

Stepping UP

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



Living Our Values for Powerful Results

Inside: Unity is Our Only Path Forward

plus: seven reasons to work



www.afscmemn.org • June 2023 Issue

ONE STRONG, UNITED VOICE FOR MINNESOTA WORKERS

**Council 5
Executive Board
2022-2024**

OFFICERS

President: Eric Hesse, Local 404
Vice-President: Latonya Reeves, Local 552
Secretary: Louis McNutt, Local 221
Treasurer: Kathy Vake, Local 66

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julie Bleyhl, Council 5

EXECUTIVE BOARD

State

Dan Gorman, Local 600
Jessica Langhorst, Local 1092
Scuffy Paulson, Local 868
Mark Pozanc, Local 868
Jeff Vars, Local 915

County

Ronisha Buckner, Local 34
Aaron Gardner-Kocher, Local 34
Kenneth Garnier, Local 34
Willie Snyder, Local 707

City

Sarah Maxwell, Local 9

Private/Special District

Renae Pereira-Webb, Local 668

Schools, K-12

Marla Zappa, Local 56

University of Minnesota

MaxVast, Local 3800

District 1 - Northeast

Christina St. Germaine, Local 1092
Jolene Jamnick, Local 66

District 2 - West

Jennifer Swanson, Local 2385

District 3 - South/Southeast

Patrick Pearce, Local 638

District 4 - Central

Adam Booth, Local 1539

District 5 - East Metro

Dalia Baez, Local 722
Tamika Hannah, Local 34
Grace Jones, Local 4001
Tiffany Leff, Local 668

District 6 - West Metro

Grace Baltich, Local 34
Sametta Hill, Local 34
Martin Hoerth, Local 844
Samantha Sheppard, Local 977

Unity is Our Only Path Forward

Our union's mission is to fight for excellence in services to the public, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers. That means we must all continue to work together to achieve our collective goals and ensure our union, state, and country fully recover from the harmful effects of the COVID-19 pandemic -and the inequities it highlighted - and best position our union to seize upon the many opportunities we will encounter - together!

Check out afscmemn.org to learn about us.



AFSCME Council 5 Goals

These shared goals are imperative to growing our union and building affinity across our membership.

We will continue to support and provide resources to assist all locals in creating and strengthening action plans to grow and best serve our members.

Together, we will unify and achieve our goals!

Stepping UP

Eric Hesse, President
Julie Bleyhl, Executive Director

Information and story ideas should be submitted to:

Max Hall, Editor-in-Chief
Diana Holmes, Editor

Published by AFSCME Minnesota Council 5, AFL-CIO
300 Hardman Avenue South
South St. Paul, MN 55075-2469
Semi-annual

COVER PHOTO: Max Hall

Top Left: Ramsey County Locals 8, 151, 707, 1076, 1935
Top Right: Metro State Local 3998
Bottom: St. Paul Locals 1842, 2508 and 3757

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Stepping Up, 300 Hardman Ave. S.
South St. Paul, MN 55075-2469
Periodical postage paid at South St. Paul and additional mailing offices.
Publication No. 352180
Subscription price \$1 per copy; \$5 per year

((ILCA))

Member International Labor Communications Association
Editors: NewPublica
Print & Mailing: Seven Corners Printing

A Message from Executive Director Julie Bleyhl

Our union is going on the offense more than ever in the service of our members, loved ones, and communities. On a daily basis, we are striving to make sure the opinions of you, your colleagues, and your communities are acknowledged by all levels of government, employers, and the general public. It is all of YOU who keep our workplaces and communities safe. It is all of YOU that put others first and always ensure that we have fully funded and safe workplaces that you deserve - and that Minnesotans expect. Your excellence in serving millions of Minnesotans is undeniable, and it's time for our union family to take bold action and demand that your voices are not only heard, but truly listened to and acted upon. We won't rest until your contributions are fully recognized and respected.

All workers have the right to be safe on the job.

All public services and our workplaces must be FULLY FUNDED.

All communities deserve to have access to the quality, excellent services our AFSCME members provide.

Our union is taking a proactive stance to halt the assaults on our members and prevent attempts to silence their voices in the workplace by encouraging them to abandon their union membership. The evidence is clear: being part of a union leads to higher pay, superior benefits, protection against unjust termination by unsavory superiors, and the liberty to live a life with honor and dignity. Your job demands resilience and often involves putting yourself in harm's way. It's imperative that your workplace is fully staffed to alleviate the strain and reduce the likelihood of encountering hazardous circumstances.

Without adequate support from your coworkers, your safety and well-being are at stake.

