

FIGHTING FOR OUR FUTURE

WHEREAS:

In June of 2018, the US Supreme Court issued its far-reaching ruling in the case of Janus v AFSCME Council 31 which effectively outlawed “fair share” union fees in the public sector, instead requiring unions to provide representation to all employees in a bargaining unit, whether or not they are union members; and

WHEREAS:

The litigants in the Janus case pursued the matter with the very clear goal of bankrupting unions, a threat Council 31 was determined to meet head-on—to make sure that we did not suffer the kind of financial losses that would cripple our union’s ability to continue to improve the lives of all union members; and

WHEREAS:

To that end, the 21st Council 31 Biennial Convention voted overwhelming to adopt a constitutional amendment which provided for a modest dues “rebate” from local unions to the Council; and

WHEREAS:

As a result, our union has been able to continue to fight vigorously to win good contracts in jurisdictions large and small, to uphold members’ rights, and to improve working conditions; and

WHEREAS:

In addition, the Council has not had to lay off any staff or cut back on union training/education programs or on communication/outreach programs; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31 has also continued to have a strong legislative program that can advance measures to aid members—and block bills that would do harm; and

WHEREAS:

Our union’s ability to remain AFSCME Strong on all fronts has depended on having sufficient resources and continued progress will require the same; and

WHEREAS:

Over the course of these five years, Council 31 did not, as our opponents predicted, lose thousands of members, but neither did our union gain the number of additional members needed to fully replace the loss of Fair Share fees; and

WHEREAS:

The dues rebate enacted in 2019 replaced about half of the amount that was lost and is thus very critical to continued financial stability; and

WHEREAS:

Our union is now facing an ever more aggressive assault on that stability by union-hating groups like the Freedom Foundation, which besiege members with calls to “opt out” of the union; and

WHEREAS:

If our opponents can be so willful and unrelenting in their determination to destroy us, we cannot be any less so in our determination to ensure the resources needed to make that fight; and

WHEREAS:

To that end, the AFSCME Council 31 Executive Board is unanimously recommending continuation of the local union dues rebate which requires further amendment of the Council constitution; and

WHEREAS:

Rather than relying on the rebate for many years to come, it is time for Council 31 to examine our own dues structure; and

WHEREAS:

Beyond the limited increases required by the International Union’s annual dues adjustment, Council 31’s dues have not increased in more than a decade; and

WHEREAS:

Now is the time for bold action in order to ensure continued strength and progress; and

WHEREAS:

In response to that call, the Council 31 Executive Board is initiating the establishment of a Dues Study Commission to examine possible steps forward, such as eliminating the dues rebate, establishing a graduated dues structure, and an increase in the Council per cap, in order to determine the best way to ensure longer-term financial stability; and

WHEREAS:

The commission would be appointed by the Executive Board and would issue its report within the coming two years, with any constitutional changes to be approved by delegates to a Council convention; and

WHEREAS:

In order to be better prepared for any tough contract fights that might arise, the Dues Study Commission would also consider the establishment of a Strike Support Fund; and

WHEREAS:

While a robust Strike Fund can take generations to build, it would be possible to begin now by allocating sufficient revenues to create a strike hardship fund that would be able to aid those most in need should any strike occur.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That this 23rd Biennial Convention affirms the decision of the Council 31 Executive Board to initiate a thorough review of the current Council dues structure by a Dues Study Commission which would propose amendments to the Council 31 constitution as deemed advisable; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That any such amendments would require approval by duly elected delegates to a Council 31 convention; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That while the challenges before our union are great and the stakes are high, Council 31 is determined to meet those challenges with the unity and conviction that are our hallmarks and that have enabled our union to become such a formidable fighting force.

Submitted by:
Council 31 Executive Board

RESOLUTION # 2

BUILDING SOLIDARITY FROM THE GROUND UP

WHEREAS:

AFSCME members worked tirelessly to provide public services during the COVID 19 pandemic and numerous other challenges; and

WHEREAS:

High inflation has eaten into working families' budgets in every sector, including the public service sector; and

WHEREAS:

The pandemic and high inflation have been exacerbated by historically low staffing levels in the public service sector, which tears at the fabric of family life and workplace solidarity; and

WHEREAS:

No matter the challenge in front of us, AFSCME members always have, and always will, serve our communities, despite the sacrifices required of us; and

WHEREAS:

Despite our commitment to our communities, billionaires continue to wage an unrelenting assault on our union and the very principle of democracy in the workplace; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 local union leaders have worked together to keep our union strong and have gone to considerable lengths to maintain the connections that are so vital to union solidarity; and

WHEREAS:

Members of AFSCME Council 31 in state government, the city of Chicago, and in every corner of the state, have waged highly effective campaigns throughout the state to win contracts that reward our hard work and sacrifice; and

WHEREAS:

A healthy economy and a vibrant public service sector start with strong unions advocating for working families and vital public services; and

WHEREAS:

Recent events have demonstrated the value of our work, and the value of solidarity.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That affiliated local unions will emphasize the value of connection among members by engaging in social events that allow members to interact and build solidarity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That each affiliated local union will develop its own plan to connect with members at the worksite by utilizing its stewards and MAT teams and holding regular membership meetings; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That local affiliates will build on our recent successful contract campaigns by working to engage rank-and-file members in every struggle, no matter how great or small; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That by building solidarity through direct action as needed to protect our rights and through organizational and social gatherings, local union affiliates can build vibrant, enduring, and fighting organizations that will effectively advocate for our members and public services.

