Bush policies and high prices are squeezing the middle class and turning the American dream into a fable.
Shattered Dream

It’s getting more difficult for middle class families to reach the American dream. Stagnant wages, rising costs and Bush administration policies that favor the rich over working families have created a gaping chasm between the wealthy and the rest of us. Why does the middle class have it so tough? AFSCME WORKS examines this devastating trend and relates the struggles of three middle-class AFSCME members who are trying to make ends meet.

Ready to Take Back America

This June, some 2,000 fired up AFSCME activists got together in Washington, D.C. They listened to five Presidential candidates, AFSCME leaders and each other — and committed themselves to winning back the White House next year. The Leadership Conference was the first step on the road to success.

Where Do the Candidates Stand?

Eight years of Bush administration policies have hurt working families all across the nation. What’s the best way to repair the damage, restore confidence and build a strong foundation that improves retirement security, expands health care coverage and protects public services? We look at some of the Presidential candidates’ solutions.

AFSCME’s NEW LOOK

The men and women of AFSCME are proud to serve their country and make America happen. We’re showcasing our members with the International’s new logo and this first-of-its-kind public service ad campaign, which began running the above billboard in June at several locations in Washington’s National Airport. The campaign is reminding scores of opinion-makers and decision-makers who travel from the nation’s capital that public service employees keep the nation moving.
provide the vital services that make America happen.

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

Top row (left to right): RNs Vilma Villareal and Maria Reyes, members of United Nurses Associations of California (UNAC)/UHCP at Woodland Hills, Calif. Retiree activist Lola Walker, formerly of United Domestic Workers of America in Los Angeles. RN Pam Jackson of UNAC/UHCP at Sharp Grossmont Hospital in La Mesa, Calif.

Middle row: Political activist Mindy Kemper of Local 2989 (Council 61), a clerk specialist at a state penitentiary in Donnellson, Iowa. Hospital worker Mario Gutierrez of Local 3299, a University of California/San Francisco employee.

Bottom row: Mechanic Charles Lewis of Local 410 (Council 72), St. Louis, Mo. Corrections Officer Bridgette Duncan of Local 6550 (Ohio Civil Service Employees Association/AFSCME Local 11), Orient, Ohio. Firefighter Herbert Furhman of Local 1565 (Council 4), New Milford, Conn. Metropolitan Sewer District worker, Calvin H. Miller of Local 410 (Council 72), St. Louis, Mo.
THE PRESIDENCY: WHY IT’S A BIG DEAL

WE HAVE MORE THAN A YEAR until the 2008 Presidential election. But you wouldn’t know it judging from all the activity of the Presidential hopefuls. Everything is heating up early and fast. The candidates from each party already have raised a total of $265 million, more than ever before at this point in a Presidential race.

Meanwhile, the major TV networks have had multiple candidate forums. The AFL-CIO just held one in August. AFSCME has held two, and our Presidential Search Committee is moving forward with a comprehensive review of the candidates. As we witness this early full-court press, we have to remember what’s really at stake when we elect the 44th President of the United States. Why is it so important for working families and our members? What’s the big deal?

The Big Deal
If we want to see what the big deal is concerning who becomes the next President, look at the economy. The middle class is being squeezed into oblivion and the wealthiest Americans sit in the lap of luxury waiting for their tax cuts to arrive in the mail. (For more on the middle class squeeze, see our cover story on Page 6.)

Look at Iraq. Congress allocated $602 billion for the war, but we never seem to have sufficient armored vehicles and protective gear for our troops. Instead of protecting top American officials with inept contractors like Blackwater, we should invest in the safety of our soldiers.

Look at the reconstituted Supreme Court. The current administration’s two appointments have doomed us to 5 to 4 decisions from the court’s conservative bloc, rolling back civil rights, restricting free speech for students and requiring employees to file a discrimination complaint within 180 days after their pay is set.

That’s not all. It’s essential to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, which will make it easier for workers to join unions. We must fight for continuation of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program for low-income children. And we must win collective bargaining rights for corrections and police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians in all 50 states. The success of these legislative priorities depends on electing a President who will stand up for workers and not veto the measures that safeguard them. Certainly we’re not going to win the really big things like affordable health care for all — or greater preservation of our members’ health care benefits — under this administration.

As union members, we’ve witnessed budget squeezes at every level of government. We’ve stood helplessly by while jobs and services are privatized. And we’ve seen jobs shipped overseas as the North American Free Trade Act replaces American workers with cheap labor in tax-free havens. We fought for the first minimum wage increase in a decade — and we got it! But when we go for a living wage of $9.50 an hour, you’d better believe the Bush veto will be waiting.

The New Deal
In ways both positive and negative, Presidents have affected union workers. During the Great Depression, Pres. Franklin Roosevelt created the New Deal. In 1961, we made a big leap forward when Pres. John F. Kennedy signed an Executive Order establishing collective bargaining rights for federal employees. Pres. Ronald Reagan fired 13,000 striking air traffic controllers, breaking their strike and altering the course of federal labor relations.

The Best Deal
While we gear up for the 2008 Presidential election, remember that the fate of our country is at stake. But when we go for a living wage of $9.50 an hour, you’d better believe the Bush veto will be waiting.
SMALLER GOVERNMENT EQUALS BIGGER PROFITS

SMALLER GOVERNMENT and lower taxes. Together, they form the cornerstone of Republican ideology. And when it comes to George Bush, Dick Cheney and other devotees, smaller government is code for using more contractors to manage functions traditionally carried out by public service workers.

All of this happens under the guise of improving services and making certain operations more “businesslike,” as if the private sector has cornered the market on efficiency.

In the end the government gets ripped off while taxpayers end up paying much more for much less.

