Why November Matters

This is a defining moment, not only for our nation but for our union. Throughout this issue of WORKS, we’re talking about just how important this moment in history is for us. The priorities we set and the plans we carry out will determine whether collective bargaining is protected, retirement security is restored, public services are strengthened, and the American Dream survives.

Our success hinges on our ability to grow our union, because we cannot win the fights of tomorrow unless we grow today. Here’s what we must keep in mind: Our ability to organize is tied directly to our involvement in politics at all levels. When we have local, state and federal laws that support workers’ rights, public service workers can organize and improve their own lives.

Re-Electing President Obama

Given what’s important to us, our top priority is re-electing President Obama because he is the best choice — the only choice — to uplift working families. I’ll give you one quick example of why.

Last year, Presidential candidate Mitt Romney went to Ohio to support Gov. John Kasich’s union-busting law. He volunteered at a phone bank and said he was “110 percent” behind Senate Bill 5, the legislation to strip public service workers of their bargaining rights. By contrast, President Obama said: “Let’s certainly not blame public employees for a financial crisis that they had nothing to do with, and let’s not use this as an excuse to erode their bargaining rights.”

I was in Ohio, too: knocking on doors, phone banking and canvassing with our sisters and brothers. Although Romney and I were there at about the same time, our purposes were vastly different. That gave me additional proof that Romney is not someone we can trust. (Nor can we trust his Vice Presidential pick, Rep. Paul Ryan, who prefers to raise taxes on working families so he can lower them for rich ones.)

It’s About Right Versus Wrong

In addition to re-electing the President, we must elect pro-worker candidates at every level of government and hold them accountable. We must encourage more working people and AFSCME members to run themselves — like Missy Sorenson (See P. 5). We must build capacity this fall for the 2013 state legislative fights. And we must begin a serious, far-reaching national conversation with AFSCME members so that our strategy aligns with the severity and nature of our challenges.

Political involvement is part of our union’s DNA; it is essential to our ability to stand up for our families who continue to believe that working hard and playing by the rules still matter.

“We cannot win the fights of tomorrow unless we grow today.”

Lee Saunders  
President
I’m a mom of three. A home care provider. And your new secretary-treasurer.

In each of these jobs, there are challenges. And in each of these jobs, I find that focusing on solutions that work is more effective than getting bogged down in the challenges. I know that when we’re facing unprecedented attacks, solutions can seem out of our reach. But they’re not, sisters and brothers. Together, through organizing, through collective bargaining, through political action and through good policy-making, we can create solutions. We can create change.

Product of Change

Like collective bargaining, like unions, home care is a product of change we created together. If it weren’t for Medicaid — a program which home care providers fought for and which covers the services we provide for the majority of people we serve — home care wouldn’t exist. Unfortunately, this program is now attacked by politicians who undervalue the work of home care providers, and all public service workers.

Mitt Romney promises to repeal President Obama’s Affordable Care Act, which gives more than 32 million Americans access to quality care. (His pledge seems even more like nonsense in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s affirmation of Obamacare earlier this summer.)

Instead, Romney favors a budget crafted by his Vice Presidential pick Rep. Paul Ryan that would devastate Medicaid as we know it, slashing home care for the people home care providers serve. Medicaid benefits allow more than 3 million seniors and people with disabilities to remain independent and in their homes. With a Romney-Ryan budget, these 3 million people would be at risk of losing that life-saving home care.

Our Communities Rely on Our Work

The Romney-Ryan budget would increase the deficit, hurt the poor and help the wealthy. It threatens Medicare and Social Security. It would cost our economy an estimated 4 million jobs in just two years. It would undermine the jobs of public service workers of every sector.

Our work’s importance is clear. People need clean streets, quality health care and safe communities. Our communities rely on our work, and our efforts help create a better life for the people we serve. Yet if Mitt Romney has his way, that accomplishment will be wiped out.

We will not let him have his way. We are going to pull together, re-elect President Obama together and find solutions together. Because there is a better way, sisters and brothers. Let’s find it, together.

“We can create change.”

Laura Reyes
Secretary-Treasurer
The 2008 financial crisis and the 2010 elections created a harsh climate for workers across America. Corporate-backed candidates won 11 governorships and both legislative chambers in 26 states.

When the legislative sessions opened in 2011, these anti-worker politicians unleashed harmful bills in nearly every state. They included “right-to-work-for-less” proposals, attacks on public service workers’ collective bargaining rights, privatization schemes, and ballot initiatives attacking unions and public services.

In the 2012 sessions, we faced yet again a tidal wave of anti-worker, anti-public services legislation. The brutal budget battles that ensued led to substantial cuts to state and local public services. There were bills to strip workers’ bargaining rights, slash pension benefits and privatize public sector jobs in state legislatures from coast to coast.

