

Winter 2016

MAINLINE

The Official Publication of AFSCME Local 444

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AFSCME Local 444

EBMUD employees, plumbers and pipemen, operators and technicians, and workers from our many classifications began organizing and fighting to unionize in the late fifties, and after two strikes, were finally recognized with the adoption of AFSCME Local 444 as the sole representative in collective bargaining in 1962.

Since that time, countless hours, days and weeks have been spent hammering out the many contracts that have afforded us the living wages, descent benefits and good working conditions we have today. We hear again and again that EBMUD is a good place to work – it is, just take a look at how many people apply for the few jobs available and how long people stay. This has been made so in no small part from the work our Union does negotiating and defending our contract and our members.

We need you to fill out the membership commitment form enclosed and return it to your steward. This is for our records and the following talks about why we need it and why we need you!

Friedrichs v. CTA

Anti-Labor forces are gaining momentum in attacks on us legislatively and at the ballot box. Now they are using the judicial system to try to dismantle us by continuing to attempt to overturn an important 1977 case, *Aboud vs. the Detroit Board of Education*. This decision has been challenged numerous times and upheld, but the enemies of public sector unions have chosen to push on yet again.

The Supreme Court has just heard arguments in a case brought by Friedrichs et al. against the California Teachers Association (CTA). The argument revolves around the *Aboud* decision, which allows for ‘agency shop’ where all employees pay a ‘fair share’ for the cost to the Union of negotiating and administering the Contract. At hand is the ‘fair share’ fee. Under the likely conservative ruling of the Supreme Court, the Union would no longer be able to collect the ‘fair share’ fee from non-members, and

those choosing not to be a member would be allowed to become a ‘free-rider’, benefiting from the work the Union does in negotiating and defending the contract while not paying for it.

This could severely weaken Unions nationwide that depend on business agents, organizers, researchers and consultants to do the work of the Local in preparation for negotiating contracts and assuring that they have compliance. The Internationals and State level Unions also do much more for working families on a political level lobbying for good legislation that protects workers’ rights and safety, as well as endorsing candidates they believe best able to defend workers and keep America a prosperous country for working families.

AFSCME PEOPLE and AFSCME Strong (from www.AFSCMEStrong.org)

AFSCME Strong is Our Plan.

We have a plan and the power to protect the jobs, financial security and future of AFSCME members. That plan is AFSCME Strong. We know that in order to survive we need to be strong. We need to be AFSCME Strong.

It’s Our Turn.

For too many years, public service workers (and actually most Americans) have seen their job security, wages and benefits, and retirement security erode — even though for the top 1 percent things have been great. Now, when it’s our turn to make things better for our families, they’re trying to cripple our union. We’re not going to let that happen.

Bold Vision.

AFSCME Strong is a bold vision of building a strong union of committed members

- A union that connects to all public workers.
- A union that has power on the shop floor, at the bargaining table and at the state legislature.
- It’s building a union that 100% of our members will be loyal to.

Big Goals.

Last year AFSCME responded nationally to a similar Supreme Court threat by adding 133,000 new AFSCME members in our 50,000 Stronger campaign. We will build on that.

Step 1: Organizing Member to Member.

AFSCME Strong makes organizing job one. In the next year, 5 percent of AFSCME members will receive in-depth training on how to reach and connect with coworkers. These AFSCME Strong member activists will be the engine that drives our effort to engage 80 percent of our members, one conversation at a time.

Step 2: PEOPLE Power.

Many of the corporate politicians that are hell bent on wiping out the labor movement won during the last election. We need to do more and do better when it comes to advocating in the political process for candidates that care about the middle class. PEOPLE is a major priority. We will make PEOPLE promotion a central issue at every union event and we will increase participation in the program nationwide. Our goal is to have 10 percent of members signed up as PEOPLE MVPs.

Step 3. Support and Accountability.

We are all in this together. AFSCME Strong is structured to help locals, councils and the national union share resources, best practices – and information. We're setting up a campaign tracker for affiliates and International Union staff so we can see each other's progress recruiting and training volunteers and talking to members. That site will also have resources and campaign updates. We'll also be sharing campaign news through regular email updates.

Getting involved: Please **fill out the Membership card enclosed** and return it to your steward. Consider making monthly contribution to AFSCME PEOPLE to continue to do the political work to protect the rights and benefits afforded to working families, and come to General Membership Meetings to find out what is happening in your local.

Unions Are Good For America

Unions benefit all workers

- Unions boost incomes of nonunion workers in industries and markets where unions are strong. For example, a high school graduate whose workplace is not unionized but whose industry is 25 percent unionized is paid 5 percent more than similar workers in less unionized industries.
- Union members earn on average \$207 more each week than nonunion workers. That's nearly \$11,000 a year.
- Women and African Americans represented by unions earn between 30.5 and 32.8 percent more than their nonunion counterparts, respectively. Latino workers with the union advantage make 53.2 percent more than those who are not represented by a union.
- Unions reduce income inequality. The wage gap among union members is 40 percent less severe than the wage gap among nonunion workers. For women union members, the difference amounts to \$200 plus per week more than nonunion women workers.
- Workers covered by a collective bargaining contract are more likely to have access to health care and pension benefits provided through their employer than nonunion workers. In fact, 95 percent of union members have health insurance and a pension plan available to them, far greater than those who are not in a union.

Unions make all workplaces safer

- Unions have championed laws such as the National Labor Relations Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act that set safety and health standards for all workers, and union contracts help to enforce those rights on the job.
- Union members have access to some of the best workplace health and safety resources available. The cost of preventing workplace injuries is far less than the cost of dealing with the injury itself, and a safe workplace attracts and retains quality workers, which, in turn, makes the entire community safer.

Unions make better communities

- Taxpayers are better off in states where public employees enjoy collective bargaining because workers earn more and therefore have more to spend, building a stronger local economy.
- Incomes are higher in states where state employees can unionize.
- Eight of the top 10 states in terms of disposable income recognize the right of public employees to bargain collectively. Nine of the bottom 10 states in per capita income do not have public sector collective bargaining.
- Increasing the number of workers in unions by a modest amount could pump \$49 billion into the U.S. economy.

Unions make people happy

- Union members are generally happier in various quality-of-life measures than nonunion workers, according to a study by professors at Baylor University and the University of Arkansas.
- Union-represented workers are more likely to have a medical plan and retirement benefits. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 94 percent of private industry workers who were represented by a union in 2014 were offered health insurance benefits by their employer. That compares to 68 percent of nonunion workers.