Look at consultant Booz Allen Hamilton, a global contractor with 19,000 employees and clients on six continents. The Department of Homeland Security awarded the company a no-bid $2 million contract in 2003. By December 2004, payments had ballooned past $30 million. By that time, Homeland Security lawyers had determined that Booz Allen Hamilton was performing work that was well beyond the scope of the original contract and recommended opening the bidding to other companies.

However, an entire year passed before that happened, and by then, payments to Booz Allen Hamilton had risen to $73 million under a second no-bid arrangement. When July of this year rolled around, the federal government — that means you and me — had paid the company $124 million. And it all began with a no-bid $2 million contract. Good work if you can get it.

No Competition, Big Money

These situations aren’t rare. In fact, one out of every two dollars spent on 2006 federal contracts was awarded with little or no competition, according to the recent congressional report “More Dollars, Less Sense: Worsening Contracting Trends Under the Bush Administration.” Last year, the report says, government contracting passed the $400 billion mark for the first time ever, with defense contractor Lockheed Martin raking in the most at $31.5 billion. Clear evidence of the administration’s version of new math: More privatization equals bigger profits for their corporate friends.

The administration’s antics mirror the words of Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), who insulted all public service workers when he said he’d like to shrink the government down to the size that he could “drown it in the bathtub.”

Along with state-based free market organizations, Norquist’s group is behind the so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) initiatives that have appeared coast to coast. TABOR laws force governments to drastically reduce spending, prompting deep and irreversible cuts in vital services.

Americans for Tax Reform Looks the Other Way

Groups like ATR constantly decry the size of government and criticize what they consider outlandish wastes of taxpayer dollars. Yet, when it’s time to speak up in the face of obvious thefts like the Booz Allen Hamilton scandal, these groups — and Bush administration loyalists — are strangely silent.

In truth, the smaller government/lower taxes crowd actually has another agenda, one that does not have a thing to do with providing relief to the average taxpayer. They know that a smaller government means a windfall for business. After all, the fact that government no longer provides a service does not mean that the service has suddenly become unnecessary. Somebody still has to provide it. That “somebody” is likely to be a government contractor — and these days, it doesn’t hurt if it’s one with good connections to the Bush administration.

Supporting smaller government and lower taxes should also mean opposing profiteering by contractors. We must challenge the hypocrisy of those who are using our tax dollars to enrich Big Business.
SHATTERED
FOR YEARS, MIDDLE-CLASS JOBS paved the way to the American dream of good pay, health care, quality education and a secure retirement. All of it was a promise: If you worked hard and made wise choices you could get ahead.

A generation ago, that promise was stitched together by the strength of the American labor movement, when more than one out of three workers belonged to a union. Their wages helped set the mark for non-union workers and raised the standard of living for all.

A DIFFERENT ECONOMY

Today, union membership is down, wages are stagnant, costs have gone up and the current generation of young people is the first in 100 years to expect they won’t be as well off as their parents. America’s middle class is under attack.

Corporations no longer feel a need to care for the workers whose efforts make their profits soar and their CEOs super rich. While companies ship American jobs to other countries, they dodge federal taxes by creating paper headquarters overseas. Meanwhile, the politicians who are in these corporations’ pockets turn a blind eye to it all.

The result? Since George Bush has been in office, the number of uninsured Americans has risen from 39.8 million to 47 million in 2006, including 8.1 million children. According to the Commonwealth Fund, four out of 10 working-age Americans with moderate incomes went without health insurance during part of 2005. Closer to home, skyrocketing costs are slicing our health care benefits at the bargaining table.

The number of Americans living in poverty has gone up, too. Since 2000, 5.4 million Americans have slipped into poverty.

DREAM TO FABLE

In 2007, many American families teeter on a financial tightrope that has become so thin and high that one unexpected bill can cause them to lose their economic footing. For these families, the American dream has become a fable. Here’s why:

It costs more to stay healthy. In 2000, the average family paid $6,348 for health insurance. Today, that number has shot up to $11,480.

It’s more expensive to get around. Six years ago, the average worker with children spent just over $1,900 per year on gas. This year, that same worker can expect to spend $3,887.

It’s harder to own a home. To reach the dream of homeownership, many buyers have stretched their dollars through adjustable-rate mortgages and interest-only loans. As the rates on these mortgages have soared, the number of homeowners forced to sell or pushed into foreclosure has skyrocketed.

It’s more difficult to retire. In recent years, some companies have ruthlessly terminated or “frozen” their private-sector pension plans, leaving scores of workers with smaller pensions, or none at all. The attack is spreading to state and local governments as some try to replace traditional defined benefit plans — reliable pensions that pay retirees based on how much was put in — with 401(k)-type plans, which are subject to the ups and downs of the stock market, affecting how much a retiree can expect to get out.

It costs more to educate a child. When it comes to providing their children with an education at a public college, working families are squeezed by costs that have risen a wallet-busting 56 percent since the 2000-2001 school year.

BUSH TIGHTENS THE SQUEEZE

Instead of addressing these challenges, Bush has pushed through policies that make things worse. Amid soaring tuition, he has cut billions in funding from student loan programs. As gas prices soared, he dished out tax cuts to Big Oil. And he has made huge cuts in education, health, child care and other critical programs for working families while simultaneously pushing through tax cuts for the wealthy — worth $197 billion over 10 years.

Last fall, Bush made it more difficult for workers to organize when his hand-picked National Labor Relations Board ruled that employees who occasionally coordinate the work of others would be considered supervisors. This one misguided decision stripped organizing rights from some 8 million workers.

Planning to tighten the clamps on workers, Bush promised to veto the Employee Free Choice Act — a measure that would make it easier for the 60 million workers who say they would join a union to do so, without fear of employer harassment and intimidation.