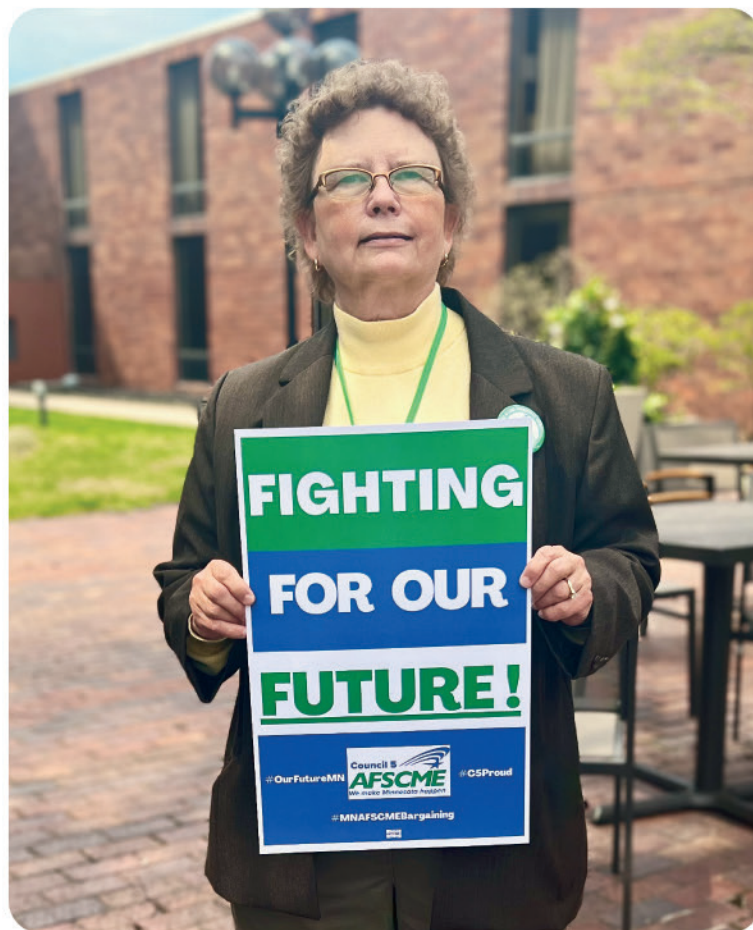
In coordination with our International Union, AFSCME Council 5 is launching our **Staff the Frontlines** Campaign. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been more than 500,000 job openings across the country that are in our union's bargaining units. We will promote these job openings and the freedom these

AFSCME jobs provide. We'll always stand by your side at the bargaining table... fighting for fair wages, benefits, and safe working conditions. Our efforts aim to recruit new workers to join your ranks and ensure current workers are not overlooked. While many employers seem to focus solely on recruitment, our union continues to lead the charge in the retention of existing workers on the job, as well.

Workers from the Minnesota Historical Society, Science Museum of Minnesota, Cornerstone, Regions Hospital, and several other workplaces have chosen to join our AFSCME Council 5 union family. They recognize our union's rich history of spearheading influential movements for progress, as well as our current efforts to construct a more resilient, secure, and adaptable future for our members, retirees, workers, and communities. We will accomplish our goals by doing this work together and empowering our union members the AFSCME Strong

way - with one conversation at a time and building our solidarity. **Stay AFSCME Strong!**

In solidarity,



THE FUTURE IS OURS: Our Path Forward

The Era of Gridlock is OVER!

For years, anti-worker lawmakers have stalled the progress that working people and retirees have demanded. As a result of the 2022 elections, our union helped maintain pro-worker control of the State House, flipped control of the State Senate to pro-worker leadership, and re-elected Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan and declared: The era of gridlock in St. Paul for working people is over!

Our union worked fiercely with our pro-worker trifecta and held them accountable to our shared values... and because of our members' stories and fierce activism, we delivered real results for working people, retirees, our loved ones.

Union members may ask, "why does my union get involved in politics?" Our answer is simple... Politics can either improve people's lives or take away hope of a fair and just future. And simply put, "When you are not at the table, you're on the menu."

We delivered for our union members, working people, retirees, our loved ones, and our communities:

- Paid Family and Medical Leave for all
- Earned Sick and Safe Time, guaranteeing paid sick leave for ALL workers
- BAN on private prisons in our state that we have fought for decades
- Historic increases in Local Government Aid, County, Program Aid, and State Agency budgets that will enable our members to fight at the bargaining table, ensure our programs and workloads aren't privatized, and ensure all Minnesotans can utilize the services we provide.
- Free breakfast and lunch for all children in our K-12 public schools
- PENSION funding to protect and secure our defined-benefit pensions AND put more money in our members' pockets by reducing employees' contributions to our pensions, that is FULLY FUNDED.
- Free public college
- Funding to remove lead pipes
- Cannabis legalization and expungement



- Unemployment insurance benefits expanded to hourly K-12 AND Higher education workers that our union especially led the fight on
- \$1 billion to build affordable housing across our state
- Historic investments, more than ever before in state history, in public safety funding
- Juneteenth is a state holiday, and no employer can discriminate against a worker due to their hairstyle
- State Budget forecasts tied to inflation to recognize that inflation is something that affects all working people & retirees
- Driver's Licenses for All that promotes public safety and ensures drivers have car insurance while on our roads
- Historic investments in transportation funding, including a 5-cent gas tax increase over the next 4 years and tied to inflation
- Eliminated required legislative approval of state contracts
- Expanded PELRA and added staffing ratios to subjects of bargaining in the public sector
- Prohibit price gouging of prescription drugs by Big Pharma and drug companies
- Expands voting rights, creates automatic voter registration, protection of election workers, and ensure individuals who have completed their time of incarceration that their right to vote is restored
- Funding for the three new veterans homes our union fought to build (Bemidji, Preston, and Montevideo), including our existing veterans' homes (along with funding for renovations)
- Closed loopholes that allowed corporations to evade taxes

When we fight, we win... in the workplace, in the halls of power, and in our communities. Your union family is leading the way to create a safer, stronger, and more thriving state for all working people, retirees, our loved ones, and our communities.

