



## **Lee Saunders, AFSCME President**

Lee Saunders is the president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, with 1.4 million members in communities across the nation, serving in hundreds of different occupations – from nurses to corrections officers, child care providers to sanitation workers. He was elected at the union’s 40th International Convention in June 2012.

Saunders, the first African American to serve as AFSCME's president, was previously elected secretary-treasurer at the union’s 39th International Convention in July 2010.

Saunders grew up in a union household in Cleveland, Ohio. This inspired him to join the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA) when he began working for the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services in 1975. His father was a bus driver and a member of the Amalgamated Transit Union. His mother was a community organizer and, after raising two sons, returned to college and became a community college professor and a member of the American Association of University Professors.

Saunders began his career with AFSCME in 1978 as a labor economist. He has served in the capacities of assistant director of Research and Collective Bargaining Services, director of Community Action and deputy director of Organizing and Field Services. Saunders also served as executive assistant to the president of AFSCME and was responsible for managing what is acknowledged to be one of the most effective political and legislative operations in the history of the American labor movement. AFSCME’s fundraising clout, member mobilization and lobbying expertise are unmatched in the ranks of the AFL-CIO and beyond.

Under Saunders' leadership, the union has launched a program called AFSCME Strong that builds power through internal and external organizing, and recognizes the individual contributions AFSCME members make to serving and strengthening their communities. The program is credited with growth in AFSCME membership despite current challenges faced by the labor movement as a whole.

He has served as administrator of a number of AFSCME councils and large local unions across the country.

For nearly four years, he served as administrator of AFSCME District Council 37, New York City's largest public employee union, representing 125,000 members. In that capacity, he was successful in restoring the fiscal health, integrity and good name of the council and its 56 affiliated local unions.

Saunders serves as a vice president of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, which guides the daily work of the labor federation; he also serves as chair of its Political Committee. He is an at-large member of the Democratic National Committee, president of Working America and treasurer of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. He also serves as a board member of Priorities USA and the Democracy Alliance.

He received a Master of Arts degree from Ohio State University in 1974, a year after earning his Bachelor of Arts degree from Ohio University.

Saunders and his wife Lynne live in Washington, DC, and have two sons, Lee, Jr. and Ryan.