AMERICA’S COMMUNITIES NEVER REST.
Streets need cleaning. Families need care. Students deserve well-run schools, and our neighborhoods demand safety. That’s why people who work in public service never stop. This isn’t just a job. It’s a calling. Nobody does this work to get rich. It’s hard work, and it’s largely unsung. The work matters because it means something to make a community better. In fact, it means everything.

AFSCME BELIEVES THAT EVERY PERSON WORKING TO SUSTAIN THEIR COMMUNITY DESERVES RESPECT.
We show ours through action — fighting to secure opportunity for public service workers wherever, and whoever, they are. We negotiate better pay and benefits because fighting for every member’s future is a form of respect. We educate about the issues that keep working families up at night because informed advocates command respect. And we organize because respect is offered to individuals who build power together.

WHEN PEOPLE IN PUBLIC SERVICE CONNECT, BIG THINGS HAPPEN: FAIRNESS. EQUALITY. DEMOCRACY.
AFSCME is the union that honors solidarity without conformity — drawing each member’s story into a force of experience and commitment that can’t be ignored. That’s how we win better lives for ourselves, our families, our communities and our country. For people proudly committed to the public service that makes America happen, WE NEVER QUIT.
America’s Communities Never Rest.

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We Vote. We Win.

Hillary Clinton stands with us on the issues that matter. Whether it’s retirement security or an affordable college education, she’s with us. So from sunrise to sunset, we’re working together to get Hillary into office. Get involved at wevotewewin.org and check out more videos at AFSCME.org/video.

Correction: On the back page of the Fall 2015 issue, there were words omitted in the story of Pope Francis’ historic visit. AFSCME’s editorial staff apologizes to our readers and will take greater care to avoid errors.
Workers’ Voices Keep Our Communities Safe

Our voices as public service workers are essential for the wellbeing of our communities. Just ask Bart Andersen, a former bridge inspector for the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Bart was one of the bridge inspectors who for years warned about the dangerously poor conditions on the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis, which collapsed on Aug. 1, 2007. Thirteen people were killed on that day, and 145 injured.

This was not an accident; it was a tragedy. The hostage incident at Mansfield Correctional Institution in Ohio, in which a corrections officer was taken hostage by a male inmate, was also no accident. It happened because, despite warnings about short-staffing, she was left alone in the presence of a violent felon.

These and many other daily lapses in public safety are preventable events. Most don’t even make the news. But we can prevent them if we listen to the workers who do these jobs.

We Never Quit

It’s important for our communities to know that, as public service workers, we never quit. Our streets will always need cleaning, our neighborhoods will always demand safety. We do this work not to get rich, but because it matters.

We need to take this message seriously because it’ll help us win. The way public service workers speak with one voice is through our union. It’s through AFSCME that corrections officers get a seat at the table with management and help prevent unsafe situations. It’s through AFSCME that police and firefighters and EMT workers can improve the life-saving services we provide in our communities. It’s through AFSCME that Bart Anderson became an advocate for bridge safety and is raising awareness about our national infrastructure crisis.

No matter how vicious the attacks against us, we’ll always stand up for our communities.

Never quit: That’s always been who we are and it’s our message from now on. The next time someone asks you what you do, tell them you’re a public service worker and you never quit. Practice this message with your friends and family. Say it proudly.

Major Threat to Our Voice

If the Supreme Court sides with wealthy special interests in Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association, it could diminish our right to a strong voice on the job. But we’ll never quit fighting for our rights and our voice. We’re building member power through AFSCME Strong, and we urge all AFSCME members to get involved.

As Vincent Variale, a New York EMS lieutenant who responded to the September 11 attacks, puts it, without a voice, “Police, firefighters, EMS and first responders won’t be able to push for life-saving equipment and shorter response times, and social workers won’t be able to push for better nurse-to-patient ratios. Our teachers … would lose the ability to negotiate for smaller class sizes and improved educational standards.”

It’s up to us to stand stronger than before. Now it’s more important than ever.

Without a strong voice for public service workers, communities all across the country will suffer.

We’re AFSCME. And we never quit.

Lee Saunders
President
The 2016 elections will allow working women to push a comprehensive economic agenda that can go a long way toward closing the gender wage gap while also getting the U.S. economy back in balance.

With the help of the Economic Policy Institute and the AFL-CIO's Raising Wages campaign, we have a 12-point platform that focuses on raising standards for working women and their families. We also have a woman in the race — Sec. Hillary Clinton, a longtime champion of working families. AFSCME's International Executive Board endorsed Secretary Clinton after an in-depth, member-focused process that also demanded that the candidates provide real solutions for working families, not just sweet talk. Hillary Clinton not only has detailed plans to fix our economy, but she also has experience at getting things done, working across the aisle in the Senate and across borders as Secretary of State.