Submitted by:
Ralph Portwood
AFSCME Local 1866

EVERY MEMBER MATTERS

WHEREAS:

On June 27, 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in the case of Janus v. AFSCME Council 31 outlawing union fair share fees in the public sector; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME and other unions representing public employees had to immediately stop all fair share deductions from the paychecks of non-members while still having to legally represent those employees; and

WHEREAS:

Anti-union forces like the Illinois Policy Institute and the Freedom Foundation, amongst others, viewed this ruling as an opportunity to weaken public employee unions; and

WHEREAS:

These groups have actively campaigned to persuade employees to drop union membership as they would still be entitled to union representation without having to pay anything; and

WHEREAS:

The organized campaigns by anti-union forces are ongoing, and will continuously try to pressure employees to abandon their union membership; and

WHEREAS:

Without a strong union, employees' wages and other benefits would deteriorate along with fair working conditions and job security; and

WHEREAS:

In conjunction with our International Union, AFSCME Council 31 initiated the AFSCME Strong program which focuses on having all represented employees sign the AFSCME Strong pledge card in addition to signing up former feepayers and newly hired employees, emphasizing organizing efforts, and promoting the PEOPLE program; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 successfully helped pass state legislation that requires employers to provide the relevant information regarding new hires in a timely fashion as well as allowing adequate time for the union to conduct orientation programs; and

WHEREAS:

New employee orientation programs provide concrete examples of the gains that the union has made in workplaces as well as making a clear and persuasive case for the importance of having a strong union, all while presented in an inspiring and uplifting way; and

WHEREAS:

An orientation program should also make a new member feel welcome by introducing them to other union members, inviting them to union events, and being available to answer any question they may have.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That delegates to this 23rd Biennial AFSCME Council 31 Convention declare the importance of unity and solidarity in our ranks in the face of attacks and in ensuring that our union has the necessary resources to continue fighting to defend union members' rights and a higher standard of living; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That all Council 31 affiliated local unions shall continue efforts to sign up every represented employee as a full dues-paying member; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will work with local unions to ensure that every local has a comprehensive AFSCME Strong program in place—coordinated by a Membership Chair or Membership Committee-- to ensure that all new employees are educated about and welcomed into the union—including being asked to sign a union card and a PEOPLE card; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue developing education materials and social media support to help inspire and engage new members.

Submitted by:
Chad Lignoul
AFSCME Local 1799

FIGHTING FOR FAIR AND EQUITABLE RETIREMENT SECURITY FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

WHEREAS:

Retirement security is one of the most important issues facing working people in our country with the basic concept of defined benefit pension plans under direct assault; and

WHEREAS:

Pensions for public employees in Illinois represent a key element of employee compensation for hundreds of thousands of workers to allow for dignity and security in retirement after a career of dedicated service; and

WHEREAS:

The significant unfunded liability of these pension funds caused by prolonged underfunding by employers continues to make them a target for business elites and right-wing groups who wage an unrelenting campaign to reduce pension benefits or eliminate pensions altogether for all new hires; and

WHEREAS:

As a result of the incessant push for pension changes the General Assembly enacted in haste a substandard and ill-conceived Tier 2 pension benefit for all Illinois public pension systems that applies to employees hired after December 31, 2010; and

WHEREAS:

Most Tier 2 employees are required to work until age 67 for an unreduced pension benefit, representing the highest normal retirement age for public sector employees amongst contiguous and neighboring states to Illinois; and

WHEREAS:

The annual cost-of-living increase in retirement for Tier 2 employees (currently the **lesser of** one-half the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 3%, simple) fails to mitigate the negative effects of inflation, impacting the retirement security of annuitants. In comparison to Social Security cost of living adjustments, whose annual increase averaged 2.6% since 2011, the Tier 2 benefit would provide an average annual increase of 1.2% during that same period; and

WHEREAS:

A Tier 2 employee with a 1.2% simple COLA would see a mere 23% increase in retirement income over the course of a 20-year retirement, Social Security benefits would increase by 63% with a 2.6% compounded COLA; and

WHEREAS:

Some politicians and corporate executives continue to push for eliminating pensions entirely for all new hires, which would destabilize the entire pension system, putting the benefits of current employees and retirees at risk; and

WHEREAS:

Recruitment, hiring and retention of public employees is a significant issue facing state and local government employers, and that in general, public employee pensions, along with the overall benefit package offered in negotiated contracts, are a draw to public service; and

WHEREAS:

