

RESOLUTIONS

AFSCME Council 31
22nd Biennial Convention
October 2021



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 cease all fair share deductions from the paychecks of non-members, while continuing to have the legal duty to fully represent those employees; and

WHEREAS:

Anti-union forces like the State Policy Network and the Illinois Policy Institute viewed this ruling as an opportunity to 'defund and defang' public employee unions in the United States; and

WHEREAS:

These groups have waged an unrelenting campaign attempting to persuade employees to drop their union membership, stressing they will not have to pay anything but will still be entitled to all the benefits of union representation; and

WHEREAS:

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

WHEREAS:

In conjunction with our International Union, AFSCME Council 31 initiated the AFSCME Strong program to educate every AFSCME-represented employee about the campaign these anti-union forces are waging with the sole aim of depriving unions of the resources needed to continue to provide a forceful voice for working people in our society; and

WHEREAS:

The AFSCME Strong program also focuses on signing up former feepayers and newly hired employees as full members and on having all members sign the AFSCME Strong pledge card; and

WHEREAS:

In this changing environment, new employee orientation programs must provide concrete examples of the gains that the union has made in that particular workplace, as well as making a clear and persuasive case for the importance of having a strong union and for the harm that could occur if the union were not as strong—and this information must be presented in a way that is inspiring and uplifting; and

WHEREAS:

Just as important as providing information, this kind of continuing orientation program should make the new member feel welcome by introducing him/her to other union members, inviting the person to come to union events, and being available to answer any questions that he/she might have; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 was successful in our goal of passing state legislation that requires employers to timely provide the relevant information regarding new hires, as well as allowing time for the union to conduct orientation programs; and

WHEREAS:

The IPI's highly-organized campaigns of mailers, phone calls, social media ads, etc. pressing employees to drop their union membership will not be a one-time effort but will be ongoing, with these anti-union efforts continuing for years to come using every possible means to pressure employees to abandon union membership; and

WHEREAS:

These anti-union forces have continued to attack our union on the legal front, now pursuing a lawsuit to recoup fair share fees paid PRIOR to the Supreme Court ruling in the Janus case and to end unions' rights to exclusive representation; and

WHEREAS:

In order to address any revenue shortfalls caused by the Janus ruling and to ensure that our union can move forward on all fronts, the Council 31 21st Biennial Convention adopted a constitutional amendment that established a local union rebate to the Council; and

WHEREAS:

By adopting that amendment, the convention delegates affirmed their determination to ensure that our union remains the potent fighting force that has

expanded rights on the job, beat back attacks, and continues to improve the lives of our members.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That delegates to this 22nd Biennial AFSCME Council 31 Convention affirm the critical importance of unity and solidarity in our ranks in the face of such attacks and of ensuring that our union has the necessary resources to continue to lead the fight to defend union members' rights and 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 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 Council 31 will continue to develop educational materials, videos and other social media support to help inspire and engage new members.

Submitted by:
Terence Boone
AFSCME Local 672

RESOLUTION #2

RISING TO MEET THE PANDEMIC CHALLENGE

WHEREAS:

Since early 2020, the coronavirus pandemic has caused extraordinary sickness and loss of life, with over 42 million Americans contracting the virus and the nation's death toll from COVID-19 now over 700,000; and

WHEREAS:

Public service employees and those performing essential work in the private sector are on the front lines of the fight against COVID, putting themselves in harm's way every day to provide essential health care, public safety, education, and social services; and

WHEREAS:

From the beginning of the pandemic AFSCME Council 31 did not waver in our determination to safeguard the lives of every single member-- fighting for essential protective equipment; for putting recommended safety measures, such as social distancing and plexiglass shields, in place; and for employees to be able to work remotely where appropriate; and

WHEREAS:

Public health officials, scientific researchers, medical professionals, and governmental agencies came together to produce science-based and data-driven public safety guidance and facilitated the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines at record pace; and

WHEREAS:

The currently available vaccines have been proven safe, with each having been studied in large clinical trials of over 30,000 volunteers, conducted according to rigorous standards set forth by the FDA to make sure they met safety and efficacy standards and protect individuals of different ages, races and ethnicities; and

WHEREAS:

Three vaccines have received FDA Emergency Authorization (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson) and on August 23, 2021 the Food and Drug Administration granted full approval of the Pfizer vaccine, with full approval of Moderna expected in the coming weeks—critical steps in confirming the safety of the current COVID-19 vaccines for individuals that are hesitant; and