After Indiana passed right-to-work-for-less legislation early this year, we faced similar proposals in Minnesota, New Hampshire and Ohio.

While we lost some legislative fights, we were successful in some key battles — thanks to an energized and powerful labor movement. AFSCME members and community supporters waged an unprecedented grassroots effort that effectively blocked Florida Gov. Rick Scott’s privatization agenda. And in Ohio, we defeated Senate Bill 5, which would have stripped public service workers of bargaining rights. We also won bills in Maryland extending collective bargaining rights to state employees not covered by existing law. And in Colorado, we stopped eight bills that would have altered or destroyed the Public Employees’ Retirement Association (PERA).

Despite these successes, however, we continue to face an onslaught of anti-worker legislation that’s harmful to middle-class working families.

The Onslaught from Lansing

In Michigan, Gov. Rick Snyder and his legislative allies rammed through several anti-worker and anti-labor measures since he took office two years ago. The most radical was Public Act 4, signed into law after the 2011 session. Known as the local dictator law, it gives emergency financial managers — who are appointed by the governor and unaccountable to voters — sweeping powers to remove duly elected officials from office, suspend or disband elected bodies such as school boards or city councils, and even void contracts, including collective bargaining agreements. “I was outraged when I learned
about this law,” says Jonathan Drake, a Wayne County vehicle inspection worker for the Department of Public Services and member of Local 101 (Council 25). “It takes away my right to have a say in our local governments and schools.”

In the months that followed the bill’s signing, Drake rallied at the state Capitol in Lansing and joined hundreds of activists gathering more than 220,000 signatures — more than the number required to put the repeal of the local dictator law on the November ballot.

With both chambers still in session, a number of anti-worker bills moved through the legislative process. They include bills that would shift costs for pensions and retirement health care benefits on to school employees and retirees; prohibit terms requiring contractors to enter into collective bargaining agreements with unions in public construction projects; and prohibit public employers from allowing payroll deduction for dues of union members. On the docket is a bill that prohibits raises and step increases after a contract has expired, even if the old contract is extended. The bill also requires that any increase in health care costs during this period be paid for entirely by members of the bargaining unit and forbids any retroactive payments for either of these employee losses. Moreover, the 2011-2012 state budget approved by the Legislature slashed revenue sharing to local governments by $100 million.

What Happens in Olympia

“There’s been an ongoing effort to repeal our defined benefit pension plan in favor of a defined contribution plan,” says Pat Miller, a construction inspector for the City of Renton and president of Local 2170 (Washington Council 2). A defined benefit plan guarantees the amount a retiree receives. A defined contribution plan is riskier, subject to the whims of the market and offers little to no security after retirement.

“We’re fighting hard to keep that and other pension rights intact because it’s going to hurt if these anti-worker politicians get their way,” Miller said. “That’s why we have to keep showing up in the state Capitol, showing our faces. We have to keep reminding legislators that we put them into office — that they are part of the solution, too.”

Miller knows how influential state and local politicians are in shaping policies that affect the daily lives of citizens and protect retirement for all workers.

“Decisions made on how resources should be spent have a profound impact on public safety, public health, justice and education and retirement security for all workers,” she says. “This is my home, my community. I have to care what happens in Olympia because bills are being debated that could profoundly change the lives of our neighbors, our families and friends and our children’s future.”

Shock and Anger in Madison

In Wisconsin, the bill Gov. Scott Walker rammed through the state Legislature wiped out the bargaining rights of 200,000 workers and cut the lifelines of the most vulnerable.

“I was shocked at the extreme way the current legislators pushed laws through that affected so many members,” says Missy Sorenson, a code enforcement officer for Green Lake County and president of Local 514 (Council 40). “My shock turned to anger and I thought, ‘It’s time to take a stand for workers.”

In the June recall elections, Sorenson, who is also a member of AFSCME’s Next Wave of young leaders, joined thousands of other activists in an unsuccessful bid to oust Walker and replace his legislative allies. She savored a victory, however, when two Walker allies were replaced. The state Senate changed hands, with a pro-worker majority back in control.

“Our members in many states saw first-hand why it’s important to be involved,” Sorenson adds. “Union busting legislation was jammed through. And now Walker is pushing to change our pension system. Our members deserve pro-worker legislators who have the people’s best interest at heart.”

To Sorenson, her top priority is regaining collective bargaining rights. “We’ve got to hit the pavement and change the political complexion of Madison.”

At 33, Sorenson is so fired up that she’s running for a seat in the Statehouse. “I bring fresh, innovative thinking,” she says. “I hope it inspires more young people to run and not consider a political office as something to do when they retire.”

