

We



Make



America
Happen.



Questions & Answers About AFSCME

Questions & Answers About Our Union





We are AFSCME



AFSCME Pres. Lee Saunders

AFSCME's 1.6 million members provide the vital services that make America happen. We work to ensure dignity and security for public service workers across the country. By organizing new members, we build our capacity to strengthen public services, improve working conditions, negotiate decent wages and safeguard pensions and health benefits.

As part of the AFL-CIO, AFSCME is one of the nation's leading advocates for working women and men. We believe everyone deserves a chance to fulfill the American Dream. But today too many politicians are siding with Wall Street – protecting the interests of corporate tycoons and bankers – while the rest of us, who work hard and play by the rules, are left behind.

AFSCME's professional staff of negotiators, staff representatives, and pension, legal, organizing and budget experts – as well as a host of other talented specialists – work every day to protect and improve our members' wages, working conditions and pension benefits. Our leaders, taking direction from our members, speak with a united voice grounded in a determination to protect workers' rights to decent wages and benefits, to a stable retirement, and to laboring each day with dignity.

We are AFSCME. Join us.

Lee Saunders
President

Laura Reyes
Secretary-Treasurer

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Together we're stronger — in Philadelphia
and every city in the United States.

Why Do I Need a Union?

Why do I need a union?

Simply talking about issues that affect public service employees isn't enough. To make a difference, our voices must be heard. And we can be heard only when we organize as a union and gain the strength to make real change. Together, our collective voice is heard — on the job and in state legislatures and city halls.

Do union workers get higher wages?

Yes.¹ Workers who are union members earn 26.7 percent more than non-union workers. Union wages are even greater for women and people of color. Women and African Americans represented by unions earn between 30.5 and 32.8 percent more than their non-union counterparts. And Latino workers with the union advantage make 53.2 percent more than those not represented by a union.

Do union workers get better benefits?

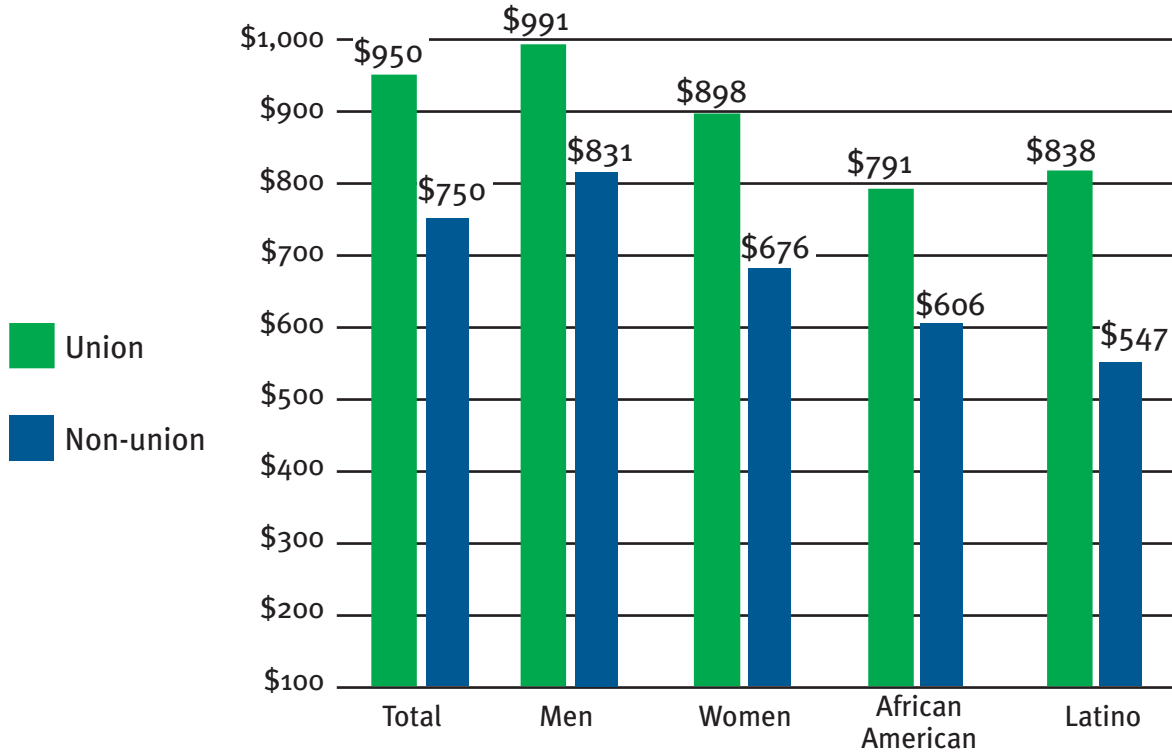
Yes.² Union workers are more likely than their non-union counterparts to have access to health care and pension benefits. Ninety-five percent of union members have health insurance and a pension plan available – versus approximately 68 percent (health insurance) and 63 percent (pension) of those not in a union.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Union Members – 2013*, January 2014.

