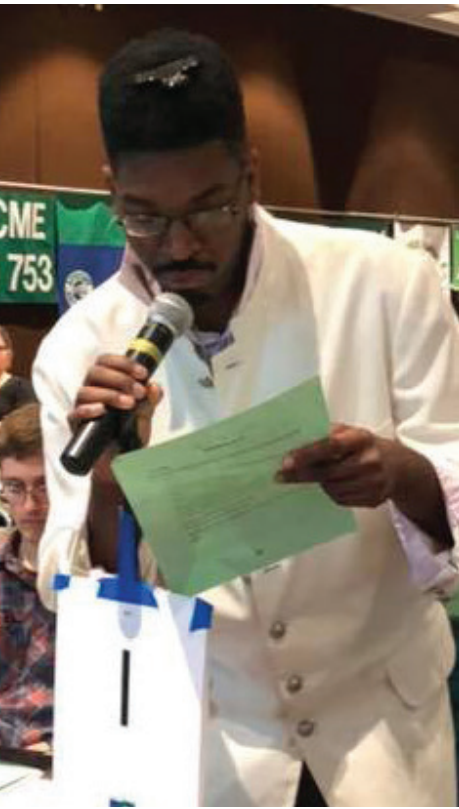


Stepping UP

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

Issue 5
September-October 2019



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WHY WE VOTE

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SOLIDARITY FOREVER: CONVENTION 2019

ONE STRONG, UNITED VOICE FOR MINNESOTA WORKERS

SHOWING UP HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT.

With only a few months left of 2019, a new Legislative session is just around the corner and the 2020 Election is looming. Early this October, we proudly wrapped up our Council's 15th annual convention stronger than ever.

We're ready to keep that momentum going.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's anti-worker ruling in Janus v. AFSCME - a move that made America's public sector a "right-to-work" environment - workers have been enthusiastically joining our union; not fleeing from it, as the big-money forces behind the Janus case predicted.

That post-Janus momentum we've built is impressive. But as always, there is more work to be done. As anti-union forces toil at all levels of government to pit working people against one another, it's more important than ever that we stand up together - in our workplaces and communities; at the ballot box; at the Capitol; and as a union family.

Our union's core values dictate that we join together across our differences in the fight for justice, dignity, opportunity and shared prosperity for all Minnesotans. As we enter our 16th year, AFSCME Council 5 is proud - and excited - to leverage our solidarity to advance our mission and keep building a Minnesota that reflects our shared values.

In the face of endless attacks, working Minnesotans like us don't quit. We keep showing up, speaking out and fighting back. In line with the theme of our 2019 convention, "Solidarity Forever," we're proudly drawing on our union's rich legacy of fighting for what's right, never backing down, and finding common ground in the face of adversity.

We hope you'll join us - at the polls, at the Capitol, and out in the wild, as we continue to bring Minnesotans together, grow our movement and build power for the people.

Stepping UP

Patrick Guernsey, President

Julie Blehyl, Executive Director

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Trisha Harms and Emily Weber, Editors

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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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SOLIDARITY FOREVER

RELIVING OUR 15TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

On Thursday, Oct. 3, nearly a thousand registered AFSCME Council 5 members and guests gathered at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center for our 15th annual convention.

This Convention came with an action-packed agenda: more workshop options, more opportunities to build solidarity between locals and across our differences, and an exciting guest list.

Thursday afternoon, AFSCME Council 5 President Pat

Guernsey officially gaveled in the Convention, and delegates were welcomed to the city by Duluth Mayor Emily Larson, a pioneer in helping advance social justice, economic security and workers' rights who has repeatedly earned our endorsement through her proven commitment to advancing the labor movement.

"We're making big changes for all workers, all families in our community, and you are a key part of that," Larson said.

In an inspiring opening address, Council 5 President Pat Guernsey emphasized the importance of strengthening the bonds of solidarity across differences. He outlined our new strategic plan, a comprehensive road map developed by a cross-section of board members, rank and file members and staff to guide our union's progress, grow membership and increase change-making capacity.

"We're making big changes for all workers, all families in our community, and you are a key part of that."

Reminding the crowd of our growth after the Supreme Court's anti-worker verdict in *Janus v. AFSCME*, President Guernsey emphasized the urgency of getting on to Direct Dues – and the power we have when we work together, no matter what any court says.

"2020 will be the most important election in our lifetime!" President Guernsey announced. "In addition to selecting a new AFSCME-endorsed

president, we need to reelect Tina Smith to the Senate and the entire State Legislature will be up

for election as well," he told the crowd. "We need a union-friendly legislature so we can continue to gain better wages, benefits and working conditions across the state."

We were honored to be joined by AFSCME International Regional Director Gino Carbenia, who gave a moving address reflecting the importance of maintaining our solidarity even in the most difficult times.

"It was 15 months ago that the United States Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Janus v. AFSCME*, a case brought by CEOs and billionaires. In a five-to-four decision, the Court tossed out decades of precedent and made the entire public sector nationwide right-to-work."

