PrioritY Number One: Jobs

With additional state and local assistance and reinvestment in public services, we can avoid a return to the past.
Putting America Back to Work

Nearly 3 million jobs will be lost by 2012 unless Congress passes jobs legislation that includes funding for public services. That's why AFSCME has launched a campaign to secure new investment in state and local governments. Our efforts are paying off: In spite of Republican obstructionism, the Senate passed a bill that includes $26 billion in funding for states and enough investment to save 300,000 jobs. AFSCME WORKS takes a close look at the issue.

Marching To Save Public Services

At press time, Irene González, a Los Angeles County senior investigator aide and member of AFSCME Local 685 (District Council 36), was in the middle of a 48-day walk from Bakersfield to Sacramento. She is one of seven participants spearheading the “March for California’s Future,” a 260-mile trek to raise awareness of the importance of public services. Hundreds of public employees — including members of AFSCME District Council 36 and UDW Homecare Providers Union (UDW)/AFSCME — are marching in a diverse coalition of labor, education, community and faith groups, holding massive rallies and press events across the state. “I am fighting for our rights and our future,” says González. “If it takes a march to do it, I’m there.”

Photo: John Harte

On the Cover

Men waiting to register for benefits in 1938 at a State Employment Service office in San Francisco. Photo: Dorothea Lange/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

TIME TO INVEST IN JOBS

National unemployment is bordering on 10 percent and the country’s economy is still in critical condition. This is the time to invest in jobs and put our fellow Americans back to work. AFSCME is spearheading an effort for Congress to pass comprehensive legislation to save and create jobs and protect the vital services that working families rely on in these troubled times. Here is what some AFSCME members say about our union’s job’s campaign:
Preserving Public Services, State by State
Across the country, AFSCME activists are lobbying lawmakers and raising their voices to oppose proposals to furlough or lay off workers, cut wages and benefits and reduce vital public services in the name of cost-cutting. Instead, AFSCME is demanding that legislatures increase revenue, close tax loopholes, stop outsourcing and take other measures that will help solve the economic crisis, not make it worse.

Citizens ‘Arrest’ Insurance Reps
Just days before the U.S. House of Representatives approved the historic health care reform bill that has now been signed into law by President Obama, hundreds of AFSCME members rallied in the nation’s capital outside a meeting of health insurance executives. Their goal: a ‘mass citizens arrest’ on charges of spreading lies and misinformation.

AFSCME Across America
AFSCME members trained in medical care help earthquake victims in Haiti; New York corrections officers fight poor working conditions; members help provide food for Oklahoma senior citizens facing the loss of a meal program; hundreds of public employees join AFSCME in Salt Lake County, Utah. These — plus a preview of AFSCME’s upcoming International Convention in Boston — are just some of the stories that made news.

Breaking the Vicious Cycle
A focus on jobs is crucial. What we are going through right now is scary. We need jobs to make our economy and our industry solvent. People who don’t have jobs have limited purchasing power, which limits the strength of our economy. It’s a vicious cycle.

Staying Afloat
It’s critical that the jobs bill includes financial support for state and local governments — because it is during these tough economic times, when families and businesses are trying to stay afloat, that government services are needed the most.

The Key to a Secure Tomorrow
To build a strong future for all, we must put the nation back to work. Everyone should be involved and push Congress to pass legislation that will create the jobs that support families and build strong communities. The key to a secure tomorrow means investing in jobs and rebuilding our highways, hospitals and schools.

AFSCME Member Stories
- Motorcycle racing
- Insuring homes
- Servicing schools
- Perforating office buildings
- Caring for the elderly
- Providing special education
- Cleaning streets
- Protecting health care
- Working in the U.S. Army

AFSCME members are trained in mediation to help solve the economic crisis, not make it worse.
THE HISTORIC MARCH VOTE by the U.S. House of Representatives helped break the power of the insurance industry and provide quality, affordable health care for millions of American families. Not since the 1965 creation of Medicare and Medicaid have we witnessed such an expansion of our health care system. Rising health care costs — and their harmful impact to our economy and our contracts — are the chief reason overhaul is needed. Families are deciding whether to pay for housing or health insurance premiums. Employer-sponsored health insurance premiums doubled in the last nine years — a rate three times faster than cumulative wage increases. And high costs diminished state and local budgets, making it harder for union members to negotiate wage increases at the bargaining table.

Change
Under reform, insurance companies can’t deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions or drop them for getting sick. Medicare will be strengthened with the phase out of the donut hole that forces seniors to cover their own prescription drug costs. As WORKS went to press, the Senate approved fixes to the proposed excise tax on high-value health plans that were included in the House version of the bill. This will mean no AFSCME member’s plan will be taxed before 2018. Even then the impact will be minimized.

This wouldn’t have happened without AFSCME members. Despite roadblocks, anti-worker rhetoric and big dollars aimed at killing health care reform, you generated over 300,000 phone calls and letters to Congress and attended rallies across the nation. Our messages appeared on television, the Internet and print media. We made the voices of everyday Americans louder than the voices of greedy pharmaceutical and health insurance giants.

We must also recognize the hard work of Pres. Barack Obama, Majority Leader Harry Reid, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and other friends of working families in Congress. They never gave up!

The Next Step
Let’s continue repairing our nation’s economy by passing major jobs legislation that will help working families and the middle class recover from the recession. With budget shortfalls for the fiscal year ending this summer projected at nearly $194 billion, governors have already said they will eliminate public sector jobs and reduce public services if federal help isn’t on the way. The result: an even weaker economy and the loss of as many as 900,000 jobs in the upcoming fiscal year.

AFSCME is fighting for — and winning — that federal help. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) helped stabilize state and local economies and assisted states with meeting their Medicaid and education obligations. ARRA saved and created millions of jobs by redirecting funds to much-needed public services and benefits. And AFSCME led the fight to pass a new jobs bill that currently includes an additional $26 billion in state aid in the form of an increased federal contribution for Medicaid, or the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP). For details on AFSCME’s jobs campaign, see Page 6.

