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Cover photo by Alexandra Buxbaum.
Delegates to AFSCME’s 37th International Convention in Chicago approved an historic plan to change our union and build the power we need to confront the greatest attacks working families and AFSCME members have ever seen.

The 21st Century Initiative’s Power To Win plan represents a bold, new strategy to expand our ranks, mobilize more activists and increase political power throughout our union. This new strategy will give us the strength we need to fight back and win.

Our challenge now is clear: to make these changes real in our day-to-day lives so we can promote public services and the important work we do, and equip the International Union and its local unions, councils and affiliates with the tools and resources to ensure we meet our goals.

This special edition of the Public Employee is dedicated to giving every member the information they need to be a part of AFSCME’s Power To Win campaign.

afscmechange.org
Power to Fight

Power to Win!

AFSCME’s 21st Century Initiative

“Let us stand for public service. Let us stand for an America that lives up to its ideals. … Let us stand for an America where workers are treated with dignity and respect. Let us stand for a more powerful AFSCME. Let us embrace the 21st Century Initiative!”

— GERALD W. MCENTEE
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

No matter where you look within AFSCME — the International Union, local unions, councils, or affiliates — we are committed to change. Thanks to the vision and dedication of AFSCME members and leaders across the nation, and the approval of over 3,000 delegates to our International Convention, we are now more prepared than ever to confront the challenges faced by AFSCME members and all working families across America.

By adopting the Power to Win plan of the 21st Century Initiative, delegates to our 2006 International Convention have opened the floodgates to a bold, new strategy that gives us the power to make our union stronger than ever before.

JOIN THE FIGHT! The need for a new game plan has never been clearer: For more and more families it is becoming difficult to achieve a decent standard of living. Affordable health care, retirement security and quality education are at risk or nearly out of reach. Corporations are raking in some of the greatest profits in history — while many of their workers can’t even make ends meet — and globalization is reducing the number of good-paying, unionized private-sector jobs, as the privatization wrecking ball destroys public services.

Billions in tax handouts to the rich have caused governmental budget cuts from top to bottom. These cuts have hit AFSCME members hard and reduced or eliminated vital public services. One result: 322,000 public service jobs have been lost in the last four years. At the same time, AFSCME members are having difficulty winning fair contracts and are sacrificing well-deserved wage increases in order to preserve their health insurance.
Our collective bargaining rights are also at risk. In three states — Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri — newly elected governors eliminated collective bargaining for state employees their first day in office.

There is no doubt that our enemies are openly and relentlessly working to destroy worker rights and dismantle public services. There is also no doubt that the men and women of AFSCME aren’t just planning to fight back, we are determined to win.

MAKE THE CHANGE! Our new strategy is the result of an effort two years in the making — one that called on the collective wisdom of more than 80 affiliate leaders who were part of the 21st Century Committee. Together, they logged hundreds of planning hours, hearing from members and local leaders, at national conferences and affiliate conventions, through town hall gatherings, local union meetings, online surveys and more. In the end, they produced a set of sweeping proposals designed to completely transform our union and build more power.

Our new Power to Win plan represents a groundbreaking effort to build more member participation; hold politicians accountable; increase our membership; expand the organizational capacity of our affiliates; make affordable health care universal; and project a proud, bold image for public services and our union.

Never in our union’s great history have we had a plan that is so promising of success. It is time to transform our union! It is time to fight and win the battles of the new century! It is time for everyone — it’s time for you — to get involved.

“For all the workers across this nation who are losing ground, we must fight back and take ground from those who would take it from us.”

— WILLIAM LUCY
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER

A JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY-TREASURER
BOLD ACTION

Our adversaries are attacking our jobs, our health care, our pensions and the vital services we provide. That’s why we must fight back harder and smarter than ever. Delegates to AFSCME’S 37th International Convention adopted the 21st Century Initiative, our bold new Power to Win plan to mobilize more members, increase our political power, bring in new members and use our increased strength and power to negotiate better contracts. These are AFSCME’S Power to Win priorities.

Power to Win
Join the Fight!
Make the Change!
afscmechange.org
MOBILIZE MEMBERS
The best way to make our union stronger is to get more members involved. The International Union is creating a Leadership Institute to provide members and leaders with the tools they need to build active local unions.

HOLD POLITICIANS ACCOUNTABLE
We elect our bosses, so we’ve got to elect politicians who support us and then hold them accountable on our issues. To raise the volume of our voices in the halls of power, we are building a year-round legislative and political action program — including an army of 40,000 AFSCME activists — and calling on affiliates to boost PEOPLE participation rates to at least 25 percent.