Their plan backfired - and less than two years later unions are more popular than they have been in fifty years.

"We can't be distracted by those who try to divide us," Carbenia said. "We can't let the bonds of solidarity be broken. We can't be knocked off our game by those who have contempt for our core values."

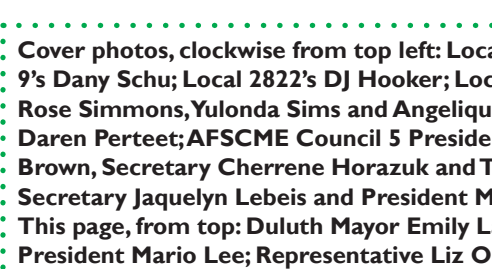
When the assembly reconvened, Executive Director Julie Bleyhl gave a powerful address, echoing President Guernsey's confidence that, as with *Janus v. AFSCME*, our union will thrive – not just survive – as long as we focus on our solidarity and what brings us together: our AFSCME values.

"Today, there are more AFSCME Council 5 members than ever – even more than before the *Janus* decision," Bleyhl informed the crowd. "That's determination. That's strength. That's the power of working people."

The attacks on our movement won't stop, Bleyhl said – and it's time for our members to write our union's next chapter. "We know something our naysayers will never understand: nothing is more powerful than the solidarity of working people determined to defend our rights," she told the packed room.

The Convention wrapped up on an enthusiastic note, adjourning around noon after remarks from State Representatives Liz Olson and Dave Pinto and an inspiring speech from Governor Tim Walz.

Rep. Pinto, also a member of AFSCME Local 8 as a Ramsey County Prosecutor, lauded the room full of public workers for their contributions to lifting up working families across the state. "I work as a prosecutor as I work as a legislator. It's just like the work of all of us at AFSCME: motivated by the belief that government can be a tool to improve



peoples' lives, to keep people safe and give everyone in our society the chance to thrive.”

Pinto painted a bleak picture of his early experiences in the House when Democrats were in the minority, but rejoiced in the fact that we now have more power to improve peoples' lives, since we won the House majority last year and elected DFL Governor Tim Walz.

“We are stepping up for paid family leave, racial and gender equity, including the equal rights amendment. We are standing up for dignified work and decent wages, the right to collectively bargain,” he declared. “Let’s keep stepping up

– at the legislature this spring, at the doors this summer, and at the polls next fall. Let’s keep on Stepping Up for Minnesota together,” Rep. Pinto encouraged the group.

“All of you do the hard work every day of making sure our vulnerable and elderly are cared for; you make sure our roads are safe to drive on, our water is clean to drink, food is safe to eat; you do the work to make sure Minnesota works, and for that we all thank you,” Rep. Olson said.

“Policy alone isn’t all we do,” Rep. Olson reminded the audience. “We’re about a movement of people rooted in shared values that are going to move the needle forever, and there’s no going back. And that’s the power we have in this room, with Governor

Walz, with the DFL majority, and soon to be a DFL Senate majority,” she said.

Governor Walz, a lifelong union member himself, gave the final address, emphasizing the importance of growing our movement, making bold progress, and building relationships and coalitions across differences in order to lift up all Minnesotans.

He voiced his support for our union and the labor movement as a necessary force in fighting for working people.

“Our commitment together is to make sure we stand up for the values that make this state and this country strong.”

“It’s about your commitment to service - doing the work that makes the state actually a pleasant place to live in,” the Governor

told AFSCME delegates. “There are millions of Minnesotans who don’t pay dues, who don’t give their time to come do this, don’t organize or door knock, but benefit greatly from those of us who do. I know you pick up the slack, and you’ve got their backs.

“You need to know every single day, without wavering an inch on it: I have your back and they have your back,” said the Governor as he gestured to the DFL House Representatives sharing the stage.

“Our labor sisters and brothers fought these fights 100 years ago: that torch has been passed to us. Those civil rights leaders who laid the ground work – that torch has been passed to us.

“The idea that every generation has to refight these fights is what reinvigorates America, what reignites us and lets us have ownership,” said the Governor. “Our commitment together is to make sure we stand up for the values that make this state and this country strong.”

Cover photos, clockwise from top left: Local 2822 member Lindsey Fenner and Local 9’s Dany Schu; Local 2822’s DJ Hooker; Local 151’s Dawn Vang, Charlotte Rouzegar, Rose Simmons, Yulonda Sims and Angelique Taylor; Local 600 members Jeff Sebeck and Daren Perteet; AFSCME Council 5 President Pat Guernsey, Vice President Carmen Brown, Secretary Cherrene Horazuk and Treasurer Destiny Dusosky; Local 668 Secretary Jaquelyn Lebeis and President Manking Lee. This page, from top: Duluth Mayor Emily Larson; Representative Dave Pinto and Local 8 President Mario Lee; Representative Liz Olson; Governor Tim Walz.

