



Q & A

AFSCME Council 5, AFL-CIO

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Q: What is AFSCME?

A: AFSCME stands for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. AFSCME is:

- the largest public employee union in the nation
- the nation's fastest-growing union
- the second largest union in the AFL-CIO—more than 1.2 million strong
- the *only* union chartered exclusively by the AFL-CIO to represent state and local employees and the men and women who work for universities, health and social service agencies
- the only union that devotes *all* of its energies to these employees

Q: What can AFSCME do for me?

A: Give you power—power that will help you make decisions about promotion policies, job security, fair hearing of grievances, better wages, pensions, and much more.

You help determine your own future by joining with other public employees and by getting AFSCME's expert assistance and service.

Q: Why do I need a union?

A: Simply talking about issues that affect public employees just isn't enough—you have to be heard. All by yourself, it's hard to be heard. You and your co-workers face similar problems and have similar needs. When you organize, you'll gain the strength to make the changes you need by working together. Through AFSCME, employees have a voice—one that is heard—on the job and in the legislatures and city halls.

Q: What is collective bargaining?

A: Collective bargaining is the process for dealing with management over such things as wages, promotions, job security, transfer rights, career ladders, pensions, and other benefits. Here's how it works: The union's representatives—chosen by you—sit down and hammer out an agreement known as a "union contract" with management on every issue of concern to your bargaining unit. They sit at the bargaining table as equals with management. The union bargaining committee represents the united strength of all union members. The more members, the more strength you will have. But before any agreement is accepted by the committee, the majority of members will have to give their approval by ratifying the agreement.

Q: What is the difference between AFSCME and AFL-CIO?

A: AFSCME is one of 60 unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO is simply a federation of those 60 unions. AFSCME's president is a member of the executive council of the AFL-CIO and serves—as a member or in some cases as chair—of several important AFL-CIO committees.

Q: How can I get my grievances resolved?

A: If you have a problem with your employer, *you need representation*—someone to prepare and present your case. AFSCME gives you that representation. AFSCME also makes sure you get a hearing by establishing a grievance procedure to which management must respond promptly and fairly. When you are part of a strong union, representing the overwhelming majority of workers, the employer has to listen to you.

Q: Does AFSCME represent clericals, professionals, and other "white collar" employees?

A: AFSCME represents more than 500,000 clericals, professionals, and other "white collar" employees. In fact, AFSCME represents more "white collar" employees of state and local governments than any other union. AFSCME is a member of the AFL-CIO's Department of Professional Employees.

Further, AFSCME also represents many so-called "new collar" workers—people whose jobs are in some of today's most modern occupations. These workers—data processors, therapists, security personnel, lab technicians, computer programmers, nurses, for instance—often have increasing levels of training, expect to deal with technology on the job, and have special interests that AFSCME speaks for.

Q: What does the union do on behalf of its women workers who are concerned about pay equity, women's rights, etc?

A: AFSCME knows that full-time women workers still earn on the average less than two-thirds of what men earn. At least half of this gap is due to the systematic underpayment in jobs that are filled primarily by women. AFSCME is the leader in obtaining pay equity—which means eliminating discrimination in pay for female-dominated jobs. Thousands of AFSCME members have won hundreds of million dollars in pay equity adjustments since 1981.

Q: How much are union dues?

A: The amount depends on what you and your fellow workers determine is necessary to provide the union's representational services. The union's dues are set by the local membership and that means you.

Q: What does AFSCME know about my job situation?

A: AFSCME negotiates and services more than 3,000 written agreements covering employees of states, cities, counties, towns, colleges and universities, hospitals and other health care facilities, and federal agencies. Employment standards vary from state to state and community to community, but AFSCME is familiar—and experienced—with them all. As its national headquarters, AFSCME has a data bank with information on pay scales, job descriptions, fringe benefits, and contract language covering public and other service employees represented by AFSCME throughout the nation.