

Council 13 CONNECTION

Council 13 AFSCME, the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

UNION BUILDING AMID PANDEMIC



LOCAL 1224 HOSTS CURBSIDE "GRAB & GO"

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INSIDE:
This story and
more on how your
union is
adapting to
COVID-19!

FIRST EVER
DIGITAL EDITION!



Executive Director's Message

I hope you are staying safe and healthy during what has been an incredibly challenging time for our world, our country, and even our union. Many things are changing, including this newsletter, which you are receiving digitally for the first time ever.

Another change has been how we conduct the business of our union. AFSCME International held its 44th Biennial Convention virtually on August 13-14 and concluded on September 2. Council 13 will hold its 48th Annual Convention virtually on Friday, October 23. The Convention Call was mailed on August 18. Not even COVID-19 can stop us from moving our union forward.

Throughout this awful pandemic, AFSCME members have been the ones on the front lines keeping our communities running and protecting our most vulnerable individuals. Council 13 has been fighting all along to save members' jobs, uphold contracts, and ensure safe working conditions.

The jobs you do often go underappreciated, especially now, and the best way we can show public employees just a shred of the appreciation they deserve is by protecting their health, their communities, and their livelihoods by passing adequate funding for states, cities, localities, and school districts. State and local revenues are being hit hard by the pandemic, and we cannot recover public health or the economy without strong public services. The House has passed multiple bills, so we must urge the Senate and the White House to act now.

This first digital newsletter features stories about the ways your sisters and brothers have forged ahead amid the pandemic to strengthen their local unions. Read on and consider how you could adapt these ideas to your local.

Thank you for all you do as a public service worker and as a member of AFSCME.

In Solidarity,
David R. Fillman
Executive Director, AFSCME Council 13



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MONDAY - FRIDAY 9 AM - 5 PM

Your one stop for any and all union issues and inquiries!

Local 1224 hosts Curbside "Grab & Go"



While many things remain uncertain, one thing is for sure: it is more important than ever to have each other's backs.

In that spirit, the Executive Board of AFSCME Local 1224 (PHEAA Clericals) collaborated at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic to determine how they could best help their membership during this difficult time.

"We decided we have to do something for the members," Local 1224 President Jamar Johnson said.

They sent out a survey to members asking how they are doing on a scale of one to five and what they need most to get by. The majority of responses came back saying members needed the pandemic essentials: masks, sanitizer, and gloves.

So, the Board members put together care packages with those exact items and announced a Curbside "Grab & Go" at the AFSCME Conference Center in Harrisburg.

Local 1224 members were able to drive up, sign in, tell their glove size, and get their care packages from volunteers who were wearing masks and practicing social distancing, all while remaining in their vehicle. They also had the ability to update their membership cards and register to vote, as well as obtain some informational literature on various topics including mental health support.

"It was awesome. We were proud to do it, and we may do it again in the future," Jamar said.

"A lot of members were just glad to see us because they had been working from home."

With this effort, these AFSCME sisters and brothers protected the health of their members while building the strength of their local union.



DARK MONEY ATTACKS

Group trying to defund unions lies about AFSCME position on “defund the police”

While AFSCME members have spent the last few months working on the front lines of a global pandemic and urging Congress to pass funding for the public services that keep society functioning, Dark Money organizations like the State Policy Network (SPN) and its affiliate Freedom Foundation have continued their attempts to “defund and defang” labor unions representing public service workers.

In an especially desperate attempt to deceive working people out of their union membership, Freedom Foundation’s latest front called Opt Out Today has been sending unsolicited text messages and emails to AFSCME-represented employees in Pennsylvania with misleading information about the union’s stance on police reform issues and how member dues are spent.

At the recent AFSCME International Convention, delegates adopted a landmark resolution, which reads in part:

“The calls to strip law enforcement officers’ collective bargaining rights or to expel all police unions from the labor movement are misdirected. It is a bedrock principle of our movement and our union that all working people, including law enforcement officers, deserve the right to join together, and collectively bargain for better pay and fair treatment on the job.”

AFSCME does not support divestment from any public services, including policing, and is proud to represent approximately 90,000 law enforcement and public safety officers.

SPN has many spawns in Pennsylvania, including The Commonwealth Foundation, The Fairness Center, Americans for Fair Treatment, Commonwealth Partners, Free to Serve, Opt Out Today, and more, which all seek to destroy unions by getting members to drop their membership through lies and deceit.

AFSCME has fought for adequate state and local funding through legislation like the HEROES Act while these so called “think tanks” have done nothing to aid public services or working families throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

The President and CEO of SPN openly admitted the organization’s goal to “defund and defang” public sector labor unions, which would jeopardize the workplace rights and protections of front-line workers as well as the safety and quality of services they provide. The only ones trying to defund anything are these billionaire-funded special interest groups.