Keep Fighting
Reinvestment in public services pays off. For every federal dollar invested in state and local government, $1.41 returns to the local economy, creating and saving jobs in schools, hospitals, prisons and police departments. In turn, the public sector workers whose jobs are saved spend their salaries on groceries, mortgages, utilities and other goods and services that keep private sector workers employed. AFSCME is committed to making investment in public services an integral part of any federal jobs legislation.

Protecting jobs and creating new ones by providing support for state and local governments tops our priority list. I know that the dedication of AFSCME members will help us win these goals just like we won quality, affordable health care for all.
The U.S. Supreme Court’s January decision on campaign finance could mean a huge increase in corporate political influence, while the rest of us struggle to make our voices heard.

The court, by a 5-4 majority, said in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that corporations can spend unlimited amounts on candidates for federal office. President Obama called the ruling “a green light to a new stampede of special interest money,” enabling businesses to spend what they choose not only on “issue” ads that discuss political matters, but also on ads expressly supporting or opposing specific candidates. The decision lifts similar bans that existed in about half the states.

**A Great Disparity**

Corporations, according to the court’s majority, have the same free speech rights in politics as individuals; therefore, banning them from sponsoring ads to elect and defeat candidates infringes upon their First Amendment protections. A public relations firm, mocking the court, has even announced that it’s running for Congress — the logical conclusion of the court’s faulty ruling.

Keep in mind that it isn’t as if corporations have been silent observers. According to the nonpartisan National Institute on Money in State Politics (followthemoney.org), businesses spent $911 million on state candidates, committees and ballot measures in 2008. Labor unions contributed $221 million that same year.

In 2006, the disparity was even greater: Corporations spent a whopping $1.3 billion compared to labor’s $208 million in contributions.

Considering that labor unions were drastically outspent, it is a tribute to union members across the land — particularly the brothers and sisters of AFSCME — that we were so successful in the last two election cycles. The challenge for us, and for all progressives, will be expanding our gains even as corporate spending rises.

**Political Corruption?**

Think about it: Corporations could advertise candidates much as they market toothpaste or cell phones. Worse, we could be in for political corruption rivaling the bribery scandals of the Gilded Age a century ago.

Collis P. Huntington, one of the railroad magnates of that era, observed: “If you have to pay money [to a politician] to have a right thing done, it is only just and fair to do it.” Even Pres. Teddy Roosevelt, who eventually pressed for campaign finance laws, took questionable donations from corporations for his campaign in 1904.

Campaign finance laws exist for a reason, yet the Supreme Court chose to ignore history. The court also ignored current reality: Many of the same influences and pressures that affected our political system a hundred years ago continue today.

**Taking Our Power Back**

Unions are made up of ordinary people using politics to achieve a better life for all working families. Corporations generate wealth for their executives and shareholders. Their interest in politics isn’t about the public good; it’s about their private profit.

Any decision granting more power to corporate America takes power away from working families. But our duty, particularly heading into the 2010 elections, is to take our power back.

We must continue to donate to candidates and causes we support. As corporations ramp up their spending, we must also devote our time to phone banking, labor walks and all other get out the vote efforts. That’s the only way to elect candidates across the board — from President to county board supervisor — who share our values and hopes for America.
PUTTING AMERICA BACK TO WORK

AFSCME HAS LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN TO SAVE JOBS AND SECURE BILLIONS IN FISCAL RELIEF FOR STATES. OUR EFFORTS ARE BEGINNING TO PAY OFF.

BY GONZALO BAEZA
THE UNITED STATES IS FACING its worst unemployment crisis in 70 years. Nearly 16 million Americans are jobless. One third of them have been without a job for more than six months. At the same time, states face unprecedented budget shortfalls and have begun to put more services — and jobs — on the chopping block. If Congress doesn’t act immediately, the situation is bound to get worse. After all, how can the nation gain jobs at the same time they are being cut?

In these troubled times, we need to create jobs with targeted support for states and local governments that will put people back to work, pave the way for economic recovery and help provide the public services that protect our communities.

Our First Victories
This is why in early February President McEntee announced a campaign to support a jobs bill and secure new investment in state and local governments. We must look for the most effective ways to bring down unemployment.

This unprecedented effort by AFSCME started off with a national “call-in day” on February 10. Thousands of AFSCME activists from across the country called U.S. senators asking them to fight for a jobs bill. Affiliates are also reaching out to senators and senior congressional staff to secure support for state and local aid.

Since then, AFSCME members have held dozens of press events across the country to bring home the fact that jobs must be Congress’ number one priority. At the same time, AFSCME has issued comprehensive state-by-state reports on the jobs picture and how the legislation we support could help the economy. This information has been shared with governors and local elected officials as well as released to the press. These ongoing activities are part of our union’s Make America Happen campaign to strengthen the middle class and jumpstart the economy.

The hard work of AFSCME members is starting to pay off. As we went to press, the U.S. Senate passed a $140 billion jobs bill including one-year extensions of unemployment insurance and COBRA benefits (health insurance) for unemployed workers. The legislation also extends the Federal Medical Assistance Percentages or FMAP, the percentage rates used to determine the amount of matching funds for state medical and social service programs. Through FMAP, states will now get an additional $26 billion in funding to help pay for Medicaid.

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE
Robii Abouchacra is a police officer in Meriden, Conn., and a member of Local 1016 (Council 15). Like many other uniformed officers and law enforcement personnel across the country, he serves and protects every day, providing an invaluable service to our communities. This is the time to strengthen and protect public services.

