The hard right is trying to push an anti-government agenda and blame the nation's woes on public service workers.

STOP THE LIES
The Challenges Ahead
Public service workers are being used as scapegoats in an all-out war by Big Business and its ideological supporters to shrink public services and reduce the power of organized workers. We’ve got to fight back! Stop the Lies is AFSCME’s new, aggressive campaign to do just that. We will expose right-wing lies through social media, videos, advertising and ground events across the country. Read more about it here.

Enemies at the Gate
Forty-thousand home-based child care providers in Michigan formed a union of their own in 2006. But two right-wing organizations, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy and the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, are trying hard to block their victory through legal challenges. Who are these groups and why are they doing this? AFSCME WORKS looks behind the curtain to find the answer.

Stop It! We’ve taken to print and the airwaves to stop opponents — like FOX News personality, Glenn Beck — from telling lies about public service workers. Photo: M. Caulfield/WireImage/Getty Images

On the Cover Photo: Ikon Images/Andy MacGregor/Getty Images

TAKING THE FIGHT ONLINE
Through our Stop the Lies campaign, we are exposing and responding to distortions about public service workers — whether they appear in print, on the airwaves or online.

Stop the Lies is AFSCME’s new, aggressive campaign to expose right-wing lies through social media, videos, advertising and ground events across the country. Read more about it here.

Despite right-wing rhetoric, we aren’t the problem and attacking us will not create much-needed jobs. These lies only divert attention from the real culprits of our country’s economic troubles: greedy Wall Street CEOs, politicians in Washington who turn a blind eye, and all right-wing talking heads who spin lies.

AFSCME members are wise to these tactics and we’re speaking up, exposing the liars and telling our union brothers and sisters about our enemies’ shenanigans. You can help us replace lies with the truth by “liking” us on Facebook and signing up for e-mail alerts at afscme.org.

Here’s what one of our Facebook friends had to say about the campaign against public services and those politicians that claim public employees are a “privileged class”:

Stop the Lies is AFSCME’s new, aggressive campaign to expose right-wing lies through social media, videos, advertising and ground events across the country. Read more about it here.

Despite right-wing rhetoric, we aren’t the problem and attacking us will not create much-needed jobs. These lies only divert attention from the real culprits of our country’s economic troubles: greedy Wall Street CEOs, politicians in Washington who turn a blind eye, and all right-wing talking heads who spin lies.

AFSCME members are wise to these tactics and we’re speaking up, exposing the liars and telling our union brothers and sisters about our enemies’ shenanigans. You can help us replace lies with the truth by “liking” us on Facebook and signing up for e-mail alerts at afscme.org.

Here’s what one of our Facebook friends had to say about the campaign against public services and those politicians that claim public employees are a “privileged class”:...
AFSCME Women Take Charge

Fifty-six percent of AFSCME’s 1.6 million members are women. Their activism and leadership are integral to the union’s strength and success. We profile five of these exemplary activists: Blanca Quintero of California’s United Domestic Workers (UDW/AFSCME), Sheri Carnahan and Phyllis Thede of Iowa Council 61, and Coral Dayon and Angel McRae of New Jersey Council 73.

Privatization Gone Wild

For years, DC 37 has issued calls for oversight of New York City’s thousands of expensive outside contracts. A recent debacle with the city’s computerized time-keeping program once again proves the council right.

Great Contract for MD State Workers

Despite these tough economic times, Maryland state employees voted overwhelmingly in February to ratify a contract with no furloughs through 2014, pay increases, a bonus, five paid days off and more. Learn about this stunning victory, and read other stories, in AFSCME Across America.

Politicians are the privileged class who spread lies about the real workers. This is just a ploy to get rid of unions. Union leaders and members need to be on the news channels, radio talk shows, newspapers, billboards and flyers speaking out loud and speaking out now. If we don’t act, we will surely lose our living standards forever.

C. Klier

Local 3450, Iowa Council 61
BEFORE THE FALL ELECTIONS, our union was already facing great fiscal and political pressures. After the elections were over, we knew the anti-union, anti-worker candidates who won in many states and the U.S. House of Representatives would make our situation worse. We were right. Today, these anti-public service zealots have proposed deep budget cuts to vital services, mass layoffs, cuts in public service workers’ pensions, jobs and benefits, and they’re trying to dismantle unions piece by piece.

Minnesota’s state Legislature is considering a bill to eliminate the jobs of 15 percent of the state’s workforce by 2015. In Ohio, newly elected Gov. John Kasich (R) wants to do away with collective bargaining rights for home health care and child care workers and curtail the bargaining rights of police officers and firefighters. He says public employees who strike over labor disputes should automatically lose their jobs. “They’ve got good jobs, they’ve got high pay. They get good benefits, a great retirement. What are they striking for?” says the governor.

A Full Assault
There’s more. Currently, there are pending bills against public employee collective bargaining rights in Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon and Tennessee. Other states are threatening to follow suit. In addition, 10 states have introduced deceptively named right to work legislation with two more states expected to follow. Legislation to repeal everything from payroll deduction to health and safety measures is being introduced throughout the country, including Washington state, Michigan and New Jersey.

This is happening because the extreme right wing needs someone to blame for state and local budget shortfalls, the near-collapse of our economy and the loss of 15 million jobs. That’s much easier than pointing to the folks who put them in office — reckless, unregulated Wall Street millionaires.

Our Blueprint to Win
To put it plainly, we need to work like hell and pull out all the stops to correct the distortions and get state legislatures across the nation to defeat or table anti-labor bills.

That means talking to co-workers, neighbors, elected officials, and family members so they know exactly what’s at stake. Everyone needs to know that while we’ll battle anyone who tries to scapegoat us, at its core this struggle is about preserving vital public services and keeping communities strong.

We are bringing the full strength of our union together. The national union and affiliates are forming partnerships that are standing up to those who stand against us. And AFSCME is stopping lies about public employees through our new website, afsme.org/StopTheLies.

AFSCME activists are signing up for e-mail action alerts, getting informed and getting involved in battles across the nation. They’re joining afsme.org/mobile and receiving important information by text so they can connect with Congress on issues where our voices are needed most. On facebook.com/afsme and twitter.com/afsme, AFSCME is starting important conversations that are getting the facts out and setting the record straight.

Our activists are writing letters and posting comments to news stories that talk about public service workers. In every way possible, we are getting out the truth about hard-working public service workers.

The Bottom Line
Times are tough. No doubt about it. But there is also no doubt that AFSCME is tougher. That’s why we must increase our efforts at every level of the union. We must mobilize the power that comes from speaking with one clear voice. Each of us must be fully engaged in a unified effort for the good of every AFSCME member, for the good of working families and for the good of our nation.

“EACH OF US MUST BE FULLY ENGAGED IN A UNIFIED EFFORT FOR THE GOOD OF EVERY AFSCME MEMBER, FOR THE GOOD OF WORKING FAMILIES AND FOR THE GOOD OF OUR NATION.”
IN SEVERAL STATES, ultraconservative legislatures and governors, claiming to be focused on jobs creation and restoring the middle class, are advocating laws that would actually kill jobs and continue the downward slide of working families.

Lawmakers in states such as Indiana, Iowa, Ohio and Wisconsin want to silence public service workers by scaling-back — or eliminating — our collective bargaining rights.

We know why. The lawmakers won last November with the help of their big-money corporate friends. They’re rewarding supporters by throwing working people under the bus. They argue that collective bargaining has led to rich contracts and benefits for public service workers that are bankrupting governments.

Making Us the Villains

We must tell everyone — from the halls of power to citizens across this nation — that the arguments against us are ridiculous. The average AFSCME member earns approximately $45,000 per year. On average, retired AFSCME members receive a pension of approximately $19,000 a year — and most of our members have been required to contribute to their pensions throughout the course of their careers.

State and local governments often renge on their contributions. In good economic times, elected leaders count on investment returns to make pension funds grow; in bad times, they say they don’t have the money to meet their obligations. We must ensure everyone knows that.

It’s up to us to tell America that our foes are blaming us for budget problems we didn’t create. They hope that by making sanitation workers, EMTs, police dispatchers and snow plow operators the villains, the true culprits — the corporate titans who created the housing bubble and complex investment schemes, then awarded themselves outlandish salaries and bonuses — will get off scot-free.