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2013*, July 2013.

Union Members Earn More

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2014
Union Members – 2013



Why do I need a union now?

Politicians and pundits are scapegoating public employees and the services we provide. They say we earn too much money, our benefits are too rich and we have too much political power. Unions have been the bulwark of the middle class for years and AFSCME is continuing the fight for prosperity and opportunity for all working families.

Their goal is simple: Privatize our jobs, strip us of our rights and dismantle the public services that make our communities better places to live.

Whether you are a public employee or work for a private company providing public services, we have to act now to stop the right-wing rush to lower our wages and benefits, and eliminate our rights. That's why helping more workers join unions and bargain for a better life is so important.

As a union, we work to build public and political support for the vital services we provide that keep our families safe and make our communities strong.



AFSCME members' voices are heard across the nation.

What Is AFSCME?

What is AFSCME?

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO, is the nation's largest and fastest growing public service employees union, with more than 1.6 million active and retiree members. With members in hundreds of different occupations, AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence in public service, and prosperity and opportunity for all working families.

Why join AFSCME?

As AFSCME members, we have the power to make a difference. By joining together, AFSCME members have clout at the ballot box, in the halls of government and at the bargaining table. AFSCME is one of the nation's most powerful advocates for working families.

AFSCME negotiates strong contracts, wins wage increases, protects jobs, settles grievances, stops privatization, and fights for health, retirement and other benefits for members from every field of public service. As AFSCME members, we receive expert assistance from knowledgeable staff, top-notch negotiators and experienced attorneys.

Who is in AFSCME?

AFSCME's members provide the vital services that make America happen. We are nurses, corrections officers, child care providers, emergency medical technicians and sanitation workers. Many AFSCME members have special training or are certified in their respective fields.

Who runs AFSCME?

We do. AFSCME is run by its members. Every member has a vote in the election of local union officers and board members. We negotiate our contracts, which must be approved by members. Each local union has its own constitution and governing documents. Members decide on policies, activities and dues. And as AFSCME members, we are protected by our Members' Bill of Rights.

What is the AFL-CIO?

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is the voluntary federation of 56 national and international labor unions, representing more than 11.5 million working women and men of every race and ethnicity and from every walk of life. The mission of the AFL-CIO is to improve the lives of working families — to bring economic justice to the workplace and social justice to our nation.

What is the difference between AFSCME and the AFL-CIO?

AFSCME is a member of the federation and is the largest union affiliated with the AFL-CIO.



AFSCME political action helps elect many pro-worker candidates, and AFSCME activists meet frequently with their representatives to advance members' interests.



AFSCME Pres. Lee Saunders and Sec. Treas. Laura Reyes

AFSCME's Structure

What is AFSCME's structure?

As an AFSCME member, you become part of a local union (also called a local) consisting of the co-workers in your office, institution, department or community. AFSCME has more than 3,400 local unions and affiliates in 46 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Each local writes its own constitution, holds regular membership meetings and elects its own officers and stewards.

What is a council?

Councils are a part of AFSCME's administrative structure. They negotiate contracts, handle grievances, arbitrate, educate, provide public relations and work on legislative and political action. Often, AFSCME local unions within one state, city or county pool their resources to form a stronger council. AFSCME has 58 councils.