Drake, Miller and Sorenson are dedicated activists who are working hard to change the outcomes in state legislatures. That means having a seat at the table. They know that statehouse races are critical to shaping our nation. And they know that state legislators make important decisions that impact the day-to-day lives of working families.
The 2008 elections saw the most diverse voter turnout in history. African-American voter turnout was up 5 percent, Latino turnout up 3. Young people came to the polls in numbers previously unheard of. And that turnout made the difference to ensure the voices of working families were heard loudly and clearly at the ballot box.

We’ve got to step it up again in 2012. AFSCME’s diverse constituencies must pull together to make sure their voices are heard this November. Here’s a look at what motivates AFSCME members representing the diverse membership of our union.

**Women for Obama**

For decades, more women than men have turned out to vote. The importance of this voting bloc is not new and cannot be understated.

From fair pay to health care, much is at stake for women this November. For Lynn Loveday, a Department of Administration worker of Local 2248 (Rhode Island Council 94), union membership for women is key.

“I’ve been a public service worker for 32 years,” Loveday began, “and over the years we have seen more and more women members. In my local, two-thirds of our members are women and many are single mothers… and the more involved I become in our union, the more I want to encourage people to speak out. As women, we must lead and take charge of our own destiny. We can do this through political activism.”

As part of their Women for Obama campaign, AFSCME’s National Women’s Advisory Committee is encouraging members to host house parties to educate and garner support for the President’s re-election. Head to AFSCME.org/houseparty to learn how to host a house party.

Loveday said, “Every vote counts. If we don’t get out there and speak for ourselves, then we are doing an injustice for women overall.”

**Making History**

In 2008, African-American voters gave President Obama the edge in many states. In Ohio, for instance, 97 percent of African-American votes helped the President win the swing state.

Bus driver Davida Russell explained, “The passion of people of color, youth, seniors, the middle class was about making history.”

This year, the African-American vote will be based not on making history but on improving reality. African Americans experience a rate of unemployment nearly twice the national average. Russell believes President Obama will put African-American families back on track.

Russell, an OAPSE Local 4 member, notes, “Without Obama, there is no future for the middle class, the poor, or anyone other than the million-dollar makers.”

These million-dollar makers are often the same people who are trying to suppress the right to vote for people of color. [See P. 11.]

**A Changing Electoral Landscape**

As Latino voters gradually change the landscape of the electorate, potentially accounting for 30 percent of the population by 2050, their vote is coveted. For this election, they could decide the outcome in states like Florida, Colorado and Nevada. AFSCME is participating in coalitions in these states to boost the Latino vote.

But this isn’t a monolithic voting bloc. Latino voters care about a wide variety of issues.

Take Jose Lapira, for instance, a school worker from Maryland Local 2250. He cares most about America’s economic health.

“There is so much frustration about the budget cuts,” Lapira shared, “People want to know if our jobs are safe. But everyone is hanging out there. Even our bosses don’t know.”

So, why vote? Lapira says, “We must vote so we can be heard. That’s the bottom line.”
Voting for Our Future

Twenty-two million people under the age of 30 cast a ballot in the 2008 election. In Michigan, 55 percent of the 1.5 million young people who were eligible to vote did.

This year, Michigan voters will have the chance to vote down the local dictator law and enshrine the right to unionize in their state constitution. And young Michiganders are fired up.

Mark Sanchez, a storekeeper from MSEA Local 5, reflected on young people’s stake in these battles. “This is about our future. If we don’t fight now, we will lose everything that generations before us built and everything our children and grandchildren need.”

AFSCME’s Next Wave, in coalition with organizations like the United States Student Association, is organizing young voters across the nation.

It’s About Equality

On election night in 2008, many closely followed two races: the Presidential election and the Proposition 8 ballot initiative in California. Prop 8, which passed, constitutionally banned same-sex marriage in the state.

A similar measure, Referendum 74, will be on the ballot in Washington state this November. It will allow voters to affirm or negate the state’s new marriage equality law.

Kimberly Cogswell, a Mental Health Technician from Local 782 (Council 28), explained why the referendum matters to union members. “It’s about equality,” Cogswell said. “We need everyone to vote so we can have the same benefits that married couples get.”

Members of AFSCME Pride are working with policymakers to promote fairness in the workplace, and they’re working to elect policymakers who are on the same page.

A Silent Minority Finds Its Voice

Hawaii has the largest community of Asian American/Pacific Islanders (AAPI), and, in 2008, had the lowest state voter registration rate. For HGEA, Local 152 member, Suzy Okino, these facts could be related.

“Politics is one of those things that you don’t talk about,” Okino said.