Thank you to the dozens of AFSCME Council 5 union members who shared your stories, sometimes more than once, to ensure lawmakers know what you do, how important your work is for our state, and the diligence and persistence you have shown in fighting for what we need and deserve.

2023 AFSCME Day on the Hill



■ Minnesota Governor Tim Walz

AFSCME Council 5 members and Chapter 5 retirees from all over our state met in St. Paul for our **AFSCME Council 5 Day on the Hill** in March 2023 to demand elected leaders **INVEST IN OUR WORK** and fight for our legislative agenda and priorities. **It was a major success!**

Nearly 500 members and retirees enjoyed a productive day filled with legislative updates, refreshed our lobbying and storytelling skills, discussed our priorities, heard from union leaders and rank-and-file members, and top elected officials, rallied in the Capitol Rotunda, toured the Capitol building, and **met with nearly 130 legislators!**

Our morning session included a member storytelling panel discussing issues affecting our members from the **Minnesota Historical Society, the Dept. of Human Services, Dept of Corrections and MN Dept. of Transportation, and representing our counties, cities, and Public Schools (K-12 and Higher Ed)**. These issues include the importance of paid family and medical leave, as well as the need to fully invest in public services, reduce burdensome caseloads, expand access to unemployment insurance, and so much more.

Our afternoon wouldn't be complete without our massive Capitol Rotunda Rally with AFSCME **Council 5 President Eric Hesse** proudly leading the charge! We heard from our **Executive Director Julie Bleyhl, Governor Tim Walz, and State Auditor Julie Blaha**. They all expressed their thanks for the hard work that AFSCME members do every day and asked us to hold our legislators accountable for public service investments that Minnesotans deserve and contributes to a high quality of life. **WHO ARE WE?! AFSCME!! WHO DOES THE WORK?! WE DO!!**

Our members then met with nearly 130 legislators to demand investments in public services after decades of disinvestment. **With a large surplus in our state, our members declared that now is the time to invest heavily in working people's lives.** The pandemic revealed every gap in public services and demonstrated the real front line workers *Make Minnesota Happen*, and the resulting labor shortage confirmed **the overdue need to invest in our work!** The people of Minnesota have spoken when our trifecta government with our shared values was elected as the majority in the House, Senate, and Governor's office. Our shared values of frontline public service will always serve Minnesota's best interests and the **AFSCME Green Machine** never quits!



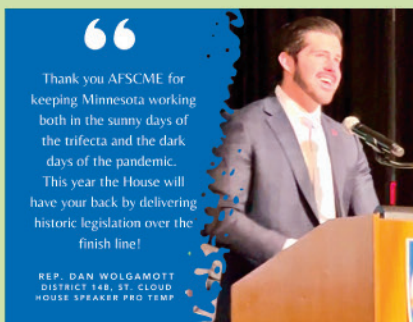
■ Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl



■ Minnesota State Auditor Julie Blaha



■ Member Panelists with House Rep. Dan Wolgamott (St. Cloud) Discuss Legislative Priorities



■ Rep. Dan Wolgamott



■ Council 5 President Eric Hesse

“

Thank you AFSCME for keeping Minnesota working both in the sunny days of the trifecta and the dark days of the pandemic. This year the House will have your back by delivering historic legislation over the finish line!

REP. DAN WOLGAMOTT
DISTRICT 148, ST. CLOUD
HOUSE SPEAKER PRO TEMP

Minnesota Historical Society Organizing and First Contract Victories!



■ Local 3173 Minnesota Historical Society Workers



■ Minnesota Historical Society at the State Fair



■ Kyle Imdieke, Minnesota Historical Society

AFSCME Council 5 welcomed our siblings at the **Minnesota Historical Society** (MnHS) into our union family. Nearly 300 new workers voted to join our union. After the National Labor Relations Board certified their election in November 2021, members soon after began their

first contract negotiations process and ultimately reached a successful tentative agreement in March 2023 after a very long and difficult contract negotiations process with their employer. The agreement includes significant improvements such as raising the minimum wage from \$15.64 to \$18 per hour, setting up a step increase framework for wage growth based on years of service, introducing new paid leave benefits, and many more benefits.

Member organizers **Matt Cassady** and **Kyle Imdieke** met with their co-workers and confirmed the reasons their coworkers overwhelmingly chose to join our union: the lack of transparency and pay equity in the workplace. These issues were so prevalent that the campaign was, in fact, born out of two separate organizing efforts that eventually merged into one. For many of the front-line employees who interacted with the public, the part-time seasonal jobs were unsustainable. According to the member organizers, management promised fixes to the hiring and benefits, but repeatedly failed to deliver real results. MnHS workers needed a voice in the workplace - by forming a union, they do!

“For months and months before the campaign, the administration has promised a vague revamp of our benefits and compensation,” said Imdieke. “They talked about it as a total solution and windfall to the workers. But it was just talk, no details, no schedule.”