**What Women Want**

The EPI research makes clear, however, that it’s not just women’s wages that need to come up if we’re going to close the wage gap. In fact, while women’s wages have stagnated over the last decade, men’s wages have actually fallen!

This is the dirty little secret about what appears to be some closing of the gender wage gap. Women may be doing a little better by comparison to men, but the overall family income is down. What women want is an economy that works for everyone.

Yes, we want an economy that rewards women and men equally for doing the same work, but we also want an economy that ensures that everyone who works earns a living wage — and that the very wealthy pay their fair share to get our economy back in balance.

If the gains of a growing economy had not gone disproportionately to those at the very top, and if workers’ wages overall had grown at the rate of productivity, then women’s wages would be 71.2 percent higher than they are today, EPI figures.

**Raising Our Voices**

What the numbers show is the need for a wholistic approach that focuses on the inequality gap as much as the gender gap. EPI says. To maximize women’s economic security, we must pursue policies that intentionally tilt bargaining power back toward low — and moderate-wage workers.

That means raising the minimum wage, but also strengthening unions. Policy makers should be encouraging more workers to join together to negotiate for better pay and working conditions. Unfortunately, not only are our current labor laws and enforcement too weak, but we are facing a Supreme Court decision this summer in a case called *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* that could destroy the protections we have.

This is our time to make our case for economic justice — for all workers! This election should not be about personalities. Let’s make sure it’s about creating real change to help working families. Raising our voices can make a difference.

“There is our time to make our case for economic justice — for all workers!”

Laura Reyes

Secretary-Treasurer

PHOTO: KIRA HORVATH

PHOTOS: HEATHER SHELLY
Connecting Co-Workers in Florida

By Pablo Ros & Mark McCullough

One had only been an AFSCME member for a month, another for about a year. A third had a year-and-a-half of public service under his belt. But all three members had one thing in common: a determination to join together to have the strongest possible voice for themselves and their co-workers in the workplace.

The way they’re doing that is through AFSCME Strong, our union’s program to communicate, one-on-one, with fellow workers to highlight the importance of sticking together to make our voices heard.

These Floridians are strangers to one another, separated by job and home town. Yet all are part of AFSCME’s growing family.

Becoming AFSCME Strong

Elsa Lina Clark was a member of AFSCME Florida Local 199 for about a month, yet the electronic document technician for the Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources was already AFSCME Strong, having participated in an activist training last October.
Later she worked with a trainer to perfect her conversation and listening skills, motivated to listen to her co-workers and spread the word about the importance of standing strong. “There are so many reasons why everybody should be in the union,” she said.

Grisela Argenal, a lab technician in Clark’s department, was a member of Local 199 for about a year when she began her AFSCME Strong training. She said it built her confidence when speaking to co-workers about “what the union is about, and how I can help my co-workers with their different situations.”

Many co-workers don’t join the union because of fears and misconceptions, she explained, but that only motivated her to “try to encourage them” to join. “That’s the part I like the most.”

Why I Joined
Darryl Lamar, a code compliance officer for the City of Jacksonville for a year and a half, realized the need to build a stronger union last fall when contract negotiations were about to begin. “We need to fight hard for things like step increases,” and other pocketbook issues, he said. That meant signing up new members of AFSCME Local 1279 — himself included. Then he helped to sign up more than 20 other co-workers in his unit — just within a month.

“Nothing is going to change until you join the union,” said Lamar, who is now his union’s steward. “As long as we fight for what is right, as long as we stand up for the services we provide to the citizens of this city, people will keep joining.”

WHAT IS AFSCME STRONG?

We’re rebuilding our union so that we can have safer workplaces, better benefits and wages, and retirement security.

What can you do? It’s simple: Talk to your co-workers. Talk about what you want to fix in your workplace. Ask your steward what you can do. You can help improve your workplace, so that you can better serve your community.

For more information, visit AFSCMEStrong.org
Members Embrace Hillary as Political Season Begins

By David Patterson, John Noonan & Michael Byrne

For Chris Weinard, this may be the most important election in her lifetime. The mother of grown children trying to get started in a tough economy, she’s also worried about retirement security for herself and her husband. Her solution: working as hard as she can to make Hillary Clinton the next President of the United States.

“I truly believe that she is the only one who can turn things around for working families,” said Weinard, a member of AFSCME Local 183 (Iowa Council 61), “Hillary is the one who can get things done for families like mine.”