Today, nationwide the public service is still 500,000 jobs short from pre-pandemic levels and staffing shortages in state and local government create safety concerns and oppressive working conditions for current staff and negatively impact our communities; and

WHEREAS:

Defending current pension benefits and addressing the inadequacy of Tier 2 must include restoring the fiscal health of the retirement systems across Illinois.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

AFSCME Council 31 will strongly oppose any measure that would unfairly diminish the pension benefits of Illinois public employees and, as such, will continue to inform and mobilize union members to defeat any such threats to their pension benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will work with labor allies to develop an educational and legislative strategy to address the inadequacy of the Tier 2 pension benefit, which will include amplifying the voice of Tier 2 members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 recognizes that Illinois and Chicago public pension systems do, in fact, face a significant funding shortfall and will continue to work with our allies to advance sound, long term solutions to this problem, recognizing that such reforms must be supported by an adequate revenue system for Illinois state and local governments; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will work closely with Retirees Chapter 31 to restore fairness and equity in the retirement benefit structure in Illinois because in this fight for retirement security, an injustice for one is an injustice for all.

Submitted by:
Ronald "Shane" Wagner
AFSCME Local 424

STEWARDS ARE UNION BUILDERS

WHEREAS:

A strong and active steward structure makes the union visible to workers and to management and enables communication, representation, and mobilization within the workplace; and

WHEREAS:

The role of the steward is varied and can include listening to coworkers' problems, organizing workers to solve workplace problems as a group, educating members about issues the union is working on, signing up employees who are not members, filing grievances to enforce the contract, explaining the contract to members, and encouraging members to get active in the union; and

WHEREAS:

To be an effective representative, stewards must understand the grievance procedure and, the rights of workers in the contract and under applicable laws; and

WHEREAS:

Union members who have effective stewards are significantly more likely to feel the union is effective in helping obtain job-related improvements, more likely to feel that their union cares about them, more likely to turn to the union to solve contract-related problems, more optimistic about the negotiating ability of their local, more likely to see the importance of union's organizing efforts, and more likely to volunteer to participate in union activities; and

WHEREAS:

The results of annual polling done by the International Union tell us that members and non-members alike often judge the union based on their opinion of how effective they believe their steward is in addressing workplace issues.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That local unions will continue efforts to identify and recruit active members who can serve as stewards; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will strengthen and expand steward training and educational programs to ensure that new stewards can fulfill their responsibilities and to aid experienced stewards in keeping current with contract interpretation, changes in labor laws, and other important developments.

Submitted by:
Tiffany Euler
AFSCME Local 997

STAFF THE FRONTLINES!

WHEREAS:

Understaffing is a long-running problem in public service, with too many politicians afraid to raise revenue or invest in services, and enamored of rhetoric such as “doing more with less”; and

WHEREAS:

The problem of understaffing was compounded by the coronavirus pandemic that resulted in the loss of more than 1 million public service jobs nationwide; and

WHEREAS:

Through important legislation like the American Rescue Plan, the Biden Administration and the pro-worker majority in Congress provided direct relief to working families and secured historic investments for our communities that helped to stop the bleeding, close budget holes, and keep essential workers on the job; and

WHEREAS:

This legislation was only the first step on our path to recovery; and

WHEREAS:

Hundreds of thousands of needed jobs in public service remain unfilled across the country, including approximately 8,000 at the state of Illinois, 4,000 at Cook County, 4,000 at the city of Chicago, and many more at all levels of government; and

WHEREAS:

Everyone loses when public entities lack adequate staff, burning out workers and costing them precious family time, and eroding the quality of services provided; and

WHEREAS:

Urgently needed improvements to recruitment, hiring and retention, especially in Illinois state government, require input from union members in order to overcome bureaucratic barriers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue our efforts to encourage employers to fill vacant positions, to modernize their hiring practices and to incentivize recruitment and retention of adequate staff; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 applauds the nationwide Staff The Front Lines campaign of AFSCME international and will work to implement its goals in Illinois; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That the public will be better served, public service will be more effective and cost-efficient, public service workers will be more productive and fulfilled, and our union will be stronger when the public entities where AFSCME members work are fully staffed.

Submitted by:
Alisha Glover
AFSCME Local 2081

**PROTECTING OUR SAFETY AND OUR RIGHTS
IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES**

WHEREAS:

AFSCME members who work in state correctional facilities, juvenile justice facilities, and county jails provide an essential service as part of the public safety continuum; and

WHEREAS:

This work presents serious risks on a daily basis that are all too often heightened by a range of managerial policies that result in inappropriate assignment of offenders, inadequate staffing levels, and inadequate offender discipline standards; and

WHEREAS:

There have been a number of policy changes over the past decade that are aimed at strengthening the rights of offenders without taking into account the potential for harm to employees; and

WHEREAS:

Such changes have included a significant increase in sentencing alternatives for those who commit lesser offenses, leading to high concentrations of repeat offenders and more violent individuals in state correctional and juvenile facilities; and