Photo: Stan Godlewski

DRIVING OUR CHILDREN SAFELY
Local 3865 President (Council 62) Grigitte Yancey is a bus driver in Indianapolis, Ind. Thousands of students attending the Indianapolis Public Schools system depend on workers like Yancey every day. Building a solid foundation for economic recovery begins with protecting these types of services.

Photo: Tom Strickland
As President McEntee said upon the bill’s passage, “With the vote in the Senate, every state’s fiscal year 2011 budget will now have additional dollars available for many of the jobs our members do.” As a matter of fact, it includes enough investment to save more than 300,000 public jobs in the second half of fiscal year 2011. The bill is one in a series of legislative initiatives by Congress to boost employment.

It passed despite receiving a “nay” vote from a majority of Republicans, who seem determined to obstruct every major piece of legislation that would alleviate the jobs crisis. This political posturing, to reap short-term political benefits, was most evident in a recent statement by Sen. John Kyl (R-Ariz.) regarding his opposition to extending unemployment insurance. According to the Republican Senate whip, “Continuing to pay people unemployment compensation is a disincentive for them to seek new work.” This attitude has become common among Republican members of Congress and it is bound to be a major hurdle for working families in the future.

The Fight Has Just Begun

Whether it’s clearing the roads of snow and ice, providing health care services or ensuring public safety, the vital services that AFSCME members provide make America happen. Nonetheless, nearly a million of these public and private sector jobs could be lost this year. To make matters worse, states are facing an estimated $260 billion shortfall in 2011 and 2012.

Economists on the left and right agree that investing in public services is one of the best ways to save and create jobs. According to Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody’s Economy.com and former advisor to Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), the most effective way to stimulate local economies and increase job creation is to inject federal assistance into the state programs that are having problems. Zandi has found that every dollar invested in public services grows the economy by $1.41.

AFSCME is also supporting the Local Jobs for America Act (LJAA), a bill introduced by Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) seeking to create or save up to one million jobs in both the public and private sectors. LJAA will provide local communities nearly $75 billion over two years to stop planned cuts or hire back public workers previously laid-off because of budget constraints. It also includes $24 billion — already approved by the House in December — to help states support 250,000 education jobs, put 5,500 law enforcement officers on the beat, and retain and hire firefighters.

Likewise, our union is fighting to secure emergency funding for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, money that can be used flexibly for government services and state aid to localities.
Jobs for Main Street
In 2009, Congress passed the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), a stimulus bill that was an invaluable first step toward economic recovery. The investments in the bill pulled us back from the brink of economic collapse and injected desperately needed funds into local economies. A recent report by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) indicates that by the end of 2009 the economic stimulus law had created as many as 2.1 million new jobs. The study also states that the bill grew the economy by as much as 3.5 percent last year. The CBO projects the measure to have an even stronger impact in 2010, increasing gross domestic product by as much as 4 percent and reducing unemployment by as much as 1.8 percent.

The figures reflect a consensus from economists across the board that the initiative was effective in boosting the economy. Before Congress passed ARRA in February 2009, the recession had been going on for over a year and the country was shedding 20,000 jobs each day. By the time ARRA became law, 5.9 million jobs had already been lost. It is hard to determine how much more damage the stimulus bill prevented considering how the national unemployment rate stands at slightly under 10 percent. According to a report by the Economic Policy Institute, without the 2 million jobs generated by the Recovery Act, unemployment would easily exceed 11 percent.

While ARRA saved thousands of AFSCME jobs by helping states and cities avoid even bigger budget cuts, this recession is worse than anyone imagined, and state and local governments need more help. The bulk of ARRA’s aid is set to expire by the end of 2010, including key items such as additional funds for Medicaid and education. Without an additional boost, states will be forced to continue pulling the plug on the services that are the foundation of the nation’s economy.

AFSCME has been waging the fight for jobs on multiple fronts. Thanks to our efforts, the U.S. House of Representatives passed in December the Jobs for Main Street Act of 2010, an initiative that would redirect unspent funds from the 2008 Wall Street bailout to create jobs and stabilize employment. The money would be used for infrastructure investment, saving public service jobs and continuing emergency funding for families hurt by the economy.

We have started to pull our economy from the brink. It’s time for everyone to get involved in this effort. With the strength of 1.6 million members, we can put America back to work.

Economists on the left and right agree that investing in public services is one of the best ways to save and create jobs.
FIGHTING TO PRESERVE PUBLIC SERVICES — STATE BY STATE

LOBBY DAY ACTIVISTS URGE LAWMAKERS TO FIND NEW REVENUE SOURCES, INSTEAD OF SLASHING PUBLIC SERVICES.

BY CLYDE WEISS
Members of Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE), AFT/AFSCME Local 300 tell lawmakers to pass a “whistleblower” bill to make it safer for state workers to expose waste in government spending — saving taxpayer dollars. Photo: Best Light Photography by Brian Brunkow

“Safety first!” and ‘no more cuts’ were the messages of the day delivered to lawmakers by hundreds of AFSCME members during Kentucky’s Lobby Day at the Capitol in Frankfort. Photo: Mark Cavanah

A delegation from AFSCME Maryland traveled to the Statehouse in Annapolis to propose alternatives to destructive budget cuts. They carried cards signed by thousands of state workers who want to preserve public services. Photo: Maryland AFSCME

AFSCME ACTIVISTS NATIONWIDE are standing up to tell their elected representatives that layoffs and furloughs are not the best solution to a budget crisis that threatens critical public services at a time when they are needed most.

Throughout the nation, members have been meeting with their state legislators to make the case that putting more people on the unemployment line will not dig the country out of this recession. Rather, they are encouraging lawmakers to identify additional sources of revenue to plug budget shortfalls.

In Florida, more than 200 Council 79 activists traveled from Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando and Tampa to make their voices heard at the Capitol in Tallahassee. Their top priority is winning funding to prevent the state from closing two hospitals in Miami-Dade County which would eliminate 4,400 jobs — most of those held by members of Jackson Memorial Local 1363.