It’s Everybody’s Fight

When it comes to taking this battle home, we can’t forget the value that comes from the support of our coalition partners and allies — folks from community and religious organizations. They’ve stood with us in other fights and they’re speaking out on our behalf now. This struggle is about the general public who count on good public services. This fight also requires the might and muscle of the entire labor movement whose greatest number of members are public sector employees. That’s because other unions have been decimated and many private sector jobs have been eliminated and sent to other shores.

Unions built the middle class that forms the backbone of the economy. It’s no coincidence that as the number of union members has shrunk, so too has the middle class.

Plus, unions set a strong pay standard that nonunion employers follow, according to research by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). Take, for example, a high school graduate whose workplace is not unionized, but who works in an industry that is 25 percent unionized. That worker is paid 5 percent more than similar workers in less unionized industries, the EPI says.

Our Audacious Belief

Additionally, in eight of the 10 states with the most disposable income, nearly all public service workers have the right to unionize. Very few public service workers have the right to unionize in the states with the least disposable income. When workers have more money to spend, it leads to a stronger economy.

When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, he said: “I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”

Let us hold the same “audacious belief” — one that compels us to fight every attempt to weaken unions. They remain the best route to achieving the American dream.

Lee A. Saunders
International Secretary-Treasurer

Collective Bargaining is Key to a Prosperous Economy

Telling the Truth | Energizing AFSCME activists at the One Nation March, held in Washington, DC, last fall. Photo: Luis Gómez
THE EFFORT AGAINST PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS:

THE LIES

IN THE MIDST OF THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, RIGHT-WING CONSERVATIVES ARE PUSHING AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT AGENDA AND BLAMING THE NATION’S WOES ON PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS. AFSCME IS DETERMINED TO STOP THEIR LIES.

To learn more about AFSCME’s Stop the Lies campaign, visit afscme.org/StopTheLies
THERE IS NO ESCAPING THE TRUTH:
Times are tough for public service workers. But it’s not just public services and the hard-working men and women who provide them who are having a difficult time, it’s all of America’s beleaguered middle class. With national unemployment hovering at nearly 10 percent and state and local governments unable to cope with increased demand for services such as unemployment insurance and food stamps, the hard right keeps pushing to curtail all aid to those in need. Encouraged by the results of the mid-term elections, they are going after the middle class like never before.

Even though the November losses — particularly the loss of the U.S. House of Representatives — are a setback for working families, voters rejected many of the more virulent tea party candidates — people like Sharron Angle in Nevada and Christine O’Donnell in Delaware — and their out-of-touch ideas. The electorate made it clear that they do not agree with their agenda of government inaction in the face of the economic crisis.

But let’s be frank: We need to do much more to put America back to work. In this economic climate, it’s easy to come up with scapegoats and that is what the well-funded, far right is doing. Wall Street corporate greed and a lack of regulatory oversight led our country to financial collapse two years ago — with effects that ripple through our economy today — yet the right wing persists in placing the blame on public service workers. According to bombastic media personality Rush Limbaugh, who earns millions by sitting in a studio attacking his enemies, government workers “don’t produce anything.” The way he sees it, “their pay could be cut and we wouldn’t have to lose a single job.” Fox News commentator John Stossel even claims that “the financial crisis is the fault of the public employee unions.”

Of course that’s wrong. Pundits who go on this way are riding a wave of discontent and seizing the opportunity to push their anti-government, anti-worker agenda. Contrary to the distortions spread by Limbaugh, Stossel and their ilk, state and local workers make on average 11 to 12 percent less than those with comparable skills in the private sector.

Stop the Lies
It’s time to put an end to the distortions. That’s why AFSCME has launched Stop the Lies, an aggressive, multimedia campaign that is exposing right-wing lies and spreading the truth.

“Public service workers have become the scapegoats for the far right,” President McEntee said during the campaign launch in December. “We’re not going to let corporate CEOs define the debate. It was their greed and incompetence that drove this country’s economy into the ditch.”

According to the U.S. Commerce Department, corporations posted profits of $1.6 trillion in the third quarter of 2010 — the highest figure recorded since the government began keeping track more than 60 years ago. And, the Federal Reserve reports that corporate America is quietly sitting on $1.8 trillion in cash reserves. These are the same people who, with considerable aid and comfort from their allies in the media and Congress, oppose “Big Government” — and ship jobs overseas.

Their formula for economic recovery is very simple: Destroy good public jobs under the false pretense of “reducing the size of government” and repackage them as privatized, non-union jobs with low salaries and few benefits. (For more on why privatization doesn’t work, see Page 16.) Everybody wins, right? Everyone, except the
middle class and working families who keep being victimized as Wall Street and the extreme right wing continue to erode the American dream — one good job at a time.

In these times of lean state and local budgets, one of the right wing’s favorite lies is ranting about the “out of control” cost of public employee pensions. What they never mention is that the average AFSCME member earns approximately $45,000 per year and receives a pension of approximately $19,000 per year after a career of public service. Contrary to what they would like you to believe, states are not shouldering this cost. Employee contributions and investment returns fund the overwhelming majority of the cost of pensions. Taxpayers contributed only 14.3 percent of all pension funding in the 11-year period ending in 2007.

And yet it is these lies that have prompted people like New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) to demand that public employees “share in sacrifice.” To make such a claim while ignoring the hundreds of thousands of public employee layoffs that have taken place in these last two years is simply ludicrous.

Equally absurd are the claims that our budget problems are due to overspending. State tax revenue data demonstrates the decline in revenue between late 2008 and 2009 is unprecedented. State tax collections are now 12 percent below pre-recession levels. That’s why vital services are being cut and public employees are used as scapegoats.

AFSCME’s Plan for Victory
Since the beginning of the recession, state governments have cut almost a trillion dollars in spending. Now, as a result of the elections, public service workers face additional and substantial new attacks.

In addition to budget fights, the right wing is coming after AFSCME members’ pay and benefits and the right of unions to organize and bargain. More than at any time in recent history, battles shift to the state capitols, where the joint work of the national union, councils and local unions will be crucial.

This is why AFSCME’s Executive Board has set several priority goals for 2011. First, we must vigorously engage in the public debate on the key role public services play in our society by promoting their value, blocking privatization and helping state and local governments increase revenues. Likewise, we must protect the retirement security of hard-working public service workers. When it comes to Social Security, the lies are even more relentless. Privatization advocates blatantly mischaracterize Social Security as an “unfunded mandate” that hampers the system, but the vast majority of Americans don’t believe workers should have to gamble their future amid the uncertainty of the stock market.

AFSCME will also work to protect hard-won collective bargaining rights for public service workers and independent home and child care providers. This dedication will help us remain at the helm of the labor movement when it comes to organizing, clearing the way for tens of thousands of new workers to gain a voice and form a union with AFSCME.

We know our enemies’ “divide and rule” tactics well: Foster resentment against government workers in order to strip them of their rights — just as they’ve done to private sector workers in the last few decades.

It’s up to us to prevent this. It’s up to us to make America happen — once again.
NOT YOUR CUP OF TEA

If you like the “tea party,” maybe you should think again. Originally a grassroots movement, it is now controlled by wealthy businessmen and right-wing ideologues who want to privatize many public services, cut taxes that support those services and make it harder for workers to build strength through collective bargaining.

THE TEA PARTY is a grassroots political movement that began as an understandably angry response to an economic meltdown. But it has been hijacked. Today, a network of organizations funded by wealthy, anti-worker, right-wing ideologues sets its agenda — and they’re coming after public service workers.

Unlike the Democrats or Republicans, the tea party is not a recognized political party. It has no official leadership organization or adopted policy platform. Yet, under the direction of right-wing organizations like FreedomWorks, tea partiers have taken up the banner of smaller government. They also want to privatize Social Security and phase out Medicare — the safety nets Americans depend upon for a secure retirement and well-being.

One of the tea partiers’ biggest goals is repealing the new health reform law that AFSCME members fought so hard to enact. Millions of Americans already benefit from its provisions, such as allowing young Americans up to the age of 26 to remain on their parents’ health insurance policies.

The tea party movement has even targeted public service workers’ pensions and health care benefits.

**Behind the Curtain**

Once lit, the tea party’s flames spread quickly, fanned by an existing network of well-funded, right-wing organizations and individuals with their own anti-worker agendas.

