

Walker Art Center Workers Unionize with AFSCME Council 5

After a full year of organizing and diligent negotiation with management, workers at the Walker Art Center won voluntary recognition of their union and joined the AFSCME family.

The workers at Walker Arts Center, a world-renowned contemporary art museum in Minneapolis, join hundreds of museum employees across the country who are standing up and demanding a voice in the workplace. Their successful campaign to be recognized by management demonstrates the strength of their solidarity.

The recognition of Walker Art Center workers adds 68 new workers to our union. Welcome to the family, WAC!

Non-CERP State Workers Reach MOU on Early Retirement Incentives

Late last week, state employees were offered an MOU from Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) to make early retirement available to agencies to utilize as a cost saving measure. AFSCME members who are not eligible for the Corrections Early Retirement Plan voted overwhelmingly to approve the MOU so that agencies can implement and offer an early retirement incentive.

An additional MOU was offered to our members in the Corrections Early Retirement Plan. These members ultimately voted to reject this MOU.

The approved Non-CERP MOU is being presented to the legislative Subcommittee on Employee Relations (SER) and can be implemented by state agencies after its approval.

Governor Walz Pushes for More COVID-19 Economic Relief

In late November, Governor Tim



Workers at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis won voluntary recognition of their union with AFSCME this week. Welcome, siblings!

Walz announced his proposal for a COVID-19 economic relief package to keep businesses afloat, support workers struggling to get by, and help Minnesota families keep food on the table. Since his announcement, Gov. Walz has been negotiating with legislative leaders to pass a long-overdue relief package as we face a long, tough winter grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gov. Walz also wrote a letter last month to Congressional leaders to act quickly and pass a bill that will fund the front lines and provide assistance for local businesses and working families. In the letter, Gov. Walz noted that Minnesota used CARES Act funds for essential investments in testing, PPE, and critical support for childcare providers, small businesses, and our education system. But CARES Act funding expires on December 30, leaving states without federal resources to combat the rising tide of COVID-19 infections and the continued toll of an economic downturn.

The COVID-19 relief package proposal includes critical measures to support working families and keep

small businesses afloat. The package would extend unemployment benefits for an additional 13 weeks, helping as many as 100,000 workers whose benefits will expire at the end of this month. It would also provide a \$500 one-time emergency payment to struggling families and pay restaurants to provide food for healthcare workers, homeless shelters, and long-term care facilities.

If legislative leaders agree to a relief package, Gov. Walz will call a special session to pass it. But until Republicans in the Senate decide to put working people before their corporate donors, the deal remains in limbo.

Call your legislator and urge them to pass COVID-19 relief now!

Family Advocates at the Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery join Local 3481

After last month's unanimous vote, family advocates at The Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery formally joined Local 3481.

Welcome to the family, siblings!

Hennepin County Fights Back Against Job Cuts - and Wins Big

Projected budget shortfalls at Hennepin County threatened the jobs and livelihoods of hundreds of AFSCME members who make Hennepin County work. In response, these workers organized to demand that the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners prioritize the critical services Hennepin County employees provide. After weeks of sustained advocacy, the Board of Commissioners passed enough funding to ensure that workers will not lose their jobs, and the budget will not be balanced on the backs of working people.

AFSCME members achieved this incredible victory by banding together and showing solidarity across all six locals. Their campaign began with an AFSCME spirit week, showcasing the critical work performed by Hennepin County employees. Their efforts culminated with a distanced rally at the Hennepin County Ridgedale site, where members stood together to demand that the County not go the route of austerity and instead prioritize the services that Hennepin County residents depend on.

Just days after their big rally, the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed the utilization of ballpark sales tax revenue in the amount of \$2.425 million to protect from any potential FTE reduction across the Hennepin County Library System. This is a huge victory for our union siblings, and a great step forward in preventing against any austerity measures that would have hurt AFSCME members and their communities.

Congratulations on your victory, siblings!

Ramsey County Locals Reach TA

Last week, the joint bargaining team from all five Ramsey County AFSCME locals reached a TA on a one-year contract. Though a challenging budget environment made this round

of negotiations especially difficult, the Ramsey County bargaining team secured a .5% general wage adjustment and held the line on health care.

The contract also includes paid time to get a COVID test, equity for \$2.50 on-call rate on all affected contracts, and OT language to include more social workers.

As part of the negotiating process, the team also successfully negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on a shift bonus at the nursing home.

Congratulations, family!

Two Washington County groups ratify their contracts

This week, two groups with Local 517 Washington County ratified their contracts.

Exempt and Non-Exempt contract groups ratified a one year contract for 2021, which has been approved by the Washington County Board. The AFSCME groups will receive a 2% lump sum on 1/8/21 and another \$1000 lump sum on 7/9/21. A reasonable health insurance increase was negotiated and the parties will be back at the table at the end of 2021 for another round of negotiations.

The Community Development Agency group negotiated a two-year contract with Washington County. The contract includes a 1.3% wage increase in 2021 and 2% wage increase in 2022, while health insurance increases



AFSCME members at Hennepin County rally for the critical services our neighbors count on.

(Photos courtesy of Brad Sigal, AFSCME Local 3800, @SigalPhotos.)

were kept to a minimum with split of insurance increases. This contract adds 3 weeks of paid parental leave for the birth or adoption of a child and also adds an additional holiday on June 19th in recognition of Juneteenth. The contract also increases bereavement leave, improves language for leave of absence to include employees' parents or to settle an estate, and expands the definition of "family" for inclusiveness. This contract was ratified by members and has passed CDA board approval.

Congratulations on your hard work paying off, siblings!

Resources for Members

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

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

Be well and stay safe.