“We visited all of the senators and representatives to emphasize how Jackson Memorial Hospital serves our community,” says Local 1363 Pres. Viviene Dixon-Shim. “We have to keep those hospitals open to accommodate the health needs of our citizens.”

In Indiana and Kentucky, hundreds of state employees — all members of Council 62 — demonstrated at their respective capitol to press lawmakers to support funding for corrections and other front-line state services. Kentucky activists also delivered 1,500 petition cards signed by state workers with the message, “No cuts — fund public services and find other strategies for fixing the state’s budget crisis.”

David Warrick, executive director of Council 62, said their Kentucky priorities included supporting a collective bargaining bill that would apply to all public employees, and full funding of a law intended to hire more social workers and increase security. It was passed in 2007 without adequate financial resources. Indiana activists also rallied to preserve public services, and for the addition of more green jobs.

More than 250 members of Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE), AFT/AFSCME Local 300 fanned out throughout the Capitol in Topeka in March to save public services, jobs and members’ pensions. The Legislature was considering closing a $106 million budget hole for the current fiscal year by reducing work on state highways and roads, and other service cuts.

KOSE, representing more than 11,000 non-supervisory, non-confidential classified employees in the executive branch of state government, has better ideas for balancing the budget as Exec. Dir. Jane Carter explains: “We know where the real waste in
No Cuts — More Revenue!
Members of Minnesota Council 5 demand legislators raise revenue through fair taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations. Photo: Jennifer Munt

Telling It Straight
A delegation from New Mexico Council 18 rallied at the Statehouse in Santa Fe and delivered this message: Raise revenues, don’t cut services! Photo: Rob Trombley

Fired Up!
In Albany, N.Y., approximately 1,500 AFSCME members from all six state affiliates — DC 37, DC 1707, CSEA and Councils 35, 66 and 82 — get briefed in the Convention Center at the Empire State Plaza before meeting with state legislators to advocate for more revenue to prevent layoffs and furloughs. Photo: Joan Heffler

government is. If employees were better protected from reprisal, they would be more likely to bring their knowledge of such waste out into the open. That’s why we need to pass the Whistleblower Protection Act.”

More than 3,000 demonstrators — including hundreds of members of Illinois Council 31 — crowded into the state Capitol rotunda in Springfield for a rally sponsored by the Responsible Budget Coalition, which includes the council. Their demand: passage of legislation to increase the individual income tax rate and expand the state’s sales tax base to help close a $13 billion budget deficit.

Approximately 300 Iowa Council 61 activists lobbied legislators in Des Moines to protect public services. “AFSCME members know that they cannot sit on the sidelines and hope for change — we fight and win on issues because of members’ activism,” says Council 61 Pres. Danny Homan, also an AFSCME International vice president.

A delegation of AFSCME activists in Maryland traveled to the Statehouse in Annapolis in January with boxes of “Budget Fight Back” cards signed by more than 3,000 state employees. The cards propose a plan that would generate more than $2 billion in revenue to close the budget gap. It includes drawing on the state’s rainy day fund, extending the so-called millionaires tax, closing loopholes that allow large corporations to avoid paying their fair share of state taxes, charging a service fee on all Internet purchases, expanding the sales tax to more services, and increasing the gas and alcohol taxes by 5 cents each.

“Laying off public workers, cutting critical state services and reducing wages and benefits will not lift the state out of its budget crisis. Elected officials must do what’s necessary to keep our state running, but the best solution is to raise revenue,” says Glen Middleton, executive director of Council 67 and an International vice president.

In Minnesota, 1,000 Council 5 members rallied at the Capitol in Saint Paul this winter to demand that lawmakers save and create good jobs to jumpstart the economy. They also met with their representatives to press for increased revenues, including fair taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations — and stopping privatization that threatens the quality of public services.

Hundreds of New Mexico public employees — members of Council 18 — rallied at their state Capitol in Santa Fe in January to deliver the message that budget cuts without new sources of revenue will not close an estimated $600 million budget deficit. The council urged lawmakers to prevent out-of-state corporations
from dodging state taxes, and to pass legislation to repeal part of a massive 40 percent tax break for the wealthiest New Mexicans that was passed in 2003.

More than 1,500 New York AFSCME activists met with state legislators in Albany in February to find a fair way to put the state’s economy back on track while protecting essential public services and the jobs that make those services possible.

“Our elected officials need to stop and analyze what happens when they dump thousands of moderate income workers onto the unemployment rolls,” declared DC 37 Exec. Dir. Lillian Roberts. “Layoffs are a quick fix that don’t solve anything.”

This is not the time to cut services, added Danny Donohue, president of Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000, and also an International vice president. “We’re clearing the roads, helping people in need and taking care of children, the elderly, people who are sick and others in need of daily assistance.”

“Elected leaders are on the verge of destroying vital public services and putting more people out of work. They’re jeopardizing the health and safety of the people and our communities,” AFSCME International Pres. Gerald W. McEntee told members from District Councils 37 and 1707; Councils 35, 66 and 82; and CSEA.

In Washington state, more than 500 members of Council 28 rallied at the Capitol in Olympia. High on their list of goals: a simple majority vote to raise revenues. The AFSCME activists also sought to restore $300 million in state employee health insurance funds, close tax loopholes that cost millions in lost revenue, and oppose legislation to authorize state employee furloughs.

Approximately 500 activists from three Wisconsin councils gathered this March in Madison for their Lobby Day. After a briefing by AFSCME lobbyists and Wisconsin AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Phil Neuenfeldt, they met with legislators to discuss investing in vital services. They also urged lawmakers to reject privatization schemes and to protect worker bargaining rights.

