

Front-line Worker Pay Working Group Update

AFSCME Council 5 has been working to lift-up the voices of our members who have been working on the front lines of COVID-19. A legislative working group has been negotiating to establish a one-time payment for thousands of our members, along with other front line workers carrying out essential functions in Minnesota.

Many of our members have told their stories at the Capitol, informing the working group of all the different types of jobs that required in-person work since the pandemic began, as well as the lack of help and recognition they've received. Our member leaders have made it clear that this working group cannot leave any front line workers behind. We've asked them to use as much of the funding available from the *American Rescue Plan Act*, instead of limiting themselves to only \$250 million. While \$250 million is certainly a large sum of money, we know this won't be enough to ensure each front line worker receives a meaningful payment.

It is now time for the legislators and commissioners tasked with building this program to come to an agreement. The legislature appears to be stuck at a standstill, mostly over the Senate's desire to fire commissioners and their rigid view of what workers are "worthy" of *Hero Pay*. Recognizing our members' contributions to the state shouldn't be a partisan issue, and we've waited long enough for them to reach agreement.

Please send your legislators an email demanding that they reach an agreement by the end of October, and that they cannot leave any front-line workers behind.

17th Annual AFSCME C5 Fall Membership Convention Highlights

Our annual membership convention was held on Sept 30 and Oct 1. Almost 400 delegates from 66 locals participated in 12 workshops, and convention debate and discussion over two days. We heard from distinguished speakers and featured member videos highlighting the important work of our members across all sectors.

International President Lee Saunders thanked us for what we're doing and congratulated **Victoria Johnson from Local 744 at Minnesota Veteran's Homes** for her political activism and hard work this past year caring for our nation's veterans and other members of our Council who continue to keep our state functioning. Saunders advocated for federal funding to keep us going during this challenging time with the passage of the *American Rescue Plan* and continues to lead our national effort to pass President Biden's massive infrastructure deal and *Build Back Better* plan.

Executive Director Julie Bleyhl outlined our successes over this past year which includes clearing the grievance backlog that was outstanding when she was appointed as C5 executive director. We revitalized our staff sector liaisons for state, city, county, municipal, private, and non-profits. Liaisons were instrumental in connecting the Council with rank-and-file members for legislative testimony, press conferences, work actions, and more. Julie also outlined our union's strategic goals and vision that we will all continue to work towards achieving. She also shared our powerful legislative victory of creating a \$250 million fund to provide hero pay to all front-line workers who keep our state functioning.

Council 5 President Eric Hesse stressed the importance of our continued advocacy for safe staffing issues which usually involves overworked and understaffed workplaces. His message reinforced that everyone is part of our union and should feel welcomed regardless of political beliefs, sexual-orientation, or gender identity. Eric reinforced our One AFSCME team approach to tackling the issues we face.

Chapter 5 Retiree President Jeff Birttnen announced the creation of grant funding for Chapter 5 sub-chapters to access for organizational activities. He said Retirees continue to work with Executive Director Julie Bleyhl on creating a seamless transition from active membership to retiree membership and encouraged locals to support this mission by paying for member's first year of retiree dues.

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Governor Tim Walz congratulated us on fighting for a good contract despite challenges we faced as a state. He promised to be a labor governor when he took office and kept that promise when he rejected anti-union legislation when Senate Republicans voted to take away 2.5% pay for over 20,000 of our state employee members. He fought attacks in court alongside our union and we succeeded!

We recognized 4 individuals and locals from state, city, and private/special sector locals for contributions this past year on behalf of our union.

***Rick Scott Political Action Award** was presented to **Victoria Johnson, Local 744, Minnesota Vets** in recognition of outstanding work in legislative and political activism on behalf of our union.

***Jerry Wurf Organizing Award** was presented to **Local 4493 Walker Arts Center** for their effective and tireless organizing activism.

***Mike Buesing Local Union Development Award** was presented to **Local 722 Regions Hospital** for their significant contributions to internal mobilization.

***Eliot Seide Communications Award** was presented to **Local 1123 City of Two Harbors** for their bold proud image of who we are and what we fight for.

Congratulations, siblings!