WHEREAS:

The CDC has recognized vaccination as the safest and most effective strategy to prevent severe illness and death from COVID-19 and to slow the spread of the virus; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 has conducted a vigorous education and outreach campaign to encourage union members to be vaccinated against COVID-19; and

WHEREAS:

Everyone 12 years of age and older is now eligible for one of the COVID vaccines, with more than 212 million people (64% of the population) in the United States having received at least one dose of vaccine, with adverse effects and severe allergic reactions having been extremely rare and most reporting no more than short-term, minor symptoms; and

WHEREAS:

Despite this widespread acceptance, vaccine hesitancy remains among some numbers across all social, racial and economic groups, preventing the country from reaching the “herd immunity” needed to contain the spread of the virus; and

WHEREAS:

Now the highly transmissible and more aggressive Delta variant poses a significant risk to unvaccinated populations, causing hospital systems in parts of Illinois to become overburdened with critically ill, unvaccinated patients and further causing shortages in available ICU beds; and

WHEREAS:

Growing numbers of employers in both the public and private sectors are turning to mandatory vaccination programs to halt the spread of COVID in workplace settings; and

WHEREAS:

Given current available research, AFSCME believes that such employee mandates should be based on a requirement to either be vaccinated or to be tested for COVID on a weekly basis; and

WHEREAS:

Vaccination, even if the most effective tool to prevent COVID-19 infection, must be part of a comprehensive strategy, as vaccines are never 100% effective and other protective measures must be maintained in the workplace and in public settings, such as testing, mask wearing, social distancing, and other precautions; and

WHEREAS:

In addition to the negative health impacts of the virus, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken an unprecedented toll on the economies of state and local governments, with projections that the revenue losses associated with the pandemic will likely extend for many years; and

WHEREAS:

State and local governments are at the forefront of the response to the pandemic in their communities and cuts to services due to revenue shortfalls are detrimental to community and public health needs and hinder the economic recovery of the area; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME's effective campaigns, such as "Fund the Front Lines", have been at the forefront of efforts to obtain sufficient fiscal assistance for state and local governments, relief for essential workers, and assistance to working families; and

WHEREAS:

The American Rescue Plan is a victory for working families across the country as it includes \$350 billion in funding for states, cities, towns, and schools that will protect jobs and keep members on the front lines to serve communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 honors all who have died of COVID-19, most especially those in our own ranks who were lost to this brutal virus; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That while courts have found that employers have the right to establish mandatory vaccination policies, labor law requires that they negotiate with the collective bargaining representative over the implementation and that Council 31 stands ready to engage in such discussions to ensure reasonable and fair policies that address safety and work to halt the spread of COVID are adopted; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 rejects the scapegoating of our union, leaders, and members who have been on the job daily since the onset of the pandemic, and as such, do not deserve blame due to societal conflict surrounding vaccination mandates; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue our own efforts to educate and address misinformation surrounding COVID vaccines to motivate hesitant people to get vaccinated, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to advocate for safe working conditions through layered mitigation strategies, including vaccination or testing policies, masking, social distancing, contact tracing, and worksite COVID plans that meet all applicable federal, state, and local recommendations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That paid leave for those who become ill with COVID or are quarantined because of exposure, as well as paid family medical leave, as were provided for under FFCRA and the CARES Act, are a critical aspect of workplace safety so that workers are not penalized or disincentivized when staying home to isolate when ill or when it is necessary to care for family members due to COVID-related reasons, and to that end, AFSCME will continue to advocate for employee access to such benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the pandemic forced a segment of employers to incorporate worksite flexibility as a COVID mitigation strategy, and that continued remote work/telecommuting is a viable option for some types of work that provides flexible options for employees while benefiting government operations and services to the public; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

AFSCME Council 31 will continue to lobby local governments to use American Rescue Plan dollars to replace lost revenue and as such reinvest in public services and its public sector workforce; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the work to recover from the pandemic is not over, as budget cuts and austerity has caused public service workers to do more with less, and as such AFSCME

supports continued efforts like President Biden's Build Back Better agenda that will make long-term investments in our communities, making them stronger than ever; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED

That AFSCME Council 31's highest priority will continue to be the critical work of protecting the lives and health of union members and the public we serve.

Submitted by:
Carlene Van Dyke
AFSCME Local 2615

RESOLUTION # 3

PROTECT PUBLIC SERVICES, DEFEAT PRIVATIZATION

WHEREAS:

Many public service workers take great personal risk to protect our nation and our people, responding to natural and manmade disasters, preventing public health threats and environmental damage, protecting public safety, and administering criminal and civil justice courts, the correctional system, and child protection oversight; and

WHEREAS:

The rights, living standards, and contributions of public service workers have been under fierce assault, an attack driven by the forces of corporate power and individual greed; and

WHEREAS:

Privatization far too often undermines the quality of public services, reduces accountability, compromises access and increases long-term costs while cutting decent, family-supporting jobs; and

WHEREAS:

Public budget shortfalls, along with aggressive lobbying and marketing by corporate privateers, are producing continuing pressures for privatization at all levels of government—with public nursing homes and water systems becoming prime targets for the privatizers; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 has been successful in limiting privatization via contract provisions and through legislative action, including the groundbreaking state legislation that made Illinois the only state in the country to ban the privatization of state prisons and to limit the privatization of school district support services; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME local unions across Illinois have successfully fought off privatization attempts through a combination of enforcing relevant union contract provisions, effective media outreach and—most importantly—building strong community coalitions; and

WHEREAS:

Too many elected officials of both parties have been all too ready to look for the

easy budget balancing that privatization offers rather than seek to ensure the best services for their citizens; and

WHEREAS:

As a result of such unreliable political allies, in some instances the privatizers have succeeded in their goals; and

WHEREAS:

When privatization does occur, AFSCME fights to protect the jobs of the affected employees and to maintain their right to union representation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will honor and uplift the value of public service work and the workers who have dedicated themselves to the public good; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 and local unions will continue to play a leadership role in working with other public service unions, our community supporters and our political allies to educate and inform about the damage done by the privatization of public services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue its efforts to organize any and all workers in the private sector who are performing work that should rightly be done by public entities, with the goal of improving their working lives and reducing the disparity between public and private sector compensation that privateers use to encourage privatization; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 and all local unions will continue to resist and defeat privatization schemes by seeking to negotiate and strictly enforce contractual language that limits subcontracting, improving service quality, building support in our communities, legislative action and member mobilization.

Submitted by:
Renee Kerz
AFSCME Local 981

RESOLUTION # 4

BUILDING SOLIDARITY FROM THE GROUND UP

WHEREAS:

The coronavirus pandemic forced months of sheltering in place, separating friends, colleagues and union brothers and sisters and limiting the ability of AFSCME Council 31 members to connect in meaningful ways; and

WHEREAS:

The pandemic and 'pandemic fatigue' has impacted the way Council 31 members interact with one another and has left some feeling isolated and alone; and

WHEREAS:

The need to maintain social distancing hit the labor movement especially hard, as labor solidarity is the inverse of human isolation; and

WHEREAS:

Through it all, 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:

Local unions adjusted in a wide variety of ways, including requiring masks at in-person membership meetings or holding remote membership meetings; and

WHEREAS:

With the availability of safe and effective COVID vaccines opening the door to a return to more "normal" forms of social interaction, the challenge to reconnect remains as individuals continue to experience pandemic related stress, anxiety, loss, and isolation; and

WHEREAS:

The AFSCME Council 31 Spring Forward Together initiative sparked a wide range of social activities over the past five months in dozens of local unions that provided members with the opportunity to reconnect; and

WHEREAS:

A strong COVID recovery starts with strong unions advocating for working families; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31's engaged and active membership provides our union with the capacity to be effective in winning for working families.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That AFSCME Council 31 local affiliates will make every effort to return to in-person membership meetings—with appropriate safety protocols in place; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Where in-person meetings present too great a hardship, local unions will ensure that remote meetings are held regularly and consistent with the requirements of the local union constitution; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That local unions will build on the success of the Spring Forward initiative and continue to hold social events and engage in community outreach in order to foster solidarity in our own ranks and strengthen our ties to the communities in which we live and work.

Submitted by:
Cheryl Graham
AFSCME Local 785

RESOLUTION # 5

STRENGTH IN UNITY AND DIVERSITY

WHEREAS:

From its founding, our union has welcomed all public service workers, bringing together people of different races, nationalities, gender, gender identity and expression, religion, and educational backgrounds—rural and urban, without regard for political party, or type of job; and

WHEREAS:

This commitment to justice for all was powerfully demonstrated in the Memphis sanitation workers strike of 1968 when African-American workers came together to demand an end to their second-class status, dangerous working conditions, and substandard wages; and

WHEREAS:

In the ensuing decades, the broad diversity of our union has proven to be one of its greatest strengths—uniting disparate forces to speak with one voice, fostering a foundational solidarity in which we stand together and stand up for each other in our respective struggles, and enabling us to advance political and legislative goals based on grassroots advocacy that reaches into every corner of our state; and

WHEREAS:

Down through the years, time and again, the forces of hatred and division have sought to break that unity, often abetted by a wealthy elite that seeks to further consolidate its own power by silencing the voices of working people; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME has survived and thrived by refusing to fall victim to such divisive tactics, instead redoubling our efforts to foster internal unity and reaffirming our commitment to building a more just society; and

WHEREAS:

The horrifying death of George Floyd last year, captured on video for all the world to see, called forth a renewed determination in our country to address the persistence of racial injustice; and

WHEREAS:

Yet today the forces of hatred and division in our country appear to be growing more bold and virulent with each passing day, attempting to legitimize white supremacy, to denigrate racial minorities, and to attack immigrants; and

WHEREAS:

History has clearly shown that such divisiveness can all too readily cripple efforts to defend and protect our workplace rights, our economic security, and so many other gains we have made over the years; and

WHEREAS:

Conversely, the more we resist the hate and fearmongering and continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder united and determined, the greater our ability to triumph in all the battles to come.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 affirms that all people have the right to human dignity; irrespective of racial or ethnic background, immigration status or national origin, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, as 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 will maintain its longstanding tradition of welcoming all employees to our ranks and treating everyone with respect and fairness; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to challenge discrimination in all its forms and to work to foster equity within our union, in our workplaces, and in our communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will build on our union's proud history of opposing

racial injustice in all its forms by supporting policies that seek to redress generations of racial discrimination, by opposing all efforts to weaken voting rights, and by continuing our efforts to forge a more just society; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 supports efforts to develop a rational and fair immigration policy that does not demonize those who have suffered so greatly in their own countries that they are prepared to take enormous risks in the desperate hope of being able to make a new home in the United States; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That delegates to this 22nd Biennial Convention recommit our union to upholding the core labor movement principle that an injury to one is an injury to all.

Submitted by:
Lloyd Marshall
AFSCME Local 3477

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

WHEREAS:

AFSCME members in state correctional and juvenile justice facilities, as well as those working in county jails, have faced unprecedented challenges during the course of the coronavirus pandemic which has taken an enormous toll on employee health and morale; and

WHEREAS:

It was often only through the vigorous advocacy of AFSCME Council 31 and the local union at the worksite that members in state prisons and county jails were able to secure the personal protective equipment, testing, and appropriate safety measures that have been so essential to reducing the incidence of COVID in these settings; and

WHEREAS:

Those pandemic conditions further exacerbated the ongoing upheavals created by legally mandated or legislatively enacted policy changes impacting almost every aspect of the criminal justice system; 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 facilities; and

WHEREAS:

Work in these facilities has become ever more uncertain and difficult because these strategies for change fail to address assaults on staff by this increasingly violent offender population; and

WHEREAS:

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

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 has a long and proud history as the foremost force fighting for adequate staffing and safe conditions in the correctional system, including eliminating cell coverings, restricting inmate property, reducing the influence of gangs, increasing penalties for assaults on staff, expanding employee access to mental health services, and enacting the nation's first private prison moratorium law; 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 will continue to work for incarceration policies that can foster offender rehabilitation and community reintegration, particularly pressing the State of Illinois and its Departments of Corrections and Juvenile Justice as they make changes to the justice system to further those goals, to preserve facilities, programming, and appropriate staffing levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will continue its advocacy for the renewal of the educational and vocational programs that have been so severely cut back over past decades and that are so essential to the rehabilitation of the incarcerated; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will continue to oppose any attempts to privatize any correctional functions, while at the same time working to fully and forcefully represent the interests of

current contractual employees, like those of Wexford Health Systems, whom our union represents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will continue to press for fairer pay at the bargaining table and before local governmental bodies for employees in county correctional facilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME 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 in order to ensure that “Safety First” becomes the operational backbone of the IL Departments of Corrections and Juvenile Justice—especially in the current pandemic--Council 31 will continue to pursue permanent placement of a Union designee as “Chief Safety Officer” in each facility of both departments.

Submitted by:
Keith Kracht
AFSCME Local 203

DEFENDING OUR RETIREMENT SECURITY

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:

Based on our state's commitment to the fundamental principle that those who have worked hard and played by the rules should be able to retire and live out their remaining years with dignity and security, public pensions in Illinois represent a key element of employee compensation for hundreds of thousands of workers in the public service; and

WHEREAS:

One of our union's signal achievements is the extended battle waged in defense of public pensions via the We Are One Illinois union coalition that AFSCME played a leading role in forming; and

WHEREAS:

That coalition successfully fought all the way to the Illinois Supreme Court and secured a unanimous ruling that the pension protection clause of the state constitution bars any diminishment of the pension benefits of current employees; and

WHEREAS:

Two-thirds of all seniors depend on Social Security benefits for more than half their income and a third depend on it for nearly all of their income, while Medicare protects beneficiaries and their families from the potentially bankrupting cost of a serious illness; and

WHEREAS:

Individual retirement savings, on average, are dangerously low, making the guaranteed benefits of pensions, Social Security, and Medicare fundamental to a secure retirement after a lifetime of work; and

WHEREAS:

For far too long the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago, and Cook County have failed to adequately fund their pension systems, leaving the state with an unfunded pension liability estimated at \$140 billion and the City of Chicago with an unfunded liability estimated at more than \$33 billion; and

WHEREAS:

Study after study has shown that pension benefits received by most Illinois' public retirees are modest and well in line with national trends; and

WHEREAS:

The Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF), the second largest pension system in Illinois with benefits comparable to the State Employees' Retirement System (SERS) of Illinois, is healthy and well-funded, proving that the State of Illinois has a pension funding problem, not a problem of excessively generous pension benefits; and

WHEREAS:

Nonetheless, business elites and right-wing groups such as the Illinois Policy Institute have waged an unrelenting campaign against public employee pensions, even arguing that the Illinois constitution should be amended to modify or eliminate the pension protection clause; and

WHEREAS:

As a result of this incessant drumbeat, the Illinois General Assembly enacted a substandard "Tier II" pension benefit for all Illinois public pension systems that applies to employees hired after 2010 and since that time legislators have resisted even the most modest increases in public employee pension benefits; and

WHEREAS:

Restoring the fiscal health of the retirement systems across Illinois will require a strategic multi-pronged approach and long-term commitment, including an effort to educate legislators about the fundamental unfairness of the current two-tier pension system.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 continues to strongly oppose any measure that would unfairly diminish the pension benefits of Illinois public employees or shift to defined contribution plans for such employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will continue to inform union members about the on-going threat to their pension benefits and mobilize members to engage in the kind of concerted, intensive political activism that is essential to defeat this threat; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will work with the labor-based We Are One Illinois coalition to develop an educational and legislative strategy to address the inadequacy of the Tier II pension benefit; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOVLED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will oppose any effort to eliminate the constitutional protections afforded to public employee pensions in Illinois; 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 which is leading the fight in Illinois to protect and defend these retirement programs.

Submitted by:
Arnold Black
AFSCME Local 2971

RESOLUTION #8

FAIRNESS FOR STATE UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES

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:

The assault on public higher education was aggressively pursued by the Trump administration in Washington, as well as the Rauner administration in Illinois, with their efforts to reduce federal and state support for colleges and college students, eliminate college loan forgiveness programs for public service, and promote for-profit and unaccredited private institutions at the expense of public universities; and

WHEREAS:

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

WHEREAS:

Lawmakers have finally begun to address the long-term damage caused by this disinvestment in public higher education, including loss of technological innovation and reduced economic growth, by approving state budgets in the last three 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 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 support for the state university systems in our budget advocacy.

Submitted by:
Julie LaTempt-Brazier
AFSCME Local 2887

RESOLUTION # 9

WINNING A LIVING WAGE FOR NON-PROFIT AGENCY WORKERS

WHEREAS:

In recent decades the state of Illinois, as well as various local governments, have increasingly shifted provision of care for individuals with disabilities and other human services from state and local government employees to workers at private non-profit agencies; and

WHEREAS:

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

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 now represents nearly 20% of workers in non-profit agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities and has also helped workers who support at-risk youth, counsel the mentally ill and those recovering from substance abuse, and provide child care to form unions with AFSCME; and

WHEREAS:

Adequate compensation and good working conditions are necessary to develop the stable workforce so critical to high quality supports for vulnerable individuals and needy populations, which makes AFSCME an advocate for both the workforce and the individuals they support; and

WHEREAS:

These nonprofit agencies are almost entirely dependent on state funding, especially those community disability agencies that rely on Medicaid funding that is matched by state dollars; and

WHEREAS:

A tight job market has made it difficult for non-profit employers to fill vacancies for jobs that are physically and emotionally demanding and pay far too little; and

WHEREAS:

Our union has consistently fought for and won additional state budget appropriations specifically aimed at raising the wages levels of front line employees in these agencies to win a family-supporting wage for all; and

WHEREAS:

In addition to organizing in the political and legislative arena, Council 31 community-based locals have engaged in organizing in their workplaces to win at the bargaining table and have helped reach out to employees at unorganized agencies to help them win a union and raise industry standards.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue to lead the charge to raise the wages of direct support personnel (DSP's) in community disability agencies, as well as other community human service agencies through grassroots lobbying, contract campaigns and new organizing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

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

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will continue its efforts to foster a stable, well-trained, unionized workforce in non-profit agencies as a critical element in assuring quality care.

Submitted by:
Timothy Oloasebikan
AFSCME Local 3492

RESOLUTION #10

ADVANCING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR NON-INSTRUCTIONAL EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES

WHEREAS:

In 1983, the federal government took action to deny non-instructional educational employees in K-12 public school districts and public university settings (i.e. teacher aides, building and grounds workers, food service workers, bus drivers) eligibility for unemployment insurance when laid off during the summer months and academic breaks; and

WHEREAS:

Although it has been 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 consistently refused 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 because they work for an educational institution; 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 1-2 months' time to return to their educational employer; and

WHEREAS:

The coronavirus pandemic greatly heightened the challenges facing these workers during summer months as many businesses had to shut down due to COVID restrictions and job opportunities were even more sparse; and

WHEREAS:

These dire circumstances opened the door for AFSCME Council 31 to lead a vigorous grassroots lobbying effort which won unemployment insurance coverage for non-instructional school workers during the summers of 2020 and 2021; and

WHEREAS:

Business lobbyists strongly opposed AFSCME's campaign, arguing that because the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund is verging on bankruptcy, no new options for benefits should be enacted; 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:

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; and

WHEREAS:

Non-instructional educational employees are typically lower wage workers, most of whom struggle financially to make it through the summer months and academic breaks, and access to unemployment insurance would be a vital lifeline.

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:
Sandra Patlan
AFSCME Local 692

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:

Council 31 is committed to building an ever stronger union through vigorous efforts to organize new members; and

WHEREAS:

In far too many instances, organizing campaigns are costly and time-consuming because employers flagrantly violate labor laws, spend large sums on union-busting consultants and run campaigns designed to intimidate their employees; and

WHEREAS:

Public support and approval of unions is at its highest level in more than a decade; 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 Democratic leaders are pressing for passage of labor law reform in measures such as the PRO Act and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act; and

WHEREAS:

State and local labor law reform, such as legislation requiring contractors that receive public funds to respect the rights of their employees to freely choose union representation through 'labor peace' agreements.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That Council 31 strengthen 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:

In order to increase our membership and strengthen our fight for economic justice, dignity and respect for all working people, Council 31 will continue to grow its organizing program by allocating resources to aid organizing efforts and integrating education regarding organizing into Council trainings, conferences and other events.

Submitted by:
Tawny Proulx
AFSCME Local 172

BUILDING PEOPLE POWER IN 2022

WHEREAS:

Public service workers have a fundamental democratic right to collectively participate in the political process that determines the terms and conditions of their employment, the welfare of their communities, and the future prospects of their families; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME has established the “Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality” (PEOPLE) program to exercise that right and support the union’s political and legislative efforts to build power for every AFSCME member at the local, state and national levels; and

WHEREAS:

The PEOPLE program provides resources for AFSCME Council 31 to conduct legislative and political activities including educating members on legislative issues, lobbying legislators and other decision-makers, educating and mobilizing members on political issues, and supporting campaigns for candidates and ballot questions; and

WHEREAS:

At no time in our history has the political and legislative activity supported by PEOPLE at the national, state and local levels been of more direct consequence to the members of Council 31 as we face a sustained and aggressive assault on our fundamental rights, including that of participation in the political process; and

WHEREAS:

The strength of the AFSCME Council 31’s political program beat back the attacks of the Rauner administration and stopped its attempts to gut our pensions, collective bargaining rights and funding for quality public services; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31 has a long and enviable record of strong support for the PEOPLE program, and has regularly led the union nationally in the percentage of members contributing to it as MVPs, while mobilizing member volunteers to contact voters in recent election cycles by knocking on doors, making phone calls, texting and other means, resulting in thousands of person-to-person discussions of the critical issues at stake; and

WHEREAS:

The upcoming elections in 2022 are critical to protecting and strengthening the labor movement and protecting important gains made for our members; and

WHEREAS:

It will be especially important to elect members of Congress who will advocate for working families and enact legislation that will expand workers' rights, such as the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, and the Better Care Better Jobs Act; and

WHEREAS:

The Illinois Supreme Court has continued to be a backstop to attacks from the wealthy elite on working people and retirees and there will likely be a well-funded effort by right-wing forces to gain control of the court.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 renews its commitment to maximizing support for PEOPLE and will redouble its effort to increase the ranks of Council 31 members volunteering and contributing to the program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That all affiliated local unions will make it a priority to actively recruit new participation by their members in the MVP program and strongly encourage existing MVP participants to step up their support and become PEOPLE Champions; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That all affiliated local unions will work to develop a solid core of volunteers who understand the importance of electing candidates who will stand up for working families and who will do the community outreach needed to help make sure those candidates win their elections.

Submitted by:
Shaun Dawson
AFSCME Local 2073

RESOLUTION # 13

RIGHT FOR ILLINOIS: WORKERS' RIGHTS AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION

WHEREAS:

The anti-union corporate and right-wing agenda for a 'union-free' environment involves widespread efforts to impose limitations on labor unions through right-to-work laws, collective bargaining prohibitions, and legal rulings; and

WHEREAS:

Right-wing groups are working without stop to enact right-to-work state laws in order to weaken unions in the private sector by banning "union shop" agreements that require all bargaining unit employees to share in the costs of union representation. The real purpose of right-to-work laws is to tilt the power balance toward corporations by making it harder for working people to form unions and collectively bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions; and

WHEREAS:

These same forces are behind the Janus Supreme Court ruling which has already had the effect of making the entire public sector (state, city, county and other units of government) "right-to-work" entities; and

WHEREAS:

These anti-union forces also continue their efforts to weaken unions in the public sector by enacting state laws—such as those already on the books in Wisconsin and Iowa—that strip public employees of their collective bargaining rights in order to limit their ability to negotiate contracts that secure fair wages, affordable health insurance, retirement security, and a strong voice on the job; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31 has played a leading role in legislative and legal actions to ensure that the collective bargaining rights for all workers in Illinois are protected, and that employees represented by AFSCME and other unions retain their representational rights; and

WHEREAS:

The Workers' Rights Amendment, set to go to voters in the November 8, 2022 general election, would enshrine in the Illinois constitution strong protection of the rights

of public and private sector workers by prohibiting state laws or local ordinances that interfere with, negate or diminish the rights of employees to organize and bargain; and

WHEREAS:

The Workers' Rights Amendment will effectively also ban so-called "right-to-work" laws in Illinois; and

WHEREAS:

With 68% approval amongst Americans, support for unions has been trending upward and is now at its highest point in more than half a century, with over half of Americans saying they would vote for a union at work; and

WHEREAS:

The labor movement has been the strongest force in our nation's history for securing and defending economic and social justice, democratic governance, and individual freedom.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 endorses passage of the Workers' Rights Amendment in November 2022; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will fully engage in efforts to win voter approval of the Workers' Rights Amendment in conjunction with other unions and our allies, and will help educate local union leaders, activists, and members on the importance of this effort; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME leaders at every level will work to build support for the Workers' Rights Amendment in our ranks and in the broader community.

Submitted by:
Stephen Mittons
AFSCME Local 2081