“Wisconsin can’t create jobs by continuing to eliminate them, especially when those jobs keep our communities running,” says Rick Badger, executive director of Council 40.

“Cutting essential public jobs only to outsource them means a loss of accountability and inevitably costs more in the long run,” adds Council 24 Exec. Dir. Marty Beil. Rich Abelson, Council 48’s executive director, noted the difficult and often dangerous work that public employees perform. “All we ask is that employers honor their side of the bargain,” he says.
TWO WEEKS BEFORE the March passage of health care reform, hundreds of AFSCME members joined thousands of demonstrators for a “mass citizens’ arrest” of health insurance executives. The charge: spreading lies and misinformation in an effort to defeat health care reform legislation.

“We’re arresting the CEOs of Big Insurance because they are devastating our families and businesses and getting away with it,” AFSCME International Pres. Gerald W. McEntee declared at the rally, sponsored by Health Care for America NOW! (HCAN).

AFSCME is a founding member of HCAN, a national grassroots campaign organized in 2008, which helped lead the fight for health care reform. AFSCME activists from Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania joined others from Washington, DC, to protest outside a meeting of the health insurance lobbying group America’s Health Insurance Plans.

“We will not allow the big corporations and their lobbyists to bully Congress to a standstill,” said Dorothy Bryant, a phlebotomist with Baltimore’s health department and vice president of Baltimore City Municipal Employees Local 44 (AFSCME Council 67). “I’ve decided that if Congress can’t hear me from Baltimore, then I’m going to DC and make my voice heard.”

“The insurance companies and their cronies in Congress have done everything they can to muddy the issue and drag down reform,” added New Yorker Jackie Rowe-Adams, president of AFSCME Local 299 (DC 37). Members of Congress “can stand with us and support real change, or they can side with the insurance industry.” Photo: Evy Mages
NEW AT AFSCME.ORG!

SCHOLARSHIPS
For years, union scholarships have helped AFSCME members, leaders and their children reach higher education goals. A partial list of scholarships appears below. For complete details, visit afscme.org/scholarships.

AFSCME Family Scholarship
$2,000 renewable scholarship awarded to high school seniors.

Union Leaders of the Future Scholarship
This mentoring program is designed to help more women and people of color develop leadership skills. Annual awards up to $3,000 can be applied toward the completion of an accredited degree, coursework or seminar at an accredited educational institution.

Union Plus Scholarship
Available to active and retired AFSCME members, spouses and dependent children, annual awards up to $4,000 help union members and their families defray the cost of higher education.

AFSCME STORE
From our featured product, a cozy black knit scarf with an embroidered AFSCME logo, to ceramic mugs, lapel pins, tote bags and baseball hats, you’ll find it all at the AFSCME Store. afscmestore.org

NEXT WAVE
Last year, young members met in Chicago to discuss recruiting, engaging and educating the young members who will lead AFSCME into the future. Today, their work is continuing through a tool kit which provides the resources and connections needed to start a chapter, host events and get involved in political action. afscme.org/nextwave

E-ACTION
Be a more effective advocate for working families and the middle class by joining the AFSCME e-Action Network and getting connected to your representatives in Congress. You’re just a click or a call away from making a difference! afscme.org/action

CLASSES
Self-paced instruction available anytime, anywhere. New courses cover the advantages of becoming an active union member and how to hold more effective union meetings by learning basic parliamentary procedures. academy.afscme.org

SOCIAL NETWORKING
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youtube.com/afscmepa
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ONLINE RESOURCES
When a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, causing massive death and destruction, millions of Americans poured money, relief goods and medical supplies into the already-struggling nation. Joining other unions across the country who pitched in following the disaster, AFSCME International made an initial donation of $25,000 to the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center’s Earthquake Relief for Haitian Workers Fund. AFSCME councils and affiliates also contributed to agencies like the Red Cross, collected clothing and canned goods, and assembled health care kits.

Members of AFSCME also responded in person. Lt. Ian Swords, a paramedic with the New York Fire Department (NYFD) and a member of Local 3621 (DC 37), was among 80 firefighters and EMTs who deployed to Port-Au-Prince four days after the earthquake. He and three other EMTs from Local 3621 and Local 2507 spent eight days searching rubble. By day four, the team had rescued six survivors, including an 8-year-old boy and his 10-year-old sister, who were pulled from the ruins of a collapsed building.

A 14-year veteran with the NYFD, Swords rescued 9/11 victims at Ground Zero. "But the devastation in Haiti was far worse than I could ever imagine," he admits. "I’m just glad I was able to use what I’ve trained for and make a difference."

Engineers employed by the New York City Department of Design and Construction started deploying in March to provide much-needed technical assistance. These members of Local 375 have been undergoing “Post-Earthquake Building Damage” training to prepare for the trip. Even if they remain standing, a lot of buildings in Haiti are not safe. The engineers’ first step is assessing structural faults, making recommendations and ensuring that residents can safely return to their homes. The local is recruiting more than 100 engineers from different city agencies, rotating them into Haiti for two weeks at a time.

Nurses from United Nurses Associations of California (UNAC/UHCP) volunteered on their own through other agencies to help staff the hospitals there. Meanwhile, the union has donated $15,000 to Doctors Without Borders, which had been delivering medical services in Haiti prior to the earthquake. “We know that our contribution means that needed resources — like antibiotics and disinfectants — will get directly to victims sooner rather than later and save countless lives,” says Kathy Sackman, UNAC/UHCP president and also an International vice president.

In Florida, state employees from the Department of Children and Families are processing Haitian orphans destined for adoptive families and helping oversee medical care for medical evacuees. Monica O’Neal, Local 3076 (Council 79) president, says her members have been busy setting up hotlines, helping with vaccinations for aid workers and handing out gifts to children when they arrive at Miami International Airport.
UtAH
Salt Lake County
WorkerS CaSt HiStoriC Vote to JoiN afSCme
For the first time, more than 400 Salt Lake County employees will be represented by a union — Utah AFSCME Local 1004.