BRINGING IT HOME

Even with good union contracts, many members of AFSCME are finding it difficult to keep up, let alone get ahead. In a 2007 poll, one out of every two members says they earn just enough to get by. But polling tells only part of the story. What follows are the stories of three AFSCME members from Connecticut, New Jersey and Oregon. Together, they represent millions of Americans across the nation who are part of the struggling middle class. — Lisa Kelly
AFSCME’S AGENDA TO REBUILD THE MIDDLE CLASS

It’s time to renew the promise of America — that if you work hard and play by the rules you can get ahead and give your children the opportunity to live a better life. This is a summary of our agenda to help more families achieve the American dream.

Make Health Care Secure and Affordable. We’ve bargained hard for our health coverage. Lately, we’ve had to sacrifice well-deserved wage increases to keep our good benefits. We must protect our health insurance, put a cap on skyrocketing costs and provide affordable coverage for all Americans. As part of national health care reform, we are working to fix the Medicare prescription drug law so our seniors can get the medicines they need.

Make College Affordable. Economic and educational opportunity are keys to the American dream. But the cost of higher education and the scarcity of financial aid leaves many people behind. We must make tuition affordable so every student who wants a college education can get one.

Guarantee a Secure Retirement. Working families deserve retirement security. AFSCME is fighting efforts by Pres. George W. Bush and others to privatize Social Security, and battling every politician who wants to reduce public employee pension benefits, and raid pension funds to balance budgets and pay for pork barrel projects. We must safeguard and strengthen Social Security and defined benefit pensions, and oppose any measure that reduces guaranteed benefits.

Restore Worker’s Freedom to Bargain for a Better Life. The hands of working men and women built this country, yet every day we are left out of its prosperity. Unions created the middle class and are the key to a strong and growing economy. The next President must sign the Employee Free Choice Act, which would give workers the freedom to join unions, without being harassed or intimidated by their employers.

Strengthen Public Services. AFSCME’s 1.4 million members provide the vital local, state and federal services that make America happen. We must increase investment in these services. We must fight privatization schemes that weaken the public sector, reduce the quality and availability of services and take away our members jobs. We must eliminate tax breaks for the rich and close corporate tax loopholes and repeal tax breaks for companies that outsource American jobs overseas.

Surviving

Ed and Ann Cogswell review their finances to see if there’s money left to buy a new car. Photo: Andrew Lichtenstein

Ed Cogswell admits he and his wife, Ann, are not in dire straits and are probably better off than some of their neighbors. But even with an estimated joint income of $82,000 year, they also feel they’re not far from disaster.

“If something happens to me or my wife, neither of us would be able to survive on one salary,” says Ed, 55, the chef manager for the Brien McMahon High School and president of Local 1748, Council 4, representing cafeteria workers in the Norwalk Public Schools. Ann works as a subcontractor in the finance department of Stamford Hospital. “The cost of living has skyrocketed over the last few years, making it impossible to even set aside money for a rainy day, adds Ed.”

Although one child is out of college, the Cogswells are still paying $38,500 a year in tuition and fees for another daughter, a junior at Bryant University in Rhode Island. The rest of their paychecks go to a monthly mortgage of $1,300 on their 3-bedroom home, insurance, taxes and other basic expenses.

“It’s always a juggling act,” Ed explains. “I want to buy a new car to replace my 7-year-old Chevy, but we just can’t. We want to travel for vacation but we can only afford going to the movies.”

Even with a recently negotiated union contract — which provides good wage increases and medical coverage — Ed and Ann are still worried about the future. Recently, they put their house up for sale, in part because they are concerned they will no longer be able to afford living in Norwalk — a city surrounded by some of the country’s most affluent suburbs.

“Sometimes, we seem only to be working but after paying all our bills, there’s not much left over,” Ed laments. — Jon Melegrito
**NEWARK, NJ**

“If a person considers himself middle class, I figure he has to be financially stable,” says James Shaw, an orderly at Beth Israel Medical Center. “I’m living paycheck to paycheck.”

Shaw, 33, is a member of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees (NUHHCE)/AFSCME District 1199J. Together, he and his wife Erika earn roughly $50,000 annually — a bit more than the nation’s median household income of $48,201. But it’s not enough to go around for the Shaws, who have two sons, ages 11 and one, and a third son born just weeks ago.

Overtime — when it comes — is a mixed blessing: It helps, but takes Shaw away from his kids. There’s still nothing left after paying bills that include monthly rent of $1,200 on their two-bedroom, single-bathroom house, plus $1,500 in annual medical deductibles. “Every dollar I make is accounted for in my family’s living expenses, especially in this high-cost city,” Shaw says. That includes the little extra he makes as a party disc jockey.

Three years ago, he returned his used car to the dealer because he couldn’t afford the $375-per-month payment, or the insurance. Now he gets to work on public transportation.

During the school year, Shaw wakes his 11-year-old at 5:30 a.m. The boy accompanies his dad to work and waits until his father takes his break and walks him to school. “I can’t afford to pay a baby sitter,” explains Shaw, who already spends $585 a month on day care for his 1-year-old.

Shaw doesn’t see a middle class anymore. “You’re either rich or poor,” he observes. Yet he refuses to surrender his dream of a better life for his family.

“When,” he wonders, “do you get a chance to have your moment?”

— Clyde Weiss

**Struggling |** James Shaw, a hospital orderly, works hard to support his young family but feels like he’s falling behind.