AFSCME members know sticking with the union is the way to go. We will continue advocating for funding of all public services and working to improve the lives of all working people regardless of Dark Money's attempts at defunding us.



Learn more about AFSCME's stance on police reforms



Learn more about the Dark Money ties in Pennsylvania

Council 13 pushes for paid sick, family leave

DARK MONEY GROUPS BASH WORKERS

Governor Tom Wolf's administration recently announced that they will begin on Oct. 15 to provide Commonwealth employees under the governor's jurisdiction with up to six weeks of paid parental leave for the birth of a new child or adoption or foster care placement of a child under the age of 18. Workers employed by the three state row offices will also be provided this benefit.

Employees become eligible for this benefit after one year of continuous service with the Commonwealth. The offer replenishes with each new child, and if both parents are Commonwealth employees, they both would be given up to six weeks of paid parental leave.

This announcement came as Wolf called for the passage of legislation that would require Pennsylvania employers to provide paid sick and family leave for their employees.

"Such a policy would be the decent thing to do even without a global pandemic, but with the threat of COVID-19 still prevalent, it would make it easier for workers to stay home when sick without fearing job loss," AFSCME Council 13 Executive Director David Fillman said.

The Wolf Administration initiated conversations about paid parental leave with the union leading up to this decision. Council 13 supports this initiative and urges the legislature to extend such a policy to all of Pennsylvania's working families.

Unfortunately, while the Wolf Administration, pro-worker legislators, and labor unions push for policies that would protect the health and security of working families, organizations like the Commonwealth Foundation saw this as an opportunity to politicize the issue and bash state workers.

Commonwealth Foundation Vice President Nathan Benefield disparaged state workers for using their collectively bargained paid time off and for being largely exempt from layoffs, as if those are bad things. Those are the benefits of a good union, which every worker deserves.

It is not surprising to see this from a group tied to unsolicited text messages and emails to AFSCME members with deceitful information trying to get them to drop their union membership. They are part of a tight-knit network of Dark Money operations including the Freedom Foundation, State Policy Network, Free to Serve, and Opt Out Today, which have made it their mission to "defund and defang" unions.

Dark Money groups are always pushing for a race to the bottom where public service workers like those represented by AFSCME have no union, no collective bargaining rights, no paid time off, no sick leave, no family leave, and no voice on the job. They do it because it suits their billionaire donors' agendas, but we won't let them stop us from fighting for our members and all working people.

AFSCME Council 13 remains proud to stand on the side of working families, and we commend Governor Wolf, Senator Maria Collett (D-Montgomery County), Senator Vince Hughes (D-Philadelphia), and Representative Michael Schlossberg (D-Lehigh County), for their support on the issue of sick and family leave.



LEGAL UPDATE

NAVIGATING CUSTODY DISPUTES DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

By: Robert Cervone, Esquire



When COVID-19 arrived in Pennsylvania, mitigation measures to reduce the spread of the virus turned our world upside-down. An added stressor for many families was the impact of virus-related restrictions on child custody arrangements. At the same time, however, on March 18, 2020, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court issued an Order declaring a statewide judicial emergency throughout Pennsylvania. This resulted in the closing of courts for most matters except for “essential functions,” which included emergency custody procedures. But true emergency custody proceedings are relatively rare.

Courts generally limit emergency custody matters to those involving real threats or dangers to the child. For instance, an emergency custody petition should be filed when a child is at risk of immediate physical danger, has been or is about to be removed from the jurisdiction, or if the other parent has been charged with a violent crime. During the pandemic, these matters are addressed by the courts, often within a few days after the filing of the petition, by allowing persons to be present virtually, either telephonically or by videoconference.

But many custody disputes of a less urgent nature have arisen during the pandemic. Because people have differing views on how to address the pandemic, a parent may act in a manner inconsistent with the custody order, to the dismay of the other parent. One parent may take precautions like avoiding traveling with the child, keeping the child out of extracurricular activities, etc., while the other may feel these acts are overreactions or done out of spite.

The overarching theme in every custody case is protecting the best interests of the child/ren involved. Some courts have clarified that custody orders should be followed, even during a stay-at-home order, and specifically permit traveling for purposes of custodial exchanges. But because there are no uniform rules on how to co-parent during a pandemic, there has been much confusion about how to comply with orders during this time. Parents are forced to weigh the risk of being held in contempt for not following the custody order against the risk of exposing their child to the virus. If you find yourself in a similar position, there are a few things you should do:

- Start by asking the other party if he/she would agree to temporary alternative arrangements – for example, postponing visits until the public health threat diminishes, scheduling make-up visits for a later date, using FaceTime or Zoom on a more regular basis, etc.
- Document everything, including text messages and emails, and take notes regarding every custodial exchange. If the dialogue between you and the other party is strained beyond repair, limit communications to issues involving the child and do so by text or email to create a paper trail.
- If the other party is withholding the child from you, continue to request custodial time even if you anticipate a negative response. This will show you made genuine attempts to co-parent while the child was being unreasonably withheld.