Salt Lake County certified the election results in December and declared AFSCME the winner, with 83 percent of the votes cast for the union.

“The victory in the skilled trades, services and maintenance is part of a tide of momentum building throughout the county in support of AFSCME,” says Utah AFSCME Local 1004 Exec. Dir. Patty Rich. “County employees in a wide array of jobs — from nurses to security officers to lab technicians — are uniting with Utah AFSCME because the employees take enormous pride in Salt Lake County. Together we’re working to improve the quality of the services we provide and prevent future pay cuts that hurt our local economy.”

The 408 county employees who make up the unit could vote for union representation only after AFSCME had gained passage of a collective bargaining ordinance earlier this year. A 2.75 percent pay cut, approved by the county last year, motivated the workers in their decisive vote to join AFSCME.

“I have a family to support,” explains John Farrer, who has worked in the Highway Department for six years. “We need a strong union voice to represent the interests of working families. That’s why I voted for Utah AFSCME.”

Local 1004 has represented employees in Salt Lake City since approval of a collective bargaining resolution in 1977. In addition to the Salt Lake County unit, the union represents employees of the state of Utah and various municipalities and counties.

Los Angeles
CALIFORNIA
TELLING IT TO CITY HALL: SAVE OUR PUBLIC SERVICES!
Activists from District Council 36 and five other Los Angeles unions have been crowding City Council chambers almost weekly for months. Their goal: to remind lawmakers of the dire consequences to public services if they proceed with the planned layoffs of 4,000 employees.

The Coalition of L.A. City Unions, led by Council 36 Exec. Dir. Cheryl Parisi, has been a force to reckon with during a budget crisis that has created a deficit this year of $212 million. Last year, the coalition reached a landmark agreement with the city that averted layoffs and furloughs and prevented major service reductions.

They were able to achieve that victory by gaining approval of a plan that provided substantially more long-term savings through a one-year deferral of a scheduled pay raise. In exchange, the city agreed to no layoffs or furloughs for one year, and to provide a retirement incentive.

The city is again proposing layoffs to deal with the continuing budget dilemma. Fired up, activists from Council 36’s five city locals have joined with their coalition sisters and brothers to overflow City Hall chambers. Some have testified before lawmakers, or called their offices, while others have leafleted libraries and parks to educate the public about the damage that layoffs would cause to critical public services.

“The coalition is looking for ways to increase city revenues as an alternative to the mayor’s budget,” says Parisi. “We need to continue reaching out to community groups and activate the membership.”

Salt Lake County
UTAH
WORKERS CAST HISTORIC VOTE TO JOIN AFSCME
For the first time, more than 400 Salt Lake County employees will be represented by a union — Utah AFSCME Local 1004.

Salt Lake County certified the election results in December and declared AFSCME the winner, with 83 percent of the votes cast for the union.

“The victory in the skilled trades, services and maintenance is part of a tide of momentum building throughout the county in support of AFSCME,” says Utah AFSCME Local 1004 Exec. Dir. Patty Rich. “County employees in a wide array of jobs — from nurses to security officers to lab technicians — are uniting with Utah AFSCME because the employees take enormous pride in Salt Lake County. Together we’re working to improve the quality of the services we provide and prevent future pay cuts that hurt our local economy.”
In a major triumph in Council 5’s fight against privatization, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) shut down its Prairie Correctional Facility in Appleton in February. After battling for 15 years to keep privateers out of Minnesota, AFSCME’s efforts finally paid off: The first and only private prison in the state is now closed.

“This shutdown is a huge victory for us,” says Eliot Seide, the council’s executive director and an AFSCME International vice president. “We’re pushing government to take responsibility for corrections, not pass the buck to private corporations that profit from prisons.”

When CCA took over the 1,600-bed prison in 1996, it housed prisoners from Minnesota, North Dakota and Washington. But there has been much less demand for prison space from these three states in recent years.

Last year, AFSCME members successfully blocked an attempt to shut down the state’s Moose Lake prison and transfer its inmates to Appleton. The privately-owned jail housed fewer than 250 offenders in 2009. This winter, they were transferred to a public detention complex in Faribault.

Now AFSCME is seeking a permanent end to private prisons in Minnesota. “We have been lobbying for a bill that will prevent our state from renting out its responsibilities,” says Tim Henderson, a corrections officer and president of Local 2728 (Council 5). “Our efforts are paying off. A growing number of legislators are now convinced that privateers shouldn’t profit from prisons.”

In February — due in large measure to AFSCME’s prodding — state legislators introduced a bill that prevents housing inmates in privately-owned prisons and makes it illegal for the state to contract with private prisons in other states. If this measure passes, Minnesota would be the fourth state to ban privatization of public corrections facilities.

“We’ve been at war with the privateers and we won’t stop until Minnesota places all of its inmates in state-run corrections facilities,” Henderson asserts. “That is our mission.”
Connecticut
Twenty-two sanitation and other employees of the Ledge Light Health District have joined Council 4; also voting for representation by the council: 18 Burlington town hall and library employees; and 12 full-time paraprofessionals and campus supervisors employed by the Woodstock Academy, a private high school in the town of Woodstock.

Maine
Eight communications officers and supervisory employees of the Oxford County Regional Communications Center have joined Council 93. The center is responsible for receiving and dispatching calls for most of the county’s law, fire and rescue agencies, including those to 911.

Minnesota
Forty corrections officers and 10 dispatchers from Pine County have joined Council 65. Also joining the council: 18 Esko Public School District paraprofessionals, plus 29 branch managers of the Great River Regional Library, serving six central Minnesota counties.