INCREASE OUR MEMBERSHIP
We gain more power at the ballot box and bargaining table by bringing more public service workers into the union. That’s why we’re going keep growing our union by helping 70,000 workers a year win the right to join AFSCME. You can help by becoming a Volunteer Member Organizer.

GET STRONGER
We can’t win the battles we face if we don’t build stronger organizations, so we’re going to help every council and local union build the strength and organizational capacity they need to win in politics, organizing and at the bargaining table.

PROJECT A BOLD, NEW IMAGE
We’re tired of being disrespected by politicians, the media and others. We are launching an aggressive campaign to educate reporters, elected officials and the general public about the important work we do in the public service and to project the values and power of our union.

MAKE AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE UNIVERSAL
For too long we’ve been forced to sacrifice wage increases just to maintain our health benefits. We’ll lead the fight for comprehensive national health care reform to take cuts in health care insurance off the bargaining table and fix a system that is immoral and inefficient.
Making Power to Win a success was at the top of the agenda for more than 4,000 delegates and alternates who spent one full day of the 2006 International Convention participating in an innovative town meeting that represents a first in AFSCME history and the entire labor movement.

Attendees were seated in hundreds of small groups where they grappled with the best ways to get members involved and to score more victories in organizing drives and at the ballot box.

The simultaneous discussions of each group were captured using an innovative system of keypads and laptop computers. Those discussions were instantaneously transferred to a group appropriately named the Theme Team, which compiled each tables’ answers into common ideas. Themes were broadcast on oversized video monitors for all to see, giving attendees the experience of one discussion made up of thousands of voices.

Called Our Voices Our Future, the meeting was facilitated by AmericaSpeaks, an organization that for more than a decade has engaged large groups in important local, state and national decisions, including redevelopment of the World Trade Center site following 9/11.

In the words of President McEntee, the gathering enabled AFSCME “to capitalize...
on our collective ideas and insights to identify common priorities, and to make commitments toward building a more powerful union.”

For everyone who attended, the meeting was a rare opportunity to use the collective wisdom and experience of a large number of their AFSCME brothers and sisters to build power in their unions back home.

Most of all, the gathering provided participants with the opportunity to put their imprint on the critical work and discussions that would not only put Power to Win in place, but ensure its success throughout the union.

“Everyone from our council thought the Town Meeting was invaluable,” said Dennis Tipton, president of Local 2367 (Council 13) and a supervisor in the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. “It was great having the chance to talk in a small group with AFSCME members from other states about how to turn the goals of Power to Win into a reality, and the computer linkup allowed everyone in the room to see our common concerns about the threats facing our union.”

With the future of the nation and AFSCME hanging in the balance, Our Voices Our Future was a critical step toward shaping our bold, new plan into a reality — one that will tip the scales of power back in favor of working men and women. PE

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LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE TAKES CENTER STAGE

To achieve the goals of Power to Win, the International Union is creating a new AFSCME Leadership Institute. The institute will develop leadership teams and leaders, and educate staff and members — providing them with the skills and online tools to build stronger AFSCME unions. Leadership development will be included in all union activities, including conferences, delegate meetings, political action, organizing, contract fights and privatization battles.

Asked what skills the new institute should address, town meeting attendees identified: communication; effective negotiation and conflict resolution; creating new leaders; and labor and AFSCME history. Other suggestions included managing local meetings, diversity training and organizational development.
Jean DieDerich, principal child support officer, and president of Hennepin County (Minnesota) Human Services and Public Health Department Local 34 (Council 5).

Member involvement

“We won our best contract in 17 years by asking members for ideas before the contract process began. We asked them what they wanted, what they thought, and then we took a survey that was based on their answers. The resulting contract was a thing of beauty. But getting members involved is not just a flash in the pan, a one-time deal. We are at a crisis level, and we must find a way to get everyone involved. Otherwise, we’ll all go down the drain together.”

JEAN DIEDERICH, principal child support officer, and president of Hennepin County (Minnesota) Human Services and Public Health Department Local 34 (Council 5).
POLITICAL ACTION

“In California, we took on Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger when he presented propositions that would have silenced the political voices of unions and taken away our retirement security. We talked to our members — especially the ones who had voted for him — and told them why it was so important that we fight this battle. In the end, he was defeated. He has already begun his attack for the upcoming re-election. But I have a message for the governor: We will be back!”

CHERYL OBASHI-WILLIAMS, Registered Nurse, Fountain Valley Medical Center, United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals, NUHCE/AFSCME.

