outsourcing plan

**A**s Minnesotans age, the need for high-quality elder care continues to rise. But when St. Louis County Public Health & Human Services (PHHS) moved to outsource this critical care, the social workers who care for some of St. Louis County's most vulnerable residents fought back.

St. Louis County PHHS decided to outsource case management of elderly waivers, citing staff shortages. PHHS suggested that contracting out this specific segment of work will allow them to redeploy the social workers to other areas where the county is also short staffed.

Outsourcing will put a strain on social workers and make the process more difficult and cumbersome for the elderly population, social workers say. "We have an enormous county. In an average day on the Iron Range, I can easily travel 100-150 miles," said social worker Sasha Lehto. "We not only know our service area well, but we know what resources we have and what we don't in certain areas of our county. How will a contracted agency located near Duluth service the elderly in areas of Ely, Hoyt Lakes or Kabetogama effectively?"

In the more rural areas of St. Louis County, Local 66 members are often the only people advocating for their patients. They help fill out paperwork, navigate complicated systems, and protect patients' rights. "I've worked with our regional Ombudsman to protect the rights of the elderly and to ensure that they are getting the services they need," says Lehto. "We are a frequent presence in long-term facilities, ensuring our clients get the level of care they need, and we work closely with the providers to do this."

After months of objecting to the plan, AFSCME Local 66 members made an appearance at the February 5 St. Louis County Board meeting. Their objective: to get the County Board to stop PHHS from moving forward with their outsourcing plan.

Social worker Karen Donald says contracting out the work she and her coworkers do would have a harmful

impact on the elderly clients receiving services. "I feel like they're just so vulnerable," she laments.

As employees of the county, Donald says, AFSCME care workers have established relationships with their elderly clients and have the resources of the entire agency available to them, so they can provide the highest quality of care coordination. "Trusting a government agency is kind of different for the elderly. When you say 'we're from the county,' you have that official stamp. It means something to them," she says, "particularly because they are trusting us with very intimate details of their lives."

Outsourcing this work isn't just harmful; it's also unnecessary. While it's true that caseloads are increasing, members of AFSCME Local 66 say that this work can be kept in-house by simply adding a few more positions specifically for elder care. This would solve the staffing problem while protecting the clients and communities who rely on these crucial services – without adding cost to the county's budget.

At the St. Louis County Board meeting, Local 66 workers had a simple request for the board: put an end to this plan. At press time, the County Board had yet to respond to their request, and their silence is disappointing to Local 66 members. "The County Board took an oath to do what's best for their constituents," Lehto says. "They have boasted with pride that we provide great customer service. So when the social workers are telling them that this is not a good idea and raise huge concerns, why are they going ahead with this and refusing to put it to a vote?"

No matter what the County Board decides, the social workers of Local 66 are glad they stood up for their clients. "I'm an advocate for the elderly as a social worker. Who would I be as an advocate if I'm not fighting to keep this?" Lehto says. "When the board says, 'well, we don't have enough chips on the table to invest in this', my questions are: When did our elderly stop being a priority investment? Who are we as a county if we are not helping our elders? We will all be there someday."



**AFSCME Local 66 members attend a St. Louis County Board meeting. They're fighting to keep providing high-quality service to some of Minnesota's most vulnerable residents - the elderly.**

# Corrections officers flood the Capitol for CPC Lobbying Day

*AFSCME Council 5 corrections officers and staff advocated for safe staffing, access to opioid-blocking medication and a ban on private prisons at the Capitol.*

Over one hundred AFSCME Council 5 correctional officers and other staff from across the state ascended upon the Minnesota Capitol Tuesday morning. They began their annual Corrections Lobbying Day by packing the hearing room for the first hearing of HF1237/SF1678, a bill to ban private prisons from doing business with the state of Minnesota. AFSCME members filled the hearing room, and so many attended that a second overflow room had to be set up at the last minute.

Correctional officers Anna Koktan (vice president of Local 1988 and Council 5 Executive Board member) and Rick Neyssen, (AFSCME Never Quit award winner and Council 5 Executive Board member), gave personal testimony at the hearing. The officers spoke against reopening the shuttered private prison facility in Appleton, and advocated to

stop private prison corporations – who turn profits off the backs of inmates and workers alike – from doing business with the State of Minnesota altogether.

“We have to ask ourselves if private prisons would provide the same opportunities and services to their staff and inmates,” said Officer Koktan. “When the bottom line is profit, why would you provide services to help keep offenders out?”