**Photo:** Christopher Barth

**Still Scraping for Dollars |** DyLynn Robertson helps the youngest child under her care eat lunch.

**Photo:** John Bauguess

**PORTLAND, OR**

As a childless couple in their forties, DyLynn and Richard Robertson are finding it harder to live on their joint annual income of $35,000. “We’re struggling a little bit more because we don’t get tax credits,” says DyLynn, a child care provider and a member of Child Care Providers Together/AFSCME Council 75. Her husband is a bicycle mechanic.

From their monthly pay, the Robertsons set aside $900 for their mortgage, $460 for liability insurance for her business and $270 for health insurance — with no dental coverage. “Because we each have a deductible of $5,000,” DyLynn explains, “we paid $7,000 out of pocket for medical treatments last year. It’s sad, but that’s all we talk about with friends these days — ailments and the high costs of health care.”

“We’re down to $45 in our savings and our checking account balance never exceeds $200,” DyLynn says. Without pension benefits and IRA accounts, the Robertsons worry about the future. “If we work till we’re 72, given what we earn, we’ll barely make $200 a month from Social Security.”

DyLynn is concerned that “as a middle class family, we’re not being rewarded financially enough for working hard. The policies of the Bush administration breed a lot of anger, fear and frustration.”

Still, she’s hopeful. “Our union recently negotiated a contract with huge increases in state subsidies for child care providers, the first in 12 years,” she says. “We will press for health insurance benefits in the next round.”

Unable to afford vacations, the Robertsons purchased a used sailboat, but it needs repairs. For now, the dreamboat is stuck in a marina along the Columbia River. “We’re still scraping for dollars to get our boat fixed,” DyLynn says. “Until then, we just sit on the dock and watch the other sailboats go by.”

— Jon Melegrito

**Barely Getting By |** DyLynn and Richard Robertson are finding it harder to live on their joint income of $35,000 — a bit more than the nation’s median household income of $48,201.

**Photo:** Christopher Barth

**Worried |** DyLynn Robertson helps the youngest child under her care eat lunch.
AFSCME ACTIVISTS MAKE BATTLE PLANS TO ELECT WORKER-FRIENDLY CANDIDATES IN 2008.

BY CLYDE WEISS

More than 2,000 AFSCME members gathered this June in Washington, D.C. They were there to formulate a plan to build a 40,000-member AFSCME “army” of election activists and expand the union’s political action fund (PEOPLE).

“We’re here for one reason: to launch our 2008 political program,” Pres. Gerald W. McEntee told leaders attending the AFSCME National Leadership Conference. “We plan to take back the White House, build the Democratic majority in Congress, and elect pro-worker, pro-family officials throughout this country.”

To do it, he said, AFSCME must “put boots on the ground, make calls, knock on doors, double our PEOPLE war chest for the 2008 elections and work harder and smarter than ever.”

POLITICS, INSIDE & OUT
AFSCME members will be critical in turning out the vote in the next election, and the activists heard five of the leading Democratic Presidential candidates outline their views during a forum moderated by MSNBC “Hardball” host Chris Matthews. (For a look at seven of the Democratic hopefuls, see Pages 12–16.)


The hopefuls addressed issues ranging from affordable health care and the environment to protecting Social Security, the Iraq war and a worker’s right to join a union. Afterward, activists braved 95-degree heat at a Capitol Hill rally in support of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), which will make it easier for workers to join a union without being intimidated by their employer.

Planning to Win
The union’s Presidential Search Committee is guiding a thorough review of the candidates, which will include polling of AFSCME members and may result in an endorsement recommendation.

Election Day — Nov. 4, 2008 — “can be the start of our nation’s recovery,” said McEntee. “But it will take the determined effort of AFSCME members nationwide to make that a reality.”
‘WE’RE TAKING ACTION!’

Whether it’s educating and registering voters or mobilizing working families on Election Day, we have a lot of work to do to take back the White House and elect pro-working family officials at every level of government. That’s why activists at our Leadership Conference in June committed themselves to do more: to help sign up more members to AFSCME’s PEOPLE political fundraising program and build an AFSCME volunteer army of 40,000 members to make more calls, knock on more doors and turn out more voters. Here, activists from across the country share their ideas and personal commitments to help elect candidates who support working families.

HELEN HAMADA
KAPIOLANI COMMUNITY COLLEGE, HONOLULU, MEDIA DESIGNER/GRAPHIC ARTIST; HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION/AFSCME LOCAL 152 OAHU-AT-LARGE DIRECTOR. Photo: Gary Hotheimer

LEONARD DEBOSE
RETIRED CITY OF PHILADELPHIA WATER INSPECTOR, PEOPLE COMMITTEE ORGANIZER FOR PENNSYLVANIA DISTRICT COUNCIL 33, AND A MEMBER OF RETIREE CHAPTER 2. Photo: Sherman Harris

AFSCME works
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007
AFSCME.ORG
WHERE DO THE CANDIDATES STAND?

See Pages 14 and 15.
YEAR AFTER YEAR and policy after policy, the Bush administration has abandoned the middle class, cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans and neglected the funding of vital public services.

It’s time for a change! We must roll back the damage, take back this country, and put it in the hands of America’s working families — the industrious men and women who make it work every single day. That is why this union is looking for a Presidential candidate with a bold vision, a real plan and the ability to win on Election Day. Top on our list? Someone who will reform health care, safeguard our retirement security and support a vibrant public sector. Here’s where AFSCME stands on these key issues.

RETIREMENT SECURITY

For over 70 years, Social Security has provided guaranteed retirement benefits. Today, more than 175 million workers contribute to the system and 47 million receive payments. In spite of the program’s success, Pres. George W. Bush and the privatization zealots in his administration claim Social Security is in crisis. They want to privatize it into a program forcing workers to divert part of their hard-earned dollars to private accounts that would invest them in the risky stock market.