New York
Two-hundred and fifty-three part-time blue collar highway workers and white collar employees in the Town of Brookhaven have joined Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000; Also joining CSEA: 50 employees of the Industrial Exhibit Authority, which employs most of the workers at the New York State Fair; and 15 employees of school bus contractor First Student, working for the Odessa-Montour School District in Montour Falls. Fifty-eight employees of the Institute for Community Living, which provides housing services for the disabled, recently joined DC 1707 through majority sign-up. This brings the union’s total membership at the non-profit agency to 185.

Pennsylvania
Forty-two custodians, maintenance workers, groundskeepers, couriers and food service workers employed by the Schuylkill Valley School District in Berks County have joined Council 13.

Wisconsin
Eleven Tomahawk city public works employees have joined Council 40. Tomahawk is in Lincoln County.

Springfield
ILLINOIS
STATE HONORS RETIREE LEADER DORIS CLARK
Doris Clark, a 94-year-old advocate for the elderly who served as president of AFSCME Retiree Chapter 31 — and also chaired the AFSCME International Retiree Council — has been inducted into the Illinois Department on Aging Senior Hall of Fame.

Clark, whose activism within Council 31 blossomed after she retired as an Illinois state employee nearly two decades ago, was one of four persons entered last year into the department’s “Hall of Fame.”

Department on Aging Dir. Charles D. Johnson said Clark and her fellow inductees are “examples that we can each do something to improve our communities.”

Virginia Yates, current president of Chapter 31, which Clark helped found, described in her nomination letter how Clark fought for financial assistance, home care and more affordable energy for lower income seniors.

Council 31 retiree coordinator Maria Britton noted in the nomination form she submitted on Clark’s behalf: “It was amazing to many how this petite 5-foot grandmother can turn quickly into a pit bull if lawmakers don’t stand on the right side of issues important to older Illinoisans.”

Council 31 Exec. Dir. Henry Bayer, who is also an International vice president, added: “The passion and dedication that Doris has brought to improving the lives of seniors is an inspiration to us all.”

During Clark’s tenure as vice chair and former chair of the International’s Retiree Council, national retiree membership grew dramatically — from less than 100,000 to the current roster of nearly 250,000 retiree members.

From state to state, workers are organizing with AFSCME for a stronger voice on the job. Here are some recent victories:
Ohio

MILESTONE FOR OHIO CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Gov. Ted Strickland (D) this winter signed the first contract covering more than 8,000 in-home child care providers represented by Child Care Providers Together (CCPT)/Ohio Council 8.

The agreement, which includes a "Bill of Rights," a grievance procedure and recognition of their new union, was ratified last September. Now, with the governor's signature affixed on the document, the union is moving forward to process grievances, elect officers and seek improvements in reimbursement rates, pay practices, training and operating rules with state and county officials.

In 2008, the providers voted overwhelmingly to make CCPT their union. Their victory was preceded by an executive order, signed by Strickland, which laid the framework for their union.

With Governor Strickland are (left to right) Ohio Council 8 CCPT negotiating committee members Tom Ritchie Sr., Council 8 director of field services; Toledo child care provider Patsy Haines; Staff Rep. Stephen Roberts; Cincinnati child care provider Ella Hopkins; Ohio Council 8 Pres. John A. Lyall who is also an International vice president; Cincinnati child care provider Estella Johnson; Council 8 General Counsel R. Sean Grayson and Staff Rep. Jaladah Aslam.

Pittsburgh

RETIREE’S DAUGHTER WINS CITY COUNCIL SEAT

The daughter of an AFSCME retiree is one of the newest members of the Pittsburgh City Council. Natalia Rudiak, 30, ran unopposed in November after defeating three other candidates in the Democratic primary last spring.

Rudiak’s father, John Rudiak, is a retired traffic signal designer for the state Department of Transportation and a former secretary of Local 2459 (District Council 84). He is now president of AFSCME retiree subchapter 8401 (Pennsylvania Retiree Chapter 13).

“Through her education and our union background, Natalia supported social causes and felt that this was the best way to further her values,” says John.

In her campaign for city council, Rudiak declared her intent to strengthen building inspection enforcement, make landlords more accountable for violations and “ensure that our uniformed men and women have the right tools to do their jobs.”
In a legal triumph for Council 13 and other unions, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in December that state employees must be paid in a timely manner even if the state Legislature fails to pass a budget.

The ruling means that Gov. Ed Rendell (D) can’t use a budget impasse as an excuse to prevent the state from issuing paychecks to thousands of nonexempt commonwealth employees, as defined by the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

The Rendell administration had argued that the state constitution prevents the commonwealth from paying those employees during a budget crisis. The unions argued that the FLSA trumped such language. The state Supreme Court agreed.

In 2009, a 101-day budget impasse led to layoffs, and 75,000 employees worked up to 22 days without compensation after the fiscal year ended in June. In reaction, more than 2,000 employees (most of them members of Council 13) rallied at the Capitol in Harrisburg against “payless paydays.” The next day, the governor announced he would seek a “bridge budget” to allow payrolls to continue. In August, he signed such a measure.

Meanwhile, Council 13, joined by two other unions, pursued their appeal of a 2008 lower court ruling over the issue. In late December, a majority of the state Supreme Court ruled in the unions’ favor. The court said the FLSA requires the state to keep paying its covered workers on a timely basis, regardless of whether the state has adopted a budget.

“It’s been a frustrating and arduous fight,” says Council 13 Exec. Dir. David R. Fillman, also an International vice president. “This is a very sweet victory indeed.”
Peace Dale

RHODE ISLAND

DISPLAYING SPIRIT OF GIVING

The economic downturn has put a serious strain on charity agencies. That’s why the members of University of Rhode Island Local 528 (Council 94) were especially appreciated last winter.

The local, representing approximately 500 classified employees, donated $2,000 worth of toys, holiday gift cards and food to the Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale during its annual drive.