“There’s no doubt that the infrastructure and the financing of the tea party come from some very traditional, very powerful, special-interest lobbies,” President Obama said in an interview with Rolling Stone magazine published last October.

Obama specifically singled out FreedomWorks as one of those “special interest” groups behind the tea party movement. Headed by Dick Armey, former U.S. House Republican majority leader, FreedomWorks sponsored a big rally on the Mall in Washington, DC, in September 2009 and later contributed to the campaign coffers of tea party candidates running in the November 2010 elections.

But perhaps the most influential — and certainly the wealthiest — tea party financiers are billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch (pronounced “coke”). Although they are not well-known names to most Americans, within the established conservative movement they are rock stars.

Their vast wealth — estimated to be $35 billion — stems from Koch Industries, America’s second largest privately owned company. It is a conglomerate of oil, natural gas, chemical, manufacturing, land development and other interests. They make well-known products like Brawny paper towels, Dixie cups and Stainmaster carpet. The Koch empire stands to gain much if the tea party’s goals of smaller government, lower taxes and fewer federal regulations succeed.

Koch family foundations established the libertarian Cato Institute, which advocates limited government (David Koch is a board member), Citizens for a Sound Economy (later reborn as FreedomWorks), the Federalist Society and Americans for Prosperity, whose website offered talking points for a “Taxpayer Tea Party.”

It should be no surprise that the Koch brothers are backing tea party candidates and organizations with their wealth. Government regulation and oversight is their enemy. In 2000, for instance, the Clinton administration hit them with a 97-count indictment that accused their company of covering up the discharge of the carcinogen benzene from a Texas oil refinery. They faced paying more than $350 million in penalties, plus prison terms for four of their employees. Under a more lenient Bush administration, which also opposed tough environmental regulation, the case was settled for $20 million and the four employees avoided jail time.

David Koch, who ran for Vice-President on the Libertarian Party ticket in 1980, does not hide his intentions. He told the National Journal, “My overall concept is to minimize the role of government and to maximize the role of the private economy to maximize personal freedoms.”

**Pulling the Strings**

“By giving money to ‘educate,’ fund, and organize Tea Party protesters,” the Koch brothers “have helped turn their private agenda into a mass movement,” wrote journalist Jane Mayer in Covert Operations,” a major exposé of the Koch brothers’ political empire, published last August in The New Yorker.

That’s not to say those who hold tea party views are all following someone else’s script. There is a legitimate anger, President Obama acknowledged in his Rolling Stone interview, “but their anger is misdirected.”

The hard right has hijacked the public’s rage over an economic catastrophe caused by the excesses and corruption of Wall Street and Big Business. These shadow financiers have directed that rage away from themselves and aimed it toward government and dedicated public service workers who provide the essential services that make our country run.

That’s the best reason why this “party” should not be your cup of tea.
ENEMIES AT THE GATE

Right-wing groups want to destroy a new union that represents thousands of Michigan home-based child care providers. What are these groups, and who pays their bills?

BY CLYDE WEISS

ROBIN EDWARDS has been a child care provider for the past four years under a Michigan program that helps low-income parents find and keep a job. But with the program paying her so little for her labors — and without benefits or anyone to stand with her in case of a dispute with the agency that administers it — Edwards began to realize that she, and thousands of others like her, “was the lowest person on the totem pole.”

Edwards was eager to improve the lives of the state’s 40,000 home-based child care providers, of whom approximately two-thirds care for the children of relatives, as she does. So she volunteered to help build a union. In late 2006, Edwards joined an overwhelming majority who cast their votes to be represented by Child Care Providers Together Michigan (CCPTM), a partnership of AFSCME Council 25 and the United Auto Workers (UAW).

Their victory celebration was short-lived. The Mackinac (pronounced mak-in-aw) Center for Public Policy in Michigan, and the Virginia-based National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, filed lawsuits to block the union from representing providers or collecting dues. If either was successful, the new union would be unable to effectively represent the child care providers.

Who Are Those Guys?
The Mackinac Center, the nation’s largest state-based conservative “think tank,” supports corporate tax breaks and so-called “right to work” laws that undermine union solidarity. It opposes prevailing wage laws, which guarantee that contractors don’t exploit workers on public works projects by underpaying them.

The privatization of public services, such as state prisons, is also a major goal of the Mackinac Center. They go so far as to propose eliminating state-run employment agencies, which provide unemployed Americans with much-needed services, and replacing them with for-profit staffing-service businesses. They even want to privatize some state parks.

But what’s most important — when it comes to the state’s home-based child care providers — is that the Mackinac Center also opposes Edwards’ new union. In September 2009, the organization filed suit against the state Department of Human Services on behalf of three providers recruited for the purpose. Although the Michigan Court of Appeals promptly rejected the lawsuit, Mackinac prevailed on a higher court to send the case back so the appeals court could explain its decision.

Last September, the appeals court again ruled against Mackinac, explaining that the state could not ignore the results of a certified union election. Still not satisfied, the Mackinac Center returned to court in October, requesting reconsideration. The court rejected that request, too.

That the Mackinac Center is so determined to undermine Edwards’ union comes as no surprise to AFSCME. Paul Kersey, Mackinac’s director of labor policy since 2007, has written extensively against workers’ rights to belong to a union, saying that “collective bargaining for government employees is not an inalienable right.”

Before joining Mackinac, Kersey worked three years at the misleadingly named National Right to Work Committee. Its legal attack arm, the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation,
filed suit in federal court last February against Edwards’ new union. That case is still pending.

The “right to work” in the organization’s title refers to the organization’s support for laws that allow workers — who choose not to join — to be “free riders” and get all the benefits of being a member without helping to defray the expense of achieving those benefits. In other words, they can receive the same wage increases and benefits negotiated by the union, but without paying their fair share. It’s a strategy that anti-worker organizations use to undermine the right of employees to act collectively in their own self interest.

**The Web They Weave**

Whether through the legal system or in the court of public opinion, groups like the Mackinac Center and National Right to Work Committee strive constantly to undermine workers’ collective bargaining rights. That effort requires money, and their network of financial backers is wide and deep.

Unlike public institutions that operate in the light of day, these organizations refuse to disclose their source of funding. Nonetheless, some researchers have managed to pull back the curtain a little on their finances, discovering a web of wealthy, right-wing benefactors — those who personally stand to gain the most by the Center’s “policy” positions.

The Mackinac Center’s donors include billionaire Charles G. Koch, a major supporter of organizations behind the tea party. (See story, Page 9.) Another is a foundation operated by the children of Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton.

The company has doggedly opposed efforts of its workforce to organize a union.

Also giving heavily to the Mackinac Center is the Rodney Fund, operated by former Mackinac board member James Rodney, chairman of plastics company Detroit Forming. The Rodney Fund also supports the Cato Institute, a right-wing think tank co-founded by Charles Koch; tea party supporter FreedomWorks, headed by former U.S. House Republican majority leader Dick Armey; and the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation.

Other Mackinac Center backers also fund the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, including the Walton Family Foundation and the Castle Rock Foundation, which is part of the organization of the right-wing Adolph Coors brewing family. Castle Rock has given money to a variety of right-wing groups, including the Heritage and Cato foundations.

This extensive, intertwined web of wealthy benefactors is pushing an agenda that includes weakening the ability of working families to build better futures through collective bargaining.

**Why Us?**

Before starting work at a steakhouse in the evening, Edwards’ daughter sends her two children, 9 and 11, to Edwards to take care of them until she returns. “When they come home from school, I make sure the homework is done, feed them and get them ready for bed,” says Edwards.

For that, Edwards earns approximately $1.60 per hour through the state child care program. It isn’t much, but “as of right now, it’s helping to pay the bills.” As small as her compensation is, it used to be smaller. But one year after organizing their union, the providers ratified a groundbreaking contract with the state that included their first raise in 10 years (a rate hike ranging from 13 to 35 percent over three years).

In addition, it established a “Provider Bill of Rights” to build dignity on the job, including a grievance procedure to protect against unjust actions. “Basically, it’s for us to continue to grow and to have a say-so in what’s going on,” explains Edwards, now president of CCPTM/Local 3051. “Without the union,” she adds, “we would not have had a seat at the table or a voice to stand up with us when we have had complaints” with the Michigan Department of Human Services.

Having a say on the job — to improve the quality of care that children receive — is basically the reason why 150,000 of these professionals (including those working in Head Start, day care and early childhood settings) are now represented by AFSCME in 15 states.

