

# An AFSCME History Timeline

*"I have nothing to say for myself, only that I have tried to make this earth a little better."  
 "Don't waste time mourning — organize!"  
 —Joe Hill, labor organizer, agitator, songwriter*

## Fighting for Civil Service

1932	Small group of white-collar, professional employees in Madison, Wisc., fearing they would lose their civil service jobs to political patronage, formed the Wisconsin State Employees Association (WSEA), which would later become Council 24 (Wisconsin State Employees Union)
1933	WSEA members hold meetings, march, demonstrate and lobby hard in the state legislature to defeat a bill that would have dismantled the state civil service system
1935	Similar employee associations emerge in 19 states; at the American Federation of Labor (AFL) convention, the group, now known as the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), is made a "department" of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
1936	AFSCME is granted a charter by the AFL; Arnold Zander is chosen as AFSCME's first International president



1938	2,000 sanitation workers in Philadelphia go on strike to protest layoffs and pay cuts and win AFSCME's first bargaining agreement with a major city
1936-1945	AFSCME focuses on lobbying in state legislatures to pass or strengthen civil service laws; membership increases from 10,000 to 73,000
1945-1946	World War II ends; the postwar period is marked by a wave of strikes as workers — 3.5 million in 1945 and 4.6 million in 1946 — strike for higher wages in the postwar economy; there is also unrest in the public sector as city employees strike in several cities
1947	Eight states pass laws that would penalize striking public workers; Congress passes the Taft-Hartley Act, which restricts private-sector unions and makes it easier for employers to break strikes
1955	AFL and CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) merge to form the AFL-CIO; AFSCME membership passes 100,000

## Bargaining for Rights

1958	A series of strikes and demonstrations in New York City pressures Mayor Robert Wagner to sign an executive order granting collective bargaining rights to unions representing city employees; under leadership of District Council 37 President Jerry Wurf, AFSCME begins winning elections that make it the strongest public worker union in the city
1961	President John Kennedy issues Executive Order 10988, legitimizing collective bargaining for federal employees and creating a favorable atmosphere for all public employees
1964	Jerry Wurf — running on a platform of aggressive organizing, fighting for collective bargaining rights for public workers, and union reform/union democracy — is elected the second International president at the biennial AFSCME Convention
1965	A special AFSCME Convention rewrites AFSCME's Constitution and includes a Bill of Rights for union members, a first in the American labor movement  By year's end, several states enact collective bargaining laws for public employees; AFSCME membership reaches 250,000

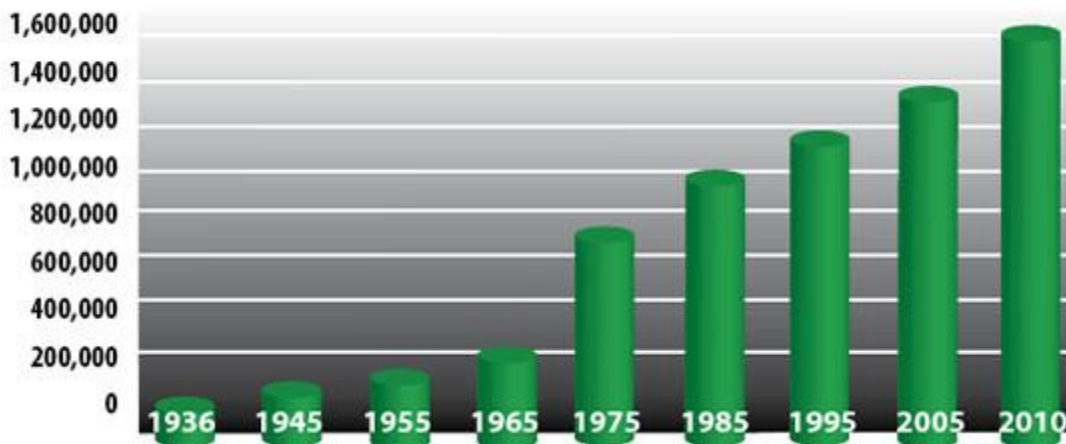
## Militant Demands for Respect

Mid-1960s	More states pass collective bargaining laws; AFSCME's demands for respect for public workers become linked with the civil rights movement and progressive groups that protest economic, racial and social injustice
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1968	Sanitation workers in Memphis, Tenn., strike for union recognition and against the city's discriminatory practices; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. marches with the striking workers and is assassinated; the city agrees to recognize the workers' union, AFSCME Local 1733
1972	William Lucy is elected secretary-treasurer of the International union
1975	In Pennsylvania, some 46,000 AFSCME represented state workers strike for fair wages — the first legal, large-scale strike by public employees