WHEREAS:

Work in these facilities has become ever more uncertain and difficult because these strategies for change fail to address the increasing prevalence of assaults on staff; and

WHEREAS:

The dangers to staff are further compounded by IDOC's massive reclassification of offenders, which has led to those previously slated for maximum security facilities being housed in medium security or even minimum security facilities; and

WHEREAS:

Employee health and safety is also compromised by the significant increase in drugs being smuggled into prisons—both via offender mail and by visitors—which can cause severe reactions in staff who are unknowingly exposed to such substances; and

WHEREAS:

In 2022 AFSCME filed a class action safety grievance against IDOC which resulted in an arbitrator's ruling that the department must take stronger measures to protect employees; and

WHEREAS:

The speed with which changes in IDOC are rolled out with little to no opportunity for input from frontline employees continues to manifest in high turnover of employees, with extreme stress, poor morale, and physical and mental injury to those who remain in service, and

WHEREAS:

Employees in juvenile facilities operated by DJJ also face daily the risk of injury, which is exacerbated by politicians who continue to press for less restrictions on youth offenders; and

WHEREAS:

In many county jails across the state employees must contend with the dangers caused by extreme overcrowding because the state has failed to develop sufficient beds for offenders who are mentally ill; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 has a strong record as the foremost force fighting for adequate staffing and safe conditions in the correctional system, including success in eliminating cell coverings, restricting inmate property, expanding employee access to mental health services, and enacting the nation's first ban on private prisons; and

WHEREAS:

Both the Illinois Departments of Corrections and Juvenile Justice have announced major, far-ranging and sweeping "transformation" plans yet failed to make needed investments in the education and programming proven to both reduce prison violence and reduce recidivism.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to fight for the safest possible conditions in all state and county correctional facilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to lead the fight for employee safety in adult and juvenile correctional facilities at every level in our state, including pressing for

the hiring of sufficient staff to ensure that all posts can be covered without excessive overtime burdens on current employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to work to preserve facilities, needed programming and appropriate staffing levels, while also supporting efforts to foster offender rehabilitation and community reintegration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to oppose any attempts to privatize any correctional functions, while at the same time working to fully and forcefully represent the interest of current contractual employees, like those of Wexford Health Systems, whom our union represents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue efforts to educate state legislators and county officials about the critical role that correctional facilities and jails play in the criminal justice system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to press for much more vigorous recruitment, hiring and retention strategies in IDOC where facilities are severely understaffed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to press for adequate numbers of parole officers and aftercare specialists who are an essential component of the criminal justice system; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That our union shall endeavor to put employee mental health and wellness at the forefront and attempt to integrate mental health services into correctional spaces in order to develop a more effective response to workplace crises and individual trauma in both state and county correctional facilities.

Submitted by:
Nick Crisman
AFSCME Local 472

**IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH IN OUR RANKS
AND IN OUR COMMUNITIES**

WHEREAS:

National public health authorities, including the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, and other entities have found that mental health is a vital part of an individual's overall well-being; and

WHEREAS:

Recent estimates from the National Institute of Mental Health indicate that one in five adults in the United States live with a mental illness and approximately 5.5% of American adults live with serious mental illness; and

WHEREAS:

Mental health, like other aspects of an individual's overall well-being, has both biological and social determinants; and

WHEREAS:

State, county, and local governments have a crucial role to play in ensuring the availability of effective mental health treatment for people who need those services to live healthy and productive lives; and

WHEREAS:

Since the late 1970s, the United States' mental health system has suffered from a disastrous combination of disinvestment and inattention at the federal, state, and local level, even as historic disasters like the opioid epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic have made it increasingly clear that mental health services are more needed than ever; and

WHEREAS:

National disinvestment in mental health services can be measured by looking at the 77.4% reduction in the total number of mental health beds and the 95% reduction in public mental health beds since the 1970s; and

WHEREAS:

In Illinois, the need for further investment can be seen by observing that the state has 31.1 mental health beds per 100,000 people, which is significantly lower than both the ratio recommended by health policy experts and the average in the industrialized world, according to the most recent report from the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors; and

WHEREAS:

Between the late '50s and the early '90s, the City of Chicago operated 19 public mental health clinics citywide, 14 of which were closed between 1991 and 2016, resulting in fewer treatment options for Chicagoans with mental illness and their families; and

WHEREAS:

Many members of AFSCME Council 31 are the essential workers who directly meet the mental health needs of their communities, in settings ranging from Illinois' state mental health centers and Chicago's mental health clinics to private agencies like Erie Neighborhood House, Southwood Interventions, and UCAN; and

WHEREAS:

Working in the public service is meaningful, but challenging work, which can become all the more difficult and stressful in the absence of substantial investment in staffing, recruitment, retention, workplace safety, and capital improvements; and

WHEREAS:

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, a wide array of economists, policy experts, and politicians have confirmed the existence of an ongoing public sector hiring crisis, both in Illinois and across the country, which has also exacerbated issues with recruitment, retention, and workplace safety; and