The Union
Difference



Walker Art Center Reaches First Contract!

Members of AFSCME Local 4493 at Walker Art Center reached their first ever tentative agreement through January 31, 2026!

Highlights of the TA include:

- * New wage scale effective immediately, or at least a 5% increase,
- * 2022 - 2025 "me too" increase, or 2% across-the-board, whichever is greater,
- * Employees may receive a wage increase or bonus at any time,
- * Generous working out-of-class language.

"We are proud of the members of Local 4493 who fought so hard to reach a first contract that treats them with the dignity and respect they deserved and brought them overwhelmingly vote to join our union in the first place," said Executive Director Julie Bleyhl. "Local 4493 went from 65% membership to over 85% membership during this time and reached a strong first contract with wage increases, essential language that protects and codifies their rights, and proves the Union Difference in the lives of workers who make the Walker Art Center work."

Congratulations, sblings!

Local 3481 Reaches TA

Members of AFSCME Local 3481 at Catholic Charities reached a tentative agreement through 6/30/22 that includes:

- * 2.5% effective 11/1/21,
- * \$1 increase to OGS (basically acting supervisor) differential,
- * New pay grid for MHP and YSS job classes; some members get a \$4 raise; lowest salary starts at \$17/hour.

The employer made this a challenging round of negotiations by basically showing no movement on any proposals presented by the local. Catholic Charities workers decided on a strong 2-year contract to build for a better bargaining position in 2022.

Congratulations, sblings!

AFSCME Community Based Services Workers Secure Additional Bonus

Pursuant to mutual agreement between Community Based Services and AFSCME, effective Wednesday,



September 29, 2021, applicable to the individual AFSCME supplements, Direct Care and Treatment will expand the use of the Voluntary Shift Bonus to all allowable classifications. Your eligibility for the voluntary shift bonus of an additional \$50 is determined in **Article 18, Section 16** which changed as follows:

At the Appointing Authority's discretion, an HST, LPN, BMA, MHPA, WTA, WTT, SPA, and RPL who is asked by the Appointing Authority or designee and agrees to work an additional weekend shift or agrees to work on their day off may receive a bonus of fifty (\$50.00) in addition to their regular compensation for hours worked.

Congratulations, sblings!

Council 5 Support to Lower Prescription Drug Costs

Our union has sent several letters to our federal congressional delegation urging support for new federal laws to lower the cost of prescription drugs to make them more affordable for working people and retirees. Time and time again, we have heard horror stories about the rapid rise in prescription drug costs for workers and retirees in our state and across the country, and more must be done to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable and ensure life-saving prescriptions are filled for all Americans.

Council 5 Fights for Workers

Our union recently affirmed that "AFSCME Council 5 does not support a vaccine mandate. Though we understand the importance of achieving as high a vaccination rate as possible, and we encourage all our members to seek advice from their medical provider regarding receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine, we understand some individuals have personal, medical, or religious reasons which factor into their individual decision, and their decisions should be respected. We encourage all our members to consult with their

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medical provider and consider the benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine, but we recognize the decision is ultimately an individual one; the indignity of losing employment and the ability to provide for oneself and family should not be used to entice vaccine compliance without a free and easily available testing alternative that does not negatively impact workers' accrued leave time. AFSCME Council 5 will continue our work to advocate on behalf of all those we represent. Together, we will build our new future."

Slowing Down Mail Service is Wrong

The Trump-appointed leader of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has implemented harmful changes as of Oct. 1 that will slow down mail delivery for tens of millions of Americans and businesses and affect billions of pieces of mail. The changes lengthen the delivery target from the previous two- and three-day standard to as many as five days for many pieces of mail. The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) called it a step backward for USPS and for the millions of Americans across the country who rely on speedy mail service. We should invest in USPS, not reducing services.

"The people deserve the prompt, reliable and efficient mail service promised under the law," said [APWU President Mark Dimondstein](#). "Postal workers are proud to serve our communities every single day. We believe management's response to months of poor performance should be to improve service and regain the public's trust, instead of this focus on moving the goalposts and slowing service standards. We'll stay united with the public until the service standards and postal performance reflect the needs of the public for quality and fast service."

