

AFSCME Council 31

2026 Legislative Agenda

Support responsible budget and adequate revenues for state and local governments

Illinois has made significant strides to fiscal stability over the past decade. However, the Trump Administration's steep cuts to federal funding for a variety of services and programs are set to begin in the upcoming fiscal year and will seriously destabilize public services throughout Illinois—jeopardizing thousands of public service jobs in the process. AFSCME will advocate for actions in the General Assembly that will strengthen public services, protect good jobs, and address staffing shortages, including:

- Oppose any cutback to vital state services, facility closures, or layoff of state employees.
- Oppose any legislation that would undermine adequate funding for local government services, including but not limited to, any effort to reduce local governments' share of the income tax distributed through the Local Government Distributive Fund.
- Support efforts to close corporate tax loopholes, including efforts to decouple state taxes on businesses from the federal code, and oppose efforts to expand such unfair giveaways.
- Support revenue-raising measures that would reinforce the progress made towards responsible budgeting, Support initiatives to lay the groundwork for the establishment of a fair system of taxation in Illinois that would raise additional revenues by making sure the wealthy and big business pay their fair share.
- Support legislation that would expand the responsible taxing authority of local governments and oppose legislation limiting that authority.

Stabilize pension funds and address inadequacies and inequities of Tier 2 pension benefits

As Tier 1 pension participants retire and the Tier 2 workforce grows, the lesser retirement benefits are proving to be a barrier to the recruitment and retention of much needed staff throughout the public sector. With state and local government budgets in distress and state pension systems underfunded, corporate forces and their allies continue to push the false narrative that cutting pension benefits is the only viable way to stabilize pensions funds. AFSCME will:

- Continue to press for improvements to the Tier 2 pensions
- Support legislation to address inadequacies and inequities in the pension systems.
- Continue to press for a solution to the pension funding crisis that is constitutional and ensures retirement security for public employees.

- Oppose any effort to amend the Illinois Constitution to remove protections against pension diminishment.
- Oppose efforts to force public employees into risky defined-contribution retirement plans.
- Oppose unconstitutional cuts to the pension benefits of employees or retirees in any public pension system.

Protect and expand workers' rights

Despite great progress in developing a framework of laws that seek to foster strong union rights, fairer policies, and safe working conditions for Illinois workers, many problems remain. Moreover, the corporate elite and right-wing forces have launched a massive and sophisticated nationwide campaign to drive down wages and destroy unions. Led in our state by the Illinois Policy Institute, these anti-union forces continue to press to weaken all laws that protect workers, whether in the private or public sector. AFSCME will:

- Support all measures that improve workplace safety and reduce the dangers that employees face on the job.
- Support efforts to ensure that state and local government funds are not used to block workers' efforts to form unions.
- Fight any effort to weaken or diminish the collective bargaining rights provided to employees by Illinois law.
- Support efforts to expand collective bargaining rights to public employees currently excluded from labor laws while opposing any attempts to strip away bargaining rights from employees currently covered by the Illinois Public Employee Labor Relations Act or the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act.
- Oppose any efforts to diminish workers' compensation or unemployment insurance benefits.
- Support expansion of unemployment insurance benefits to include school district and university employees who are not afforded the opportunity to work during the summer months or other academic breaks.
- Support expansion of unemployment insurance benefits to striking and locked out workers.
- Support stronger remedies when employers commit unfair labor practices.

Establishing Guardrails for the use of Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as the latest new technology promising to improve our lives and usher in a utopia of less work. Despite an increasing body of evidence demonstrating the inaccuracies of AI, nearly half of all jobs in America face exposure to some form of AI leading to enhanced risk of job loss across various sectors. The increasing presence of AI in public sector workplaces in Illinois calls for an urgency to establish meaningful guardrails to protect quality public services and the employees

who provide them. To that end, AFSCME Council 31 will work for the passage of legislation to:

- Bar employers from using AI to reduce work assignments, duties, hours, or pay or changing any other terms or conditions of employment.
- Require human review of all decisions made by AI.
- Require employers to complete impact assessments prior to implementation of AI and on a continuing basis.
- Require employers to notify employees and their bargaining representatives prior to implementation of AI in the workplace; and to bargain over such use.

Support adequate funding for state universities/equity for employees

Despite recent funding increases, state universities are still struggling to recover from decades of inadequate state funding which has resulted in substantial cutbacks at many campuses. Moreover, state universities in Illinois have lagged in raising the pay of support staff as demonstrated in a study that showed a disparity of more than 20% between university employees and state government employees doing the same work. AFSCME will continue to work in coalition with other unions, educational advocates and student organizations to:

- Improve state university funding.
- Establish a minimum wage (higher than state minimum wage) for university employees.
- Oppose efforts to weaken State University Civil Service System rules that seek to ensure fair treatment of university employees.

Fight privatization of public services and assets

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

- Oppose all legislation that would have the effect of privatizing any service currently provided by public employees.
- Oppose efforts to weaken or repeal the laws that currently restrict privatization of any public services, such as the law prohibiting privatization of school district support services.
- Oppose efforts to expand charter schools and press to ensure that available educational funding is devoted to public education.
- Oppose efforts to sell or lease publicly run nursing homes.
- Oppose public private partnerships that would open the door to privatization of essential public services.

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

Thousands of workers serving individuals with developmental disabilities in private community-based agencies, as well as other human service providers, depend on funding from the state to improve wages. AFSCME has been leading the way in the fight for additional state funding earmarked for wage increases. Last year AFSCME helped win the seventh straight funding increase to help improve wages for direct support personnel in community agencies in three years. AFSCME will:

- Support passage of legislation providing for a \$1.20 per hour wage increase for direct support personnel in community disability agencies.
- Press for adequate state funding to ensure fair wages for frontline workers in providing services in other private human services agencies, such as those serving at-risk youth and the mentally ill.
- Work for legislation to help organize new units in this sector by limiting employer anti-union activities.
- Press for the passage of legislation to establish guardrails for disability service providers owned by private equity firms to prohibit activity that would cause the provider financial distress and jeopardize quality of care.

Fight for Affordable Prescription Drugs

Prescription drug prices continue to climb at inexplicable rates, forcing working families and retirees to choose between food, housing and life-sustaining medications. The cost of prescription drugs is not correlated to the actual cost of research, development or production by pharmaceutical companies and does not reflect the public subsidies, tax breaks, or taxpayer funds for research and development provided to these companies by government agencies. AFSCME will fight for the passage of legislation to address prescription drug affordability.