Weinard echoes the sentiment of AFSCME members all across the nation who are actively working to help Clinton win — knocking on doors, holding debate watch parties and gathering for enthusiastic rallies.

That enthusiasm helped the former Secretary of State win the Iowa caucuses, where she picked up the majority of the delegates. AFSCME Pres. Lee Saunders attributed her victory there to “AFSCME boots on the ground.”

“This is just the beginning of a long campaign and we know that Secretary Clinton will continue to travel the nation, listening to workers and earning each vote with her message of an economy that works for all, fix our unbalanced economy, and ensure we strengthen unions to strengthen America.”

AFSCME for Hillary supporters cheer at the Presidential debate party in Des Moines, Iowa.
The One Who Can Get Things Done
Clinton’s focus on working-family issues, and her record of getting things done, have buoyed AFSCME members. “Hillary will take on income inequality and focus on Main Street and not on Wall Street,” said AFSCME member Paula Martinez (Council 61).

“Looking at the Supreme Court alone, it really hits me about just how high the stakes are, especially for organized labor,” said Jerry Jones (AFSCME Local 451, Council 61). “Hillary is clearly the most experienced candidate who can win for working people both at the polls and as President.”

Hundreds of Clinton supporters, including members proudly wearing their “AFSCME for Hillary” T-shirts, wedged themselves into a jam-packed debate party held on Drake University’s campus in Des Moines, Iowa.

The standing-room-only crowd listened intently to the two-hour debate between Clinton, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and former Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley, where the candidates discussed homeland security in the wake of the Paris attacks, economic policy and health care, among other topics.

AFSCME members are working hard to ensure that the campaign is focused on issues that working families care about most: economic security. This has not been easy when the media downplays economic issues in favor of following the hateful speech of some right-wing candidates.

AFSCME for Hillary supporters cheer at the Presidential debate party in Des Moines, Iowa.

Solutions to Rebuild Middle Class
“We’ve had enough of these economic policies that help corporations and CEOs instead of working people,” said Kelli Bryant. “We need a President who has a vision that helps working people and wants to change the rules and help rebuild the middle class.”

Bryant and other Council 61 members stood outside security fences to protest the positions of Donald Trump, the billionaire who leads among the Republican candidates (as of press time). They held signs and sung pro-worker chants. Trump’s economic policies include cuts to the corporate tax rate and the capital gains tax, repeal of the estate tax and no raise in the minimum wage.

Clinton was one of the first candidates to propose a plan to reduce student debt, calling for a $350 billion federal commitment to ensure that students can go to college without having to take out loans, which are now eating many family budgets around the country. Clinton also called for raising the minimum wage and labor law reform that would make it easier for workers to join unions.

Speaking to a union audience in Davenport, Iowa, Secretary Clinton promised that, as President, she would continue to involve them as she fought for union members and their families.

“You are going to be part of my administration,” she said. “You’re not going to be out there looking in. You’re going to be inside helping me fight for you.”

“Sunrise to Sunset: Working People for Hillary,” captures enthusiastic members door-knocking and phone-banking on Clinton’s behalf. Watch the video at wevotewewin.org.
It was nearly two years ago, in April 2014, when the emergency manager for the city of Flint, Michigan, appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder, convinced the City Council to switch its water source from the Detroit water system to the Flint River to save money. “Three weeks after we made the switch to the river water, we noticed something was wrong,” recalls Jon Mochty, a senior water distribution operator and member of Local 1600 (Council 25). “We told our supervisors we needed to test the water but we were told the water was fine.”

It wasn’t fine. It was poisoned. The change in the chemical composition to treat the river water caused lead and other metals to leach from aging pipes into the water supply. For the next 17 months the residents of Flint were left to drink, cook and bathe in lead-contaminated water as city and state officials insisted the water was safe.

The human cost of the tragedy won’t be known fully for many years, as ingesting lead can severely affect mental and physical development in young children. At high levels, it can be fatal. Those human costs far outweigh the cost of importing drinking water from the Detroit system.

What has become increasingly clear is that the austere anti-government policies of Governor Snyder, who ran for office on the promise to run government like a business, are behind the disaster in Flint.

Demanding Political Accountability

Two busloads of union members and Flint residents traveled to Washington, DC, in early February to share their stories with legislators and the media. In an emotional press conference, the residents demanded that Governor Snyder and his emergency managers testify to Congress under oath about their actions.

