

AFSCME Council 31

2019 Legislative Agenda

Support responsible budget and adequate revenues for state and local governments

After four years, Bruce Rauner leaves the State with a backlog of unpaid bills that grew to historic heights and vital public services in every corner of government in urgent need of rebuilding. Illinois' revenue shortage threatens jobs, schools, health care and other public services. The state's chronic budget shortfalls have had a negative fiscal impact not only on state services, but on cities, counties, state-funded private agencies, and public universities which are reliant on state funding. AFSCME will:

- Advocate for measures to move Illinois toward a fair tax system, beginning with lobbying for passage of the legislative action needed to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would allow for graduated tax rates that require the wealthy to pay their fair share.
- Support efforts to close corporate tax loopholes and oppose efforts to expand such unfair giveaways.
- Support other revenue-raising measures that would address the state's budget shortfall, while opposing measures that would reduce income to the state.
- Oppose any cutback to vital state services or layoff of state employees.
- Support legislation that would expand the responsible taxing authority of local governments and oppose legislation limiting that authority.
- Oppose any legislation that would undermine adequate funding for local government services, including but not limited to, any effort to reduce local governments' share of the income tax distributed through the Local Government Distributive Fund.

Strengthen union rights in response to unprecedented assault

When the US Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Janus v. AFSCME*, the court's majority sided with the super-wealthy whose aim is to weaken unions in our country by essentially establishing the public sector as a right-to-work zone. AFSCME will join with other public sector unions to press for passage of legislation that will reinforce the rights of workers to come together in strong unions and will oppose any efforts to undermine unions' rights to represent all employees in a certified bargaining unit.

Restore state employee step increases

It is AFSCME's position that Bruce Rauner's illegal step freeze can be remedied without a specific legislative appropriation because it was a violation of state law. However, if it becomes necessary to pass an appropriation in order to ensure that employees are made whole, the union will lobby for such funding.

Support adequate funding for state universities

State universities were a particular target for Rauner’s budgetary reductions and the resulting operational shortfalls have meant substantial cutbacks at many campuses. Such cuts have already led to employee layoffs, as well as making contract negotiations very difficult. AFSCME will continue to work in coalition with other unions, educational advocates and student organizations to:

- Restore state university funding.
- Oppose any cuts having the effect of reducing access to higher education for working families, including but not limited to, the elimination of tuition waivers for university employees and their families or cuts to the Monetary Assistance Program (MAP).

Stabilize pension funds and oppose cuts to retirement benefits

AFSCME Council 31, along with our union partners in the We Are One Illinois coalition, has successfully beaten back all efforts to slash the pension benefits earned by union members at the state, university and local government levels. Now, corporate forces are pushing for the most radical change of all – amending the Illinois Constitution to remove the pension non-diminishment clause. AFSCME will:

- Oppose any effort to amend the Illinois Constitution to remove protections against pension diminishments for state, university and local government employees.
- Continue to press for a solution to the pension funding crises that is constitutional and ensures retirement security for public employees.
- Oppose efforts to force public employees into risky defined-contribution retirement plans.
- Oppose unconstitutional cuts to the pension benefits of employees or retirees in any public pension system.

Press for improved workplace safety

AFSCME will continue to press for legislative oversight and work towards the necessary changes in policy, staffing levels, and working conditions to reduce the dangers that employees face on the job, including strengthening the role of IDOL’s OSHA program. A few examples of the dangers employees face include:

- A dramatic increase in the number of violent assaults on staff by inmates and youth due to changing policies in the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- The very serious assault and murder of a DCFS caseworker.
- Employees at the Quincy and Manteno Veterans Homes have been exposed to the life-threatening Legionella virus.
- Violent assaults on staff in state run mental health and developmental centers are a growing concern.

Fight privatization of public services and assets

As the State of Illinois, public universities and local governments struggle to balance their budgets, all too often public officials are looking to privatize public services and assets as a way to save money without any regard for the impact on employees or the quality of services provided. Time and again, taxpayers suffer the consequences of these ill-conceived schemes. AFSCME will:

- Oppose all legislation that would have the effect of privatizing any service currently provided by public employees.
- Oppose efforts to weaken or repeal the laws that currently restrict privatization of any public services, such as the law prohibiting privatization of school district support services.

Fight to improve wage levels in community disability agencies and other AFSCME-represented nonprofit agencies

Thousands of workers serving individuals with developmental disabilities in community-based agencies, as well as other human service providers, depend on money from the state to improve wages. AFSCME has been leading the way in the fight for additional state funding earmarked for wage increases. Last year AFSCME helped win the second wage increase for direct support personnel in community agencies in two years. Previously these workers went almost 10 years without any kind of wage increase. AFSCME will:

- In collaboration with our partners in the They Deserve More coalition, continue the battle for legislation which phases in a minimum wage of \$15 per hour for workers in state-funded community disability agencies by July 2021.
- Press for adequate state funding to ensure fair wages for frontline workers in providing services for at-risk youth and the mentally ill.

Protect workers' rights

The corporate elite and right-wing forces have launched a massive and sophisticated nationwide campaign to drive down wages and destroy unions. Led by the Illinois Policy Institute and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), these forces continue to press to weaken all laws that protect workers, whether in the private or public sector. AFSCME will:

- Fight any effort to weaken or diminish the collective bargaining rights provided to employees by the Illinois Public Employee Labor Relations Act and the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act.
- Work to defeat any effort to pass any version of so-called “Right-to-Work” legislation in Illinois.
- Oppose any efforts to strip particular groups of employees of their bargaining rights; seek to restore or strengthen bargaining rights for employees who have lost or are at risk of losing those rights.
- Oppose any efforts to diminish workers’ compensation or unemployment insurance benefits.
- Support efforts to raise the minimum wage in Illinois.
- Support legislation requiring paid family leave for all employees.
- Support efforts to stop sexual harassment in the workplace.