What is the AFSCME national union?

The AFSCME national union, headquartered in Washington, DC, coordinates the union's actions on major national issues such as outsourcing, health care, Social Security and worker safety. The national carries out certain national functions such as representing us in the U.S. Congress and coordinating political activities for federal elections. It also provides resources and expert help to councils and local unions in areas such as:

- Collective bargaining and negotiations
- Communications
- Information systems

- Leadership education
- Legal counsel
- Legislative lobbying
- Organizing
- Political action
- Public relations
- Research
- Training
- Women's rights

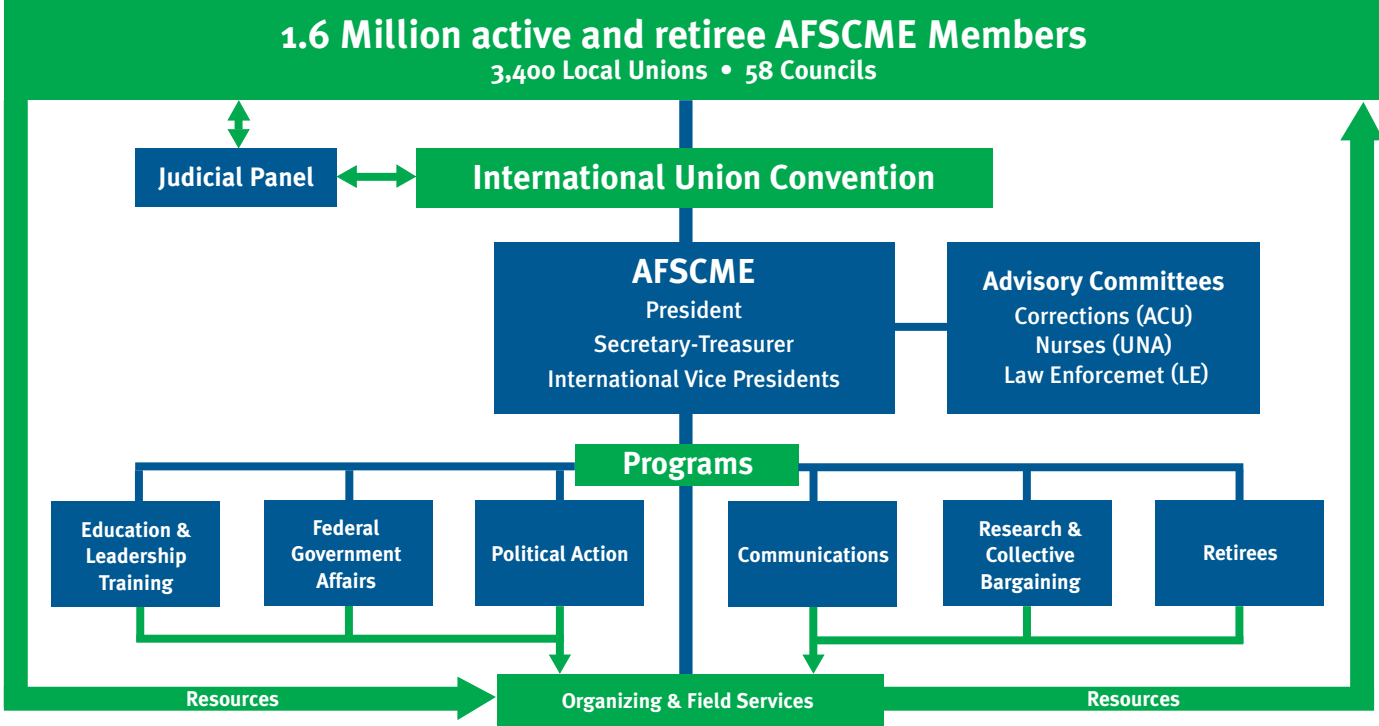
Who determines AFSCME's direction?

AFSCME members. Every two years, AFSCME holds its International Convention. AFSCME members are elected as delegates, and debate and vote on the union's basic policies. Every four years, delegates elect the International Union's President, Secretary-Treasurer and 34 International Vice Presidents.