## Growth in AFSCME Membership



## Power Through Organizing and Political Action

Mid-1970s	Over 60 independent employee associations affiliate with AFSCME
1978	The New York Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), with 250,000 members, affiliates with AFSCME and pushes membership over the 1 million mark
1980s	In an era of anti-public worker sentiment, AFSCME greatly increases its political activism and visibility and helps elect AFSCME-endorsed candidates at all government levels; collective bargaining rights are won in three new states: Illinois, Ohio and Nebraska
1981	<p>President Ronald Reagan breaks a strike by PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization), beginning an era of attacks on workers in both the public and private sectors</p> <p>AFSCME's 60,000-member delegation, the largest from any single union, leads the AFL-CIO Solidarity Day — a massive demonstration in Washington, D.C., demanding fair treatment for American workers</p> <p>City workers in San Jose, Calif., members of AFSCME Local 101, wage the first strike in the nation's history over the issue of pay equity for women workers</p> <p>AFSCME President Jerry Wurf dies after a long illness; Gerald McEntee — who had led AFSCME's successful organizing drive in Pennsylvania in the 1970s and had served as director of Pennsylvania Council 13 — is chosen as the third International president. He began his AFSCME career as a member and continued as an organizer and leader in</p>

	Pennsylvania. He led the drive to unionize more than 75,000 public service workers in Pennsylvania – the largest union mobilization at that time
1989	The National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees (NUHHCE) affiliates with AFSCME and solidifies the union as the leading voice for the rights of health care workers
1990	AFSCME membership surpasses 1.2 million
1998	Delegates at AFSCME's Convention commit to a bold program of aggressive organizing

## AFSCME in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

2001	60,000 public service workers in a dozen states and Puerto Rico organize with AFSCME — the largest single year of organizing in three decades
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2002	Another 55,000 workers join AFSCME; membership reaches 1.3 million
2004	AFSCME Convention delegates passes the 21st Century Resolution, creating a committee to examine every aspect of the union and to make recommendations to the 2006 AFSCME Convention
2006	<p>AFSCME increases its ranks to 1.6 million members</p> <p>The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Power to Win plan is adopted at the 37<sup>th</sup> AFSCME International Convention, and delegates participate in town hall meeting to discuss implementation of the plan</p> <p>Due to grassroots efforts across the Country, AFSCME helps stop the Bush administration from privatizing Social Security</p> <p>Through concerted efforts, the union helps win six governors' houses and take back legislative chambers in 10 states, wins back the U.S. House of representatives and the U.S. Congress</p>
2007	The union creates a new brand and identity which includes the new logo and tagline: We Make America Happen
2008	40,000 volunteers mobilized to elect President Barack Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden
2009	<p>AFSCME is the top organizing union in the AFL-CIO</p> <p>AFSCME plays a major role in winning health care reform and getting fiscal relief for states through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).</p> <p>AFSCME convenes the first ever Next Wave Conference, for new and young leaders of local unions and councils. Close to 600 Next Wavers converge on Chicago, Illinois.</p>

## A Main Street Movement

2010	International Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy retires. Lee A. Saunders is elected International Secretary-Treasurer at the International Convention. Saunders joined the Ohio Civil Service Employee's Association (OCEA) when he worked for the state of Ohio in his 20s. Saunders has worked for AFSCME in many capacities since 1978.
2011	<p>In February 2011, nearly 200,000 Wisconsin public service employees, including more than 60,000 AFSCME members, lose the right to bargain collectively over health care, retirement and working conditions. In response, tens of thousands of protestors demonstrate at the Capitol in Madison for months. A recall campaign is mounted that ultimately results in two Republican state senators being unseated from office.</p> <p>In Ohio, Senate Bill 5 (SB5) targets collective bargaining for public workers. AFSCME members, working with other unions and coalition partner, gathers enough signatures to place a repeal referendum on Ohio's November 2011 ballot. Ohioans overwhelmingly vote to repeal SB5 and to protect collective bargaining for public employees.</p>
2012	<p>Lee Saunders is elected president of the International union, upon the retirement of Gerald McEntee</p> <p>Laura Reyes is elected secretary-treasurer of the International union. A home care provider, Reyes was president of the United Domestic Workers, AFSCME Local 3930, which represented 62,000 home care providers in her home state of California.</p>