Meanwhile, back in Flint, residents are still coping with contaminated water, with churches and other community groups stepping up to provide bottled water and funds to fix the pipes. Some 300 union plumbers from around Michigan volunteered to install water filters in Flint homes in early February.

Stephanie Davis, a Local 496 member who works in the Genesee County Clerk’s office in downtown Flint, said she had been suspicious of the water even though ...
she hadn’t noticed any change in color or taste as other residents had. “My granddaughter said it made her skin itch,” Davis said. “She refused to take a bath in it, and we were using bottled water. We haven’t tested her yet for lead poisoning, but we’re going to.”

Despite the workers’ suspicions, the water was deemed to meet state and federal standards by the world’s largest private water corporation, the French company Veolia, which was hired by the city in February 2015 as protests mounted. The testing by that private company flew in the face of tests conducted by Virginia Tech Professor Marc Edwards and his students, who found lead levels as high as 13,200 parts per billion — twice the level established by EPA as hazardous waste.

‘Emergency Manager’ Rules
Citizen protests led the Flint City Council in March 2015 to vote 7-1 to “do all things necessary” to switch back to the Detroit water system, but that vote was rejected by the city’s emergency manager, who maintained the water was safe.

The Snyder administration authorized Flint to switch back to the Detroit Water System last October, but the damage was done. Snyder apologized to the citizens of Flint in January, but calls for his resignation continue. Two members of his administration and a regional EPA official already have resigned under fire, but that has not helped the citizens of Flint.

The Flint debacle is an extreme example of what is happening all over Michigan as a result of the austerity policies imposed by Snyder, including the hiring of emergency managers in cities determined to have a “financial emergency.” But it was Snyder’s severe budget cuts, revenue sharing cuts, a personal property tax rollback and corporate tax breaks that helped push those cities into their financial emergencies.

“This was a man-made disaster created by a governor who would not listen, who told us to shut up and drink,” said Melissa Mays, the mother of three boys who formed “Water You Fighting For,” a grassroots organization dedicated to making Flint reconnect to the Detroit water system. “Governor Snyder and his emergency managers need to be held accountable.”

To contribute to the Flint relief efforts, you can make a donation at AFSCME.org/helpflint. Or, send a check made payable to “AFSCME Fallen Heroes Fund,” to AFSCME Fallen Heroes Fund, c/o AFSCME, 1625 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-5687. Contributions to the fund are tax deductible.
WE NEVER QUIT

America’s communities never rest, so the people in public service never stop.

By Michael Byrne

Shawn Ost, a school bus driver in Chillicothe, Ohio, echoes the commitment to public service that other AFSCME members share when he says about the students he ferries to and from school, “I’ve got two grown kids I’d give my right arm for, even give my life, and I feel the same way about the kids on my bus.”

Ost, a member of AFSCME’s Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE) was recently honored by the Chillicothe School Board for preventing two schoolchildren — a 5th grader and a 10th grader — from walking into a burglary in progress at their home. He not only locked down the bus, but he also got 911 on the line to report the burglary and turned the kids on the bus into detectives.

“I told the kids, ‘pull your cell phones out. If you can take a video or a photo, do it,’” he told a Columbus TV station. Ost also instructed them to get out their notepads and write down descriptions of the burglars, who were loading the goods into a white van.

Armed with the photos and written descriptions provided by the kids, the police quickly arrested the suspects — within minutes, Ost said. “I wasn’t going to let those kids walk in on a burglary. It was a dangerous situation.”

How Our Work Matters

The OAPSE bus driver’s heroism is exceptional, but it is par for the course for AFSCME members dedicated to our communities and our clients. What puts these everyday heroes in the right place at the right time is a personal
determination to improve our communities, delivering the best possible service.

From police and corrections officers, to school cafeteria workers and school nurses, from mechanical engineers and medical technicians, to home care workers and doctors, from parks and recreation workers, to custodians and sewer repair technicians, it really is the work that matters. We are committed to serving our communities with pride and dedication.

Just a few months before Shawn Ost’s heroism in Ohio, a school bus driver and bus attendant didn’t hesitate as they rushed in to save a 5-year-old girl being attacked by a wild pit bull in Bayonne, New Jersey.

In honoring driver Bill Farrington and attendant Damien Washington, members of Local 2251 (Council 52), the Bayonne school administrator told the school board they “risked their lives to rescue a child from the jaws of a wild dog,” according to The Jersey Journal. The girl was treated at a local hospital and released the same day.

Jobs That Are More than Jobs
And in Merced, California, two sanitation workers on their morning rounds responded to the faint sounds of, “Help me, help me,” climbing over a fence and rescuing an elderly woman who fell in her backyard. David Soto and Mike Schlessinger — members of Local 2703 (Council 57) —
Our jobs matter because our communities need us. That’s why we never quit. Public service is more than a job. It’s a calling.