Okino, a State Department of Health worker, is working to transform that culture. She has been rallying support for Kirk Caldwell, candidate for mayor of Honolulu, on Facebook. She is making sure that the AAPI community, which she describes as a “silent minority,” has their voices heard.

This fall, AFSCME will work with AAPI communities in states like Hawaii and Nevada to expand the community’s electorate and educate voters.

“I just want people to educate themselves,” Okino added, “make educated decisions and think about the impact of their absence.”

Neither Red Nor Blue

In poll after poll, Americans identify one issue as the most important: the economy. Whether left or right, they’re concerned about our economic future as a nation.

AFSCME has many members who are both conservative and proud trade unionists. They know that when jobs are threatened, it doesn’t matter if you are a Democrat or Republican. They want people on both sides of the aisle to fix the problems that so many workers face.

Bill LeBeau, an Albany police officer from Local 756 (New York Council 82) member agrees, “There are so many issues that unite us: more jobs, retirement security, the right to bargain and organize. And that is what every AFSCME member, red or blue, needs to take to the polls in November.”

AFSCME’s network of conservative members is focused on just that. Their mobilization is based on values, not parties.

To join the “AFSCME Conservative Network,” visit AFSCME.org/conservatives.
Why Obama Matters

What’s Pres. Barack Obama done for working men and women?

A lot.

AFSCME endorsed Pres. Barack Obama for re-election in November, and it’s not hard to see why. Since taking office four years ago, he’s racked up a lengthy list of significant accomplishments, including affordable health care, Wall Street reform, and equal pay protection for women. The independent magazine Washington Monthly compiled a list of the President’s top accomplishments that are worth passing on. In just four years, Obama:

**Passed Health Care Reform:** After five presidents over a century failed to create universal health insurance, Obama signed the Affordable Care Act in 2010. It will cover 32 million uninsured Americans beginning in 2014 and mandates finding ways to cut health care cost growth, the number one cause of America’s long-term fiscal problems. In late June, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of the law, protecting health care for all Americans.

**Ended the War in Iraq:** Ordered all U.S. military forces out of the country. Nearly all troops left on Dec. 18, 2011.

**Eliminated Osama bin Laden:** In 2011, Obama ordered a special forces raid of secret compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in which the terrorist leader responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks was killed and a trove of al-Qaeda documents was discovered.

**Passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:** Signed the $787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009 to spur economic growth amid the greatest recession since the Great Depression. Weeks after the ARRA went into effect, unemployment claims began to subside. Twelve months later, the private sector began producing more jobs than it was losing, creating a total of nearly 3.7 million new jobs. ARRA included $210 billion for state and local governments, which helped save public workers’ jobs. He passed smaller, related measures in the months that followed to help families hurt by the recession and spur the economy as stimulus spending declined, and signed a series of measures in 2010 and 2011 to extend unemployment insurance and cut payroll taxes.

**Passed Wall Street Reform:** Signed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act in 2010 to better regulate the financial sector after its practices caused the Great Recession. (AFSCME members’ pensions dropped by $44 billion, or 19 percent, during this crisis.) The new law limits banks’ ability to throw our money around in risky trades for their own profit. The act created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to crack down on abusive lending products and companies.

**Kicked Banks Out of Federal Student Loan Program, Expanded Pell Grant Spending:** As part of the 2010 health care reform bill, he signed a measure ending the wasteful decades-old practice of subsidizing banks to provide college loans. Starting that year, all students began getting their federal student loans directly from the federal government. The law saves taxpayers $67 billion over 10 years, $36 billion of which will be used to expand the number of Pell Grants for lower-income students.

**Turned Around American Auto Industry:** In 2009, injected $62 billion (on top of $13.4 billion in loans from the Bush administration) into ailing GM and Chrysler. Since then, the auto industry has added more than 100,000 jobs. In 2011, the American automakers were selling enough cars to register “market share” — a sign of a company’s significant size and sales — for the first time in two decades.

**Repealed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”:** Ended 1990s-era restriction and formalized new policy allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military for the first time.
Increased Support for Veterans: With so many soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan with serious physical and mental health problems, facing long waits for services, increased 2010 Department of Veterans Affairs budget by 16 percent and 2011 budget by 10 percent. Also signed new GI bill offering $78 billion in tuition assistance over a decade, and provided multiple tax credits to encourage businesses to hire veterans.

Passed Credit Card Reforms: Signed the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act (2009), which prohibits credit card companies from raising rates without advance notification, mandates a grace period on interest rate increases, and strictly limits overdraft and other fees.

Eliminated Catch-22 in Pay Equality Laws: Signed Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009, giving women who are paid less than men for the same work the right to sue their employers after they find out about the discrimination, even if that discrimination happened years ago.