Whether Michigan’s home-based child care providers are able to keep that voice through CCPTM/AFSCME Local 3051 depends on the courts. But the ruling by the Michigan Court of Appeals offers them hope they will prevail.

“By throwing out the Mackinac lawsuit, brought by a tiny group of anti-small business, anti-government ideologues bent on destroying the partnership of Michigan child care providers,” CCPTM Dir. Herbert Sanders said last year, “the court supported the families and children of Michigan, and the quality, affordable child care that Michigan businesses depend on to have reliable workers.”
Women comprise 56 percent of AFSCME’s 1.6 million members. Their activism and leadership have been critical to our union’s strength and success. Through leadership programs — and this year’s women’s conferences — the national union is equipping women with the tools and knowledge they’ll need to make a difference in our union, the labor movement and our nation. Here are the stories of five activists who are doing their part to build AFSCME’s power and confront the challenges ahead.

**BUILDING ACTIVISM**

At AFSCME’s first Women’s Leadership Café — held during the 2010 International Convention and attended by more than 500 women — participants shared ideas on how to engage women members in their local unions and encourage them to take leadership roles. Recommendations include:

- Establish formal mentoring programs and promote “one-on-one” mentorships that encourage members, notably fellow retirees, to share experiences and provide guidance to younger members.
- Provide leadership training and promote scholarship opportunities.
- Reach out to women members and activists by providing a variety of networking opportunities.
- Share information and encourage activism by giving women specific tasks and responsibilities.
- Start a program designed to forge partnerships between Next Wavers (young women 35 and under) and their older co-workers.

For a summary of the Leadership Café discussions, visit [afscme.org/womenleaders](http://afscme.org/womenleaders).
A MEMBER OF Local 2208 (New Jersey Council 73) and a therapy assistant at the Trenton Psychiatric Hospital, Angel McRae is worried about her 10-year-old daughter Ashley’s future. She is outraged that New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) is axing funds for social services, public schools, public health facilities and libraries, while cutting taxes for millionaires. A single parent in her mid-30s, McRae is also concerned that people who are adversely affected aren’t standing up to fight.

Last summer, McRae decided to change that. She posted messages on Facebook and Twitter, and phoned and e-mailed her co-workers, urging them to join a rally in downtown Trenton. Her efforts paid off. Thousands of AFSCME members and their families showed up at the Citizens Rally — the largest protest ever held outside the State House. Noted one Trenton columnist: “Christie’s cuts are radicalizing a whole generation.”

McRae is proud of what she did to make the rally a success. “I brought my daughter along because I want her to know that we need to stand up and fight when our jobs are on the line, when our rights are being trashed,” she says.

The sense of urgency — in getting young people politically involved — is what’s keeping McRae busy nowadays. “We need to ignite the youth vote once again, like we did in 2008,” she says. “If we don’t, then the Christies of this world will guarantee a bleak future for our kids.”

To this end, she’s intensely focused on mobilizing “Gen X” workers — the term AFSCME leaders in New Jersey use to describe the Next Wave of men and women, 35 and younger. Hundreds of these youthful activists met two years ago in Chicago, determined to build a new generation of leaders who can take the reins in the years ahead. They are all part of the union’s Next Wave. To learn more, go to afsime.org/nextwave.

In preparing for their third Gen X Convention last November, she drew on her experiences working with Next Wave activists from all over the country. “We need to explore a variety of activities to get young workers interested,” she says. “There has to be a good mix of serious and funny stuff to get them animated.” To make the convention engaging and entertaining, McRae came up with comic skits and vignettes. “They loved it,” she says. “We all learned something and had a good laugh at the same time.”

‘They Keep Me Young’

Coral Dayon is one of those who is impressed with McRae’s tireless energy and dynamic leadership. The Local 2208 president and senior therapist program assistant works with McRae. “I saw Angel’s great potential for becoming an excellent leader by watching her encourage her co-workers to be involved,” Dayon recalls. “She exudes so much enthusiasm that it’s infectious. She’s very passionate about what she believes in.”

Council 1 Exec. Dir. Sherryl Gordon, also an International vice president, agrees. She appointed McRae chairperson of AFSCME’s New Jersey Nurses Council last year. “She’s got the right people skills which makes her a good listener and an effective facilitator,” Gordon says. “Given the issues they have to deal with, like staff shortages and quality health care, we’re proud to have a leader like Angel.”

Dayon, 52, also a single parent and mother of two teenagers and three young adults, treats McRae like family. “I assign her lead roles in committees because she is completely dependable,” Dayon notes. “And she does it cheerfully — not out of self-interest but for the well-being of others.”

McRae and Dayon have their work cut out for them. The results of last year’s mid-term elections don’t bode well for working women and their families. “This means we’ll only fight harder,” McRae lightens up, recalling the words of labor organizer Joe Hill: “Don’t mourn, organize!”
BLANCA QUINTERO, a 43-year-old home care provider, says that the opportunity to work for women through her union has been “a great blessing.”

A member of United Domestic Workers (UDW/AFSCME) for seven years, Quintero is one of approximately 1.7 million independent providers nationwide — mostly women — who are employed directly by the “consumers” of their services. These are the elderly and disabled who live in their own homes, or sometimes, the homes of the providers themselves.

In her role as member organizer, Quintero reaches out to other providers, “who feel vulnerable and defenseless. They come from different countries, and cultures and language barriers often keep them from getting the help they need.”

And she identifies with many of them because their situation is similar to hers.

When Quintero’s 18-month-old daughter, Lislany, died of Cerebral Palsy 25 years ago, she struggled with “the most wrenching pain in my soul.” Two years later, she gave birth to daughter, Lizeth, who also has special needs.

“Lizeth needed me to take care of her,” says Quintero. “She’s 23 now but she still functions like a six-year-old.” Quintero, and her husband, Roberto, have two other children: Edgar, 27, and Lesly, 17.

But rather than curse her fate, Quintero considers herself fortunate. “What made me who I am is the fact that I have been the mother of a child with special needs, twice. The experience of living in fear for both of my daughters has made me value life even more — as a human being and as a woman. For children with disabilities, I have learned that I am the arm, the ears and the voice they do not have.”

With this insight, three years ago Quintero founded “Grupo Mariposa,” (Butterfly Group), a support organization for Latino parents of children with special needs. Drawing on her union’s resources, she organized house meetings and workshops in Spanish to help them become better providers and active members of the union. Last summer, she led a busload of families and friends to Los Angeles to protest state budget cuts to In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS). They were outraged that the state would reduce wages for workers like them who care for the elderly and the disabled.

“Coming together to share our pain and join hands to fight injustice made us all realize how important a union is,” Quintero says. “I’ve learned what it’s like to be in my co-workers’ shoes. They have told me that I had something to do with their getting involved, that they also feel rewarded for giving back because of the security and support the union provides.”

“Blanca has done a tremendous job as chair of the Riverside Chapter to mobilize and get home care providers active,” says UDW Exec. Dir. Doug Moore, who is also an International vice president. “Her demonstrated leadership and activism have inspired many of her co-workers to step up and be involved.”

Quintero points to the union’s training tools, including the conferences and street actions, as indispensable to her development as member organizer, chapter chair and executive board member of UDW’s State Board.

“Many of us are natural leaders but aren’t able to develop to our full potential,” she asserts. “This is especially true among women who come from cultures where they are discouraged from seeing themselves as leaders. AFSCME has given us valuable opportunities to learn from one another, to change, to grow and value ourselves for who we really are.”
When AFSCME Member Phyllis Thede made history by becoming the first African-American candidate from her district to win a seat in the Iowa Legislature, the media likened her to Barack Obama — the nation’s first African-American President.

“I wasn’t really thinking about that,” says the 55-year-old secretary of Davenport’s North High School, who has served as Local 751 (Council 61) president, contract negotiator and grievance chair. “All I wanted was to win the race for my constituents. It’s clear that we’re crossing party and color lines.”

She also wants elected officials to do something substantive for the people of Iowa. “That’s what prompted me to run,” she recalls. “As a member of our school district’s negotiation team for several years, I got frustrated waiting for change. That was the start for me. I knew I had to get more politically involved.”

In the 2008 election which swept Obama to the White House, Democrat Thede unseated Republican Jamie Van Fossen, a 14-year incumbent, with 56 percent of the vote. Her narrow defeat in a state Senate race two years earlier only spurred her to try again.