Do you know of a co-worker who goes above and beyond their job? Tell us all about them and they may be recognized in our next Never Quit Recognition series. Send us an email at works@afscme.org. Include your name, their name, local and contact information.

The Bayonne school board recognized two of its employees as heroes — Bill Farrington and Damien Washington (centered) on Oct. 29, 2015, after they helped rescue a 5-year-old girl from a vicious pit bull attack.

The Power of Coming Together
The power of co-workers coming together is why Darryl Lamar joined Local 1279 (AFSCME Florida) when he became a code compliance officer for the City of Jacksonville, Florida. With contract negotiations coming up with the city, he then got busy signing up other members, too. “Nothing is going to change until you join,” Lamar said.

This same determined spirit to never quit on our jobs and on our co-workers is what led California paramedic Jared Kirby, Local 4911 (Council 57), to travel to Ohio to help a group of EMTs join with AFSCME.

“Our union is our voice,” Kirby said. “And that’s how we fight for the betterment of EMS as a whole and make it a respected public safety profession. We’re going to keep pushing until every EMS worker is well-rested, well-equipped and well-trained to provide the best patient care possible.”

That’s how we win better lives for ourselves, our families and our communities — by joining together. For people proudly committed to the public service that makes America work, we never quit.

Do you know someone who Never Quits?
We want to know!

— Bill Farrington and Damien Washington (centered) on Oct. 29, 2015, after they helped rescue a 5-year-old girl from a vicious pit bull attack.

The Bayonne school board recognized two of its employees as heroes — Bill Farrington and Damien Washington (centered) on Oct. 29, 2015, after they helped rescue a 5-year-old girl from a vicious pit bull attack.
AFSCME Boosts Campaign to Raise Minimum Wage

By Clyde Weiss

Efforts by AFSCME affiliates to convince state and local leaders to raise the minimum wage for public service workers is helping to fuel momentum for the national “Fight for $15” campaign. The latest victory: a $15-an-hour minimum wage for 50,000 low-paid New York City workers — including 20,000 workers mostly represented by DC 37 — which will take effect by the end of 2018.

The announcement, by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, was made at DC 37 headquarters in January. DC 37 is a supporter of the nationwide ‘Fight for 15’ movement that was launched to support fast-food workers, who are demanding a living wage and union representation.

“We are here to celebrate a moment in history where working people won a major victory in our city,” said DC 37 Exec. Dir. Henry Garrido.

Real Money for Workers
The victory is more than a political achievement. It will mean real money in the pockets of hardworking families. Among them are school crossing guards represented by Local 372, such as Maria DeLaura, who spoke at the DC 37 news conference.

“I have co-workers who are school crossing guards who live in shelters, and some sleep on the subway because they don’t make enough money to get an apartment, or qualify for public assistance,” DeLaura said. Yet, she added, “They still get up every day, and get to work on time to make sure your children are crossed safely to their schools.”

New York Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000, whose members include employees of the state, counties, towns, villages, school districts and library systems, also has been a strong advocate for ’Fight for 15.’ Its advocacy paid off in November when Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced plans to raise the minimum wage for approximately 10,000 state workers to $15 an hour by 2021. A similar plan, affecting approximately 28,000 state university workers who also make minimum wage of $9 an hour, also was announced in January.

Getting Around Congress
The movement to raise the minimum wage is stymied in Congress by corporate benefactors who don’t want to see working families have more money in their pockets. It is being championed at the state and local level — thanks to the work of AFSCME and other unions and progressive allies. In California, Oregon and Washington, DC, voters and lawmakers will have their say this year on various proposals that would gradually raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour.

THINGS TO KNOW:
1. New York City and state are the latest victories in the campaign to raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour.
2. DC 37, CSEA and other AFSCME affiliates are pressing employers to raise the minimum wage.
3. AFSCME believes everyone deserves respect for the work they do — which means a living wage.
Anti-worker groups funded by wealthy special interests have brought a case to the U.S. Supreme Court that could undermine the ability of public service workers to join together for better pay and benefits. Known as *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, the case was heard in January and will be decided by the end of June.

America’s economy has swung out of balance and workers are at a big disadvantage against the corporate CEOs and the rich who are manipulating the rules in their favor. As we work harder than ever before, creating record wealth for the top 1 percent, they are attacking unions — the main ones fighting for working families.