“At the end of the day, it was primarily about the front line staff,” Imdieke added. “We all wanted them seen, to be heard, and to be treated as professionals. The historical interpreters, the library workers, the visitor services staff are MnHS to the vast majority of our patrons. They deserve respect.”

For MnHS, it turned out to be more than just a union election victory – the campaign was about worker solidarity and building a workplace that reflects their values.

“I’m confident in our future, now,” Imdieke said. “The relationships we built through this campaign, through our union, are strong enough to weather whatever is ahead of us.”

This past October at the AFSCME Council 5 Fall Convention, members of **Minnesota Historical Society Local 3173** were awarded the distinguished **Jerry Wurf**

Organizing Award for their organizing efforts which were then shared as a model for other CWU locals across the country. **Congratulations, MnHS!**



■ Minnesota Historical Society receives the Jerry Wurf Organizing Award at the C5 Fall Convention



■ Regions Hospital Workers

Science Museum of Minnesota Workers Successfully Vote to Join AFSCME

Workers at the **Science Museum of Minnesota** (SMM) voted to unionize with our AFSCME Council 5 family, advocating for dignity, respect, and acknowledgement for their labor. In spite of a significant anti-union pressure campaign by SMM management, our members spoke decisively that they wanted a voice in the workplace, fair pay for a day’s work, dignified paid leave policies, and more. SMM members have the full weight of our union as they continue their fight and momentum for dignity and respect as they negotiate a first contract with the SMM.

This victory adds to the growing number of Minnesota workers, including those at Cornerstone, the **Minnesota Historical Society**, and RHSC, Inc at **Regions Hospital** who have joined our AFSCME

Council 5 family to demand transformative change and a dignified life. With their unified voice, these workers will be able to advocate for a more equitable, safe, and thriving work environment.

Walker Art Center Workers Successfully Fought for a Voice



■ Walker Art Center Workers

Our AFSCME Green Machine grew stronger when workers at the **Walker Arts Center** voted to join the AFSCME Council 5 family. Members of Walker Art Center Local 4493 in Minneapolis approved a historic first contract in October 2021 that includes major improvements around layoff and recall rights, six weeks of paid family leave (there was none previously) and raises which average 11% over the five-year contract term. These victories came after many internal and public shows of union solidarity.

Our labor movement grows when workers stand together for dignity and respect in the workplace - and a REAL voice. We continue to show the power of this ever-emerging industry of cultural workers across Minnesota and the country where workers are choosing to join the AFSCME family!

GROWING OUR UNION



Campaign Launch: Staff the Frontlines

Across the country, more than 500,000 public service jobs remain unfilled, with thousands of open positions in Minnesota alone. One often cited reason for this is uncompetitive wages that affect workers in nursing homes, cultural institutions, K-12 public schools and colleges and universities, state and local government, libraries, secure facilities, and many other workplaces. Our union is taking action through our **Staff the Frontlines** campaign to promote job openings and highlight the successes of our members who have fought hard for fair contracts and dignity on the job.

Although we have made progress in recruiting new workers, we must also prioritize retaining our existing workers. Our union is leading the charge to ensure that employers understand the importance of valuing their employees and treating them with respect. We will not rest until our workers are paid fairly and have safe working conditions.

A Banner Year for Cultural Workers

Workers at a variety of cultural institutions across America are

demanding a seat at the table and a voice in boosting pay, improving workplace safety, equity, and resolving other long-standing issues.

In the last two years, more workers turned to AFSCME's Cultural Workers United (CWU) campaign to build power, marking two years of remarkable success for CWU.

"Public service workers at museums, libraries, zoos, science centers and aquariums are the stewards of cherished community resources," said **AFSCME President Lee Saunders**. "For too long, these cultural workers have been underpaid and undervalued, with little ability to raise their voice on the job. But now, there is a nationwide movement of cultural workers standing up to demand the power and protections of a union - and they are finding a home with Cultural Workers United - AFSCME."

AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl said, "Cultural institutions are proving to the labor movement that working people are ready to take control of their lives and their destiny and improve their workplaces and communities. We are proud to welcome hundreds of these workers who have joined our movement for justice, community, and solidarity."

Living Our Values

Workplace Solidarity

As AFSCME members on the frontline, we are deeply invested in the work we do every day and we stand together to fight for what we need. **Together, we can make a difference!**



■ Jessica Langhorst, Local 1092, at 2022 AFSCME International Convention, Philadelphia

For example, our members at the **Department of Human Services (DHS)** took quick action when their employer eliminated a crucial shift bonus for workers at DHS to fill challenging shifts. "We knew that this harmful action by our employer required an all-of-the-above approach to fight to reinstate this critical shift bonus," said **Jessica Langhorst**, President of the AFSCME DHS Policy Committee from Local 1092 in Moose Lake, MN. She explained how "Hundreds of AFSCME DHS workers from every corner of our state sent emails and made phone calls directed to the Commissioner and the Director of DHS Direct Care and Treatment (DCT) to try and compel the employer to reinstate this shift bonus. We took action together and we are stronger because of it."

These workers continue to push hard on management to bring this back and have even pushed the employer so hard as a collective force that they relented and heeded their call to reinstate our New Employee Orientation (NEO). "In our recent NEOs, we have seen 100% new member sign ups!" Security Counselor and AFSCME Local 1092 Chief Steward **Nicholas Weerts** said. "We are able to put a face to our union, show that our union truly cares for our fellow co workers, and we can share the freedoms and benefits that come with our union membership. We show the power of the Union Difference in getting these events back up and running again!"