Thede, mother of three daughters and wife of a school teacher, wants to see more women in public office because they have a firm grasp of the issues. “We live our lives as daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, workers,” she asserts. “We understand what it takes to run a household, a farm, a classroom. We’ve done it all. Plus, we’re a natural for the political arena because we are scrappers by nature.”

Thede’s mom, who died two years ago at 87, was that sort of woman. “She was a housekeeper but never afraid to speak her mind,” Thede says proudly. “She was tenacious, bluntly honest and a woman who was ahead of her time.”

“Women need to be involved to help shape their future,” she says. “I want to make sure our senior citizens are provided for. Living on a fixed income is difficult enough. I want to help pass bills on fair share, prevailing wage and choice of doctors. We’ll probably not get all of this done, but we need to keep trying.”

Outside the Box

Last November, she campaigned for Sheri Carnahan — an AFSCME sister and a recently retired member of Local 3011 — who ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the Iowa Legislature but vows to run again. “Sheri got me started in the union 10 years ago,” Thede says. “I know a lot about her personal and professional experiences as a community activist, political organizer and someone who worked for 31 years helping unemployed Iowans retrain for new jobs and start their lives all over again.”

Carnahan’s activism was sparked seven years ago when her husband Tom was mugged in front of their Davenport home. Instead of moving, they decided to stay and fight. “We worked with law enforcement, the city council and various community organizations to start a Neighborhood Watch,” recalls Carnahan. “I saw first hand the process involved in making our communities stronger and safer.”

Married for 12 years, the Carnahans have created a blended family of four adult children and seven grandchildren. “They are the reasons why I do what I do,” she says. “For most of my life, I was more like a worker bee, staying behind the scenes to help get things done or get people elected. Women sometimes underestimate their own power. But we know how to balance budgets and arrange personal lives. We are multi-taskers by nature. We can do it.”

SHERI CARNAHAN
PRIVATIZATION PROponents want us to believe contractors provide better services than government employees — that they are more “efficient” and cost less to taxpayers.

What they say is a myth. Just look at New York City, where a highly touted project to computerize city employee time sheets became a seemingly endless fountain of waste and fraud.

Billed by the city’s website as “a secure, web-based time and attendance system for the 80 mayoral and other agencies of the city of New York,” the project known as CityTime proved to be anything but. In December, federal prosecutors in Manhattan charged consultants working on CityTime with an $80 million fraud scheme dating back to 2005. Prosecutors charge that the contractors made the city pay expensive contracts to businesses under their control, and redirected some of the money for personal gain through shell companies, doctored timesheets and overseas bank accounts.

In all, New York taxpayers have spent $728 million on CityTime. The project’s original price tag was $63 million and it was supposed to be finished in 2004.

As city Controller John Liu said, “This further underscores the need to more closely monitor expensive outside consultant contracts.” Had New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg heeded DC 37’s repeated calls for oversight of the 18,000 outside contracts — many of them no-bid — the city might have saved more than $80 million.

“The city has squandered millions of taxpayers’ dollars on CityTime, along with thousands of other contracts, which have drained city resources causing a financial crisis that has caused layoffs, cuts in vital public services and the imposition of a host of fees and fines,” DC 37 Exec. Dir. Lillian Roberts said.

A TRAIL OF WASTE

The indictment uncovered a vast network of contractors and subcontractors making a killing off what was sold to taxpayers as a model program to prevent fraud. The city already froze payments to lead contractor Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC) in September, while four consultants from two other firms, DA Solutions and PrimeView, were charged with fraud and money laundering.

Worse, a letter made public by The New York Times shows how the city official in charge of overseeing CityTime had expressed concerns about the ballooning costs of the project as early as 2003. Accusing SAIC of deliberately delaying the project in order to get more money, Richard R. Valcich, executive director of the city’s Office of Payroll Administration at the time, stated that the company had “repeatedly been late on virtually every deliverable” and “guilty of producing deliverables far below acceptable standards.”

The indictment also raises questions on how the Office of Payroll Administration failed to monitor the project under Valcich’s successor, Joel Bondy. Before taking over the payroll administration office in 2004, Bondy worked as a subcontractor on the CityTime project for Spherion, a company which, according to The New York Daily News, was hired “to keep an eye on SAIC.” Spherion first came onto the project in 2001 and the company has been paid more than $49 million for its services.

The CityTime scandal has opened up a can of worms all across New York, uncovering newer irregularities and casting aspersions on other city and state contracts. In January, Liu’s office rejected a $286 million contract request for a project to establish two 911 emergency call center systems. The contract was awarded to Hewlett-Packard in 2005 at a projected cost of $380 million. Six years later, one of the centers is still not fully operational and the project’s overall cost has mushroomed to $666 million.
IT'S A MYTH that “rich” public employee pensions are bankrupting cities and states. Yet, right-wing conservatives are happy to keep pushing the lie on the airwaves, in print and on the Internet. For Wall Street and its ideological allies, the distortion is a handy smokescreen obscuring the fact that their actions — not the actions of hard-working public employees — put the nation’s economy into such a sorry state.

The result: Lawmakers are presenting proposals that would gut the retirement security of tens of thousands of workers — most of whom will return that money to the economy during their senior years.

Last December, more than 200 of the union’s leaders and activists gathered in Washington, DC, for the AFSCME Public Pension Leadership Meeting. Their goal: learning the ins and outs of public employee pensions, forming strategies designed to protect them and creating a plan for replacing myths with the truth.

The Truth
Here it is: Employee contributions and investment returns fund the overwhelming majority of the cost of pensions. Taxpayers shouldered only 14.3 percent of all pension funding in the 11-year period ending in 2007.

Here’s more: Public employees — most of whom earn, on average, $45,000 per year — pay a significant portion of the costs of their pensions in return for modest benefits. In fact, the average newly retired public employee receives a pension of just $19,000 per year — a little more than $400 over the current federal poverty guidelines for a family of three.

The real problem is that politicians who run state and local governments have often failed to faithfully contribute to their employees’ plans, while public workers have contributed year in and year out.

Here’s another fact pointing to why the pensions of public employees need to be protected: One in every four public service workers is not covered by Social Security. When these workers retire, they don’t receive the program’s benefits. As a result, their pensions — and any personal savings they’ve accumulated — are their only source of retirement income.

Pres. Gerald W. McEntee explained another reason AFSCME members should be concerned about the myths surrounding public employee pensions: “The more momentum anti-worker politicians gain, the more their ideas take hold,” he said, “the more is at risk for all working families.”

Meeting participants discussed ways to protect public pensions and protect the retirement security of all working Americans, including taking the facts to the media and forming coalitions with outside groups.

Explained Sherryl Gordon, executive director of New Jersey Council 1 and an International vice president, “We have addressed this problem by building broad coalitions with other organizations, with all of us understanding that we can aggressively fight together on these issues and still maintain our ability to individually advocate for our members.”

“The way to really beat back attacks on pensions is to start early and have a strong, proactive media presence,” added Scott Wasserman of Colorado WINS, an affiliate of AFSCME, SEIU and AFT. “We were able to get a sense of what Coloradans thought about pensions, understand what would resonate with the public and make sure our voice was heard in the media,” he told the group.

By Lisa Kelly Leigh

A Secure Retirement | Speaking at the AFSCME Public Pension Leadership Meeting, AFL-CIO Pres. Richard L. Trumka said, “The answer isn’t to knock down public employees by demanding pay cuts and givebacks, but to lift up all workers.”

Photo: Luis Gómez
Annapolis

MARYLAND

HISTORIC AGREEMENT STRENGTHENS UNION, SECURES JOBS, PAY, VITAL RESOURCES

In tough economic times, good news is hard to come by for working families. But AFSCME Maryland members have a different story to tell. They affirmed that the best way for working families to protect themselves and prioritize critical public services is through unity and collective bargaining. In an overwhelming show of union strength, Maryland state employees said “YES” to their new union contract, effectively putting an end to furloughs, winning pay raises and securing public services for those in Maryland who have felt the brunt of this economy.

By an overwhelming margin of more than 89 percent, employees voting in six bargaining units, which represent more than 20,000 workers, ratified a new 4-year contract.