After a similar case targeting home care and child care workers, groups like the Freedom Foundation, funded by the ultra-rich Koch brothers and their allies (see p. 18), are already calling these independent providers and urging them to drop out of their union, claiming they can get representation without paying dues. If the Supreme Court rules against workers in the *Friedrichs* case, they likely will target other public service workers as well.

**What *Friedrichs* Is About**

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Friedrichs* this past Jan. 11. Outside the court, hundreds of workers assembled to protect their voice on the job and protest the ongoing attacks against families by wealthy special interests.
"My union contract allowed me to stay home six months with my newborn child. That’s why I’m sticking with the union."

— Peggy Wise, Local 1679 (Northern New England Council 93)

At stake in this case is the unanimous 1977 Supreme Court decision called *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*, which upheld the payment of "fair share fees" by nonmembers for their share of the cost of their representation. If *Abood* is overturned, it would mean that every state in the country would be a "right-to-work" state for all public service employees.

As a result, the ability of nurses, librarians, emergency first responders and other public service workers to negotiate effectively with their employer would be harmed. On average, workers in right-to-work states earn nearly $6,000 less than workers in strong union states.

Dovard Howard, a certified control systems technician and AFSCME member from Riverside, California (Local 1902), who joined a dozen other workers outside the Supreme Court on the day of oral arguments, put it best when he said that the very wellbeing of communities across the nation is at stake.

“We know that without a strong voice on the job, we’ll lose the ability to advocate for the safety and training our communities rely on,” he said. "It is only through a strong union that we have been able to win improvements in training and safety systems at my worksite."

The Forces Lying in Wait
The Freedom Foundation is just one of many fake grassroots organizations funded by CEOs and rich corporations ready to exploit an anti-worker outcome in the *Friedrichs* case. The primary goal of these shadowy groups is to undermine unions while relentlessly supporting a corporate agenda.

Besides having a vast wealth of resources at its disposal, the Freedom Foundation is using vicious and deceitful tactics. “Drop your membership,” they say. “Save money. Lose nothing.” You may hear from one of these groups by phone or even in person, at the door of your home. They’ll try to convince you that you can save money by dropping your union membership. They’ll even insist that you can continue to receive the same pay and benefits as before.

What they won’t tell you is what happens every time workers lose the ability to bargain for pay, wages and working conditions, as happened in Wisconsin. There, while many public service workers have stopped paying $40 a month in dues, their health care premiums have increased by $400 a month.

Many of these extremist groups belong to the State Policy Network, an umbrella organization funded by billionaires and corporations that promotes corporate interests at the expense of America’s working families.

Through deceptive media hype and canvassing campaigns, these groups are knocking on workers’ doors hoping to trick them into leaving their union.

Freedom Foundation is operating in Oregon and Washington state. In Pennsylvania, Commonwealth Foundation is trying to break a recently formed union of home care workers. Although these groups set up shop in local communities, their funding comes from outside wealthy donors whose only interest in a particular workforce is how they can exploit it.

Don’t believe the hype: direct mail urging you to drop your union.

3 THINGS TO KNOW:

1. You may get a phone call from a group like Freedom Foundation urging you to drop out of your union.
2. These groups are waiting for an anti-worker ruling by the Supreme Court to boost their efforts.
3. By standing strong, we can keep our voice on the job and the ability to join together for better pay and benefits.
“I understand that it is through our union that we improved reimbursement rates for child care providers across the state. And our union protects us from costly and baseless consumer complaints. I’m sticking with the union.”

— Gaila Wold-Adams, Local 132 (Oregon Council 75)

**Coming Together to Fight Back**

Most workers don’t want to lose their voice in the workplace or their ability to come together and speak up for better wages and working conditions. AFSCME members have stood up for their rights time and again.

But the special interests have deep pockets, and their attacks will probably intensify. That’s why AFSCME has undertaken an unprecedented member-involvement program to strengthen our union. Through AFSCME Strong, we are training leaders and members to engage co-workers in one-on-one conversations to highlight the importance of standing together against this threat.

When members are given the information about how their pay and benefits are being threatened by the anti-union forces behind *Friedrichs*, they are overwhelmingly supportive of our union. “You can’t eat your union benefits, but guess what? You can’t eat without your union benefits,” said Vincent Zucchero, Local 2475 (New Jersey Council 73), when informed of the effort to weaken his union.

We’re also forming coalitions and partnerships to expand the fight. One such organization is America Works Together, a broad progressive alliance. America Works Together includes not only labor unions, but also allied organizations working for economic and social justice, including Interfaith Worker Justice, the Campaign for America’s Future, the National Employment Law Project and many others. Find out how you can get involved at [www.americaworkstogether.us](http://www.americaworkstogether.us).