Protected Two Pro-Worker Seats on the U.S. Supreme Court: Nominated and obtained confirmation for Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina and third woman to serve, in 2009; and Elena Kagan, the fourth woman to serve, in 2010. Both voted against Citizens United, which opened the floodgates to anonymous corporations and donors buying elections. (See P. 12 to learn more about the importance of the Supreme Court for working families.)

Improved Food Safety System: In 2011, signed FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, which gives the Food and Drug Administration’s budget by $1.4 billion. The act gave the FDA the authority to increase the number of food inspections it performs, directly recall tainted foods and review the food safety practices of countries shipping products for us to eat in this country.

Expanded National Service: Signed Serve America Act in 2009, which authorized a tripling of the size of AmeriCorps. Program grew 13 percent to 85,000 members across the country by 2012.

Cracked Down on Bad For-Profit Colleges: In an effort to tight predatory practices of some for-profit colleges, the U.S. Department of Education cracked down on schools where more than 35 percent of former students aren’t paying off their loans and/or students spend more than 12 percent of their total income to keep up with their student loans.

Improved School Nutrition: Signed Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010 mandating a $4.5 billion spending boost and higher nutritional and health standards for school lunches. New rules based on the law, released in January, double the amount of fruits and vegetables and require only whole grains in food served to students.


This piece is an adaptation of “Obama’s Top 50 Accomplishments” by Washington Monthly writers Paul Glastris, Ryan Cooper, and Siyu Hu. To read the full story, head to AFSCME.org/top50. Or scan the QR code to go directly to the story on your smartphone.

A few more reasons we know that Obama is working for all Americans:

Protects Retirement Security: In his 2011 State of the Union address, Obama committed to sustaining Social Security “without putting at risk current retirees... or people with disabilities; without slashing benefits for future generations” and without privatization. His Affordable Care Act added new Medicare benefits and years of solvency.

Champions Workers’ Rights: President Obama ended efforts to gut the National Labor Relations Board. After board appointments were blocked, he used his constitutional authority to fill vacancies, saying, “The American people deserve to have qualified public servants fighting for them every day... to uphold the rights of working Americans.”

Supports Collective Bargaining: Obama called Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker’s actions “an assault on unions.” After a similar attempt in Ohio, he said the economic downturn should not be used as an excuse to erode bargaining rights. Obama explained, “I’m going to stand up for collective bargaining.”

Focuses on Working Families: President Obama proposed to Congress a 2013 budget that prioritizes job creation. The plan calls for increased investments in job training, infrastructure and manufacturing. It also proposes tax policies that help working families.

Reforms Nation’s Immigration Policy: He made a humane decision to allow undocumented young people — brought as children — to avoid deportation, work legally and continue developing their talents and academic skills. The administration challenged Arizona’s controversial anti-immigrant law, which divides communities, threatens workers’ rights, and weakens already fragile economies.
BY A SERIES OF RECENT 5 TO 4 DECISIONS, THE U.S. SUPREME COURT IS TIPPING THE SCALES IN THE POLITICAL ARENA IN FAVOR OF WALL STREET AND CORPORATE TYCOONS. AT THE SAME TIME, RIGHT-WING LAWMAKERS ARE TRYING TO WEAKEN WORKERS’ POLITICAL STRENGTH BY TAKING AWAY THEIR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS. THIS OMINOUS TREND DEMONSTRATES WHY WHO SITS ON THE NATION’S HIGHEST COURT MATTERS TO WORKING-CLASS AMERICANS.

THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THOSE DECISIONS, CITIZENS UNITED V. FEC, HELD THAT CORPORATIONS CAN SPEND UNLIMITED FUNDS ON ADVERTISEMENTS SUPPORTING OR OPPOSING CANDIDATES FOR FEDERAL OFFICE – AS LONG AS THOSE ADS ARE MADE INDEPENDENTLY OF THE CAMPAIGNS THEY SUPPORT.


PRES. BARACK OBAMA DECREED THE CITIZENS UNITED RULING AS “A MAJOR VICTORY FOR BIG OIL, WALL STREET BANKS, HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANIES AND THE OTHER POWERFUL INTERESTS THAT MARSHAL THEIR POWER EVERY DAY IN WASHINGTON TO DROWN OUT THE VOICES OF EVERYDAY AMERICANS.”

THE SAME RIGHT-WING BLOC OF THE COURT EXPANDED THAT RULING IN JUNE IN A CASE FROM MONTANA CALLED AMERICAN TRADITION PARTNERSHIP V. BULLOCK. NOW, THE COURT’S RIGHT WING HAS LIMITED THE POWER OF WORKERS TO INFLUENCE ELECTIONS AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT BY LIFTING THE LAST RELIABLE CHECKS ON THE ABILITY OF THE WEALTHY TO SPEND THEIR WAY TO EVEN MORE POWER.

