

**Gubernatorial Election
Resolutions Adopted by the Delegates to the
Biennial AFSCME Illinois PEOPLE Conference--August 13, 2022**

Resolution #1: Given that Darren Bailey has introduced legislation that would overturn our state's constitutional protection of public employee pensions, opening the door to reducing or even eliminating our pension benefits, and has also repeatedly voted against legislation that would protect labor rights, AFSCME urges members not to vote for Darren Bailey for governor of the state of Illinois.

Background:

Republican gubernatorial candidate Darren Bailey was the chief (and sole) sponsor of legislation to repeal the pension protection clause of the Illinois constitution—which would open the door to the reduction, or even elimination, of public employee pensions—the pensions to which we have faithfully contributed from each paycheck during all our years of employment. Every AFSCME member who works in the public service would be harmed by this measure.

Darren Bailey is now retracting his support for this legislation, asserting that he wasn't really informed about the pension system when he introduced it.

First, it must be noted, that Bailey is currently revising or retracting his position on various issues, which renders the reliability of any further statements suspect.

More to the point, we have to ask what kind of elected official, without educating himself on the issues involved, would put forward legislation that would rob hundreds of thousands of current and former public servants of their security in retirement. It is telling that no other legislator—even those who are very critical of public pensions—signed on as a sponsor of Bailey's legislation.

Any appearance of tolerance for Darren Bailey's introduction of legislation to repeal the pension protection clause of our state constitution would send all the wrong signals to other elected officials. Taking a stand against Bailey as a gubernatorial candidate as the delegates have done is intended both to help ensure that he does not become our next governor and to send a clear signal that we will oppose those who would jeopardize our right to economic security in retirement.

Delegates also took into account that Bailey has repeatedly voted against AFSCME-backed legislation, including the resolution to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot to protect workers' rights on the job. His voting records with AFSCME and the AFL-CIO are very poor—and he has spoken out against unions, saying they are "...just a bullying tactic."

Resolution #2: In session on this 13th day of August 2022, the AFSCME Illinois PEOPLE Conference hereby delegates to the PEOPLE Executive Committee the authority to take any action that, upon further deliberation, is deemed in the best interest of AFSCME members with regard to the 2022 gubernatorial election.

Background:

Former governor Bruce Rauner undermined the entire foundation of state government—driving the state deep into debt, slowing down hiring, attacking collective bargaining rights, and encouraging privatization. When JB Pritzker was elected governor, he set about righting the ship of state-- restoring fiscal stability without significant tax increases,

making the requisite employer pension contributions, and settling a fair contract with our union.

But as the governor sought to bring greater financial stability to the state and to respond to the unprecedented public health emergency presented by the COVID virus, state government suffered from a lack of attention and direction. A troubled state bureaucracy became even more bureaucratic in its hiring practices which, when combined with the economic destabilization that accompanied the pandemic, drastically increased staff shortages in a number of state agencies.

By the start of 2022, the state had over 7,000 vacant positions, leaving key state agencies in very dire straits. One veterans' home nearly has more nurse aide vacancies than it has individuals working in those positions. Several correctional centers each have more than 100 vacancies.

Employees in these agencies are consigned to punishing schedules that rely on excessive amounts of forced overtime. Too often in veterans' homes, developmental disability centers, and correctional facilities, employees have to work double shifts--sixteen hours straight--and sometimes several times a week. They miss out on precious time with their families and are often near exhaustion while at work or travelling home. There have been a number of motor vehicle accidents and employee suicides believed to be stress-related. In DOC and in DHS forensic units, understaffing has led to increased incidents of violence by individuals in custody, some causing serious injuries to staff. Given these conditions, even when new employees can be hired, they often leave in short order.

Understaffing also undermines the quality of services these agencies can provide. In DCFS, staff shortages have led to excessive caseloads that make it more difficult to assure child safety; in DHS developmental centers, employees struggle to provide the kind of vital support needed by the residents; and in DVA, employees are distressed by their inability to timely respond to the emotional needs of the veterans in their care.

The vote in support of this resolution was overwhelming because the delegates recognized that while this staffing crisis does not directly impact members outside of state government, every AFSCME member has a stake in ensuring that safe and responsible practices are restored to state agencies. The resolution is predicated on the long-held labor conviction that we must stand up for one another when confronted with such challenges.

Despite repeated efforts by our union to address this situation, the administration did not seem to recognize the severity of the staffing crisis, the sacrifices employees were making, the toll it was taking on their lives, or the harm being done to vital services.

However, recently the Pritzker Administration informed our union that it is taking immediate steps to address the understaffing crisis. The governor personally attended a listening session with AFSCME local union leaders from the most troubled state agencies who laid out in compelling detail the very serious consequences of understaffing that frontline employees face every day. In response, Gov. Pritzker stressed that he values the service of state employees and welcomes our input in tackling the hiring crisis.

Our union is fully prepared to cooperate in any such endeavor and we will be working steadfastly to advance the needed changes. As we do so, we will continue to discuss and consider further action in the gubernatorial election.