WHEREAS:

Earlier this year, Council 31 conducted electronic surveys to document the impact which inadequate staffing, unfilled vacancies, and disinvestment have taken on state government employees, and those survey results underscored the enormous toll which these developments have taken on employees and their families; and

WHEREAS:

Many AFSCME members experience the effects of inadequate investment in Illinois' public mental health infrastructure, not just as workers directly providing mental

health services, but also as individuals who might potentially benefit from more accessible mental health services; and

WHEREAS:

Many AFSCME Council 31 members have access to mental health services either through their union's Personal Support Program or through their health insurance plans; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME has led the way in advocating for both reforms to Illinois' mental health infrastructure and for on-the-job improvements meant to limit the negative impact which a worker's job can have on their mental health; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31 has also pioneered much-needed workforce empowerment measures for workers directly involved in the provision of mental health services, like the Human Service Workforce Advancement Ordinance, which was passed by the Chicago City Council by a 41-2 margin earlier this year; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 also released a whitepaper showing the shortcomings of the City of Chicago's current mental health treatment system, which also demonstrated how the city could realistically expand its system of public mental health clinics from five to 19 over the next four years.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to inform union members about the mental health services available to them through their union and through their collective bargaining agreements, and will continue to proactively encourage members to seek help when they need it; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Council 31 will continue using every avenue to fight for on-the-job improvements, like adequate staffing, expedited hiring, safety on the job, and capital investments, to improve mental health in our ranks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Council 31 will continue to advocate for reforms to Illinois' mental health infrastructure, across all levels of government, through internal and external organizing,

political engagement, and outreach to community allies, to the benefit of both AFSCME members and our larger communities; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT:

AFSCME Council 31 will continue to work to improve mental health in our union's ranks and in our communities.

Submitted by:
Carmen Carter
AFSCME Local 26

FAIRNESS FOR STATE UNIVERSITY STAFF

WHEREAS:

Public higher education has historically been of vital importance to the social mobility and economic improvement of working people; and

WHEREAS:

For that very same reason, the forces seeking to further enrich the wealthy corporate class at the expense of middle-class Americans have targeted public higher education across the country, seeking to undermine public support for state universities and make it more difficult for middle and low-income students to pursue post-secondary education; and

WHEREAS:

Tuition at Illinois universities has increased by 115% over the rate of inflation in the last two decades, while public funding for those universities has decreased by one-half, adjusting for inflation, in that same time period; and

WHEREAS:

As a result of historic drastic cutbacks, support staff at state universities, many represented by AFSCME, continue to be subjected to layoffs, position eliminations, program cuts and increased workloads; and

WHEREAS:

An historic number of faculty went on strike for higher pay at Chicago State University, Governors State University and Eastern Illinois University in 2023; and

WHEREAS:

A recent study by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and the University of Illinois shows that state university staff, on average, make 21% less than their counterparts working in state government; and

WHEREAS:

Lawmakers have finally begun to address the long-term damage caused by this disinvestment in public higher education, including reduced economic growth and lack of opportunities for working class students, by approving state budgets in the last several years that began to reverse the decline in state support for public universities as well as providing new funding for campus capital improvements; and

WHEREAS:

Despite the additional state funds that universities are now receiving, university management has resisted efforts by AFSCME local unions representing university employees to repair the damage done and improve the wages and working conditions of administrative, technical and building support staff.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 recommits to supporting a robust system of public higher education in Illinois that is affordable to all students seeking post-secondary education, that provides the wide and diverse educational resources necessary for success in the increasingly complex world economy, and that is adequately funded to provide all staff with fair pay and decent benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will continue efforts to call attention to the crucial role played by support and non-instructional staff in university operations and the failure of state universities to provide fair wages and a path for advancement for these employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will assist local unions at state universities in waging contract campaigns that will put the issue of substandard wages for university personnel front and center; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will work to educate legislators and the broader public about the unfair wage structures of state universities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will recommit to efforts to bring pay equity to university workers doing similar work to state workers; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to press for increased public funding for the state university systems in our budget advocacy.

Submitted by:
Karen Pope
AFSCME Local 981

RESOLUTION # 10

WINNING FAIR WAGES FOR NON-PROFIT HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS

WHEREAS:

The State of Illinois and local governments have increasingly transferred responsibility for providing human services from state and local government employees to workers at private non-profit agencies; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 represents workers in nonprofit agencies who care for and protect at-risk youth, workers who educate our children and our communities, workers who support individuals recovering from substance abuse, workers who provide vital social services, and more than 20 percent of workers supporting individuals with developmental disabilities in Illinois; and

WHEREAS:

Our union recognizes the skill, compassion and emotionally and physically challenging nature of human service work and has consistently led grassroots and legislative efforts to win additional funding for employees of these organizations; and

WHEREAS:

Many non-profit providers are struggling to fill vacancies, leading to rampant short-staffing and high-turnover that negatively impacts non-profit workers and the individuals, families, and communities to whom they provide services; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 is resolved to assist non-profit agency workers to win the rights, protections and voice on the job that are only assured through collective bargaining; and

WHEREAS:

Most of these agencies rely on public funding as their primary (sometime sole) source of income and thus workers' wages are to a large extent dependent on that funding; and

WHEREAS:

For nearly two decades now, AFSCME Council 31 has successfully led the charge in the Illinois General Assembly to secure additional funding specifically targeted to raising workers' wages.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue a grassroots-based lobbying campaign to raise the wages of non-profit workers at social service agencies, including Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) at community disability agencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to organize non-profit workers seeking to gain union representation in order to help them achieve the respect, dignity and voice on the job that only a union can bring; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will continue our campaign to foster a stable, well-trained, unionized workforce in non-profit agencies as a necessary element to assure high-quality human services throughout our state.

Submitted by:
Yurvette Simmons
AFSCME Local 3237

UNIONS FOR ALL

WHEREAS:

Public service workers need and deserve the strength that comes with AFSCME representation so that they are treated and compensated fairly and can come together with one powerful voice to address their concerns on the job; and

WHEREAS:

Organizing to bring new members into the ranks of AFSCME Council 31 improves the lives of these workers and strengthens our union's ability to fight and win for our current members; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 is committed to building a forever-strong union through sustained efforts to organize new members; and

WHEREAS:

Far too often, organizing campaigns are costly and time-consuming because employers will violate labor laws, spend large sums of money on union-busting consultants and attorneys, and run campaigns designed to intimidate their employees; and

WHEREAS:

Public support and the approval of unions is at its highest level in the U.S. since 1965; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31's organizing program has aided more than 2,000 employees in forming local unions in their workplaces since the 22nd Biennial Convention; and

WHEREAS:

Recognizing that reforming our nation's labor laws is essential to enabling all employees to exercise their right to form a union, President Biden and Congressional leaders have either introduced or have successfully passed multiple measures to empower workers such as the PRO Act, the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act; and

WHEREAS:

Advocating for state and local labor law reform, such as legislation requiring contractors that receive public funds to respect the rights of their employees, is essential to union-building in our state; and

WHEREAS:

Improving the operations of the Illinois Labor Relations Board is essential to effectively enforcing those labor laws that are currently on the books and in reducing employer's ability to undermine workers' rights to union representation; and

WHEREAS:

The participation of Volunteer Member Organizers (VMO's) is essential to building an ever stronger organizing program.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 strengthens its efforts to organize all unrepresented public employees, as well as employees of nonprofit agencies, state or local government contractors, hospitals and other health care facilities, as well as museums, libraries, and other cultural institutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 work in concert with AFSCME International, other unions, and concerned community and religious organizations to do everything possible to advance legislative and policy labor law reforms at the federal, state, and local levels, like labor peace agreements, neutrality policies, and expedited recognition procedures to allow employees the right to organize free of harassment, intimidation, and retaliation; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

To increase membership density and strengthen our fight for economic justice, dignity, and respect for all working people, AFSCME Council 31 will continue growing its organizing program by allocating resources to aid organizing efforts, integrating education regarding organizing into Council trainings, conferences, and other events, and by training members to participate as VMO's in organizing drives.

Submitted by:
Tawny Proulx
AFSCME Local 172

RESOLUTION # 12

STRENGTH IN UNITY AND DIVERSITY

WHEREAS:

AFSCME has found strength in diversity since our union's earliest days; for nearly a century we have worked to unite all public service workers, no matter their age, race, nationality, gender or gender identity, and without regard to geography, religion, education, political party or social class; and

WHEREAS:

We inherit a long, proud history of support for and involvement in movements for racial and social justice; our national union's founding president Jerry Wurf led an AFSCME delegation to the 1963 march on Washington, our union famously helped the Black sanitation workers of Memphis, Tennessee, to form their union in 1968, and we provided crucial support for Nelson Mandela's anti-apartheid freedom movement in South Africa; and

WHEREAS:

The diversity in our own ranks has proven time and again to be one of our greatest strengths; overcoming superficial divisions and standing in unity, we have advanced our interests much further together than we could ever do alone; and

WHEREAS:

The forces of hatred who oppose our fight for progress still seek to divide us, knowing that only by doing so can they succeed; and

WHEREAS:

We recognize that they often work in concert with the same billionaires who seek to entrench their own power by diminishing ours.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 affirms that all people have the right to human dignity; irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status or national origin, we share common values and goals such as hard work, love of family, and the desire to build a better life for ourselves and our children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 rejects all efforts to divide working people against each other, which seek to weaken workers' rights, drive down family incomes, and undermine retirement security; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 believes that drawing strength from the diversity of our membership and our many experiences and viewpoints is an expression of labor solidarity and the core principle of the labor movement that an injury to one is an injury to all; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That delegates to this 23rd Biennial Convention recommit our union not only to affirming diversity within our union but also to carrying forward the continuous work of creating a more just and equitable society in our nation and world.