THE COURT SWUNG TOWARD BIG BUSINESS AGAIN IN JUNE, THIS TIME IN A CASE CALLED KNOX V. SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION, LOCAL 1000. IN THIS INSTANCE, THE COURT’S RIGHT-WING BLOC AGAIN SHOWED ITS HOSTILITY TO UNIONS BY IGNORING DECADES OF PRECEDENT ON A UNION’S LEGITIMATE USE OF ITS FUNDS TO ADVOCATE FOR PRO-UNION, PRO-WORKER CANDIDATES AND POLICIES. IN EFFECT, IT EXACERBATED THE DOUBLE STANDARD FOR CORPORATIONS AND UNIONS IN POLITICAL FUNDRAISING. ONCE AGAIN, WORKERS LOST.

THE COURT’S FAR RIGHT MAJORITY HAS SHOWN BY THESE RULINGS THAT IT IS NOT A FRIEND OF WORKING FAMILIES. WHILE, ON OCCASION, THE COURT DOES HAND DOWN DECISIONS WE APPLAUD, ITS ANTI-WORKER MAJORITY CONTINUES TO PUSH THE NATION’S HIGHEST COURT TOWARD WALL STREET AND FURTHER AWAY FROM MAIN STREET.

THERE IS SOMETHING AFSCME MEMBERS CAN DO TO HELP SWING THE BALANCE TOWARD FAIRNESS. THROUGH OUR POLITICAL ACTION PROGRAM, PEOPLE, WE CAN RAISE THE RESOURCES TO HELP US GET OUT OUR MESSAGE THAT WORKERS’ RIGHTS SHOULD NOT BE TRAMPLED IN THE RUSH TO BUILD MASSIVE CORPORATE PROFITS. WE CAN KNOCK ON DOORS AND MAKE PHONE CALLS TO GET OUT THE VOTE FOR WORKER-FRIENDLY CANDIDATES, AND VOTE TO RE-ELECT PRESIDENT OBAMA IN NOVEMBER.

THE SUPREME COURT IS POWERFUL — ITS JUDGES ARE APPOINTED FOR LIFE, SO THE COURT WILL BECOME MORE WORKER-FRIENDLY ONLY WHEN THERE’S A VACANCY — AND THAT CAN HAPPEN ONLY IF PRESIDENT OBAMA IS RE-ELECTED.
The governors and legislators who are gunning for collective bargaining rights are going after voting rights, too. For them, it’s all about silencing working people at the workplace and in the voting booth.

During the past year, more than 30 states have either introduced or passed laws that restrict the right to vote. Some states, such as Florida and Ohio, shortened the length of time for early voting. Florida has also compiled a database of 180,000 suspected “non-citizens.” Gov. Rick Scott is requiring that they prove citizenship or be purged from the voter rolls. Even a 91-year-old World War II veteran in Broward County, a voter since age 18, is on the list.

Other states made it harder for volunteer organizations such as the League of Women Voters to register citizens to vote. In others, more extensive identification is required of voters, or restrictions have been placed on the types of ID that are acceptable at the polls.

These measures are the handiwork of ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council, which derives support from the same corporate titans who want to restrict collective bargaining. ALEC and its funders say the point is to reduce voter fraud. In reality, voter fraud is almost non-existent. For example, a Wisconsin study found that out of nearly 3 million votes cast in 2004, there were only seven substantiated cases of voters knowingly casting invalid votes.

The new restrictions have one purpose: to purge people of color, poor people, the elderly, the disabled, and students from voter rolls. These voters often make use of options such as early voting and Sunday voting, and they frequently don’t have government-issued photo IDs. In fact, one study indicated that in Wisconsin — where Gov. Scott Walker last year signed a law requiring a photo ID at the polls — half of African Americans and Latinos lack a valid Wisconsin driver’s license.

It’s no coincidence that these laws are taking effect in advance of the 2012 elections. Pennsylvania House Majority Leader Mike Turzai, a Republican, actually predicted that the new law in his state would “allow Governor Romney to win” Pennsylvania.

AFSCME Florida is working diligently to make sure no members are disenfranchised at the polls, while in Ohio, AFSCME helped put the state’s voter suppression bill on the November ballot. In Minnesota, Councils 5 and 65 are involved in the effort to defeat a constitutional amendment to change state election laws in several ways, including requiring a government-issued photo ID to vote.

“I think it’s absolutely wrong that some people are trying to roll back the clock on the right to vote,” says Grace Baltich, a social worker in Wright County who is president of Local 2685 and vice president of Council 65. “This proposed amendment erodes participation by people who have been left out in the past and tend to vote Democratic.”