Lee Saunders is the President of AFSCME. He was elected in 2012. Saunders joined the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association when he worked for the state in 1975, and he is now widely recognized as one of the most effective labor leaders in the country.

Laura Reyes is the Secretary-Treasurer. She was elected in 2012. A homecare provider, Reyes is a key advocate for non-traditional workers across the country.

AFSCME's Structure



What are AFSCME Advisory Committees?

AFSCME advisory committees are made up of leaders who give the officers input on the issues that impact their professions.



What is United Nurses of America?

United Nurses of America (UNA) is made up of more than 60,000 registered and licensed practical nurses. Members of UNA fight to ensure that professional nurses retain their rightful voice in the health care system as caregivers and as advocates for quality care.



What is AFSCME Public Safety?

AFSCME Public Safety brings together more than 100,000 sworn law enforcement officers and corrections employees to unite around the issues facing them on the job, provide tools they need to address these issues and offer valuable benefits like legal protection and workers' compensation representation.



What is AFSCME Corrections United?

AFSCME Corrections United (ACU) represents 85,000 corrections officers who work in our nation's prisons. ACU is a powerful lobbying force at state and federal levels on such issues as privatization, safety and health, staffing and survivor benefits.

What are AFSCME Sector Caucuses?

AFSCME members doing similar jobs can participate in online Sector Caucus networks to discuss common issues and concerns. AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence in public services, and prosperity and opportunity for all working families. To join one of the 17 online Sector Caucus networks for professions listed below, go to [afscme.org/union/jobs-we-do](https://www.afscme.org/union/jobs-we-do).

Corrections
Early Childhood Education
Emergency Services
Environmental Stewardship
Health Care Workers
Higher Education
Home Care
Housing
Human Services

K-12 Schools
Law Enforcement
Library Workers
Nurses
Probation and Parole
Public Administration
Public Works
Transportation



What is AFSCME Retirees?

More than 250,000 men and women belong to AFSCME Retirees, a nationwide program that enables them to fight effectively for common goals, such as preserving Social Security and improving retirement benefits.



Public service employees in Puerto Rico fought for — and won — collective bargaining rights.

Collective Bargaining Power

How can we get more power on the job?

By working together in our own workplace and building on the strength of 1.6 million members across the country, we win strong contracts and protect our jobs. The challenges we face are enormous. Health insurance premiums are skyrocketing, employers are attacking our pensions, politicians are cutting budgets at the expense of public service workers, and our jobs are under direct attack by those who seek to privatize and outsource work to the lowest bidder. The only way we can win is to mobilize our membership to fight against these attacks and grow by organizing other public service workers.

How does collective bargaining work?

A committee of our co-workers — chosen by us — sits down and hammers out an agreement known as a “union contract” on every issue of concern to our bargaining unit. The committee sits at the bargaining table as equals with management. In settings such as home-based care, a committee of provider/members — chosen by us — meets with representatives of the appropriate public agency to discuss issues affecting our daily lives. The union bargaining committee represents the united strength of all union members. The majority of members must approve the agreement before it can become accepted as a contract.

Does AFSCME have bargaining experience?

Yes. With AFSCME, workers have improved their jobs and the services they provide. AFSCME has negotiated more than 8,000 written agreements with better pay, benefits and working conditions. Employment standards vary from state to state and community to community, but AFSCME is familiar — and experienced — with all of them.

What about dues?

All unions are supported by dues paid by members. With most locals, you pay dues when a majority of members of your bargaining unit approve and ratify a first contract — which details the agreement between you and your co-workers and your employer on wages, benefits or other working conditions.

Does having a union mean there will be strikes?

No. A strike is just one tactic available to workers to pressure their employer, and is a tactic of last resort. The decision to strike is made locally by you and your fellow workers. It is rare when AFSCME members have found it necessary to strike to achieve dignity on the job. It has been *their* decision. In most cases, a strong, well-organized local will not have to strike.



AFSCME Corrections United fights for a strong corrections system and for public employees who supervise the most dangerous members of our society.



AFSCME members protest outsourcing at every step.

Fighting Outsourcing

What is outsourcing?