**The Anti-Worker Forces Behind a U.S. Supreme Court Case**

*By Clyde Weiss*

The U.S. Supreme Court will decide a case later this year that could make it significantly harder for workers to have a voice on the job through our union. The extremist groups that pushed this case before the justices have ties to Charles and David Koch and their network of right-wing billionaires.

Adele M. Stan, a columnist in *The American Prospect* magazine, discloses the Koch brothers’ ties to the case — called *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* — in a sobering article published last fall entitled “Who’s Behind *Friedrichs*?”

Stan wrote that the “real force” pushing the case is the Center for Individual Rights (CIR), a group whose financial backers “reads like a who’s who of the right’s organized opposition to labor. A number of those funders, unsurprisingly, enjoy the support” of the Koch brothers, principals in Koch Industries, the second-largest privately held corporation in the country.

Right-wing “think tanks” and other corporate-backed groups supporting the *Friedrichs* case are funded by the Koch brothers, reports Stan. “They include the Cato Institute, the National Right to Work Legal Defense Fund, and the Mackinac Center, a major force behind the 2012 anti-union legislation enacted in Michigan.”

The case, which may be decided by this summer, could weaken all public-sector unions in the country by establishing so-called right-to-work nationwide. That means those who benefit from a union contract but don’t want to support the costs of providing that contract will not have to contribute. That could undermine the power of all workers to improve their jobs, and the services they provide through a union.

This is the Koch brothers’ goal. AFSCME has joined with the AFL-CIO and other public unions and even some states to urge the justices to decide in favor of workers, not the corporate-backed interests behind this case.
Our AFSCME Family
AFSCME members out & about, hanging out with their co-workers

1. Members of Local 3395 in Indiana celebrating Library Staff Day
2. Our sisters and brothers from CSEA in New York took to the icy waters to raise funds for Special Olympics
3. Local 3450 in Iowa came together in the holiday spirit to present a check to Toys for Tots in the amount of $5,000!
4. Members of the UDW Homecare Providers Union of California enjoyed their annual holiday party in December
5. Members of Palestine Local 3806 in Texas donated $450 to “Blankets & Bears Children’s Fund” — an organization that provides supplies to children who were traumatized or abused.

PHOTOS: LOCAL 3395; CSEA CAPITAL REGION 4; LOCAL 3450; UDW HOMECARE PROVIDERS UNION OF CALIFORNIA; PALESTINE LOCAL 3806

Going to a basketball game with your union sisters & brothers? Send us your pictures & maybe you’ll see them in the next issue of WORKS! Email us at works@AFSCME.org

AFSCME.org 19
Do you perform messy work? Send us a picture and you may be featured in the next WORKS magazine.

Visit: AFSCMEdirtyworks.tumblr.com/
Federal
AFSCME won reauthorization of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, which provides lifetime health care coverage to first responders and others who suffer health conditions as a result of the Sept. 11 attacks.

With AFSCME backing, Congress avoided another budget showdown and lifted tight spending limits that undermined state and local priorities. AFSCME also won delayed implementation until 2020 of a new 40 percent excise tax on worker health benefits imposed by the Affordable Care Act.

Congress also passed a five-year reauthorization of surface transportation programs boosting federal aid for highway and transit programs for the first time since 2009. AFSCME also defeated several privatization proposals.

Finally, AFSCME won relief for retirees and state budgets by convincing Congress to reject a dramatic spike in Medicare premiums, scheduled to take effect this year.

Ohio
The Legislature is again debating a right-to-work bill, even though similar measures were repeatedly voted down in 2011. SB 5 was repealed by more than 61 percent of voters, stopping the anti-workers’ rights law. Another bill seeks to cut unemployment benefits. If that bill passes, Ohio would have one of the weakest unemployment programs in the nation.

Florida
Gov. Rick Scott released his 2016–17 budget proposal, and it would be devastating for state employees. He’s calling for the elimination of more than 1,300 state jobs and won’t increase pay for the state workforce, which has not seen a raise in three years. At the same time, he’s asking for $1 billion in corporate tax breaks.

Illinois
Thousands of AFSCME members across the state rallied for a fair budget and a fair contract as Gov. Bruce Rauner and the Legislature are still negotiating over the budget. The billionaire governor is trying to force through an agenda that would make it harder for injured workers to get medical care; reduce wages for construction workers; and strip the right of teachers, first responders and other public service workers to bargain together.