Our Union Continues to Fight for Our Heroes

In 2018, our union led the effort to pass a fully-funded bill that authorized the construction of three new Veteran homes - a major victory for our union who fought for its passage, **now this is becoming a reality!** The veterans homes in Bemidji, Montevideo, and Preston are nearly complete with an anticipated summer 2023 opening! These homes will be ready for our veterans and it is critical we help staff these workplaces. For many years, increased housing insecurity for our nation's heroes has grown to an unacceptable level. That is why we fought so hard to build these new veterans homes. These homes will house hundreds of our heroes and potentially add a few hundred new members to our union family.



Bemidji



Montevideo



Preston

■ MN Department of Veterans Affairs

Thanks to the ceaseless effort from our union members, and especially those who served in the United States Armed Forces and those with families in the

military or law enforcement. We will have these three new veterans homes so that no veteran will be left behind. Our union will continue our fight for fully funded veterans homes all across our state - every facility, everywhere.

These new facilities offer a great opportunity for new workers to join our union. Our members ensure that veterans receive the safe, dependable, and compassionate care they have earned and deserved. We advocate for Minnesotans at every level of state government with the power to make positive changes in the services and facilities available in our communities.

AFSCME proudly cares for our VETERANS!

HIRING at New Veterans Homes

If you are interested in a future career, or know someone who is, we encourage you to visit the **Minnesota Careers website** for job opportunities in Preston, Bemidji, or Montevideo by visiting careers.mn.gov.

New Holiday: Juneteenth

Juneteenth is a commemorative date of the emancipation of enslaved African-Americans in 1865. The first day it was recognized as a federal holiday was in 2021, when President Joe Biden signed the **Juneteenth National Independence Day** into law. In Minnesota, Governor Tim Walz signed this legislation into state law that was championed by our union members, coalition partners, and community allies.

The fight to include Juneteenth as a paid holiday in **ALL** of our union contracts has been a successful one, but there are still contracts that do not recognize Juneteenth as a paid holiday. This is unacceptable. **Employers should not create a floating holiday or exchange another holiday for Juneteenth.** Our members will continue to fight for a recognized paid Juneteenth holiday in ALL contracts across our union.

As an AFSCME member, there are various ways we can combat discrimination and indifference in your workplace:

1. **Educate yourself:** Start by learning about the issues affecting your fellow workers and you can start by having



■ Local 2474, Hennepin Healthcare Celebrates New Juneteenth Holiday

meaningful and personal one-on-one conversations.

2. **Speak up:** Don't remain silent if you witness discrimination of any kind. Call it out and confront it, even if it feels uncomfortable or difficult to do so.
3. **Organize:** Work with your fellow union members to organize and take collective action against discriminatory practices in your workplace.
4. **Support one another:** Support and uplift your fellow union members and all coworkers. Create a space for open dialogue and encourage one another to share their experiences and feelings.
5. Shop at Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) businesses and **always shop local -especially local union businesses!**

Remember, this is an ongoing process and we must all work together to create an inclusive and equitable environment for all workers. Together, we will make a difference and create a better future for ourselves and future generations.



AFSCME International President Lee Saunders
 ■ Fought for Recognition of Juneteenth as a Federal Holiday

Minnesota Red Cross AFSCME Member Wins Never Quit Award

AFSCME International proudly presented the **Never Quit Service Award** to our fierce and dedicated member **Ashley Peterson**, from Local 3931, Council 5 based in Mankato, for her exceptional work with the **Red Cross of Minnesota**. Despite the grueling demands of a typical blood drive that involves setting up early in the morning, performing countless blood draws, and packing up late in the evening, Ashley never gives up! She perseveres through the toughest challenges, including dealing with patients who would sometimes pass out or vomit, to ensure that life-saving blood samples were shipped off to St. Paul. Ashley's unwavering commitment to her job is a testament to the resilience and dedication of AFSCME workers, who never quit in the face of adversity.



"I lost my brother to cancer a year ago, so blood donations to me are so personally important," Peterson said. "I'm doing an

important job and my kids know I'm doing an important job."

First-time donors are Peterson's favorite donors.

"I like to walk them through the process," Peterson said. "The needle's not as big as your brain's imagining it to be.

Ashley's personal calling led to a flourishing career and with a supportive family, Ashley Peterson's journey has been anything but ordinary. Along with her Red Cross family, Ashley's newfound AFSCME family, of which she is a newly-appointed shop steward of Local 3931, has become an integral part of her life. Like Ashley, our AFSCME members serve in their communities with a passion to help others.

Congratulations, Ashley! We're proud of your work and commitment to your communities.

AFSCME Members Always Give Back

AFSCME members give back to our communities. When Minnesota sends a call for volunteers, AFSCME responds en masse. And we are proud of our members who step up when Minnesota and surrounding states need them most.

- **Winona State University AFSCME Local 945** donated \$200 to the Winona Area Humane Society from their winter celebration. Member Bob Olson presented the check and stands in front of an area that will be replenished with supplies from their donation.