At the same time, private companies are eliminating pensions altogether and governments are moving away from traditional defined benefit plans and toward defined contribution plans. Unlike defined benefit plans, which provide employees with a guaranteed pension paid from money that has been set aside for that purpose by the employer, the payment from defined contribution plans depends on how much was put into the fund and how these contributions were invested. In other words, a defined contribution plan is risky, especially if invested funds do poorly.

What’s more, public employee pensions are being raided across the country to balance budgets and pay for all kinds of politically expedient initiatives and pork barrel projects. To ensure pensions are fully funded, public employees have made concessions at the bargaining table. This situation must stop.

A deal is a deal and public employees — just like every other worker — deserve a dignified retirement.

We oppose any measure that cuts or takes away guaranteed pension benefits.

Continued on Page 16.
### Social Security

Each Presidential hopeful opposes Social Security privatization and supports efforts to protect defined benefit plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Biden (D-Del.)</td>
<td>Supports modest changes, such as raising the income cap subject to Social Security tax.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.)</td>
<td>Intends to convene stakeholders to address funding shortfall projected for 2041.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Dodd (D-Conn.)</td>
<td>Will insist on pay-as-you-go budgeting that protects Social Security.</td>
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### Pensions

Helped strengthen federal government pension protections while in the Senate.

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<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joe Biden (D-Del.)</td>
<td>Would require employers to create fully portable retirement accounts for all workers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.)</td>
<td>Helped author legislation to prevent Enron-type scandals and make sure pensions are there when workers retire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Dodd (D-Conn.)</td>
<td>Helps author legislation to prevent Enron-type scandals and make sure pensions are there when workers retire.</td>
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### Health Care Reform

Each supports national health care reform and would require the federal government to negotiate lower drug prices for nearly 43 million Medicare recipients and disabled Americans.

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<th>Candidate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joe Biden (D-Del.)</td>
<td>Will convene key health care stakeholders within the first 90 days of his administration to develop a comprehensive plan for full coverage and reduce costs. Supports community rating for health insurance to pool risk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.)</td>
<td>Would require individuals to carry coverage, with active employer participation and caps on affordability. Supports linking reimbursement with quality. Would require guaranteed issue, which prevents employers from excluding pre-existing conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Dodd (D-Conn.)</td>
<td>Will create a federal health insurance marketplace based on the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan that is eligible for buy-in by anyone.</td>
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### Protecting Public Services

Says basic services like safety, postal service, child welfare and prison systems should never be contracted out. Introduced legislation to stop contracting out maintenance of military medical facilities.

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<tr>
<td>Joe Biden (D-Del.)</td>
<td>Will significantly reduce the number of federal contractors and provide transparency in the process. Will end no-bid contracts on the federal level.</td>
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<td>Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.)</td>
<td>Says outsourcing is unnecessary and has supported efforts to keep federal agencies from outsourcing government jobs to contractors. Will prohibit granting federal contracts to labor violators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Dodd (D-Conn.)</td>
<td>Helps author legislation to prevent Enron-type scandals and make sure pensions are there when workers retire.</td>
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<td>Former U.S. Sen. John</td>
<td>Wants to pursue a non-ideological, bipartisan solution to expand the life</td>
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<td>Edwards (D-N.C.)</td>
<td>of the Social Security Trust Fund.</td>
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<td>U.S. Rep. Dennis</td>
<td>Will take steps to prevent executives from making windfalls if companies</td>
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<td>Kucinich (D-Ohio)</td>
<td>go bankrupt.</td>
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<td>U.S. Sen. Barack Obama</td>
<td>Would require individuals to carry coverage, and employers to cover</td>
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<tr>
<td>(D-Il.)</td>
<td>employees or help them with premium payments. Will repeal Bush tax cuts</td>
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<td>for those making over $200K to pay for reform. Pledges coverage for all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>by end of first term.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gov. Bill Richardson</td>
<td>Would halt efforts to outsource federal jobs if public employees don’t</td>
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<tr>
<td>(D-N.M.)</td>
<td>have a chance to compete. Will reinstate contractor responsibility rules</td>
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<td>suspended by the Bush administration.</td>
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A QUESTION HEARD ACROSS THE NATION

“What will you do to restore the rights of workers, like myself, who want to form a union?” Shirley Brown, a housekeeper at Resurrection Health Care’s Westlake Hospital in Illinois, raised this question during the recent nationally televised AFL-CIO Presidential Candidates Forum at Soldier Field Stadium in Chicago. For nearly five years, Resurrection workers have fought for a voice at their workplace with AFSCME Council 31. Brown’s question prompted the candidates to voice their support for workers’ right to organize, and the Employee Free Choice Act, a bill that would allow workers to join unions without employee interference.

AFSCME member Shirley Brown. Photo: Marc PoKempner

Continued from Page 13.

HEALTH CARE
Skyrocketing health care costs threaten to destroy the economic security of many working families. The strain is felt on state and local budgets, and public employees are increasingly being forced to sacrifice wage increases to maintain their health benefits. Unless we make affordable health care available to all, including the 47 million Americans without health insurance, coverage costs will remain at the center of our contract battles and eat away our economic gains. To take health insurance off the bargaining table and fix a broken system, AFSCME is leading the fight for comprehensive national health care reform.

PROTECTING PUBLIC SERVICES
From privatization and budget cuts to negative stereotyping of public employees, there is an all-out attack on the public sector.

From one fiscal crisis to the other, politicians scapegoat public employees by dismissing the importance of public services, and the dedicated men and women who provide them. Public employee unions are vilified as self-interested organizations that put their members’ needs above the public good. AFSCME is committed to educating people about the key role of the public sector and the vital services that make America happen.