ORGANIZING

“I’ve been a home care provider for over three years. It’s around-the-clock care. It’s hard, and the pay is low. We have no retirement, sick or vacation days. The state used to send our paychecks a week late and there was nothing we could do about it. Then, 2,800 Iowa home care providers like me decided to step out of the shadows and form our union with AFSCME. We even took our case to the governor. A year ago home care providers across Iowa won an executive order recognizing our union, and now we’re at the bargaining table. Not long after we won recognition, 6,000 family child care providers also won their fight for a union.”

JULIE BELL, Iowa home care provider, Council 61.

PROMOTING PUBLIC SERVICE

“We are proud workers in the public service — doing the jobs that keep this great nation moving forward. We are proud members of our communities — helping our neighbors, volunteering in schools, serving as members of the National Guard and running for elected office. We stand up for ourselves and for all of America’s working families. We lead the fight for justice. We are AFSCME!”

HOMER POST, recreation facility director at the Claude Pepper Senior Citizen Center, City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, and president of Local 901 (Council 36).
Stepped-up political action and organizing are key to *Power to Win*.

By Gonzalo Baeza

A top priority of *Power to Win* is helping affiliates recruit at least 25 percent of all AFSCME members to participate in our PEOPLE program in the next five years. PEOPLE is the union’s political, legislative and fundraising arm. The program is critical to AFSCME’s power in politics *and* at the bargaining table.

For more information on how you can make a difference in politics and organizing, visit afscme.org.
Just weeks after adopting the Power to Win plan at its 37th International Convention, AFSCME has already hit the ground running with an ambitious political action agenda for the 2006 and 2008 elections. AFSCME’s new year-round political program has a three-pronged strategy:

• Continue to mobilize our members at record levels, and improve our efforts by increasing voter registration and turnout.
• Mobilize members of union households — the fastest way to more than double our influence.
• Reach out to neighbors and like-minded constituencies — the path to expanding our base for pro-worker candidates.

AFSCME is stepping up current efforts to hold politicians accountable by running a year-round political and legislative action program to put our issues first. By creating a 40,000-member activist army and increasing the percentage of members registered to vote from 72 to 90 percent, AFSCME members will ensure elected officials carry out their promises.

With Election Day fast approaching, AFSCME has set up comprehensive political programs in 30 states with key gubernatorial, congressional, legislative and other down-ballot races. In these targeted states, labor has 11.4 million people living in union households, including working and retired members.

YEAR-ROUND MOBILIZATION. A cornerstone of this political effort will be the “labor-to-neighbor” strategy, where members will systematically contact their non-union neighbors to boost turnout for pro-worker candidates.

AFSCME members in Ohio are already reaching out to their neighbors by knocking on doors and conducting phone banks as part of a two-year battle to take back their state in 2006 and win the White House in 2008.

Three nights a week, members of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA)/AFSCME Local 11, Council 8 and the Ohio Association of Public School Employees/AFSCME Local 4 participate in labor walks that are part of the AFL-CIO’s “Take Back Ohio” initiative. To increase the number of people they can contact, AFSCME members have added two additional nights a month.

“I am a recent retiree who along with others is working to get people out on the issues of why it is so important that they vote this year,” says AFSCME activist Jean Fightmaster, who retired in May after 28 years of state service as a claims investigator at the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation as well as more than two decades with OCSEA.

According to Fightmaster, it is crucial to attract more activists to get voters to the polls.

“When you wonder whether you should be part of these activities as a public employee, you should also ask yourself the question: ‘Do you cash your paycheck?’, because every penny that funds the services we provide is put in place by legislative action. So if you don’t want to be involved, then you probably should not be on the public payroll,” she says.

Other key parts of AFSCME’s national election plan include: a “Special Forces” program to recruit and train members who will take leave of absences from their jobs to work full time on campaigns; a recruitment
**KEY POLITICAL RACES FOR NOVEMBER 7**

**IOWA**

Gov. Tom Vilsack (D) is stepping down, setting the stage for a race between Iowa Secretary of State Chet Culver (D) and U.S. Rep. Jim Nussle (R). Culver is a strong supporter of raising the minimum wage and defending workers’ pensions. At the state level, the Senate is split evenly between both political parties whereas in the House, Republicans have a 51 to 49 majority over Democrats, with enough competitive races to change this scenario.

**MICHIGAN**

Pro-worker candidate Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) faces Dick DeVos (R). In the U.S. Senate, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D) faces the sheriff of Oakland County, Mike Bouchard (R). Stabenow is a defender of workers’ rights, including overtime pay protections and ergonomic rules in the workplace. There is also an opportunity to take back the state Senate by electing labor-friendly lawmakers.

**OHIO**

Congressman Ted Strickland (D) runs for governor against Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell (R). In the U.S. Senate, Rep. Sherrod Brown (D) faces incumbent Sen. Mike DeWine (R), who has consistently supported the Bush anti-worker agenda.