With the courts starting to get back underway, these issues may eventually be addressed by a judge. At the hearing, you should be prepared to explain your request and present evidence to show that your proposal is in the best interest of the child. If you are requesting a modification of the custody order, have a proposed custodial schedule for the judge to consider when fashioning her ruling. If you are requesting the other party be held in contempt, make sure to outline how the other party deviated from the order. Likewise, if you are requesting make-up time with the child, have the dates and times you did not get to see the child and the circumstances surrounding them. Oral testimony is helpful but should be corroborated with documents or witnesses when possible. In presenting your documents, make sure you have everything in order and bring multiple copies.

Custody cases are often emotionally-charged, and sometimes parties have such ill will toward one another that co-parenting is almost impossible. However, some relationships flourished during the pandemic with parties putting aside their differences to focus on the best interest of the child. Regardless of your relationship, it is important for every parent to examine his/her circumstances to keep their child safe and make every effort to work together to do what is the child’s best interest.

It is often helpful to consult legal counsel in making these decisions. Members of AFSCME Council 13 in need of legal advice can obtain a referral through the AFSCME Council 13 Legal Services Plan. For more information on this and other member-only benefits, check out the Member Discounts page on the AFSCME Council 13 website at <https://www.afscme13.org/members/member-discounts/>.

CORONAVIRUS: PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS ON THE FRONT LINES



www.afscme.org/covid-19/resources



www.afscme13.org/shop/product/afscme-council-13-face-mask



*Thank You,
Front-Line
Workers!*



Scan the QR codes with your smartphone!

Stay Safe. Wear a Mask.



DEFENDING AGAINST COVID-19

Courtesy of AFSCME Council 31

LOCAL UNIONS HOLD DRIVE-THRU ELECTIONS AMID PANDEMIC



The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to rethink how we live, work, shop, and interact with one another, as well as how we conduct union business.

AFSCME Local 2763 (City of Reading) ratified their contract while maintaining social distancing with drive-thru voting.

"In this world of COVID, labor must move forward," AFSCME District Council 88 Director Tom Tosti said.

"This is a first for us, and it went well for the members."

AFSCME Local 2456 (State Professional - District 8) members also pulled together to conduct a drive-thru local union officer election.

Recording Secretary Susan Bosco made signs directing members where to go, President Cliff Ackman checked members in and gave them ballots, Local Steward and Elections Chair Michele Brookins collected ballots, Trustee Danielle Gibson distributed box meals, and Executive Board members Tiana Smith and Lillie McMullen assisted.

"It went very well! I was excited," Michele said.

"Tell all the locals: do a drive-thru election!"

Thanks to their ingenuity, Local 2763 members ratified a contract, and Local 2456 members elected new officers, who will be sworn in via Zoom.





As we continue to navigate the new normal in a world altered by COVID-19, we are finding innovative ways to push the labor movement forward and conduct the business of our union.

AFSCME District Council 86 and 87, which together represent nearly 10,000 workers in northern Pennsylvania, held their delegate assemblies outdoors for the first time during the summer. Chairs were placed seven feet apart on the lawn, and attendees wore masks when voting indoors.

Delegates of DC 86 voted for political endorsements and District Council officers, and they honored three retiring Board members for their years of service.

“We had to adapt and overcome,” District Council 86 Director Zollie Rayner said.

“We wanted to ensure the democratic process moved forward for the members and everybody could come and vote.”

Jimmy Dellomo (Local 2674, City of Williamsport), Dawn Roland (Local 1513, Danville State Hospital), and Rich Heimer (Local 2360, Lock Haven University) received plaques thanking them for their service as they enter retirement.

Congratulations to the newly elected officers of District Council 86: President Shawn Makar (Local 2361, Bloomsburg University); Vice President Heidi Diem (Local 166, Selinsgrove Center); Recording Secretary Jessica Huffman (Local 2596, Lycoming County Clerical); Treasurer Don Aungst (Local 2118, Clinton County Trades & Labor); Executive Board Members Keith Segraves (Local 2674, City of Williamsport), Logan Billig (Local 1513, Danville State Hospital), and Michael House (Local 2604, Tech. Services – District 3); and Trustee Margaret Bitler (Local 3330, SCI Coal Township & Muncy).





AFSCME Council 13 members Susan Bosco (Local 2456 - State Professional District 8) and Stefanie Ross (Local 2536 - LCB/Securities Commission/Probation & Parole) picked up trash along the Appalachian Trail at the Conodoguinet Creek in Cumberland County.

**Visit our
website!**



www.afscme13.org

Council 13 Connection
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David R. Fillman, Executive Director
Jane Gill, President
Earnestine Kears, Secretary
Shawn Makar, Treasurer

Jennifer George, Editor and PR/Communications Director
William Kauffman, Writer

Have a question or concern? Call the AFSCME Council 13 Member Resource Center:
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