One of the main threats faced by the public sector is privatization. Even though its stated goal is to reduce costs and improve services, we often end up paying more for less. Privatization can also lead to layoffs, threatening AFSCME members’ job security, pay, benefits and career opportunities. Contracting out also means we often end up paying more for less accountability and lower-quality services. Private companies are not subject to the same scrutiny as government entities operating in an open arena.

AFSCME is fighting to stop privatization. We support cost-effective, high-quality public services, and speak out to ensure state and local governments have an adequate and stable revenue stream to fund them.
Minneapolis, MN | Members of Minnesota Council 5 issued repeated warnings about their state’s crumbling infrastructure. Sadly, their predictions came true with the Aug. 1 collapse of the I-35W bridge. Thirteen people died as a result of the disaster, and 100 were injured.

“In America, bridges shouldn’t collapse,” said Council 5 Exec. Director Eliot Seide, who is also an AFSCME International vice president. “Whether it’s bridges or levees, people get hurt when government stops investing in infrastructure.”

To salute those who responded to the tragedy, Council 5 ran the ad shown below. Photo: Jennifer Lovaasen

**TRAGEDY IN MINNESOTA**

**BRIDGES SHOULD NOT FALL**

**BUT IF THEY DO, WE’RE THERE TO HELP**

We honor the union members and public employees who courageously responded to the bridge collapse.
AFSCME STAFFER RESCUES BOY

Doug Moore Jr., 50, an assistant to the AFSCME regional director in the West, who is based in Oakland, is being credited with saving the life of 2-year-old Kevin Anthony Spears in June when the child wandered away from his grandmother, Dolores Spears.

Moore and his 3-year-old granddaughter had been invited by Dolores to attend a birthday party for another child at a local park. Near the party’s conclusion, Moore saw Kevin Anthony about 100 yards away, chasing ducks into a pond. “I just took off running.”

The boy fell into the water and went under. Moore jumped in and rescued him. “I turned him on his stomach, across my forearm, and gave him compressions on his back. That’s when he started coughing up water and breathing.”

Both mother and granddaughter praised Moore. In a letter to AFSCME Pres. Gerald W. McEntee, grandmother Dolores wrote: “One takes a ‘measure of a man’ in so many different ways. My measure of Doug Moore is an unsung hero and I felt someone should sing his song.”

AFSCME members took up the mantle, signing an on-line petition to amend the U.S. Flag Code to have flags lowered for a day each time an American service member dies at war. The “Honor the Fallen” campaign, which ran in May, generated 7,143 signed petitions to 343 members of Congress.

“We owe it to the memory of all the soldiers who have lost their lives in this war to lower the flag each time one of them dies for his or her country,” AFSCME Pres. Gerald W. McEntee stated at the union’s Leadership Conference in June. “When we bury the dead, we must not bury the memory of their sacrifice.”

The mayor of Washington, D.C., will have the same right as a governor to order U.S. flags lowered on federal buildings, including at the White House.

Grateful for a Hero  | Kevin Anthony Spears, 2, was saved from drowning by the fast action of AFSCME employee Doug Moore, shown here with the boy’s grandmother, Dolores, far left, and his mother, Cynthia Spears. Photo: KortKnee Spears
A major ruling of the Kansas Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) consolidating small units into larger ones grouped by occupation, and allowing the merger of local affiliates of AFSCME and the American Federation of Teachers, means more power for some 14,000 executive branch state employees.

“This is a new day — a great day — for Kansas and state employees,” says Gerald Raab, an environmental technician for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and president of the new entity, named the Kansas Organization of State Employees (KOSE). It was automatically recognized as the certified bargaining agent for six of the 17 newly formed units. All non-supervisory, non-confidential classified executive branch employees (exclusive of those in higher education) are eligible to join.

Already leveraging their KOSE membership, state employees have met with officials to air their concerns. In August, KOSE corrections officers met — for the first time in a neutral setting outside the Department of Corrections — with corrections officials about staffing and other safety issues following a serious assault on a prison employee.

STATE EMPLOYEES HAVE NEW UNION CLOUT

Preserve Step-based Pay | KOSE members attend a June session of the State Employee Pay Plan Oversight Commission to protest an attempt to implement merit-based pay.

AFSCME MEMBERS EARN COLLEGE CREDITS

When JoAnn Johntony and Davida Russell received their bachelor’s degrees in labor studies from the National Labor College (NLC) — the nation’s only union-based college — in June, each acquired nearly six academic credits for completing AFSCME training programs. These accredited courses were created through the union’s partnership with NLC. As a result, the two took the fast track to becoming full-fledged college graduates.

Since 2003, AFSCME has developed high quality, rigorous training programs, which are accredited by the college. In many instances, AFSCME members may transfer credits to undergraduate degree programs at accredited colleges and universities.

Johntony and Russell, both members of the Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE)/AFSCME Local 4, enrolled at NLC last year. Each won the 2006 Joey Parisi Memorial Scholarship — named after a legendary AFSCME organizer — which helped them to pursue their NLC studies.

Johntony is a school custodian and state president of OAPSE. Russell, a bus driver and president of Local 744, wrote a book (as a class project) about her mother, a bus driver herself who organized her co-workers to form a union. The Birth of a Union: The Legacy of Noridean McDonald was published in July.

Three other AFSCME members received their diplomas from NLC this summer: Karen Ann Lewis, former member and regional vice president of Local 972 (Pennsylvania Council 90); Robert C. Trombley, chief steward, Local 1461 (New Mexico Council 18); and Sherman Henry, president of Local 1184 (Florida Council 79).

For more scholarship information, go to www.afscme.org and look for “Scholarships” in the “Members Only” section.