“This is a clean sweep of every bargaining unit by huge margins,” said Moe Said, a direct care assistant at Springfield Hospital in Sykesville, Md. “This is a great day for state employees and my patients. We achieved a great contract in tough economic times. We have been working hard to build the strongest union possible since we first achieved collective bargaining rights in 1997. This positions us to be even more effective in the future.”

The new agreement protects Maryland’s public service workers from furloughs through the life of the contract (2011–2014). As a result, salaries will go back up to pre-furlough levels and every state worker will receive a $750 bonus, starting July 1, 2011.

During the past three years, 3,500 state worker positions have been cut while employees have been forced to cope with furloughs, short staffing and increased caseloads. This new contract is a welcome relief for the front-line workers serving the people of Maryland.

The agreement also provides for a 2 percent salary increase, effective January 1, 2013, and a 3 percent raise, effective January 1, 2014, as long as the state hits projected revenue levels. In addition, workers will receive a one salary-grade step increase as of April 1, 2014.

While Maryland will continue to close certain state facilities on five predetermined days to save money in 2012–2014, state workers will still be paid for those closed days. Furthermore, employees at those facilities will also receive five days of administrative leave that can be used any time prior to the employee’s separation from state service.

The contract also includes a fair share provision that all workers who are covered under the agreement pay for representation. More than half the workers who voted are not currently members. They endorsed the agreement and the idea that everyone should provide their fair share of resources to strengthen the union. This effort is consistent with the “Power to Win” plan adopted by delegates to the 2006 AFSCME International Convention. Delegates understood that in order for working families to hold their own and fight for the resources needed to provide critical public services, everyone has to pitch in their share of dues.

“By voting in favor of our contract, state employees have spoken loud and clear,” said AFSCME Maryland Exec. Dir. Patrick Moran. “This sends a powerful message that we are united and deserve respect for the vital public services we provide that make Maryland happen. Now we have greater resources to win upcoming fights in the Legislature, such as defeating unfair efforts to slash our hard earned pensions.”
Hundreds of child care providers, parents and supporters rallied last fall to demand continued funding for a program that helps low-income working parents who no longer receive welfare to pay for child care.

The demonstrators included members of Child Care Providers UNITED (CCPUnited), which is affiliated with AFSCME’s National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees (NUHHCE) and the Service Employee International Union (SEIU). CCPUnited represents the state’s 75,000 child care providers. Nearly 14,000 are directly affected by the funding cuts.

At issue are child care subsidies available to parents who have left welfare in favor of jobs or school. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) cut $256 million from the program, known as CalWORKS Stage 3, in October — effectively gutting the program, which affected more than 56,000 parents statewide. A bill to restore funding through June, with a mixture of state and federal dollars, was introduced in December by Assembly Speaker John Pérez, (D-Los Angeles). Its supporters are working to ensure the measure will become law with the signature of the state’s new governor, Jerry Brown (D).

“Child care empowers working parents and helps educate a new generation of citizens,” said Magdaleno. “Cutting subsidies actually would cost the state more, because many parents who otherwise could not afford child care would need to quit their jobs to stay home with their kids, forcing them to re-apply for welfare.”

Victory For State Workers
Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear (D) signs two negotiated union agreements covering approximately 9,000 corrections and social service workers. Photo: Kentucky Office of Creative Services
AFSCME's young activists — ages 35 and younger — gathered last year in Wisconsin and Ohio to attend their states' first multi-council Next Wave conferences. Learning how to build a new generation of union leaders was their key goal.

In Wisconsin, approximately 160 members of councils 24, 40 and 48 gathered in Milwaukee for the three-day conference. In addition to learning how to build strength by encouraging young members to get active in their union, they demonstrated their own activism by rallying at the county courthouse to counter attacks on public workers. They also spent a morning doing community service projects and then visited hundreds of union households and made thousands of phone calls to support labor-friendly candidates in the 2010 midterm elections.

“We have a strong foundation to build on,” said corrections officer Matt Davis, a member of Local 48 (Council 24). “But there can be no question that we have to keep building. We cannot rely on the legendary leaders that have brought us here.”

Addressing the Wisconsin rally, Sec.-Treas. Lee A. Saunders declared, “Furloughs and layoffs should be a last resort in tough times — not a first resort to score points with the tea party.

These actions hurt working families, and they destroy services.”

The first-ever Ohio AFSCME Next Wave Conference brought approximately 200 young AFSCME members to Westerville, headquarters of Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA)/AFSCME Local 11. In addition to OCSEA, Next Wavers came from Council 8 and the Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE)/AFSCME Local 4.

“You are the future,” affirmed OCSEA Pres. Eddie Parks, also an International vice president. “By focusing on the Next Wave, we are keeping our eye on the future by educating, training and developing young leaders to continue the fight.”

At workshops in both states, the Next Wavers focused on labor history, social networking and busting myths about public service workers. In Ohio, during a session billed as the World Café, Next Wavers brainstormed such key questions as, “What is our vision of tomorrow’s future?” and “How will we support our union?” Then they signed pledges to get young members more active in their chapters and locals.

“This conference was only the beginning,” said Parks. “We must continue to engage the Next Wave by recruiting, mobilizing and organizing to win.”
Seeking new ways to build and strengthen their union, members of Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA)/AFSCME Local 11 came together last year for weekend sessions of the first-ever OCSEA Leadership Academy (OLA).

“This is the most far-reaching training we’ve ever conducted and we’re seeing real results,” says OCSEA Pres. Eddie Parks, also an AFSCME International vice president. “Chapters are stepping up like never before and truly forging a path that will take our union into the 21st century and beyond.”

OLA is part of a nationwide program designed in conjunction with AFSCME International’s Education Department under the Local union Leadership Academy (LuLA). AFSCME International also sponsors an online Leadership Academy.

During a six-month span, approximately 1,000 OCSEA leaders attended the weekend retreats, where they received training in communications, running an effective meeting, increasing membership involvement and establishing local union goals.

Attendees also learned how to recruit stewards, discovered new social networking resources and learned about labor history. “We were inspired,” says Jeana Campolo, vice president of Mount Vernon Developmental Center Chapter 4220. “Seeing how far we’ve come was a big eye-opener.”

Campolo and the eight other members of her chapter who attended a session also were impressed by “Member Action Team” (MAT) training. MATs are networks of workplace leaders who systematically communicate with and mobilize their co-workers to take action. “We all really liked the idea of the MAT program as a way to get others involved,” she says.

Inspired by their training, Chapter 4220 members created a chapter-only Facebook page to advertise events and increase activism.

More than 400 corrections officers (COs) and employees at the Morgan County Correctional Complex in Wartburg — members of AFSCME Local 2173 — are hailing an agreement to provide seniority bidding throughout the facility.

COs and employees may now choose their preferred work shifts, days off and job assignments according to tenure. “It’s all about getting a fair shake and having dignity on the job,” says Local 2173 Pres. Bill Shillings.

Fighting for the agreement — a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) — wasn’t easy. “The former warden wanted to bust our union and he kept stalling and spreading unfavorable statements about us,” recalls Shillings. “And with the mid-term elections coming up, we couldn’t wait any longer and allow a hostile Legislature to stop us. So we flexed our political muscle and went to battle.”

Local members phoned and visited state representatives — mostly members of the Democratic Caucus — who then pressured the Department of Corrections (DOC) to sign the agreement. In addition, the Caucus pressured state administrators to instruct the commissioner of the DOC to sign the MOU over the warden’s objections.

As it turned out, Local 2173 timed it perfectly. The November elections returned the Statehouse to the Republicans, who also now control both chambers of the Legislature. “We’re the only union in state government that was offered an MOU,” Shillings says proudly.

Today, the local maintains good relations with the newly appointed commissioner and warden who want to keep the union as the bargaining unit. Labor-management meetings are held regularly to deal with safety and other work-related issues.
Foster Township

PENNSYLVANIA

IN MEMORIAM: HIGHWAY WORKER KILLED IN TRAGIC ACCIDENT

Jack Griffin, a 51-year-old transportation equipment operator for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), was struck by a car and killed in October while flagging traffic with a stop sign in a highway construction zone.

Griffin was a member of AFSCME Local 2116 of District Council 85 (Council 13). He was the third PennDOT worker to die on the job in 2010. The others, also members of AFSCME, were Lebanon resident Thomas Allen, 57, and Richard Bentel, 43, of Ellwood City.