“Outsourcing” occurs when a government body decides that a public service provided by public employees should instead be provided by a private contractor. It is also referred to as “privatization,” “competitive sourcing” or “contracting out.” Some public officials and politicians think outsourcing is a quick fix to address their budget woes. Others see outsourcing as a way to reduce government and services, and weaken public employee unions.

Yet outsourcing creates problems, not solutions. Usually outsourcing involves substituting non-union workers — with lower wages and few, if any, benefits — for AFSCME members with decent wages, health insurance and retirement benefits. Government should support the creation of good-paying jobs to support strong communities.

How does outsourcing affect AFSCME members?

For AFSCME members — and all public employees and the people we serve — the price of outsourcing is high. Outsourcing threatens job security, pay and benefits, working conditions and career opportunities. That is why AFSCME actively works to organize more outsourced workers into the union — to bargain for better wages and benefits, and thereby protect the living standards of current AFSCME members.

AFSCME is fighting efforts to outsource public services. Our battle is in Washington, DC, and in state legislatures, in city halls and in board rooms. Our strategy is to fight outsourcing early on, using our resources to win each battle. To continue to win, we must elect public officials who will not allow outsourcing to weaken our communities and our nation.



AFSCME members stood up for Ohio workers and helped repeal the anti-worker Senate Bill 5.

Increasing Political Power

Why does AFSCME get involved in politics?

We elect our bosses, so we've got to elect politicians who support us and hold those politicians accountable. Our jobs, wages and working conditions are directly linked to politics. From privatization to budget cuts, politics at the federal, state and local levels affect public services, workers and the people we serve. Only through active participation in the political arena can AFSCME members have a say in policy-making and in electing candidates who support laws that benefit working families.

Do my dues pay for contributions to political candidates?

No. Under federal law, and many state laws, union dues cannot be used directly to fund political candidates, although they may be used to support some state-level candidates.

How does AFSCME support its political action?

AFSCME members have a voluntary, independent political organization called PEOPLE — Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality. PEOPLE is the union's political, legislative and fundraising arm. It is supported by members' voluntary donations and is one of the biggest political action committees in the nation.

PEOPLE is run by AFSCME members who participate in committees at the local, state and national levels. PEOPLE committees raise funds and work to elect politicians responsive to the needs of public service and health care workers.



What does PEOPLE do?

PEOPLE helps fund campaigns and coordinate member political education programs to elect candidates who support working families. But funding is only part of the winning equation. PEOPLE offers political expertise and old-fashioned leg work for candidates and campaigns that support AFSCME's goals. Trained AFSCME volunteers and political activists can make the crucial difference in any campaign.

How can I get involved?

You can help fund PEOPLE by making a contribution or by having money sent directly from your paycheck. You can also become active with your local's PEOPLE committee in fundraising, political action and legislative advocacy campaigns.

With your contribution, AFSCME PEOPLE makes sure we can keep on fighting until we win justice for every worker, everywhere. For as little as \$2 a week (that's less than a cup of coffee!) you'll qualify as a MVP and become eligible to earn Rewards points to redeem exclusive PEOPLE merchandise.

Questions? Contact people@afscme.org



Family child care providers join with AFSCME to have a stronger voice and ensure quality care.



Organizing — on campus, in health care facilities, in offices — helps our union grow and be strong.

Strengthening Our Union

How does AFSCME reach out to workers who are not union members?

By organizing — helping unorganized workers form unions with AFSCME — we can become stronger. AFSCME recruits and trains the best organizers in the country, mobilizes dedicated volunteers and applies cutting-edge strategies and old-fashioned hard work to strengthen and expand our membership. By organizing with AFSCME, workers win new rights and benefits.

Why is organizing important?

Organizing and growing gives us more power. Despite AFSCME's successes, union membership is down nationwide, even in the public sector. And with state budgets getting tighter, politicians will look for ways to reduce public-sector payrolls. Unless we organize, the percentage of workers represented by unions will decline, which will weaken our bargaining power. The more members our union has, the more powerful we are in the workplace and with the politicians who make decisions that affect our work and lives.

Does organizing new workers help existing members?