The Jonnycake Center was founded in 1973 by a group of women who realized the need for an organization that helped individuals who didn’t qualify for assistance from other established agencies. Today, even more people need help.

“Like just about every other support agency in the state, we’re seeing a 30 percent increase in people needing help,” says Jonnycake Center Exec. Dir. Susan Gustaitis. “Lots of those folks — many of whom are unemployed — we’ve never seen before.”

The center provided lunches for children who weren’t getting their regular meals because schools were closed during the holidays. It also donated toys that people dropped off at a church basement. Parents came by to pick them up, preserving the spirit of giving for their children.

“Each child got at least two gifts,” says Gustaitis. The AFSCME members made “a very big donation,” she adds. “It definitely helped us out.”

“The Jonnycake Center does nice things for underprivileged people,” says J. Michael Downey, president of Council 94 and Local 528. The union’s charity has gone to various organizations over the years, but Jonnycake is a favorite because many of the local’s members live in the county where the agency is located.

“Some even volunteer their time to help out at the Jonnycake Center,” Downey adds. “We like helping people in our own community.”

NEW YORK

COs DEMAND BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS

Understaffed, overworked and underpaid. These are the conditions corrections officers at the Sullivan County Jail in Monticello want to change now.

“Our working conditions affect us greatly,” says Joe Manning, a corrections officer at the facility for 17 years and the vice president of Sullivan County Sheriff’s Office Unit 8800, part of Local 853 of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000. “They affect our home life and how we do our job the next day.”

Late last year, Manning and 15 other officers showed up in full force at a meeting of county legislators to express their demands. The lawmakers promised to act promptly in improving working conditions at the 100-year-old jail.

The COs have been without a contract since December 2007. They are forced to work stressful 16-hour shifts because of staffing shortages. The state is required to employ 102 COs but the county only has 91.

“I think these people have been vastly underpaid and neglected,” said County Legislator Dave Sager. The maximum pay in neighboring Ulster County is $14,268 more than Sullivan County.

Sager added that the budget crunch should not prevent the county from moving contract negotiations quickly and improving the CO’s working conditions. Several lawmakers from both parties signaled their support.
The Convention will be held at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, in the city’s waterfront district.

MAKING HISTORY WHERE HISTORY THRIVES

BOSTON, where Paul Revere made his famous ‘Midnight Ride,’ is a city where history is made. So it’s appropriate that an estimated 5,000 AFSCME delegates will convene here this June to set the union’s course for the next two years at the 39th International Convention.

The theme of this year’s week-long Convention — “Ready to Fight! Ready to Lead!” — displays AFSCME’s determination to build political strength, grow through effective organizing and fight like never before to preserve vital public services during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

AFSCME activists helped take back the White House, win a labor-friendly majority in Congress and achieve health care reform. Now members are working to win more change, including passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, which is critical to restoring our freedom to bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. AFSCME activists across the nation are also fighting to prevent drastic cuts in state and local budgets that threaten to derail the nation’s economic recovery.

Convention delegates will meet from June 28 to July 2 to consider key policy resolutions and Constitutional amendments, to learn how to deal with the challenges ahead and to re-energize their commitment to AFSCME’s “Power to Win” goals: expanding our ranks, mobilizing more activists and increasing political power throughout our union.

In Massachusetts, AFSCME Council 93 represents more than 38,000 state, county and municipal workers, and employees of public and private higher educational institutions. More than 2,000 members serve citizens of Boston, in public works and at public schools and libraries. The council also represents more than 10,000 members in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Registration
Registration for delegates and alternates opens Saturday, June 26, at 1 p.m. and closes at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, June 29.

Reception
A delegates’ reception will be held on the evening of Sunday, June 27. The Convention formally opens for business on Monday, June 28, and ends on Friday, July 2.

Retirees Council
AFSCME’s Retirees Council will meet June 26–27, the weekend before the Convention opens.

Convention Delegates
February 28 was the earliest date for the election of Convention delegates, except for those from affiliates that meet less frequently than quarterly, and this restriction does not apply to any elected officer serving as an automatic delegate as provided in the affiliate’s constitution.

Secretary-Treasurer
Lucy Tribute
The week’s highlights will include a special tribute recognizing the leadership, service and commitment of Sec.-Treas. William Lucy, who retires in June.

Credentials
Regular credentials must be postmarked no later than June 8, 20 days prior to the opening of the Convention. Credentials postmarked after that date are considered irregular, and such delegates will not be included in the initial Report of the Credentials Committee, but will be included in any reports after the Convention votes to seat these irregular delegates. This date is also the deadline for submission of resolutions. Resolutions not postmarked by this date may only be considered after a two-thirds consenting vote of the Convention.

PEOPLE Fun Run
The PEOPLE Fun Run will be held on Thursday, July 1, starting at 6:30 a.m. at Castle Island.

Workshops
Workshops will be held Sunday, June 27, and Monday, June 28, from 2–3:30 p.m.

Orientation
First-time Delegate Orientation, in both English and Spanish, will be held on Sunday, June 27, from 3:30–5 p.m.
As members of a union standing 1.6 million strong, the hardworking men and women of AFSCME have long relied on good contracts that provide quality, affordable health insurance.

But skyrocketing health care costs have forced us to give up far too much at the bargaining table just to keep the health care we have. Meanwhile, millions of Americans have no health insurance at all.

That is why neither AFSCME — nor our allies — ever wavered in the battle for quality, affordable health care for all.

But we never fought alone.

Today, we are proud to thank Pres. Barack Obama, Majority Leader Harry Reid, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and friends of working men and women in the U.S. Congress for standing with working families every step of the way. Their steadfast efforts made health care reform a reality, made history, and made it possible for more people across this nation to get a shot at the American Dream. Photos: Evy Mages and Jay Mallin

**HEALTH CARE REFORM: WE DID IT!**