AFSCME members have also been active in the fight against Colorado Secretary of State Scott Gessler’s push to stop the city and county of Denver from mailing ballots to voters who did not vote in 2010, including military voters who are overseas, declaring them “inactive.”

“We need to hold accountable the politicians who took these radical steps the next time we vote,” AFSCME Pres. Lee Saunders said, “before they eliminate our voice at the ballot box completely.”
Romney Loves Outsourcing. Why that Matters to America.

He’s got his eyes on the White House. Ours are on his anti-worker record.

BY KYLE WEIDLEMAN

As working families struggle to make ends meet in a tough economy, much of the policy debate in the 2012 Presidential election centers around who has a better plan to create jobs. Presumptive GOP nominee Mitt Romney says his private sector experience is an indicator of how he would govern, and he frequently criticizes offshoring and outsourcing — the practice of companies shipping American jobs overseas.

In fact Romney knows quite a bit about outsourcing American jobs; he was the head of a company that was a pioneer in the practice. Add that to his history of valuing profits over people and it’s clear that AFSCME members and our allies must work to defeat Romney and ensure the next President builds an economy that will work for, not against, working families.

The first step is to make sure that our families, friends and neighbors understand the truth about Romney’s record and his economic agenda. Let’s take a look:

At Bain Capital, Romney was known for his hands-on management style, and the company invested in a series of firms that specialized in outsourcing American jobs, according to The Washington Post. He can’t run from that record no matter how hard he tries.

Seven of the top companies in which Bain Capital was the majority owner during Romney’s tenure, went bankrupt. These bankruptcies led to thousands of layoffs across the United States, but Romney and Bain still found a way to make millions off the deals. Now, Romney claims that his experience running Bain and sending American jobs overseas best qualifies him to lead the nation’s economy.

Romney infamously told an Iowa crowd in 2011 that “corporations are people.” When the crowd expressed disbelief he doubled down, saying that corporations getting huge tax breaks was good for the average Joe. We know the average Joe never sees that money.

In 2008, he proposed in a New York Times op-ed that the American automotive industry should be allowed to go bankrupt. This was at a moment in time when the Big Three U.S. automakers were in peril of collapse and millions of U.S. jobs were threatened.

Romney demonstrates repeatedly that he is a danger to Americans worried about their job security. He is campaigning to increase unemployment woes.

This summer, Romney attacked Pres. Barack Obama, saying, “He says we need more firemen, more policemen, more teachers. It’s time for us to cut back on government and help the American people.”

Meanwhile, top Romney surrogates John Sununu and anti-worker Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels suggest that taxpayers truly want fewer teachers and first responders. Yet, the facts do not back up their claims. An October 2011 poll conducted by CNN found that 75 percent of Americans would prefer to send “federal money to state governments to allow them to hire teachers and first responders,” the same positions Romney wants to cut. In September 2011, 70 percent of Americans believed “providing funds to state and local governments to prevent layoffs of teachers, police officers, and other first responders” were an effective way to create jobs, according to a National Journal poll.

Mitt Romney’s actions at Bain Capital and anti-worker statements as a Presidential candidate make it clear that he cares more about mega-rich donors and corporate “people” than he does about working families and public services. Our AFSCME sisters and brothers need you involved in this year’s election, to make sure we return President Obama, a champion of working families, to the White House.

To learn more about the troubling policies of GOP Vice Presidential candidate Paul Ryan, head to AFSCME.org/ryan.
How We Communicate Matters
AFSCME members are changing minds about public workers

BY JON MELEGIRITO

When San Jose, Calif., AFSCME member Karen McDonough learned that her anti-worker city councilman would debate her at a neighborhood association meeting, she jumped at the opportunity.

“The city councilman who represents me and my neighbors is part of an effort to scapegoat public service workers,” says McDonough, an environmental service specialist and secretary of Local 101 (Council 57). “Debating him gave me a chance to rebut his false arguments.”

Because McDonough is a graduate of AFSCME Faces and Voices training, she was in top form. The program teaches workers how to develop their individual stories to help transform the national conversation about public workers.

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McDonough helped lead the fight by mobilizing union members and community supporters to knock on doors, talk to church-goers, shoppers and news reporters.

Although they lost a ballot measure forcing current city workers to pay even more for their retirement security, AFSCME members in San Jose continue to fight in the courts and in November elections. “What makes the whole experience instructive is the many creative and innovative ways we can get our message out.”

Facing unprecedented challenges, AFSCME members like McDonough are reaching out in new ways to communicate with co-workers, community members and the media. They’re using their learned skills to speak at rallies, testify at legislative hearings, give press interviews, post Facebook messages and tweet. They’re doing it to support pro-worker candidates, protect pensions, demand collective bargaining rights and fight layoffs.