■ Local 945 member Bob Olson with Winona Area Humane Society worker.

- **Jessica Langhorst, DHS AFSCME Local 1092**, is a current volunteer firefighter and served in the Minnesota National Guard.



■ Scuffy Paulson, Local 868

- **Scuffy Paulson, MnDOT AFSCME Local 868**, served in the Army and is a leader within his local American Legion.

- **Marilee Thomas, AFSCME Local 2385** Southwest Minnesota State University, serves on the American Red Cross Disaster Action Team.

Thank you, **Jessica, Scuffy, Marilee**, and **Local 945** for your service and dedication to Minnesotans! And thanks to the many members of our union who serve your community and have served in our Armed Forces, volunteer fire departments, and more.

Let us know of your service, too! Email us at Communications@afscmemn.org.



■ City of St. Paul Locals 1842, 2508 and 3857

STRONGER TOGETHER, SAFER TOGETHER

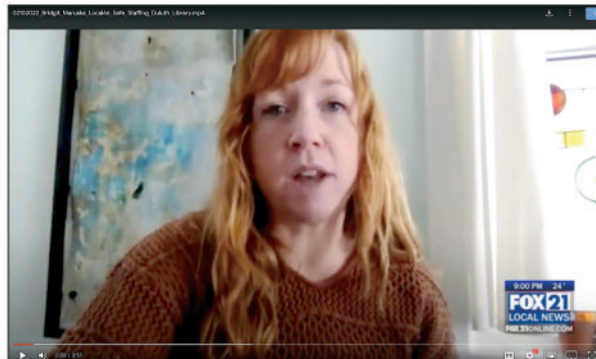
AFSCME Members Call Out Unsafe Working Conditions

Our union members fight every single day to ensure safe staffing in their workplaces - a critical priority of our union. **City of St. Paul AFSCME Locals 1842, 2508 and 3757**, along with labor affiliate members, showed up in FORCE at a St. Paul Council Meeting to share their stories and demand changes to address unsafe libraries in their communities.

And not only that, but on April 18, 2023, members of AFSCME **Local 1842** and **2508** held an informational picket outside of the city's State of the City address, where our members called out the REAL issues within the city and the need for management to come to the table in good faith and negotiate a fair and equitable contract with our members. **Great show of solidarity!**

AFSCME Local 3998 members at Metropolitan State University organized an informational picket to draw attention to their library's unsafe conditions. President Chris Gevara said, "Despite years of discussions with the university administration, no progress had been made on the issue

and our picket was held during a MinnState Board of Trustees meeting at the university in October where they certainly took notice of our action. The driving public took notice of the event, which yielded dozens of honking from them in agreement. The Chancellor



■ Bridget Maruska, former Local 66 member

and Board members, including city and state leaders, expressed gratitude to AFSCME for bringing the issue to their attention and pledged to address it at various levels once they left the meeting.

After a second employee was assaulted at work, **Local 66 of Duluth Public Library** members spoke out publicly about the safety concerns in their workplace. A Fox 21 news

report featured an interview with now-former AFSCME Local 66 -City of Duluth member **Bridget Maruska**, who discussed the safety hazards in the library and the mental health challenges faced by the vulnerable population. Following our members' interview with the news, Duluth Mayor Emily Larson then accelerated the hiring process for two part-time library security specialists.

In just one week alone, more than one dozen **correctional officers** and workers in secure facilities were attacked while on the job. Our union took immediate action to condemn these brutal attacks and emphasized the critical need for Safe Staffing in all workplaces to prevent such incidents from happening again and ensuring enough workers can respond to these incidents. We took to the media to

share our members' stories and concerns and touched the hearts of many who expressed their solidarity AND support our call for transformative action.

Thank you, AFSCME members, for addressing the unsafe conditions in our workplaces!



■ AFSCME C5 Press Conference at St. Paul Capitol. At podium: C5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl, alongside (from left) Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman, Rep. Dan Wolgamott, C5 External Relations and Planning Director Max Hall, C5 Political Organizer Cabbas Abdi, C5 Legislative Director Ethan Vogel, C5 Political Action Director Kent Eken, AFSCME Local 915 Vice President and AFSCME CPC President Jeff Vars. Photo credit: Diana Holmes, Communications Coordinator, AFSCME Council 5.

MAJOR VICTORY: AFSCME Priority to Ban Private Prisons Passes Into Law

AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director **Julie Bleyhl** and AFSCME Corrections Policy Committee President and Corrections Officer **Jeff Vars (AFSCME Local 915 - Oak Park Heights)**, joined Speaker of the House **Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park)** and Rep. **Dan Wolgamott (DFL-St. Cloud)** at a press conference on March 23, 2023 prior to the bill being debated and ultimately passed the Minnesota House HF 1200 off the House floor. This bill was included in the omnibus bill which was signed into law.

"I have worked alongside our members in public safety who work in state and local government for more than 20 years in working to get a ban on private prisons passed in our state and our members are excited that this legislation will be debated on the House floor today and slated for swift passage," Julie Bleyhl said.

AFSCME Local 915 Corrections Officer Jeff Vars stated: "As public service workers, we put public safety above all else, while private prison corporations put public safety last, and profit first. Lack of training, ignoring safety concerns brought forward by staff, poor food being served to offenders, poor heating

and A/C systems, and so much more are emblematic of the private prison industry that refuses to spend money on maintaining the facility or protecting the staff and offenders in their care and custody."