VOTING OUR VALUES

Every vote counts. Every election matters.

ELECTIONS IMPACT EVERYONE.

For public employees, the stakes are even higher: not only are we choosing leaders, we're often also helping to shape the culture and values of the places we work.

Union members know every election matters. But in case you need help convincing your friends and family, here's why everyone should vote:

ELECTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES.

The people we elect make decisions that can affect the future for generations. Officials who do not share our values can make harmful changes to the progress we've worked so hard to secure. The 2020 elections will prove to be among the most consequential of our lifetimes.

On top of choosing a President and members of Congress, all 201 seats are up for grabs in the Minnesota State Legislature. Plus, the results of the 2020 Census will kick off rounds of redistricting and district apportionment decisions. We must ensure those elected to make these choices do so in service of people, *not politics*.

Every election is an opportunity to advance policies like collective bargaining, safe pensions and retirement, workplace safety, and paid time to care. It's also an opportunity to protect our members – and all working families – from bad policies, like right-to-work legislation and tax cuts for big corporations.

ELECTIONS DECIDE HOW OUR WORKPLACES FUNCTION.

Our elected officials make choices that affect our working conditions. From budgets, hiring, culture, and workplace safety, they shape our working lives in profound ways.

Congress sets the national budget, and by extension sets large parts of our state and local budgets. They decide how our tax dollars are spent. It's your money, and you deserve a say in what our leaders do with it.

YOUR VOTE MATTERS.

In 2016, just a few thousand votes in a handful of states made Donald Trump the President. In Minnesota, elections are sometimes decided by a few hundred votes – or even one or two ballots. Your vote could tip the balance in favor of working families.

The future is decided by those who show up.

OUR UNION SIBLINGS ARE RUNNING FOR OFFICE.

AFSCME encourages our members to run for office. This year, two labor sisters, Liz De La Torre and Theresa O'Halloran-Johnson, are running for City Council in St. Paul and Duluth. As union members and public servants, they know government can play a powerful role in building prosperity for all working families.

All working people benefit when union members have a seat at the table.

WE NEED TO FIGHT BACK.

For decades, the richest Americans have hoarded power and wielded it to repress working people. Unions and the ballot box are two places where we can fight back.

We've made huge strides to balance the scales of power. But this isn't the end of the fight.

The forces allied against us won't stop: we're all that's standing between them and massive profits made on the backs of workers. When we vote, we let them know we have the power to decide our own future.

OUR NEIGHBORS DEPEND ON US TO VOTE – ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO CAN'T.

The wealthy few are working overtime to restrict our right to vote. Right now, millions of Americans are not allowed to vote.

Thousands more will be scrubbed from the voter rolls before Election Day in a concerted effort to silence working people – especially people of color.

Everyone should have access to their constitutional right to vote.

Voting allows us to amplify the voices of all working people, even those who aren't given a voice in a system that benefits the rich and powerful.

When you vote, you demand to be heard. When you don't vote, you harm your coworkers, your community, and all your neighbors who need you to speak out.

2020 LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

Elections are just the beginning of AFSCME's work to maintain a seat at the table for all our members.

The next Minnesota legislative session is coming up quickly, and we have a lot of work to do to ensure every Minnesotan has dignity in the workplace.

Last session, AFSCME members won some big victories:

- Defending Minnesota's provider tax, which funds health care for millions of vulnerable Minnesotans.
- Expanding the working families tax credit, boosting MFIP, and allocating more Local Government and County Program Aid.
- Passing the strongest anti-wage theft law in the country.
- Lower prescription drug costs, affordable insulin, and programs to stop the opioid crisis.

We rise up, and we never quit.

Many of our top priorities were left on the table due to obstructionist Republicans in both chambers blocking some top priority policies. This session, we'll keep fighting for Earned Sick and Safe Time, another minimum wage increase, and Paid Family and Medical Leave for all Minnesota families. **And as we do every year, we'll need to defend public pensions and fend off legislation designed to attack our power as working people.**

Next year, we'll have the opportunity to replace anti-worker President Trump with a candidate who supports collective bargaining and basic human rights.

In addition to choosing a President and members of Congress, Minnesotans will decide the fate of the State Legislature, where all 201 seats are up for grabs. With so many of our top state-level priorities held up in a GOP-held Minnesota Senate, our future progress depends on flipping it – and defending a DFL-controlled House.

Meanwhile, results of the 2020 Census will kick off rounds of redistricting and district apportionment decisions. We must elect leaders who will make redistricting decisions in a fair, honest, and transparent way, in the service of people – *not politics*.

In 2020, we need a leader who puts people before personal profit. We need a Congress ready to fight for working families. And we need a fair, transparent government where public employees can focus on what we do best: delivering high-quality essential services to the American people.

To achieve all this, we need to work harder than we ever have before. But AFSCME members have never been afraid of a challenge. We rise up, and we never quit.



Left: Corrections Lobby Day 2019
Above: Day on the Hill 2019