Since 1970, 82 PennDOT workers have been killed in the line of duty. Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation Allen D. Biehler ordered state flags flown at half-staff for five days to honor Griffin.

Authorities said Griffin, of Bradford, was struck by a vehicle at a Route 646 worksite in Foster Township and thrown into a ditch, where he died. The vehicle continued into the work zone, hitting a pavement-cutting machine operated by PennDOT worker James B. Burrows, 51, of Eldred. Burrows, also a member of DC 85, was thrown to the pavement. He was treated at a local hospital and released.

“People need to be more aware and careful when they come to a work zone,” says Local 2116 Pres. James Peffer, a PennDOT diesel mechanic. “Jack had all the right equipment on — a reflective vest. I just don’t know why the car struck him.”

The driver, Donald Blocher of Salamanca, N.Y., was charged with three counts, including homicide by vehicle while driving under the influence.

“There’s nothing worse than the motoring public not respecting us when they approach a highway work zone,” says Mark Blair, a PennDOT transportation equipment operator specialist and treasurer of Local 2116. He suggested a driver awareness program could be created to make sure this does not happen again.

This spring, Local 2116 plans to install a plaque in Griffin’s memory outside of the PennDOT maintenance office at 300 Bingham Road, Cyclone.

WASHINGTON

WORKER SLAIN AFTER AFSCME CALLS FOR MORE SECURITY

Larry Hutchins, a member of AFSCME Local 2091 (District Council 20) was shot to death on the job in October. Just one day earlier, the local’s members complained to officials at the Department of Public Works (DPW) about the lack of security and inadequate lighting at several work sites, including the Washington, DC, yard where the shooting occurred.

Hutchins, 51, of Suitland, Md., was a 24-year sanitation technician for the DPW. Known to many as “Uncle Larry,” Hutchins was killed in the early morning hours at a sanitation lot in Northeast Washington by an unidentified assailant wearing some type of uniform, police said.

A second worker, Lucius Anderson, a member of Local 2091, was wounded in the incident. Also a sanitation technician, Anderson was treated at an area hospital and released.

James Ivey, president of Local 2091 and an electrician for the DC Water and Sewer Authority, says city officials have refused to provide additional security at various Public Works facilities, citing budget constraints. “Most yards and buildings don’t have security,” he says, despite numerous security breaches, including one last year — at the same facility where Hutchins was killed — in which a worker was stabbed.

At the meeting with DPW officials, which occurred before the fatal shooting, Local 2091 members cited a large spike in the number of workplace violence incidents. “But the response from the city’s representatives was inadequate,” says Donnell Pringle, a sanitation crew chief for the department who is also vice chapter chair of the local. “They said there was no money in the budget for them to continue to provide security at certain locations. It was almost as if something’s got to happen before they take it seriously.”

Then something did happen.

Immediately after the shooting, the district posted an armed guard at the front gate of the sanitation yard where Hutchins was killed, says Pringle, who hopes the city will now put up security barriers “to help make our workers feel safe.”

To recognize Hutchins, the city renamed the building where he was killed in his honor.

Since the shooting, the city hired a private security firm and increased lighting at the yard where Hutchins was killed, and also cut down shrubbery. Local 2091, which had recommended those actions, continues to seek other safety improvements at DPW facilities.
California
Approximately 400 employees of the City of Commerce — members of the City of Commerce Employee Association (CCEA) — voted overwhelmingly to affiliate with District Council 36. Their affiliation follows a two-year period during which the two unions built a relationship that included providing technical assistance with their contract negotiations.

Delaware
One-hundred and fifty professional health care workers statewide have overwhelmingly chosen to form a union with Council 81. They join approximately 600 RNs and other state health care professionals represented by the council. Also, 16 public works employees of the town of Smyrna voted unanimously to join Council 81. This victory was achieved after AFSCME members and supporters packed the town council chambers, persuading council members to reverse their decision to fire two of those workers who led the organizing campaign. Their achievement inspired another 23 of the town’s workers — including city administrators, clerical workers and police 911 dispatchers — to vote overwhelmingly for Council 81 representation. Sixteen state police officers at Delaware State University also organized with the council.

Illinois
Two-hundred and eighty-five clerical employees at Western Illinois University have won a voice at work with Council 31 through majority card check. Also joining Council 31: 170 Red Cross blood services workers employed by Peoria-based Heart of America Blood Services. Their victory took three years to achieve because the company — which runs blood drives in a three-state area — appealed the makeup of the bargaining unit. The National Labor Relations Board impounded their ballots, but the workers’ vote to build a union with AFSCME — by better than a 2-1 margin — was finally recognized once a newly appointed board decided the ballots could be counted after all.

Minnesota
Sixty-five pharmacy and medical lab technicians employed at the Hennepin County Medical Center have joined Council 5. Also forming a union with the council: 45 Ramsey County librarians, social workers and management analysts, 39 Sodexo dining service employees who work at the Minnesota State University campus in Moorhead, and 34 administrative coordinators at clinics run by the non-profit University of Minnesota Physicians.

Ohio
Approximately 400 city and county workers across the state joined Council 8 in 2010. Among the victories: 140 seasonal municipal employees in Cincinnati; 115 workers at the Franklin County Clerk of Courts; 25 Willowick city employees; plus units at the city of Campbell, city of Indian Hill, Hamilton County and Medina County Housing Authority.

Pennsylvania
Eighty counselors employed at Hoffman Hall and Coleman Hall of the Community Education Centers in Philadelphia voted overwhelmingly to join Local 159 (Council 33). Fifty-five employees of The Cedars of Monroeville Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing Assisted Facility in Allegheny County recently joined Council 13, as well as 28 employees of the York Housing Authority, including maintenance mechanics, maintenance aides and janitor/laborers. Forty non-professional employees of Wayne County — including those who work in the departments of probation, domestic relations and district magistrate — joined Council 87.

New York
One-hundred and thirty officers of the Binghamton Police Department voted to affiliate with Council 82.
Across America

New York City

DC 37 FIGHTS TO PREVENT PRIVATIZATION, LAYOFFS

Resuming a battle that has lasted more than a decade, New York City’s largest public employee union is again fighting to prevent the outsourcing of laundry services for most of the city’s public hospitals, and also to stop a plan to lay off other city employees.

Through a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court, DC 37 is attempting to enforce a 2005 agreement between the union and Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC). The company, which operates the Brooklyn Central Laundry (BCL), promised to stop outsourcing and return laundry processing to BCL.

HHC recently reneged on the agreement and is seeking a private vendor to do the work. Approximately 150 BCL workers, including 100 represented by Municipal Hospital Employees union Local 420 (DC 37), would lose their jobs if the company’s reorganization plan goes through.

Over the next four years, the company might lay off as many as 3,700 HHC workers, including 150 laborers, carpenters and electricians who were to be dismissed by last September. Approximately 60 of them are represented by Local 924 (DC 37).

In several lawsuits, DC 37 and other unions have temporarily blocked HHC from laying off laborers. The dispute remains unresolved as AFSCME WORKS went to press. DC 37 also has conducted a more direct campaign to win public support: On the day the lawsuit was filed, nearly 300 members of DC 37 and other unions rallied in front of HHC’s Manhattan headquarters to protest the company’s outsourcing plans.

Standing Together

Last fall, AFSCME activists joined with individuals and organizations who are committed to putting America back to work and pulling America back together. Photo: Peter Holden

Washington

DC

ONE NATION COMES TOGETHER

Tens of thousands of Americans — including AFSCME members — gathered last fall in Washington, DC, to deliver a message of change. The One Nation March brought union members, social activists, and human and civil rights leaders committed to good jobs, equal justice and quality public education for all.

Four activists — including Local 1549 (DC 37) member Ayanna Gabriel, who is also a Next Wave leader — officially started the rally by reciting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech while standing at the footsteps of the Lincoln Memorial — the very same place where the civil rights leader delivered his speech in 1963. Popular MSNBC commentator Ed Schultz conducted the event.

AFSCME was well-represented. As Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE/AFSCME Local 4) Local 233 Pres. Barb Phillips said, “I’m here for jobs, education and because I want to see one nation working together. We need to energize Americans and start rebuilding our country.”
Warwick

RHODE ISLAND

MEMBERS HELP DERAIL PRIVATIZATION SCHEME

A plan that threatened the jobs of 60 bus drivers and 100 custodians was tabled last fall after more than 400 union members and community activists throughout the city rallied to oppose the plan.