Yes, since we launched our new organizing program, more than 450,000 newly organized workers joined with AFSCME. By growing, we're able to negotiate stronger contracts and can offer better services and benefits for members. Strength comes from an active and large membership, so we've got to get bigger by helping workers form new unions with AFSCME. Now, more than ever, it's important that our voices be heard on Capitol Hill, and by our state and local governments.



Does AFSCME offer special benefits for members?

Yes. The AFSCME Advantage programs offer many money-saving benefits for full-dues-paying members and retirees. Tap into services that are essential to your everyday living. Your family members even benefit from your union membership as they are eligible to apply for some of the Advantage benefits. Popular benefits include:

- **AFSCME Advantage Credit Card:** Pay no annual fee and become eligible for job loss benefits
- **Accidental Death Insurance:** Get up to \$20,000 of accidental death insurance at no cost to you
- **AT&T Wireless:** Save 15 percent on individual and family plans
- **Auto Insurance:** Save hundreds, add on your homeowners insurance and save even more
- **Credit Counseling:** Get one hour of free consultation on your financial challenges and more
- **Legal Service:** Get attorney references and half hour of no-cost consultation
- **Mortgage Program:** Offered through Chase and saves you hundreds on closing costs
- **Scholarships:** There are several. Take out the time to learn about them and apply!

To learn more about these and other AFSCME Advantage services, check our website at www.afscme.org/advantage or call 1-800-588-0374.



What is the AFSCME Leadership Academy?

A strong union requires strong leaders. That's why AFSCME is dedicated to leadership development at all levels, from new activists to senior leaders. The AFSCME Leadership Academy offers top-notch online and in-person classes to develop the knowledge and skills needed to build effective local unions, organize workers, and strengthen our political power. Classes are free to members. You can access classes like Robert's Rules of Order, Women in Unions and Workplace Safety anytime, anywhere at afscme.org/academy.



How does AFSCME support women leaders?

AFSCME women make up 58 percent of AFSCME's membership, so we offer programs designed specifically to increase the knowledge and skills of women activists and leaders. Signature programs include public speaking to help hone presentation skills and style; online learning with topics of particular interest to women; and national women's conferences to educate and inspire new activists and seasoned leaders.



What about young members?

The AFSCME Next Wave is a network of new and young AFSCME members. Next Wave is creating pathways to leadership for the next generation. Next Wavers organized educational programs and committees at the local and statewide level across the country. National conferences bring Next Wavers together to learn, strategize and commit to building the union into the future.

AFSCME Members' Bill of Rights

As AFSCME members, we have the right to...

1. Membership

No person otherwise eligible for membership in this union shall be denied membership, on a basis of unqualified equality, because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability or political belief.

2. Freedom of speech

Members shall suffer no impairment of freedom of speech concerning the operations of this union. Active discussion of union affairs shall be encouraged and protected within this organization.

3. Freedom from bosses

Members shall have the right to conduct the internal affairs of the union free from employer domination.

4. Fair elections

Members shall have the right to fair and democratic elections at all levels of the union. This includes due notice of nominations and elections, equal opportunity for competing candidates and proper election procedures constitutionally specified.

5. Hold office

Members shall have an equal right to run for and hold office, subject only to constitutionally specified qualifications, uniformly applied.

6. Review financial records

Members shall have the right to a full and clear accounting of all union funds at all levels. Such accounting shall include, but not be limited to, periodic reports to the membership by the appropriate fiscal officers and periodic audits by officers elected for that purpose or by independent auditors not otherwise connected with the union.

7. Vote

Members shall have the right to full participation, through discussion and vote, in the decision-making processes of the union, to pertinent information needed for the exercise of this right. This right shall specifically include decisions concerning the acceptance or rejection of collective bargaining contracts, memoranda of understanding, or any other agreements affecting their wages, hours or other terms and conditions of employment. All members shall have an equal right to vote and each vote cast shall be of equal weight.

8. Due process

Charges against a member or officer shall be specific and shall be only on grounds provided in the *International Constitution*. Accused members or officers shall have the right to a fair trial with strict adherence to due process. The accused shall be considered innocent until proven guilty.







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