Union Made! | Two OAPSE members, JoAnn Johntony (left) and Davida Russell graduate from the National Labor College in Maryland. Photo: Jan Melegrito
From state to state, workers are organizing with AFSCME for a voice on the job. Here are some recent victories:

**Alaska**
Approximately 700 members of the Alaska Public Safety Employees Association voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with AFSCME. They include state troopers, wildlife troopers, airport police and fire officers, deputy fire marshals, court service officers, municipal police officers, dispatchers, EMTs and other law enforcement personnel.

**Connecticut**
In two separate and unanimous votes, 42 Fairfield Board of Education employees voted to join Council 4. They include 21 special education trainers and 21 information technology and systems workers.

**Illinois**
More than 700 state workers have joined Council 31, including 440 “Executive IIs” employed in a wide range of departments and agencies: aging, agriculture, corrections, children and family services, human services, public health, state police, transportation, veterans’ affairs and others. Also, about 300 public service administrators working in a variety of state agencies won a 4-year-long battle to become members of Council 31. These previously unrepresented employees petitioned the state for union recognition in 2003 and demonstrated that a majority had expressed interest in joining AFSCME. It took a decision by the Illinois Labor Relations Board to make the administrators’ wishes a reality.

**Indiana**
About 400 Indianapolis public school bus drivers, monitors and mechanics employed by First Student Inc., the second-largest school bus operator in North America, joined Council 62. Their Aug. 21 vote to build a union with AFSCME was nearly unanimous. Also, some 240 Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library employees joined Council 62, overcoming employer opposition that included a requirement that more than three-fourths of the workers vote in the union election.

**Michigan**
Fifteen custodian/maintenance/utility workers employed by Kellogg Community College voted unanimously to join Council 25.

**Minnesota**
More than 150 nursing home workers at the Edgewood Vista Care Center, an assisted-living facility just outside Duluth, have joined Council 5. The campaign was marked by management’s unfair tactics, including captive-audience meetings and the hiring of a union buster. Also, seven Isanti County assistant attorneys joined Council 65 by card check.

**New Jersey**
Thirty-five clerical workers and crossing guards in the borough of Haddon Heights, near Camden, organized with Council 71.

**New Mexico**
A unit of 1,300 non-professional and technical employees at the University of New Mexico Hospital in Albuquerque voted unanimously to join the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees (NUHCE)/AFSCME District 1199NM. Also joining 1199NM were 350 service and maintenance workers at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Santa Fe.

**New York**
Building a union with DC 1707 are 32 professional and non-professional employees of the East Bronx Day Care Center, 40 teachers and aides at Brooklyn Family Services (Project Chance), and 60 social service workers at two Catholic charities for developmentally disabled adults: Straus Residence and Golden Residence. Also, a 30-member maintenance unit employed by AvPorts at the Albany Airport voted to join Civil Service Employees Association/AFSCME Local 1000.

**Oklahoma**
Nearly 330 blue- and white-collar employees of the city of Edmond became the latest public employees to organize under a recently upheld collective bargaining law covering 10,000 municipal workers in Oklahoma.

**Oregon**
About 130 Portland Development Commission employees, including planners, financial coordinators, auditors and other professional and administrative support staff, have voted to join Council 75.
BARGAINING FOR POWER

After several lengthy battles & tough negotiations, members win pay raises & more.

San Diego

CALIFORNIA

3,400 SHARP RNs & LPNs

Nurses at Sharp HealthCare ratified a new 3-year contract in June, strengthening their voice on staffing and quality of health care, plus boosting wages and retirement benefits.

The RNs and LPNs, members of United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals (UNAC/UHCP), averted a scheduled 3-day strike that would have affected seven hospitals where they work. “The 3,400 nurses at Sharp will now have a real say in quality-of-care issues,” says Corinne Hollings, RN, president of the union affiliate at the San Diego-based system.

The agreement will resolve crucial issues such as safe staffing levels through a binding dispute resolution process, provide for a new retiree health coverage program and protect nurses from being arbitrarily classified as “supervisors.” This is in response to the National Labor Relations Board’s ruling classifying a supervisor as anyone who gives even occasional direction to another employee, which makes them ineligible for union representation.

During the contract campaign, the nurses filed a potentially multi-million-dollar lawsuit in a state Superior Court. The class-action suit contends that Sharp deprives hundreds of nurses of legally mandated overtime pay, plus compensation for lost meals and breaks.

“Nurses need breaks and rest time so they can provide the high quality care their patients deserve,” says UNAC/UHCP Pres. Kathy J. Sackman, RN, who is also an AFSCME International vice president. “If they don’t get this rest, at least they should be properly paid for it.”

Berkeley

CALIFORNIA

UNIVERSITY WORKERS

Approximately 4,000 custodians at the 10 campuses of the University of California reached a settlement with UC officials, successfully ending an 18-month battle to win respect on the job — and a raise.

The employees — members of Local 3299 who work at UC Berkeley, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz — won a $1.75 per hour wage increase. Custodians at other UC campuses received a $0.50 per hour raise. Under the agreement, the jobs of more than 60 formerly outsourced groundskeepers were also brought back to UC Irvine.

Under pressure, the university eventually agreed to accept the recommendations of former state Senate Pres. Pro Tem John Burton (D), who mediated the disagreement.

“This has been an important struggle for those of us who work very hard to make the university work,” says UC Berkeley custodian Maricruz Manzanárez.

Atlanta

GEORGIA

ATLANTA CITY EMPLOYEES

Persistence by members of Local 1644 resulted in a June raise for 2,000 city employees.

The Atlanta City Council voted to grant municipal workers a 2.6 percent pay raise that began July 1, and will rise to 3.6 percent in January.