This is a major victory our union members have long fought to achieve, and we have

worked closely with the House and Senate to pass this legislation and have it signed into law by Governor Tim Walz.

We will never give up to ensure that the for-profit incarceration of human beings is **ILLEGAL ACROSS AMERICA.**



Council 5
AFSCME
We make Minnesota happen

BAN PRIVATE PRISONS

For-profit incarceration is immoral

AFSCME LOCAL 915

Our Fight for Front Line Worker Pay



■ AFSCME Council 5 members rally at the Capitol for Front Line Worker Pay Celebration.

“

Senate Republicans want to limit front line worker pay to only health care workers. I am a health care worker. And as a health care worker, I am offended that Minnesota Senate Republicans are holding up paying bonuses to all front line workers who keep our state running during the most difficult times we have experienced in generations.

Pay the whole team who Make Minnesota Happen!

CARMEN BROWN

Clerical Worker, Hennepin Healthcare
Vice President, AFSCME Council 5
President, AFSCME Local 977



#AFSCMEC5Proud
#InvestInUs
#MakeItRight

said this check would be **TAX FREE** on the state side. Our union also secured legislative language requiring employers to notify eligible workers so as many workers who were eligible could apply.

Our union also operated a large-scale, council-wide outreach campaign to ensure as many eligible workers as possible applied for Front Line Worker Pay. We also encouraged members to tell their loved ones who qualified to do the same! This was a huge victory for front line workers who could not work from home during the pandemic. In a membership mailing to current non-members of our union on this topic, we signed up more than 235 new members from jobs that qualified for this hazard bonus pay! That's the power of OUR union membership!

Our union strongly advocated for frontline pay for workers who kept Minnesota going during the pandemic. **And our members' activism delivered incredible results.** On April 29, 2022, Governor Tim Walz signed the Frontline Worker Pay agreement into law that included \$500 million in hero

paychecks to qualifying front line workers.

This was the largest front line worker pay bill passed by any state in America. Roughly 660,000 front line workers were eligible to receive a hero check. Our union fought for and secured legislation that

Together, we will keep fighting for additional hazard bonus pay for our front line heroes and sustained, longterm investments in their everyday life and work. This massive victory, and others, continue to propel our union forward.

Equity, Health and Safety Initiative

Our union has been fighting tirelessly for equity, health, and safety initiatives across our membership that directly affects the lives of our members. We've been pushing for infrastructure investments, reducing the exorbitant costs of healthcare and childcare, working

to help remove barriers to employment and union membership, fully funding higher ed to reduce barriers to seeking a higher education and so much more. We will not rest until our members' voices are truly heard and valued at the highest levels, and their concerns and ideas are

translated into bold, transformative action that guarantees a better future for all.

Please let us know if your local has an active equity, health and/or safety program or if you participate in such activities with your employer!

7 Reasons to Work Union

1

BIGGER – AND MORE EQUAL – PAYCHECKS.

Despite higher employment – and much, MUCH higher corporate profits – wages aren't even keeping up with inflation. That's no accident; it's because powerful corporate interests have eroded the forces that made sure workers get paid what they're owed. Why do employers hate unions so much? The answer is obvious: unions make it much harder for those employers to underpay, exploit, and abuse workers. Unions raise wages, and they close the gap between the highest and lowest salaries in the workplace by holding management accountable. Unions also boost paychecks for non-union workers. Union contracts set the standard for non-union workers in the same occupation or industry.

2

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE.

Healthcare in America is extremely expensive. Luckily, your union fights to make sure you get the best and most affordable health care possible. Union workers are 25 percent more likely to be covered by health insurance, and their health insurance plans are 53 percent better. Union political committees – funded by the voluntary contributions of members – also fight to elect candidates who support the right to health care, and hold them accountable once they're in office.

3

BETTER BENEFITS.

Have you ever gone to work sick or skipped an amazing vacation because you couldn't get the time off work? Your union knows you'll have better quality of life – and will be a better employee – if you have paid leave benefits you can count on. Collective bargaining means union jobs provide more sick days, more vacation days, more holidays, and more advanced notice of scheduling.

4

THE CHANCE TO RETIRE – SERIOUSLY!

Millions of American workers aren't sure if they'll ever be able to retire, and millennials are even more pessimistic about their odds of retirement. Union members are 22 percent more likely to be covered by an employer-based pension, and their pension plans are 28 percent richer in terms of how much the employer provides per hour.

5

SOMEONE IN YOUR CORNER WHEN YOU NEED TO FIGHT THE BOSS.

In most jobs, you can be disciplined or even fired just because your supervisor says so – no proof needed, and no appeal allowed. Union contracts guarantee your rights to due process – and they'll help you fight back every step of the way.

6

A FAMILY OF WORKING PEOPLE JUST LIKE YOU.

Union organizing is built on the foundation of solidarity: the idea that an injury to one is an injury to all and we must stand together against forces of exploitation and oppression. Being a union member is like being in a big family ready to lift you up, cheer you on, and fight for our shared rights as working people. Your union membership doesn't end when you clock out, and your union family stands ready to support you 24/7.