Robinson credits her Faces and Voices training for the confidence and competence she has gained. “I’m a lot more comfortable now talking to reporters and facing TV cameras,” she says.

“The facts are on our side,” she says, “but we must give face to those facts because most politicians just don’t get it.”

You can try part of the Faces and Voices training right at home. Visit afscme.org/facesandvoices and learn how to share your story about the importance of public service with family, friends, and neighbors.
LOS ANGELES — In an historic election, delegates to AFSCME’s 40th International Convention this summer elected Lee Saunders president and Laura Reyes secretary-treasurer. In his first presidential address, Saunders told delegates that we “must work our hearts out to re-elect President Obama” to meet the tough challenges facing labor and working families.

In her remarks, Reyes focused on the critical importance of building a stronger union by organizing traditional and non-traditional workers. Reyes, president of UDW Homecare Providers Union/AFSCME Local 3930, becomes AFSCME’s first woman secretary-treasurer.

“We will dig deep into every state, every city to organize new workers from every sector,” Reyes said. “Our reason for organizing is not just to collect more dues, or boast higher numbers. Our reason for organizing is our reason for being: to give every worker a fair shot in a world where the deck is stacked against us.”

Besides increasing efforts to organize new members, she said, AFSCME will fight hard for fair contracts. “Pay, pensions, non-discrimination measures, health care, workplace safety, leave — it’s all on the table. And we will give up nothing for working families.”

Saunders, a former state worker in Ohio and AFSCME’s secretary-treasurer, succeeds Gerald W. McEntee, who retired after 31 years as president. He is the fourth president since the union’s formation 75 years ago in Madison, Wis., and the first African-American president of AFSCME. Saunders called McEntee “a fearless and visionary leader.”

In the spirit of the Convention’s theme — “Solidarity,” — Saunders pledged to lead a united AFSCME and pointed out that our enemies were outside the convention hall, not in it. “We start fresh. What unites us is our belief in, and love for, AFSCME. We are family, and we always will be.”

Saunders received 683,628 votes to 582,358 for Danny Donohue, CSEA/Local 1000 president and International vice president. In the race for secretary-treasurer, Reyes received 661,413 votes to 603,624 for Alice Goff, District Council 36 president. The election was administered independently by the American Arbitration Association.

“Both Laura and I are committed to our members and cherish this union,” Saunders said. “We had a vigorous and energetic campaign, but now the union will pull together to win victories for working families and our members all across this great country.”

“We know that Wall Street and their allies are engaged in an all-out assault against our members and the services we provide. They know that AFSCME stands in the way of their efforts to destroy the middle class. We are united in our commitment to stand up for the men and women who care for America’s children, nurse the sick, plow our streets, collect the household trash and protect our communities. Our members are a cross-section of America, not some elite group as our opponents try to claim. We are energized and ready for the battles ahead.”
ADDITIONALLY, the following International vice presidents were elected to AFSCME's International Executive Board at the Convention:

**California District**: Kathryn Lybarger, Ralph Miller  
**Capital District**: Glenard Middleton Sr.  
**Central District**: Dave Warrick  
**CSEA District**: Mary Sullivan, Nick LaMorte*, Kathy Garrison  
**Eastern District**: Mattie Harrell  
**Hawaii District**: Randy Perreira  
**Illinois District**: Henry Bayer, Roberta Lynch  
**Michigan District**: Larry Roehrig  
**Midwestern District**: Danny Homan  
**New York City District**: Lillian Roberts, Eddie Rodriguez  
**New York State District**: Ragian George Jr.  
**North Central District**: Eliot Seide  
**No. New England District**: Alva Arellano  
**Northwestern District**: Ken Allen, Greg Devereux  
**NUHICE District**: Henry Nicholas, Ken Deitz, RN  
**OAPSE District**: Joe Rugola  

**OCSEA District**: Christopher Mabe  
**Ohio District**: John Lyall  
**Pennsylvania District**: David Fillman, Michael Fox  
**Puerto Rico District**: Braulio Torres  
**So. New England District**: Salvatore Luciano  
**Southeastern District**: Jeanette Wynn  
**Southwestern District**: Greg Powell  
**UDW District**: Johanna Puno Hester, Douglas Moore Jr.  
**Wisconsin District**: Gary Mitchell  

**Retiree representative**: Gary Tavormina was elected by the Retiree Council as the liaison to the Board.  

* LaMorte resigned; Danny Donohue, CSEA/Local 1000 president, was elected.

To read more about the programs and business of the 40th International Convention, head to [AFSCME.org/convention](http://AFSCME.org/convention). You can also view photos and video from the events in L.A. by scanning this QR code.