“Locking up people for profit has nothing to do with justice,” said Officer Neyssen. “It has everything to do with making

billions of dollars off of human misery.”

**“Locking up people for profit has nothing to do with justice.**

**It has everything to do with making billions of dollars off of human misery.”**

At a press conference following the hearing, the members joined Rep. Ryan Winkler and Sen. Ron Latz, the bill’s authors, and AFSCME Council 5 associate director Tim Henderson, for a

press conference. They explained that banning private prisons isn’t only morally right; it’s essential to guaranteeing the safety of staff as well as the inmates and communities they serve.

“We thank Sen. Latz and Rep. Winkler for authoring this responsible and moral legislation,” said Henderson. “It’s time to end the concept that anybody should profit off of incarcerating human beings.”

The Corrections Division hearing also included House Files 1315 and 1615, which focused on funding safe staffing and indexing the staff-to-post ratio at our correctional facilities so that when more staff are needed, more staff actually get hired. Jeff Vars (president of Local 915 in Oak Park Heights) and John C. Hillyard (president of the Corrections Policy Committee and of Local 600 at the Stillwater prison) shared their experiences and described why adequate staffing is so important.

It’s not just about security, they argued. It’s essential so that facilities can offer programming to inmates that reduces recidivism and prepares inmates to reenter their communities after they serve their time.



**Rep. Ryan Winkler and Local 1988 member Anna Koktan give testimony at the first hearing of a bill to ban private prisons from Minnesota**

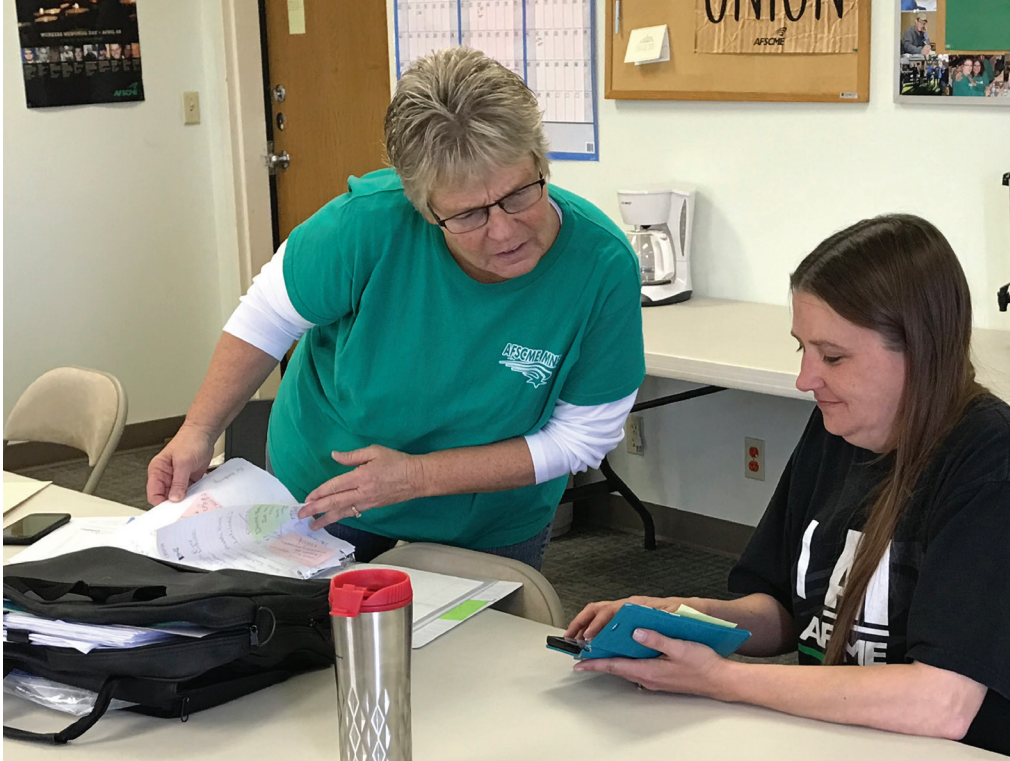
*(Continued on page 16)*

# Workers on a mission: Local 701 takes Direct Dues challenge

Cindy Ramsey is on fire.

The Local 701 member from Hutchinson, who works as a one-to-one caregiver in a state-run care facility for developmentally disabled adults, has spent the past two months on a mission to sign up her entire Local – all 192

The local's leaders are building power beyond signing their coworkers up for Direct Dues. They've also been promoting AFSCME PEOPLE (Cindy has recruited more than 15 PEOPLE MVPs since they launched the Direct Dues campaign) and enlisting members to join them in lobbying for pro-worker legislation at the Capitol.