Pennsylvania
Proposals for pension “reform” were foiled again. This issue has been a chronic threat in Harrisburg, but this bill has gotten farther than in previous years. After Council 13 members contacted their representatives and urged them to oppose a bill that would have undermined retirement security, the House voted it down.
**Political Rebate**

Article IX, Section 14, of the AFSCME International Constitution includes a rebate procedure for members who object to the expenditure of union funds for partisan political or ideological purposes. The rebate is not available to those who are members under a union shop or similar provision — or to non-members who pay agency shop or similar fees to the union.

The timing of the rebate procedure is tied to the International's recent fiscal year, which ended December 31, 2015. The procedures, including the requirements for submitting a proper rebate request, were adopted by delegates to the International Convention and are spelled out in Article IX, Section 14, of the International Constitution and summarized below. THESE REQUIREMENTS ARE STRICTLY ENFORCED.

Eligible members who object to the expenditure of a portion of their dues for partisan political or ideological purposes and want to request a rebate must do so individually in writing. Written requests must be postmarked between April 1 and April 16, 2016, and must be sent via registered or certified mail to BOTH the International Secretary-Treasurer AND the council with which the member’s local is affiliated (or if no council affiliation, to the member’s local union).

The request must contain the following information: the member’s name, Social Security number or member number, home address, e-mail address, if available, and the AFSCME local and council number to which dues were paid during the preceding year. This information must be typed or legibly printed. The individual request must be signed by the member and sent by the individual member to: Laura Reyes, International Secretary-Treasurer, AFSCME, 1625 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20036-5687, AND to the council with which the member’s local is affiliated (or if no council affiliation, to the member’s local union). Requests from more than one person may not be sent in the same envelope. Each request must be sent individually. Requests must be submitted in writing each year.

Upon receipt of a valid rebate request, an application for partisan political or ideological rebate will be sent to the objecting member. The objecting member must be postmarked between April 1 and April 16, 2016, and must be sent via registered or certified mail to BOTH the International Secretary-Treasurer AND the council with which the member’s local is affiliated (or if no council affiliation, to the member’s local union).

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“AFSCME members work hard and we take pride in our work.”

Get Involved.

Learn more at AFSCMEstrong.org
Forty Years of Service, Seeing with His Hands

By Pablo Ros

Los Angeles — As he has every workday for the past 40 years, Mike Conrad goes to his job with Los Angeles County, where he serves as a mechanic. Among other things, he has rebuilt air system brake calipers, fire pump pilot valves and automatic transmissions, and made harnesses for vehicles. Unlike his colleagues and fellow AFSCME members who once stared in disbelief, he works without the use of his eyes.

Conrad, 64, was born three months premature. He was placed in an incubator at a time there was little awareness of the dangers of overexposing a baby's still developing eyes to oxygen, he says. As a result, he has been blind from the time he was born.

But blind doesn't mean non-seeing. To watch him work on an engine, say his co-workers, is to witness how a person can see with their hands, exercise full control of the tools at their disposal, and do as good a job in repairing an engine as anybody could with perfect eyesight.

"The first time I watched him I was pretty shocked," recalls Andreas Jung, a helicopter mechanic who is chief steward of AFSCME Local 119 (Council 36). "I'm a mechanic myself so I thought it was pretty impressive. It's really something to watch him work on a piece of equipment, to watch him assemble something. There's not enough praise I can give him."

Harry Wong, also a mechanic who is president of AFSCME Local 119, has known Conrad for 12 years, and says Conrad's work as a mechanic is not just a job for him.

"He has a passion for doing this stuff," Wong says. Conrad's passion for mechanics goes back to his love of cars, which started when he was a child.

"I had my first car when I was 12," he says. "It was a 1956 Ford Victoria, black and white two-door. My dad gave it to me."

Conrad's love of cars grew with every automobile he touched with his hands, telling them apart by the door handles, and by the sound of their engines, like the sound of the Ford Model A, which he loves and is unlike any other to him.

"I like especially the old cars," Conrad says. "They're more distinctive, they're different. The new cars all seem the same to me pretty much."

Conrad says he has 20 cars, including old trucks, and even a Studebaker.

"When I retire I'm going to start working on them," he says.

Conrad has many plans for retirement, which he says is just around the corner. Besides four decades of service for the county, he stayed active in his union, serving on the executive board. When he retires, he plans to volunteer for his union, become more active in Access Services, which is transportation for the disabled, and serve at the Braille Institute, among other things.

"I think I'm going to miss the daily routine," he says. "That's why I have to keep myself busy. I don't just want to sit around watching TV."

PHOTO: ERICA ZEITLIN