The spirited solidarity rally was organized with the help of AFSCME Local 1651 (Council 94) in support of Warwick Independent School Employees (WISE). The union, which recently affiliated with Council 94, represents 455 school employees, including bus drivers, clerical workers, custodians and teaching assistants.

In addition to the rally, the union filed a complaint in Superior Court to block the school’s privatization move.

Following the rally, the Warwick school superintendent tabled the plan.

“We’re here because it’s important to show our support for our sisters and brothers who are not being treated fairly,” says Jean Bouchard, president of AFSCME Local 1651, which also represents more than 300 city workers. “Privatization is only a short-term solution that costs local jobs and more money down the line.”

Although privatization is not off the table as a cost-saving measure, Bouchard welcomes the superintendent’s decision. “WISE needs the opportunity to be part of the solution to Warwick’s budget problems,” explains Bouchard. “We hope both sides will arrive at a mutually-satisfactory resolution that ensures the long-term interests of the school children.”

Also attending the rally were AFSCME members from Locals 528 (University of Rhode Island), 670 (Woonsocket City), 904 (Veterans Home), 1137 (Woonsocket Schools), 1350 (Medical Center), 1651 (Warwick City), 2448 (Department of Administration), 2872 (Department of Education), 2873 (Rhode Island Airport Corp.), 2879 (Rhode Island College Clerical), 2882 (Department of Human Services) and Retiree Chapter 94.

AFSCME’S POLITICAL REBATE PROCEDURE

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. 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, 2011, 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).

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 will be required to complete and return the application within 30 days of its issuance. The application will require the objecting member to identify those partisan political or ideological activities to which objection is being made. In determining the amount of the rebate to be paid to any member, the International Union and each subordinate body shall have the option of limiting the rebate to the member’s pro-rata share of the expenses for those activities specifically identified in the application.

Any member who is dissatisfied with the amount of the rebate paid by the International Union or any subordinate body may object by filing a written appeal with the AFSCME Judicial Panel within 15 days after the rebate check has been received. Appeals should be sent to the Judicial Panel Chairperson at the AFSCME International Headquarters at the address listed above. The Judicial Panel will conduct a hearing and issue a written decision on such appeals, subject to an appeal to the full Judicial Panel. If dissatisfied with the Judicial Panel’s ruling, a member can appeal to the next International Convention.
The Challenge
Both meetings addressed the challenges facing the union and how corporate interests and the very wealthy continue to use the economic crisis to advance their interests. These opponents fund a steady stream of attacks on our members and the work they do. They call for budget and tax cuts, privatization of public services and the reduction of health and retirement security for the vast majority of working Americans. Because we pose a serious threat to their ability to achieve their goals, we have become their chief target.

In December, the Board discussed how the election losses of 2010 affected budget fights and privatization battles that were already intense as a result of the recession, which led states to cut nearly a trillion dollars in spending and cut services to the bone. Board members also finalized the union’s strategy to confront new and more aggressive attacks on the pay and benefits of AFSCME members, collective bargaining rights and the ability of working men and women to achieve the American dream.

The Board recognized that the attacks against our union are fueling — and being fueled by — lies about public employee jobs, retirement security and privatization. As a result, the national union and its local unions, councils and affiliates are gathering the tools and resources we all need to respond to attacks quickly and comprehensively.

The Solution
We must face today’s challenges with the same resolve and commitment that has helped AFSCME score victories in the past. At the national union, that means communicating with members and educating them via new technology, training programs and critical conferences throughout this year.

The national union is also forming battleground state partnerships with councils and locals, which will replicate the strategies that made AFSCME a key player in the passage of health care reform and the successful effort to secure $250 billion in federal aid for the states to fund vital public services. And headquarters is collaborating with affiliate partners on the ground and conducting polling on key subjects to develop effective messages that will resonate with the public and opinion leaders.

Through the Power to Win Academy, leaders will receive the information they need to stand up for public service workers. Our Stop the Lies campaign is getting out the truth about public services and public service workers. As long as this battle continues, additional tools will be developed so that we can keep up our important work.

On the Frontlines
The efforts of the national union are bolstering the work of AFSCME activists across the nation. They are working tirelessly to protect public services, block privatization efforts, secure funding for state and local government programs and defend AFSCME members’ hard-earned pensions and our work to make America happen. Our members are taking to the streets, sending text messages, posting on social networking sites, speaking up in the media and using every outlet to make sure AFSCME’s voice is heard.

Together, We’ll Win
But this fight isn’t just about us. That is why we are calling on America to protect the retirement security of all workers. It is why we are demanding the preservation and expansion of the rights of all workers — including public employees and independent providers — to bargain collectively for better wages, working conditions and benefits. And it is why we are calling on every AFSCME member to help the union chart a course through the demanding days that lie ahead.

This report summarizes the September and December 2010 quarterly meetings of the AFSCME Executive Board, held in Washington, DC. For complete reports, visit afscme.org/iebreport.
SURF, SHOP OR SAVE @ AFSCME.ORG!

Find information about programs and products, scholarships and social networks, courses and conferences.

Take Action to Stop the Lies!
Join our campaign to halt attacks on public service workers and vital public services. To view the video, check out the special web page — afscme.org/StopTheLies. Don’t miss other important action alerts and petition drives. Sign up with the AFSCME e-Action Network afscme.org/join.

Lead AFSCME into the Future!
AFSCME’s young activists — men and women 35 and younger — are learning how to build a new generation of union leaders. Check out the Next Wave tool kit for resources and connections needed to start a chapter and get involved. afscme.org/nextwave

Shopping for Hot Items?
Stay warm with a union-made, charcoal fleece hooded jacket. You’ll find more products and merchandise at the AFSCME store, including a long-sleeved twill khaki shirt, a thermal, navy blue, long sleeve shirt, a pink T-shirt with capped short sleeves, and a green windbreaker jacket that stands out in rallies and outdoor events. afscmestore.org

Go Green and Save!
Take advantage of energy efficient rebates for home heating equipment, an EPA-certified union-made car and other programs designed to help AFSCME members and their families save energy and money, too. afscme.org/advantage

Need Scholarships?
Grants up to $10,000 are available to qualified recipients. Check out the complete list of union scholarships, mentoring programs and higher education opportunities. afscme.org/scholarships

RESOURCES FOR WOMEN

AFSCME Women’s Online Network
Thousands of women across the nation are getting connected, learning about resources, signing up for programs and getting the latest news. To sign up, go to groups.google.com/group/afscmewomen.

2011 AFSCME Women’s Conferences
Don’t miss this exciting educational event, March 18–20, in Orlando, Fla. and in the Western region on a date to be determined.

Self-paced Online Classes
A Part of History: Women in Unions
Explore the challenges women face in becoming union members, achieving better work hours and conditions, and finding pay equity.

Activate Your Union Membership
Learn the value of union membership for women and how AFSCME works to make America happen.

For more information about classes and up-to-date conference information, visit afscme.org/women.

Are you an MVP?
Help our union build the political power we need to fight and lead. As an MVP, you’ll be able to register for our PEOPLE Rewards Program, accumulate points and redeem them for a wide variety of PEOPLE merchandise. Log on to people_rewards.afscme.org to see our line of MVP items.

Get Connected...
...to AFSCME’s favorite social networking websites:
facebook.com/afscme
twitter.com/afscme
youtube.com/afscme
flickr.com/afscme
In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. traveled to Memphis, Tenn., to support sanitation workers who were striking in an effort to force the city to recognize their union, AFSCME Local 1733. These 1,300 public service workers were protesting a long history of mistreatment. The evening of April 3, Dr. King delivered his famous “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech to a packed room of strikers and supporters. The next day, he was assassinated.

Just as Dr. King stood with us, we pay homage to him as we continue the fight for social and economic justice. AFSCME raised more than $1 million toward the creation of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Set for dedication later this year, Sec.-Treas. Lee A. Saunders recently visited the construction site of this architectural milestone.

Soon, visitors from all over the world will be able to see this historic landmark. AFSCME is proud to be part of this initiative.

Honoring the Dream | In January, Sec.-Treas. Lee A. Saunders toured the construction site with Harry E. Johnson, president and CEO of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc. Photos: Above, top right, Rick Reinhard; bottom right, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation