

AFSCME STRONG—GETTING STRONGER

WHEREAS:

The shadowy network of super-wealthy individuals who are out to consolidate greater wealth and power in their own hands were all gloating when the U.S. Supreme Court declared public sector union fair share fees unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS:

Because public employee unions are among the last bastions of organized strength for the middle class that can challenge the ever-greater consolidation of wealth and power in the hands of a small elite, those wealthy individuals are doing everything in their power to eliminate our unions from the economic and political landscape; and

WHEREAS:

They believed that the decision in the case of Janus vs AFSCME Council 31 would strike a “mortal blow” against public employee unions; and

WHEREAS:

Nobody knows better than the members of AFSCME in Illinois what this case was really all about as it was initiated by Bruce Rauner who spent his entire term in office doing everything in his power to demean public employees, drive down our standard of living, drive up our health care costs, cut pension benefits, obliterate the union contract in state government, and strip local government employees of their right to collective bargaining; and

WHEREAS:

As Rauner has admitted, the Janus case was actually about ‘shifting the balance of power’ by stripping unions of the resources needed to be an effective voice for working families even as it requires us to continue to provide services and negotiate contracts for those who choose not to pay dues; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME members’ determination not to back down in the face of even the toughest fight and our ability to prevail in so many of those contests have earned our union the respect of individuals and organizations across the political spectrum in our state, but have also roused our enemies to even greater animosity and ever more fevered attacks; and

WHEREAS:

Right-wing groups like the Illinois Policy Institute have launched an ongoing mail, phone, digital, and TV ad campaign to convince union members that they should drop out of the union and cease paying any dues, all the while reminding them that the union will still have to represent them; and

WHEREAS:

Research consistently shows that communication from a trusted personal source—family member, friend, coworker—can be far more influential than any external media communication; and

WHEREAS:

Local union leaders, stewards, and MAT team members have developed vital relationships with co-workers that represent an essential communications network that is key to countering the big money onslaught of lies and distortions that continues to rain down on members of AFSCME Council 31; and

WHEREAS:

It is essential to educate every member about the real agenda of the Janus lawsuit—the complete destruction of public employee unions—and to explain how dropping out of the union aids that agenda, essentially making it impossible for employees to continue to have the kind of strong union representation that they are counting on; and

WHEREAS:

Critical to such an ongoing educational effort is securing from the employer regular up-to-date information on the status of all employees; and

WHEREAS:

As part of that outreach process every member is being asked to renew his/her commitment by signing a new AFSCME Strong membership card that makes clear he/she recognizes that a strong union is built on a strong membership; and

WHEREAS:

This ongoing AFSCME Strong sign-up program provides both a solid foundation of educated members and a solid financial foundation enabling our union to move forward secure in the knowledge that we can continue to battle forcefully and effectively against the array of assaults on employees' standard of living, workplace rights, and quality of life.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That all local unions will strive to be 100% Union by fully participating in the AFSCME Strong program to educate and sign up every employee—former fair share feepayers, current members, and new employees—on the AFSCME Strong maintenance of authorization membership cards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That all local unions will seek to ensure that they receive regular lists of represented employees from the employer and that this information is shared with Council 31; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will continue to utilize On the Move and all forms of social media to amplify the message that stewards and MAT team members are bringing to their coworkers about the grave threat posed by the shadowy network of the super-rich who are out to destroy not just our unions, but American democracy itself; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 and all affiliates will continue to fight on every front to defend members' rights and standard of living, to resist the insistent onslaught of attacks on public employees and their unions, and to expose the real aims of those forces making that attack.

Submitted by:

Tim Worker
AFSCME Local 993

DEFENDING UNION RIGHTS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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; and

WHEREAS:

For that very same reason, the rights of working people to join and build strong unions have been under sustained attack for the last half-century by the forces of corporate power and wealthy privilege; and

WHEREAS:

As a consequence, union density has dramatically declined in the private sector where less than 7% of all workers are unionized, while 34% of all public employees are protected by a union, and even though only 1 in 6 workers is employed by the public sector, public sector union members constitute nearly half of all union membership; and

WHEREAS:

Because public sector unions have become the backbone of the labor movement, they have also become the target for a sophisticated, well-funded and relentless vendetta by corporate elites over the last two decades; and

WHEREAS:

That assault has many components including the attempts to privatize public services, defund public education and especially public higher education, eliminate public pension plans, and fiscally strangle state and local governments by reducing public revenues; and

WHEREAS:

The assault on public sector unionism has also been carried on in the nation's courts, with a multi-year strategy to undermine settled constitutional rights and negate state labor laws, culminating in the *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31* ruling in June 2018 by the U.S. Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS:

Hardly content with damage inflicted by the *Janus* ruling, those same corporate-funded sources are now engaged in further litigation aimed at depleting union ranks and

draining their treasuries, pushing additional harmful legislation where politically possible, and conducting dark money operations to persuade individual union rank-and-filers and retirees to drop their membership.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 and all affiliated locals recommit to fighting all attacks on the union rights of public service workers, and will engage our resources at every level – legal, legislative, political, through public discourse as well as by member to member communication – in that ongoing struggle; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will support policies and legislative initiatives to strengthen union rights and build union power in the public sector, including pending legislation now in the Illinois General Assembly and H.R.3463/S.1970, the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act of 2019, in the U.S. Congress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That through our robust AFSCME Strong program, our union will defend against outside parties attempting to confuse our members and persuade them to drop membership; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 and affiliated local unions will seek to develop new and innovative strategies to sign up all new employees as members and move quickly to educate them about the critical role organized labor—and our union in particular—has played in establishing and enforcing strong workplace contractual rights, in assuring a good standard of living, and in expanding employee benefits to cover a range of vital needs.

Submitted by:

Stephen Mittons
AFSCME Local 2081

PASSING THE FAIR TAX BALLOT INITIATIVE

WHEREAS:

The current Illinois income tax structure is unfair and inadequate, placing too much of a burden on working people while not requiring wealthy people to pay their share and failing to raise adequate revenue for public services, local governments or to pay the state's bills; and

WHEREAS:

The Illinois General Assembly has placed a proposed constitutional amendment before the voters on the November 2020 ballot that would allow for the enactment of a Fair Tax, with lower rates for working people with moderate incomes, and higher rates for wealthy people with higher incomes; and

WHEREAS:

The Illinois General Assembly has also passed accompanying legislation that upon approval of the constitutional amendment establishes such a rate structure, under which 97% of Illinois income taxpayers will receive a tax cut or pay no more than they do now, while income over a quarter-million dollars a year is taxed at a rate sufficient to raise more than \$3 billion in new revenue annually; and

WHEREAS:

Enactment of Fair Tax reform will allow Illinois to reduce its chronic structural budgetary deficit, modernize its revenue stream and raise adequate revenues for education, health care and the many other obligations of both state and local government; and

WHEREAS:

Local governmental units including school and community college districts, townships, municipalities and county governments will directly benefit from the revenues generated by a Fair Tax, which will relieve the pressure on property taxpayers; and

WHEREAS:

Publicly funded non-profit and community organizations such as those serving individuals with developmental disabilities, providing mental health services, administering drug treatment programs, working with at-risk youth and many others will also benefit from the new revenue raised by a Fair Tax; and

WHEREAS:

The revenue generated by Fair Tax reform is critically necessary to helping restore Illinois public pension funds to fiscal health and thereby prevent continued attacks on the retirement security of public employees; and

WHEREAS:

Enactment of a Fair Tax will also be a step towards reducing income inequality in Illinois, where the lowest-earning taxpayers now pay twice the percentage of their income in state and local taxes as the top 1%; and

WHEREAS:

More than 30 other states and the federal government already base income tax rates on the ability to pay, and there is no credible evidence that adoption of Fair Tax reform would drive businesses or wealthy taxpayers out of state; and

WHEREAS:

The opponents of the Fair Tax, including the Illinois Policy Institute and big Illinois corporations, have already raised millions of dollars and begun a dishonest disinformation campaign to seek to defeat the Fair Tax amendment.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 wholeheartedly endorses the passage of the Fair Tax constitutional amendment in November 2020; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will fully engage in the efforts to pass the amendment, especially in tandem with other unions and our allies in the Responsible Budget Coalition; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will include support for the Fair Tax amendment in its communications with members leading up to the November 2020 general election, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME leaders at every level will work to build support for the Fair Tax amendment in our own ranks and in the broader community.

Submitted by: David Delrose, AFSCME Local 1028

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST EMPLOYEES

WHEREAS:

In the course of the important work they perform, many AFSCME members are exposed to the threat of violence; and

WHEREAS:

Recent serious assaults on AFSCME members around the state call for an intensified effort to address the causes of such violence; and

WHEREAS:

In 2017, DCFS investigator Pamela Knight was viciously attacked when she visited a home to check on the welfare of a child and later died from her injuries; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME's DCFS Standing Committee has pushed agency management to institute policy changes to improve employee safety, resulting in a number of steps being taken; and

WHEREAS:

At IDOC and IDJJ, mismanagement and policy changes pushed by outside groups who lack a full understanding of the challenges involved in providing a secure and therapeutic environment for those who have committed serious crimes have led to a growing number of violent incidents in the state's correctional and youth centers which continue to accelerate in severity; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 also worked to pass [legislation](#) that for the first time requires DCFS and three other state agencies—Corrections, Human Services and Juvenile Justice—to fully document assaults and their consequences for employees and to make quarterly reports to the Illinois General Assembly; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 filed and won a class action health and safety grievance against the Illinois departments of corrections and juvenile justice, with the arbitrator's ruling requiring both agencies to work with the union to develop specific plans to reduce violent attacks and foster safer working conditions; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME local unions at state mental health and developmental centers have pushed relentlessly to reduce the incidence of violent assaults on staff by residents at these facilities; and

WHEREAS

AFSCME members employed by local governments and private sector entities-- especially those in corrections, law enforcement, and nursing and residential care – also face threats to safety including workplace assaults and are working to address these problems through their union; and

WHEREAS:

There is growing awareness of the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace and the urgent need to combat it.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 condemns the all-too-common indifference with which many in management and governmental officials respond to the vicious assaults that employees have suffered; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue – through bargaining and when necessary through media, legislation, collective action or public protests – to fight for measures that can reduce violent assaults on the job; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will work with local unions to ensure that any violent assaults that occur garner the kind of wider public attention that can provide pressure on management to take steps to address the conditions that give rise to violence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will seek to educate legislators about the conditions that give rise to violent assaults in order to secure additional funding or policy changes that may be needed to address the problem; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will continue to press for adequate staffing, which can help to reduce the likelihood of assaults; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME recognizes that sexual harassment is a form of workplace violence and will work to ensure that workplaces are free of any such assaultive behavior; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That Council 31, in conjunction with all local unions, will continue to insist that no public service worker should face unnecessary risks on the job and that every effort should be made to protect employees' lives and prevent bodily harm.

Submitted by:

Shaun Dawson
AFSCME Local 2073

DEFENDING RETIREMENT SECURITY

WHEREAS:

Retirement security is one of the most important issues facing working people in our country with the decline of employer-provided retiree health care benefits and worker pension benefits threatened in both the public and private sectors, and the basic concept of defined benefit pension plans under direct assault; and

WHEREAS:

Social Security and Medicare, two of the biggest social insurance programs that provide dignity and security to senior citizens and people with disabilities, are more threatened than ever before due to the ballooning federal deficit; 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:

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 \$133 billion and the City of Chicago with an unfunded liability estimated at more than \$30 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 that pension plans are a far more cost-efficient means of providing retirement income as compared to defined contribution (401-K) accounts; 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:

Article XIII of the Illinois Constitution contains a "non-diminishment" clause that prohibits the pension benefits of current employees from being reduced by the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS:

In an effort intended to cut pension costs for all Illinois state and local governments, 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

WHEREAS:

Despite the unanimous ruling by the Illinois Supreme Court confirming that the Illinois Constitution ensures against the unilateral diminishment or impairment of pension benefits, a sustained and relentless campaign aimed at substantially reducing public employee benefits and silencing labor's voice in negotiating retirement security for its members persists by the Illinois business community; and

WHEREAS:

A combination of fiscal watchdogs, conservative think tanks and newspaper editorial boards are now urging voters to consider doing away with the protections for promised pension benefits by passing a Constitutional amendment; and

WHEREAS:

Proposals for instituting harmful structural changes to Medicare and Social Security include raising the eligibility age for Medicare benefits; changing the formula for

the Social Security COLA to a chained CPI in order to reduce annual increases; expanding Medicare means-testing to raise premiums; turning Medicare over to private insurance companies; increasing Medicare beneficiaries' out-of-pocket expenses, and introducing a process to fast-track major changes to Social Security threaten the critical safety net these programs provide; and

WHEREAS:

Social Security and Medicare have made full payment of benefits for almost 80 years and over 50 years respectively, and the long-term solvency of these programs should be addressed with all parties at the table and with the goal of protecting the integrity of the benefits, not in the context of federal budgets or deficits; and

WHEREAS:

Restoring the fiscal health of the retirement systems across Illinois will require a strategic multi-prong approach and long-term commitment.

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 FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 rejects all efforts to balance the federal budget on the backs of seniors and people with disabilities by cutting benefits in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid for either current or future beneficiaries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 will work with other concerned organizations to build the strongest possible bulwark against those who seek to shred the retirement safety net that Social Security and Medicare provide for our nation's senior citizens of today and tomorrow; and

BE IT FURTHER 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; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That since budget and benefit cuts are clearly not the answer to the pension funding crisis, AFSCME supports new revenue measures—including amending our state constitution to allow a Fair Tax for individuals and corporations with higher rates for higher income levels and lower rates for moderate income levels-- to raise additional revenues that would allow the state to balance its budget while meeting its obligation for the unfunded pension liabilities of Illinois state and local governments.

Submitted by:

D. Safiya Felters
AFSCME Local 2854

RESOLUTIONS # 6, 7 and 8

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC SERVICES AND FIGHTING 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:

Public service workers care for the most vulnerable in our society, whether in hospitals and health clinics, public facilities and community-based agencies serving those with mental and emotional challenges, or in homes or long-term care facilities for seniors and people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS:

Public service workers nurture our children, from Head Start and preschool programs to our K-12 schools, at our public libraries, and in our public universities that are the shining beacons of our higher education system; and

WHEREAS:

Public service workers assure the prosperity of our communities through the maintenance of our roads and public works, the administration of licenses, taxation, public benefits and the other obligations of state and local government, as well as the operation and maintenance of our parks, public recreational and cultural assets; 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:

One component of this assault is the coordinated attempts by corporations and politicians to privatize the services AFSCME members provide; and

WHEREAS:

For decades, the corporate agenda has sought to demonize public employees, undermine and privatize public services, and shred the social safety net, as part of a

drive to weaken unions, and enrich the already wealthy; and

WHEREAS:

These same corporate interests attempt to divide workers from those who rely upon public services, unions from communities, retirees from young workers, as a divide and conquer strategy to maintain their power and wealth; 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:

AFSCME Council 31 has been successful in limiting privatization via contract provisions such as those in the state master agreement, and through state legislation or local ordinances including those banning or limiting some privatization in state prisons, school district support services and the City of Chicago; and

WHEREAS

AFSCME Council 31 staved off Bruce Rauner's attempts to strip privatization protections from the state master contract and will continue to work to strengthen provisions in all union contracts to make it more difficult for employers to privatize public services that AFSCME members provide; and

WHEREAS:

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

WHEREAS:

Despite all evidence to the contrary, the reality of public budget shortfalls, along with aggressive lobbying and marketing by corporate privateers, is producing continuing pressures for privatization at all levels of government;

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 worker unions, our community supporters and our political allies to defend the rights, living standards and freedoms of all public service workers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will support the protection, expansion and improvement of public sector services and infrastructure, including efforts to open/re-open public facilities such as community-based service offices, wherever the need for such public services exists;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will support as public policy that every community in Illinois have suitable, accessible, and adequately staffed public service offices within a reasonable commute.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

AFSCME Illinois supports a public policy requiring a community public hearing be held at least three (3) months before any public service office, facility, or institution is closed, or is relocated so as to negatively impact the quality and/or the accessibility of services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will continue its efforts to organize any and all workers who provided public services in the private sector, 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 and building support in our communities, legislative action and member mobilization.

Submitted by:

Terry Boone
AFSCME Local 672

RESOLUTION # 9

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:

The assault on public higher education has been furthered by the Trump Administration's efforts to reduce federal 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:

The contempt for public higher education in Illinois reached its zenith under Bruce Rauner, as that embodiment of Ivy League privilege systematically sought to slash funding for state universities and the student Monetary Assistance Program, compounded by his refusal to negotiate a budget for over two years, and leading to severe disruptions at state universities across Illinois, including class and program closures, staff reductions, tuition increases and further enrollment losses; and

WHEREAS:

This year lawmakers finally addressed the long-term damage caused by this disinvestment in public higher education, including student out migration, loss of technological innovation and reduced economic growth, when they approved the FY2020 state budget that began to reverse the decline in state support for public universities as well as providing new funding for campus capital improvements; and

WHEREAS:

As a result of drastic cutbacks over more than five years, support staff at state universities, many represented by AFSCME, have been subject to a repeated series of furloughs, layoffs, position eliminations, program cuts and increased

workloads; and

WHEREAS:

Despite the additional state funds that universities have now received, 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 far too many 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 the unfair policies of the State Universities Civil Service Commission; 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, recognizing that requires a long-term fix to our state's fiscal woes through the adoption of the Fair Tax amendment.

Submitted by:

Tad Hawk, AFSCME Local 1805

RESOLUTION # 10

DEMANDING HIGHER WAGES 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:

This shift was motivated in large part by a desire to reduce costs, eliminating public sector jobs where union representation has won affordable health care, pensions, and fair wages and replacing them with a workforce with low levels of unionization and low compensation; and

WHEREAS:

AFSCME Council 31 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:

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:

The AFSCME Council 31 legislative program includes advocacy for needed state revenue increases to fund improvements in non-profit agency workers' wages and benefits; and

WHEREAS:

Among the lowest paid community workers are those supporting individuals with developmental disabilities, whose starting wage is just \$10.49 per hour despite recent hard-won annual wage increases totaling an extra \$1.25 per hour; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31 brought together members in developmental disability and child welfare agencies to lead an intensive lobbying and public education effort aimed at winning a family-supporting wage; 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 work in coalition with progressive elected officials, other labor unions, human service organizations and advocacy groups to increase state revenue sufficient to avoid further cuts to the human service safety net, and

BE IT FURTHER 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 expand the Care Campaign model of working cooperatively with employers to improve quality of care through joint advocacy for non-profit agency workers in other sectors; 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:

Yolanda Woods
AFSCME Local 2481

CARRY THE FIGHT FORWARD

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 and fairly 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:

Even before the Janus ruling was issued, Council 31 had initiated the AFSCME Strong program to educate every AFSCME-represented employee about the dishonest and insidious 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:

The AFSCME Strong program urges every member to stand together to preserve and protect this great union that we have all fought so hard to build into one of the most widely respected and effective organizations in our state; and

WHEREAS:

Despite undertaking this intensive employee outreach effort which resulted in thousands of new union members, there is no doubt that the Janus ruling has negatively impacted our union's finances; 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

WHEREAS:

These radically different circumstances required that we subject every aspect of our union to a thorough review to ensure that we continue to have the resources and the structural efficiency that will allow AFSCME in Illinois to continue to provide to members high quality contract negotiation and enforcement, legal advocacy, and legislative, policy and communications support, as well as having the capability to continue to mount the kind of comprehensive campaigns that enabled us to beat back efforts to drastically slash public pensions, weaken bargaining rights, and privatize public services; and

WHEREAS:

The Council 31 Executive Board, led by its Committee on the Future, which was established pursuant to a resolution adopted at the 20th Biennial Convention, began such a review in order to ensure that the Council is effectively utilizing all of our available resources and to determine whether those resources are sufficient to meet the challenges ahead; and

WHEREAS:

Based on that review, the Council 31 Executive Board determined that additional resources would be required to offset revenues lost as a result of the Janus ruling in the near term and recommended the adoption of a constitutional amendment that would replace a significant portion of the lost revenues by establishing a local union rebate to the Council; and

WHEREAS:

The local union rebate would rely on a sliding scale to ensure that local unions continue to have the resources they need: and

WHEREAS:

By proposing the amendment, the Council 31 Executive Board has affirmed its determination to ensure that our union remains the potent fighting force that has expanded rights on the job, defied and defeated Bruce Rauner, and continues to improve the lives of our members.

THEREFORE BE IT 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 and all affiliated locals shall strengthen our efforts to educate all members about the forces seeking to wipe out unions in our country—particularly unions representing employees in the public sector; and.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That delegates to this 21st 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:

Efforts to address the new financial challenges shall continue at both the council and local union level and shall include an examination of greater operational efficiencies, new technologies, limiting expenditures, consolidation of functions or mergers of local unions--all considered with a determination not to diminish in any way the potency, efficacy, coherence, and strong spirit of our union; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That the Council 31 Executive Board, based on further recommendations of its Committee on the Future, shall continue its efforts to ensure that AFSCME remains a potent force fighting to improve the lives of union members, expanding our numbers and further building our strength, and defending the public services that are so vital to all working people.

Submitted by:

Kathy Lane
AFSCME Local 448

WORKPLACE ACTIVISM MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

WHEREAS:

The only way to counter the union destruction scheme of the wealthy elite and their multiple organizational arms is with a proactive member outreach effort that seeks to ensure that every member understands the forces behind the Janus case and its potentially disastrous consequences for the ability of working people to have a strong voice on the job and in the wider society; and

WHEREAS:

The most effective counterweight to these forces is a strong and enduring bond between our AFSCME stewards and activists and the frontline member; and

WHEREAS:

For more than a decade, AFSCME Council 31 has sponsored an intensive steward training program that has graduated more than 4,000 AFSCME Certified Stewards, and

WHEREAS:

Local union stewards all across the state build trusted relationships day-in and day-out by providing high quality representation to members whose rights are violated as well as helping to resolve problems that arise on the job; and

WHEREAS:

Stewards have been critical in mobilizing members to take action, especially during campaigns to win fair contracts, to resist assaults on basic rights and benefits, and to participate fully in the electoral process.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That all local unions will strive to strengthen their steward structures to ensure that there is a solid infrastructure of committed activists who will communicate regularly with the entire membership; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will seek to develop additional training programs that can enhance the skills and knowledge of local union activists with the goal of continuing to strengthen the bonds of solidarity amongst our members.

Submitted By:

John Rayburn
AFSCME Local 1215

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

WHEREAS:

AFSCME has a long and proud history of diversity and inclusion within our union, as well as serving as a leading voice for human rights in the wider society; and

WHEREAS:

From its founding, our union welcomed all public employees, bringing together people of different races, nationalities, gender, gender identity and expression, religion, and educational backgrounds—rural and urban, without regard for political party, sexual preference, 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:

The real and symbolic potency of that struggle impelled Dr. Martin Luther King to march with the sanitation workers and to shine a bright light on the critical importance of unions in securing economic justice for all workers; and

WHEREAS:

Over the 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:

From the assassination of Dr. King down through the years, time and again the forces of hatred and division have risen up to seek to break that unity and solidarity, often instigated and abetted by a wealthy elite that seeks to further consolidate its own riches and 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:

That unity and solidarity were critical to our union's ability to withstand the unrelenting attack that Bruce Rauner waged on public employees in our state and to cohere into a fighting force strong enough to drive him out of office and into near oblivion; and

WHEREAS:

Today the forces of hatred and division in our country appear to be growing more bold and virulent with each passing day, all too often abetted by political leaders who refuse to stand against white supremacy, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigrant rhetoric; and

WHEREAS:

It is no coincidence that such divisive tactics are intensifying just as workers' rights on the job are under assault by President Trump's appointees to the National Labor Relations Board; and

WHEREAS:

When a broken immigration system leaves workers in the shadows of society, outside the protection of the law, those workers are at risk of exploitation by unscrupulous employers, to their own detriment and that of all workers who rely on standards of fair compensation and safe working conditions to be upheld; 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:

The more that working people fall prey to such divisiveness, the weaker we become in our ability to forge the kind of unyielding unity that has carried us through so many battles here in Illinois and across the country; 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 strongly condemns all effort to divide working people against each other, abetting the forces who would undo workers' rights, drive down family incomes, reduce access to health care, and weaken retirement security; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 recognizes that the hateful rhetoric of white supremacy, anti-Semitism, and other gender and racial bias, can all too often lead to conflict, even violence; 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 affirms that all people have the right to human dignity; irrespective of racial or ethnic background, 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 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 21st Biennial Convention recommit our union to upholding the core labor movement principle that an injury to one is an injury to all.

Submitted by:

Trudy Williams, AFSCME Local 3433

KEEP ON ORGANIZING—BUILDING OUR RANKS

WHEREAS:

Public services and public service workers are threatened like never before with attacks aiming to silence our voice, preventing us from working to improve our jobs and advocate for quality public services that we provide; and

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 their lives and increases 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:

Council 31 members trained as Volunteer Member Organizers play a vital role in reaching out to potential new members and assisting in organizing; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31's organizing program reaches out to public service workers throughout Illinois—those who work directly for government and those who work for agencies that are funded by government—to help them form unions in their workplaces; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31 continues to seek to organize all employees of contractors performing work that is related to the work that AFSCME members are already performing in order to raise the living standards for these workers and to provide a disincentive for any further privatization of bargaining unit work; and

WHEREAS:

Less than 7% of all private sector workers are represented by unions and the resulting decrease in the standard of living threatens all workers-public and private-alike; and

WHEREAS:

The National Labor Relations Act fails to adequately protect private sector workers who frequently face threats, intimidation and termination by their employers when they attempt to form a union; 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:

Only strong worker organizations will reverse these trends, lift the incomes of working people and create economic opportunity for generations to come; and

WHEREAS:

Public support and approval of unions is at its highest level in the last fifteen years; and

WHEREAS:

Reforming our nation's labor laws is essential to enabling all employees to exercise their right to form a union; and

WHEREAS:

Corporate interests, politicians, the press, and other anti-union critics point to the diminished compensation and rights in the private sector to justify their call for reducing the salaries and benefits and rights of public sector workers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That Council 31 and all its affiliates continue to emphasize that we are a union for all those who work in service to the public, whether in public or private employment; and

BE IT FURTHER 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, and hospitals and other health care facilities-all of which are funded with public dollars; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Council 31 continues to expand its Volunteer Member Organizer program and work with activists to identify organizing opportunities among unrepresented public services workers, 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, 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:

Phillip Cisneros
AFSCME Local 3969

PREPARING FOR THE 2020 ELECTIONS

WHEREAS:

The last election cycle in Illinois was one the most successful ever for AFSCME members, the labor movement and the public services we provide, resulting in the defeat of the viscous anti-labor Bruce Rauner and his replacement by a governor who respects labor and working people, as well as the election of pro-labor officials to other statewide offices, the reelection of pro-labor Members of Congress with the addition of two new such members, and the election of a labor-friendly supermajority in the State House and Senate, followed by important gains in several municipal elections; and

WHEREAS:

The consequences of those electoral victories have been abundantly evident during the past year, with an overwhelmingly ratified contract for state employees, the restitution of state workers to their proper pay steps and the payment of their owed backpay, the adoption of a no-cuts state budget that moved towards more adequate funding for other public services like higher wages for direct care workers and increased funding for public higher education, a new consensus among key state and local officials that cuts to public employee pension benefits are “off the table”, as well the passage of the Fair Tax constitutional amendment proposal; and

WHEREAS:

Despite this sea change in Illinois as well as the election of a pro-labor majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, the war on working people and organized labor, especially public employees and the public services, continues to rage, abetted by an anti-labor White House and its pro-corporate allies in the U.S. Senate; and

WHEREAS:

While the corporate forces in Illinois hostile to public employees and public services have been pushed back for now, they remain vocal, aggressive, and well-funded and are mobilizing all their resources for the 2020 elections with a particular focus on defeating the adoption of the Fair Tax on the November ballot.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 and affiliated local unions will begin immediately to prepare for a massive effort in the 2020 election cycle to protect the gains we have made in Illinois, secure the adoption of the Fair Tax amendment to the Illinois constitution, and

change the nation's course by helping to elect a president and a US Congress who will put the interests of working people over those of big corporations; and.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 local unions will reach out to their members through the PEOPLE program to assure they are fully educated on the issues and candidates, including the Fair Tax, that they contribute to the PEOPLE program resources by becoming PEOPLE MVPs and, where possible, stepping up to become PEOPLE Champions, that they are registered to vote and they and their families get out to vote; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME locals make a priority of recruiting and mobilizing their members to volunteer for PEOPLE-supported campaigns, to knock on doors and talk directly to their neighbors and others about the importance of voting, our candidate recommendations, and the critical importance of passing the Fair Tax amendment.

Submitted by:

Gary Cacciapaglia
AFSCME Local 1058

FIXING OUR BROKEN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

WHEREAS:

Access to quality, affordable and comprehensive health care is a fundamental human right and one that should be available to all; and

WHEREAS:

Despite the important improvements to access and cost control resulting from the Affordable Care Act of 2010, our nation's health care system remains broken, with over 27 million uninsured Americans, nearly twice that many underinsured, and even for the fully insured, no coverage for many critical services, while overall health care costs remain more than 50% higher than other comparable industrial nations; and

WHEREAS:

Our broken system is a hodge-podge of uncoordinated, overlapping and sometimes competing public, private, and "non-profit" interests as well as profit-driven insurance, pharmaceutical, medical technology, and marketing industries but the fundamental cause for this dysfunction is that too much of our health care system is based on private profit rather than public need, distorting public policies and driving the ever-increasing costs of the system; and

WHEREAS:

No one has a greater stake in fixing our broken health care system than AFSCME; many of our members are directly employed in providing health care services, from primary and mental health clinics, to public and non-profit hospitals, to long-term residential and community-based facilities for those with disabilities, mental health challenges and other needs, while others employed in providing access to health care through the city and state human services programs; and

WHEREAS:

For all AFSCME members, affordable, quality and comprehensive health care coverage is critical, and protecting and improving that coverage has been top priority for all our collective bargaining agreements.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will continue to fight to protect access to affordable comprehensive and quality health care for its members and their families through its collective bargaining, legislative, legal and political activities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will also use these same means to fight to protect the services provided by AFSCME members, including public health and mental health clinics, hospitals, nursing homes and other residential care services, from the budget-cutters, privatizers, and others seeking to replace public providers with private interests; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will support legislation and other public policies at both the state and federal levels to improve access to care, increase coverage for all necessary health-related services and control health costs without reducing quality of or access to care, while opposing efforts to cut expenditures by reducing coverage or shifting costs; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will work toward systemic changes to American health care that prioritize public need over private profit, including the regulation and control of the pharmaceutical industry to lower drug costs, improvements to the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, and moving towards a health care system that truly can ensure access for all.

Submitted by:

Tamara Rietman
AFSCME Local 3693

WELCOME TO AFSCME—IMPROVING NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

WHEREAS:

In years past, union orientation programs often relied heavily on simply explaining that the workplace is “union” and that everyone who works there must become a union member or pay a fair share fee; and

WHEREAS:

In the wake of the Janus ruling, such an approach is no longer legal as employees can now refuse to join the union without paying any fees at all; 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:

AFSCME Council 31 has developed orientation talking points for a variety of different types of workplaces which make it easy to present important information in a relatively brief time; and

WHEREAS:

Council 31 has also developed new employee orientation kits which provide a wide range of informational materials to help make new employees more familiar with all aspects of the union and which can be shipped out to local unions; and

WHEREAS:

Orientation of new employees cannot be seen as a one-time interaction, but rather must be viewed as an ongoing process in which the new employee learns about the specific provisions of the union contract, about how contracts are negotiated and

rights enforced, and about how the union can help resolve any problems that might arise, and

WHEREAS:

Such ongoing orientation should also provide information on the workings of the local union, for example when and where local union meetings are held or who the local officers are; 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:

In order to conduct regular and effective new employee orientation programs, it is critical that the local union receive up-to-date information on new hires from the employer and be allowed time to meet with all new employees.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will work with other public sector unions to enact legislation requiring that employers provide the needed information regarding new hires, as well as allowing time for the union to conduct orientation programs; 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 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 FURTHER RESOLVED:

That all local unions will appoint a Membership Chair or Membership Committee who will be responsible for ensuring that the local can present an interesting, informative and inspiring orientation program to new employees, as well as provide

ongoing support and encouragement to help the new employee become an active and committed union member; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Each local union leadership team, along with its Council 31 Staff Representative, will seek to identify who can best conduct orientation sessions in a way that can motivate new employees to join the union; 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:

Lori Gladson
AFSCME Local 51