Cathy Malvin (left) and Cindy Ramsey get ready for a worksite visit

Malvin says the campaign hasn't just resulted in amazing results for Direct Dues and PEOPLE signups – it's empowered members at other worksites to branch out in their own organizing efforts, creating more solidarity and worker power at each of the sites the team visits.

When asked what keeps them motivated, both Ramsey and Malvin point to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Janus v. AFSCME* as a precursor to the attacks on workers' rights on their way – and their commitment to fighting back.

"They thought they were going to take us out when they chopped fair share dues [with the Janus decision]. If anything, we just became stronger," Malvin says. "People were like, 'Oh my gosh, I have to join my union,' and then they joined. We're just being proactive

members – for Direct Dues.

Local 701 President Cathy Malvin has been on the job for 28 years. After the recent unexpected loss of her husband, Malvin says she was just about ready to pass the torch to the next generation of AFSCME leaders. But Cindy's passion and determination is contagious. "She's just got a fire in her," Malvin explains. "She's so passionate, it's hard not to follow along!"

After their January 2019 membership meeting, Cindy got to work. She and her coworkers laid out a plan to visit each worksite in their local, and came up with creative ways to make sure they were able to not just sign people up, but to use the Direct Dues conversations as a tool to get members more engaged in our union.

before the forces behind Janus decide they're going to

**"They thought they were going to take us out when they chopped fair share dues. If anything, we just became stronger."**

bust our union by ending dues check-off. That won't matter if we've already got everyone on Direct Dues."

On top of that head start, Malvin sees another big benefit of the Direct Dues push. With state employees currently at the negotiating table,

she says, switching over to Direct Dues will give AFSCME members a leg up. "The more we take out of the boss's ability to know about us," she says, "the stronger we are."

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# CPC Lobbying Day

*(Continued from page 14)*

It's also essential that those staff have the training, tools, and resources they need to be able to do their jobs.

We've neglected to get the officers we've needed in the past," said Officer Hillyard. "It's very important that we get the officers we need to protect the people of the state of Minnesota, our officers, and our inmates."

AFSCME correctional officers and staff from every state corrections facility agree that our correctional system needs to hire 328 additional staff to provide the essential services Minnesotans expect. It is now the job of the Minnesota Legislature to ensure those staff can be hired, and that they have the resources they need to be successful. That includes making opioid blockers like Narcan available and accessible, and to give staff the training and authorization administer the life-saving treatment in emergencies.

AFSCME members took time out of their busy work schedules to advocate on behalf of themselves and their colleagues. Their efforts will help ensure safer working conditions and essential training and resources for themselves and future correctional officers in Minnesota.

The members had effective conversations with their legislators and plan to return throughout the session to ask lawmakers to support initiatives that are so crucial not just to their own well-being, but to the safety and security of workers, inmates and communities.

## Direct Dues

*(Continued from page 15)*

The local has also taken advantage of their site visits to collect home emails, another organizing tool to help build opacity into their communication structure during contract negotiations. "With the Direct Dues campaign and all of the organizing we're doing – we're taking back our power," Malvin says.

The pair say they sometimes run into pushback when they're asking coworkers to sign up, but they've planned for that, too. Cindy says that while folks are initially concerned about sharing their financial information or getting double-billed, walking members through the sign-up process and teaching them how to navigate MemberLink and take control of their dues tends to assuage their fears. She always shows members the AFSCME Advantage tab on MemberLink, too. Cathy says that more members of the local are using their AFSCME Advantage benefits than ever, as a direct result of their Direct Dues outreach.

Both women say that although they've discovered a particular passion for organizing their coworkers around Direct Dues, the most significant rewards involve the organizing power and relationships that have been built throughout the campaign.

"We've empowered others in our local to get their coworkers signed up, too," says Malvin. Ramsey says the reason their coworkers are signing up and getting involved in the campaign is simple.

"It's easy to fight for something when you truly believe in it."

**Cover:** Day on the Hill Rally in the Rotunda

**Inside cover:** AFSCME members approach the State Capitol on Day on the Hill

**Photos, page 11:** AFSCME members from across Minnesota meet with their legislators. Pictured: Rep. Jay Xiong; Rep. John Lesch; Sen. Patricia Torres Ray. **Bottom:** Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey swings by Day on the Hill.