The 4,000 employees represented by Local 1644 aren’t covered by a collective bargaining law, and pressed city officials to deliver better than the 2 percent hike that Mayor Shirley Franklin proposed. Chanting “Two percent won’t pay the rent,” some 300 members of the local marched on City Hall and delivered 1,000 signed cards reading: “We need a raise. This city works because we do.”

The union — representing workers in Atlanta’s public works, water, planning and development, corrections, parks and recreation, and aviation departments — also produced a video that went to all City Council members, the mayor and public access TV, illustrating the important work of the city’s employees.

We Need a Raise! Atlanta city employees, including members of Local 1644, march on City Hall. They recently won their first raise in six years. Photo: Sam Gonzales

We Need a Raise! Atlanta city employees, including members of Local 1644, march on City Hall. They recently won their first raise in six years. Photo: Sam Gonzales
Nearly 13,000 state employees have won the right to bargain collectively for fair wages and benefits, thanks to legislation signed in August by Gov. Ruth Ann Minner (D).

Along with a coalition of labor organizations, AFSCME championed the law, which gives state workers the same bargaining rights as county and municipal employees.

“This bill puts power in the hands of workers to improve our jobs, our lives, and the important public services we provide,” says Kathleen M. Wooten, a Sussex County social services case manager and Local 2031 (Council 81) member.

Michael Beggato, Council 81’s executive director, explains that state employees can now “secure a fair and binding contract, which guarantees participation in decision-making, fair grievance procedures, workplace safety, and fair and equitable wages.”

Some 7,000 registered and licensed child care providers throughout the state are building a strong voice through their new union, Child Care Providers Together Kansas/AFSCME.

In July, Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D) signed an Executive Order granting them collective bargaining rights. That same month, they won certification of their union.

Their campaign to demonstrate that a majority supported forming a union with CCPTK/AFSCME was launched in January.

The providers will elect a representative group from around the state to speak for Kansas child care providers when they meet with officials.

“Joining CCPT Kansas/AFSCME puts me in touch with providers across the state,” says provider Shalisa Lowery of Wichita. “I know I have the support of thousands of child care providers just like me.”

Some 4,000 independent home care providers in Maryland can now join a union and bargain collectively with the state over working conditions, thanks to an Executive Order recently signed by Gov. Martin O’Malley (D).

The providers work in the homes of some of the 20,000 seniors and others with disabilities who would otherwise live in nursing homes or state facilities. With home care costs averaging $4,000 per year, compared to nursing home expenses of $55,000 to $65,000 annually, the providers’ work saves the state millions of dollars every year.

With the Executive Order in place, the providers — who have been organizing with AFSCME Council 67 for four years — have the power to negotiate reimbursement rates, payment schedules and benefits. “I love to help people stay in their own homes and live their lives with dignity,” says Baltimore provider Audra Feldman. “I know I won’t get rich doing this work, but I need to earn enough money so I can support my family.”

AFSCME represents 75,000 home care workers in public and private facilities — and independent providers in three states. Most of them are represented by United Domestic Workers of America-NUHWCE, an AFSCME affiliate in California.


Photo: Edward Savaria Jr.
Albany

NEW YORK

CHILD CARE EDUCATORS

The Voice of Organized Independent Childcare Educators/CSEA has been certified as the exclusive bargaining representative for 7,000 registered family and licensed group child care providers throughout New York state.

A majority of the providers had signed cards demonstrating they wanted VOICE/CSEA to be their union. VOICE is an affiliate of Civil Service Employees Association/AFSCME Local 1000.

This certification follows an Executive Order signed May 11 by Gov. Eliot Spitzer (D) that allows the state to bargain with any union that proved it represents a majority within four different groups of child care providers.

Salem

OREGON

TWO STATEWIDE VICTORIES

Two years after winning an Executive Order granting them collective bargaining rights, Oregon child care providers now have what they really want: Gov. Ted Kulongoski’s (D) signature on a bill making their right a state law.

In July, the governor also signed into law a measure allowing public employees to join a union via majority sign-up (sometimes called card check).

“We will no longer fear that a future governor will undo all the gains we have made,” says Marian McDonald, president of Child Care Providers Together/Local 132 (Council 75), which represents over 4,400 registered and certified family child care providers statewide.

Philadelphia

PENNSYLVANIA

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Gov. Ed Rendell (D) signed an Executive Order in July that provides collective bargaining rights to 4,000 state-regulated family child care providers.

The providers are building their own union, Child Care Providers United, a joint-unity local formed last year by AFSCME and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). They will soon be able to vote for union representation.

“We now have an opportunity to unite by voting ‘Yes’ in the upcoming child care election so we can begin to work on real solutions that will help make child care a quality job,” says provider Andrea Sheeder of Clearfield County, Pa.

Prospects for a better future are already growing for these providers: After tough budget fights earlier this year, the governor’s proposals for early childhood education (which help finance provider services) have now received full funding.
More than 300 AFSCME corrections and law enforcement officers gathered Sept. 5 at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial to honor comrades killed in the line of duty. The ceremony took place during a 3-day conference that included AFSCME members in corrections and law enforcement.

Officers also placed roses near the names of members from their respective councils. Among those honored by AFSCME was Andrew Krakow, a conservation warden with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, who was shot by a 13-year-old while responding to a domestic dispute. Krakow was a member of Local 1215 (Council 24).

“Let us be inspired by our members’ sense of duty to live our own lives with hope and purpose,” said Pres. Gerald W. McEntee.

Leading the procession to the memorial site were bagpipers Kathleen Stevens and Peter Lounsberry — both Albany police officers and members of Local 2951 (Council 82.)

Photos: Paul Tanedo