**PENNSYLVANIA**

Both the state Senate and House are controlled by a precarious Republican majority. Working families have a real chance to make gains here. In the U.S. Senate race, incumbent Rick Santorum (R) is being challenged by State Treas. Robert Casey (D). Santorum opposes increasing the minimum wage and supports the elimination of the 40-hour workweek.

**MARYLAND**

Baltimore Mayor Martin O’Malley (D) is challenging Gov. Bob Ehrlich (R), who among other things tried unsuccessfully to veto the Fair Share Health Care Act, which would require big employers like Wal-Mart to spend part of their profits on employee health care.

**WISCONSIN**

Gov. Jim Doyle (D) faces U.S. Rep. Mark Green (R), whose congressional voting record shows him in favor of budget cuts in education and health care while supporting increases to the national debt limit.

**ORGANIZING TO WIN.** AFSCME is applying the same energy and commitment to organizing as it is to politics. Since 1999, AFSCME has won new representation rights for 330,000 workers. As impressive as this is, it is only the stepping stone to the Power to Win plan’s goal of organizing 70,000 workers per year.

AFSCME has a three-part organizing strategy:

- **Win the legal right for workers to organize and bargain through gubernatorial executive orders and legislation.** Earlier this year, AFSCME helped thousands of municipal workers in Oklahoma win bargaining rights for the first time. This is but one example of what a stronger union can do.

- **Organize workers who provide publicly funded services in the private sector and help them improve their wages, benefits and retirement security.** Public service work is increasingly being undermined by private-sector contracts that reduce costs on the backs of public service workers. Organizing private-sector workers helps to reduce the incentive to privatize vital government services.

- **Reach out to emerging workforces.** Another harmful trend to reduce budgets and trample the rights of public service workers has been the increased use of independent providers who are paid with public funds, but receive subsistence wages and are not even considered to be employees. Services such as caring for children, the elderly and people with disabilities are now performed by these so-called “independent providers.” They lack health and retirement benefits, and are seldom covered by unemployment insurance. AFSCME has launched an aggressive national organizing program — with specialized trainings — focused on congressional candidates willing to fight for working families on issues such as health care and retirement security (so far this year the union has trained 40 congressional candidates); and aggressive efforts to define the political debate around issues of importance to working families, such as health care and jobs, so voters know what’s at stake when they vote.

Putting issues first is one of the reasons AFSCME has spearheaded the Americans United coalition, which led the successful fight to defeat the privatization of Social Security.
campaign to help hundreds of thousands of home-based family child care providers and home care workers win justice and a better life by joining the union. Just last year, Council 75 was designated the exclusive bargaining representative for nearly 5,000 child care providers in Oregon. At press time, they were preparing to sign a contract that among other things increases their subsidy from the Oregon Department of Human Services and establishes a Provider Bill of Rights setting guidelines for registered and certified child care professionals to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS GAIN A VOICE.
In Iowa, the union is entering negotiations with the state for 6,000 family child care providers who are among over 50,000 providers nationwide who recently gained recognition with AFSCME. In Michigan, a coalition of AFSCME and the United Auto Workers were certified as the majority representative for 40,000 child care providers. In New Jersey, the governor has signed an executive order and recognized AFSCME and the Communications Workers of America as the co-representatives for nearly 5,000 child care providers. We have also won recognition for providers in four counties in Minnesota and Ohio.

BUILDING OUR CAPACITY. The resolution passed at the Chicago Convention calls for each council and large unaffiliated locals to develop new and expanded organizing plans — charging them to grow by organizing workers at the rate of 3 percent of membership. The International Union is mandated to organize at the rate of 2 percent of the national membership. But none of this can happen without increasing the union’s capacity to organize at every level. The International Union is working with affiliates on the most important ingredient to a successful national organizing strategy: fully staffed organizing programs and thousands of new Volunteer Member Organizers who will share their experiences with unorganized workers across the country while strengthening their unions for existing members in the process.

ORGANIZE!
Since 1999, AFSCME has won new representation rights for 330,000 workers. As impressive as this is, it is only the stepping stone to the Power to Win plan’s goal of organizing 70,000 workers per year.
Thousands of delegates to the 37th International Convention rallied outside the St. Mary of Nazareth Hospital Center on the northwest side of Chicago on August 9. They joined workers from Resurrection Health Care system’s eight hospitals, where 10,000 employees have been fighting to win a union with AFSCME Council 31 for nearly four years. The workers have faced harassment and hostile union-busting tactics in their fight for recognition, including the firing of eight union activists.

Says Nida Cuevo, a nurse for 23 years at Our Lady of the Resurrection Medical Center, “We’re not giving up!”