Submitted by:
April Smith
AFSCME Local 2615

WE'RE READY!

WHEREAS:

Our country is currently witnessing a steady increase in workers demanding their fair share of economic growth; and

WHEREAS:

Both in the private sector and public sector over the course of several decades, workers were called upon to make sacrifices—to give up retirement benefits, to work longer hours, to establish two-tier wage structures, and even to forego wage increases entirely—all in the name of greater economic progress; and

WHEREAS:

Throughout that time, big corporations continued to rake in profits, investors continued to secure big gains, CEO's saw their compensation climb—all while workers were left behind; and

WHEREAS:

The public sector has suffered from a dearth of revenue which has led to similarly tough times for many public sector workers; and

WHEREAS:

Attempts to raise additional revenues, such as the "fair tax" plan for progressive taxation that was on the ballot in Illinois in 2020, have been beaten back by the super-wealthy who do not want to pay their fair share; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31 affiliates have faced tough contract fights in a number of jurisdictions over the past decade; and

WHEREAS:

Those contract fights required militant and ongoing grassroots action to win contract settlements that could improve members lives, and

WHEREAS:

The fundamental source of the power of AFSCME Council 31 and local affiliates is an organized membership; and

WHEREAS:

The public services AFSCME members provide are crucial to the functioning of our society and cannot be delivered without the hard work of AFSCME members; and

WHEREAS:

High inflation and working through the COVID 19 pandemic have brought into sharp focus the need for workers to stand up and demand fair treatment; and

WHEREAS:

Workers throughout the country, in every sector, are taking action to stem the tide of this decades long attack on our power and our living standards; and

WHEREAS:

In a growing number of instances, workers are now facing down the wealthy and powerful with the ultimate weapon that working people have—the strike.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That all contract negotiations include from the outset a plan for a contract campaign based on direct action and member involvement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That local affiliates plan a campaign for each contract that engages members, identifies escalating actions, and includes consideration of conducting a strike if all other paths to a settlement are blocked; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will work with local affiliates to assess the union's capacity to sustain a strike under the specific conditions involved; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That Council 31 recognizes that strikes are actions of last resort but must be considered when an employer is blatantly unresponsive to the needs and concerns of union members.

Submitted by:
Chuck Carver
AFSCME Local 1110

RESOLUTION # 14

ENHANCING MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT IN THE AFSCME PEOPLE PROGRAM

WHEREAS:

The AFSCME PEOPLE (Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality) program plays a pivotal role in advancing the rights and interests of union members and their communities; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME PEOPLE is dedicated to supporting candidates and initiatives that prioritize the well-being of union members, their families, and the public they serve; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME PEOPLE is a stalwart defender of essential public services, consistently opposing harmful budget cuts and privatization attempts; and

WHEREAS:

The AFSCME PEOPLE program empowers union members to become politically active and raise their voices in support of policies that enhance their lives and communities; and

WHEREAS:

Bolstering membership participation in the AFSCME PEOPLE program will strengthen our collective voice and increase our influence in shaping policies that affect our lives; and

WHEREAS:

The PEOPLE candidate endorsement process is based on a thorough review of candidate records and positions—not on a particular party affiliation—and is carried out by a democratic process within our union that involves local union leaders from all across the state; and

WHEREAS:

Union volunteers in the campaigns of candidates endorsed through the PEOPLE program can make a significant difference in the outcomes of elections.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That this 23rd Biennial Convention recognizes and emphasizes the importance of the AFSCME PEOPLE program in advocating for the rights and well-being of working people and their communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That we encourage all members of our organization to actively engage with the AFSCME PEOPLE program through volunteering, contributing, and advocating for its mission; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That we commit to working together to increase participation in the AFSCME PEOPLE program, ensuring that the voices of union members continue to be heard and heeded.

Submitted by:
John Day
AFSCME Local 1048

RESOLUTION # 15

DEFENDING STATE-OPERATED DEVELOPMENTAL CENTERS

WHEREAS:

Our union has a deeply held commitment to civil rights and believes that accessible, high quality public services are integral to substantively realizing those rights; and

WHEREAS:

Access to public services and other supports is crucial for the well-being of people with developmental disabilities and their families; and

WHEREAS:

The State of Illinois has both a moral and a legal responsibility to ensure the availability of an array of services and supports for these individuals; and

WHEREAS:

The state fulfills its responsibilities to people with developmental disabilities, both directly through its state-operated development centers and by providing financial support for care in other settings; and

WHEREAS:

Some individuals need a level of care and support which currently in our state only state-operated developmental centers are capable of providing; and

WHEREAS:

The vast majority of the workers who care for and support the residents of Illinois' state-operated developmental centers are members of AFSCME Council 31; and

WHEREAS:

In recent years, other states have tried to relinquish their responsibilities to people with developmental disabilities by disinvesting in essential services, like developmental centers, which serve individuals with the most acute needs; and

WHEREAS:

Some people would have Illinois take steps backwards, follow the example of other states, and eliminate options for people who need the support which state-operated developmental centers provide; and

WHEREAS:

The disinvestment in, and past closures of, state-operated developmental centers in Illinois has too often been devastating for people with disabilities and their families.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

AFSCME Council 31 recognizes the indispensable role that Illinois' state-operated developmental centers occupy in the full spectrum of services available for people with developmental disabilities; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 shall continue to support Illinois' state-operated developmental centers, and our union's members who are the heart of the developmental centers, through internal organizing, political engagement, educational campaigns, and outreach to residents' families and to allies in our communities.