7

A WAY TO FIGHT THE POWERFUL INTERESTS HOLDING US BACK.

Over the past few decades, the 1 percent in America has only grown more powerful in the workplace. And as they've gotten richer, they've also taken over our democracy by donating huge checks to candidates who promise to maintain their stranglehold on power. Fighting back can seem daunting. But with your union, you can do your part to make change. We're stronger together, whether in the workplace, on the picket line, or at the ballot box. Unions are essential to making our biggest and boldest dreams possible.

AFSCME Advantage Empowers Members

In addition to powerful workplace solidarity and power, the power of your union membership includes an AFSCME members-only program called AFSCME Advantage. As members, we have additional benefits to access services and keep more money in our pocket. Huge savings that not only provide peace of mind, but add to our quality of life. Our members can access discounts for travel (theme parks, car rental, lodging); cell phone plans; entertainment (concerts, sporting events); access to credit counseling; hardship funding; mortgage financing; renters, homeowners and pet insurance; educational scholarships for you, your child, or grandchild; identify theft and much more! Visit AFSCME.org for information on these valuable services.

Stay tuned for additional benefits for dues-paying AFSCME members that will **SAVE YOU MONEY** and **GAIN NEW SKILLS**.

Better benefits, a voice on the job, due process rights, and a union family that has your back. That's the POWER of your union membership!

Member Benefits

Being an AFSCME member doesn't only give you an advantage at the bargaining table – it also gets you access to discounts and benefits that can help make life a little easier.



White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment

The first report of the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment was released! Established through President Joe Biden's Executive Order 14025, Vice President Kamala Harris and former Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh served as the task force's co-chairs.

This report marked a historic moment in our nation. Never before has a president or administration taken such a bold 'whole-of-government' approach to identify and eliminate barriers to union organizing, collective bargaining, and employment. It's a testament to our unwavering commitment to ensuring our country lives up to its values as working people and union members.

We thank Marty Walsh for his diligent work as U.S. Secretary of Labor and wish him all the best as he will serve as Executive Director of the National Hockey League Players Association, a labor union representing professional hockey players. **Congratulations and thank you Marty!**

AFSCME Council 5 Fall Convention

AFSCME convention delegates gathered in-person in Fall 2022 in St. Paul.

Convention highlights include distinguished award recipients, calls to action from AFSCME Council 5 President Eric Hesse, Executive Director Julie Bleyhl, AFSCME President Lee Saunders, Governor Tim Walz, elections for Council 5 Executive Board, and more.



Newly-elected Council 5 Executive Board Members. Note: Not all executive board members present.



Rick Scott Political Activism Award was presented to **AFSCME Council 5 Frontline Workers and Testifiers** to honor the work of dozens of frontline workers who provided critical testimony that enabled this to become law. **Christina St. Germaine of AFSCME Local 1092** accepted this award on behalf of all AFSCME Council 5 Frontline Workers and Testifiers.

Mike Buesing Local Union Development Award was presented to **Ramsey County AFSCME Locals 8, 151, 707, 1076 and 1935** for their massive and successful informational picket during the middle of a huge snowstorm. AFSCME Local Ramsey County Presidents accepted the award.



Eliot Seide Communications Award was presented to **AFSCME Local 66 City of Duluth** to highlight their march and rally on the steps of Duluth City Hall, where hundreds of members and their loved ones showed their massive support for a fair contract and called out the employer for their disturbing proposal to harm their health insurance. **Council 5 Treasurer Kathy Vake** of AFSCME Local 66 accepted this award on behalf of Local 66 City of Duluth.

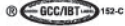


Jerry Wurf Organizing Award was presented to the **Minnesota Historical Society**. Left to Right: Eric Knutson, Molly Jessup (accepting award), Maia LeClair, Teresa Tjepkes, and Sonja Isaacson accepted this award on behalf of Minnesota Historical Society workers!



Nonprofit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Twin Cities, MN
Permit # 7382

AFSCME Council 5
300 Hardman Ave South
South St. Paul, MN 55075



Return Service Requested

Want to Build Power in Your Workplace?

Membership provides a great way to build relationships, organize members around central issues, and build worker-centered power in your workplace.

Contact the Member Action Center (MAC) at **(651) 450-4990** for information or connect with your **AFSCME Council 5 Field Representative** to schedule training, learn about AFSCME Advantage cost-saving benefits, and more.

Check out our website **AFSCMEMN.ORG** and sign up for a **MemberLink** account at **MEMBERS.AFSCMEMN.ORG** to access more information.

We Want to Hear From You!

Do you have a unique job or do you volunteer in your community? Do your friends and neighbors have questions



■ St. Paul AFSCME C5 Members Picket Outside the State of the City meeting, April 2023.

about what we do as a union? Is there an AFSCME hero in your workplace? Did a recent action you saw with your fellow union members resonate with you or your coworkers? Reach out to us and tell your story!

AFSCME Council 5 is member-driven, small "d" democratic union that is run by members, for members – your union doesn't work without workers front and center. This is YOUR UNION.

Step up and inspire your fellow AFSCME members by sharing your story. Send us a short description of the story you want to tell. We'll connect with you to develop your story into a blog post, video, or magazine article.

Email us at - **communications@afscmemn.org** to get started!