Submitted by:
Ona "Tind" Rivero Winfield
AFSCME Local 141

**EXPANDING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS TO NON-INSTRUCTIONAL
EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES**

WHEREAS:

In 1983, the federal government took action to deny non-instructional employees working for public institutions of education eligibility for unemployment insurance when laid off during the summer months and academic breaks; and

WHEREAS:

This action impacted employees who work as teacher aides, building and grounds workers, food service workers, bus drivers and others in K-12 public school districts and public university settings, most of whom are lower wage workers and struggle financially to make it through the summer months and academic breaks; and

WHEREAS:

In 1991, the federal government reversed action and restored unemployment insurance benefits for non-instructional school employees on the condition that states must explicitly elect to cover them in their state unemployment insurance program; and

WHEREAS:

Although it has been over thirty years since the federal government changed direction to once again permit non-instructional educational employees to be covered by unemployment insurance programs if the state explicitly elected to cover them, the State of Illinois has failed to make that election; and

WHEREAS:

Non-instructional educational employees are no different than other types of workers who experience seasonal unemployment, yet they are deemed ineligible for unemployment benefits solely because they work for an educational institution; and

WHEREAS:

Workers who perform the same duties in an educational setting but are employed by a private company are eligible for and receive unemployment benefits during summer months and academic breaks; and

WHEREAS:

Non-instructional educational employees often find it difficult to find employment in the summer months and during academic breaks, as employers are not quick to hire and train employees who will quit in a few months' time to return to their educational employer; and

WHEREAS:

Resolving this inequity is a simple matter of basic fairness; and

WHEREAS:

There is no public policy justification for why these employees should be treated differently from all other similar types of workers who experience seasonal unemployment.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will work to educate lawmakers about the unfair treatment of non-instructional educational employees by the unemployment system; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will work to permanently restore unemployment insurance eligibility to non-instructional education workers during the summer months and academic breaks by amending the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Act to remove statutory barriers.

Submitted by:
Jason Williams
AFSCME Local 963

CULTURAL WORKERS RISING

WHEREAS:

Cultural institutions and sites, such as museums, libraries, science centers and other such spaces, are essential to a vibrant democracy and strengthen our communities; and

WHEREAS:

Over the past several decades AFSCME has represented thousands of workers in such institutions both in Illinois and across the country, including the Chicago Public Library and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art; and

WHEREAS:

In recent years, employees in a broad array of cultural entities who did not have union representation have become increasingly determined to tackle the harsh reality that their compensation is not sufficient to provide a decent standard of living and that their voices are excluded from program and policy development; and

WHEREAS:

These workers began to come together to form unions in their workplaces, recognizing that the democratic process and unified voice that a union provides can transform their working lives; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Cultural Workers United, some 35,000 members strong, has been a leading force in fostering such union organizing efforts; and

WHEREAS:

Many nonprofit cultural entities are governed by boards of directors made up largely of wealthy individuals who have exhibited little concern for the well-being of their employees and who are very often fiercely opposed to unions; and

WHEREAS:

Even workers in public entities, such as public libraries, have too often met with vigorous opposition from elected boards when they seek to form their union; and

WHEREAS:

Despite such opposition, workers at both private and public cultural institutions have persisted and prevailed in their efforts to gain union representation and have a voice on the job; and

WHEREAS:

Here in Illinois over the past several years, workers at nearly a dozen cultural entities have formed local unions and joined the AFSCME Council 31 family; and

WHEREAS:

Several of these new local unions have already secured collective bargaining agreements that significantly raise wages and strengthen workplace rights; and

WHEREAS:

Even at a moment of such dramatic progress for cultural workers, new challenges have arisen due to ultra right-wing forces that have sparked cultural warfare, seeking to ban certain books and bar certain kinds of programming in libraries and other entities; and

WHEREAS:

These campaigns to restrict content and access at cultural institutions have included threats of harm to employees as well as patrons; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME members in cultural institutions have remained determined to continue to improve their working lives while resisting efforts to restrict materials and programming.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue outreach to employees at cultural entities throughout Illinois to ensure that all of these workers have the opportunity to improve their working lives through union representation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to build vigorous contract campaigns that can help ensure that cultural workers secure the rights and respect they deserve; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will support local unions in their efforts to ensure that management takes all possible measures to protect the health and safety of employees at libraries and other cultural entities.

Submitted by:
John Lustig
AFSCME Local 2794