

## Presidents Report 2025

Ten years ago, three divided councils convened in Appleton in order to forge a more powerful union. A union that would be capable of winning the fights facing public sector workers in Wisconsin. Each of those three councils had been bleeding members and resources, reeling under the impact of Act 10 for almost four years. The leaders and activists of those three councils had spent months meeting about and debating over a path forward. Over and over again throughout the process of that merger, the International Union made sure to highlight the fact that when Minnesota had merged to create Council 5, it had taken 10 years to overcome their divisions. The question posed during those early meetings was simple and clear. Could Wisconsin, facing all of the legal limitations imposed by Act 10, Republican control of every branch of state government and our own potential financial insolvency, carrying all of the history between our legacy councils achieve the same timeline for success?

In 2025, ten years after those meetings, and for the first time since our merger, Council 32 closed the previous year's books in the black, with no deficit spending. In 2025, we have actually received a significant organizing grant from the International Union, with \$200,000 dollars of direct investment coming for membership growth and empowerment. This is in addition to their support of elections and our political program. In 2025, with the generous assistance of the International Union, we beat Act 10 in the courts where it has been found to be unconstitutional and in 2025, we elected another pro-worker Supreme Court Justice, locking in what should be a friendly court majority for at least the next three years. We have even seen the author of the original dissent against Act 10 elected as Chief Justice of the Court by her peers. This Council is well positioned to finally see the end of Scott Walker's signature achievement and restore all of our rights.

But just as importantly, in 2025 this Council has embraced a new identity. We are no longer three divided councils. Today a significant number of our activists and leaders were never part of any Council other than 32. We have leaders who have never been in a collective bargaining unit or under contract because they were in high school when Act 10 was forced upon Wisconsin. We aren't tied to a past full of divisions and resentment. We are not and will not be tied to practices and beliefs that won't serve our members anymore. In my eyes, we have not only met the bar set by the International Union and the example of Minnesota; we have wildly exceeded it. I am proud of each and every union member who still stands with AFSCME after these ten years.

This obviously does not mean we have no challenges left before us. We continue to face elected Democrats who want to use us as a source of campaign money and volunteers but who have no interest in treating us as equals across the table. We face a disorganized and ineffective AFL state federation and a Wisconsin labor movement that is generally complacent in regard to our issues and our concerns. We also clearly face a long struggle with an administration in Washington D.C. that is actively trying to pursue policies that would make the continuation of Act 10 look like a picnic in comparison. We have taken

great steps forward, and we deserve to celebrate those victories, but it is incumbent upon us not to grow complacent.

Each officer of this union and every delegate to this Council 32 convention must commit to active organizing, to talking with every single coworker about their ability to impact their wages, hours and working conditions. We also need to talk to them about their ability to make an impact their communities. If Act 10 is gone tomorrow, the attacks from Donald Trump are going to continue. Federal prison guards are under attack, it is a model for further attacks on state prison guards. Nurses and mental health professionals in the VA are under attack, it is going to be a model for attacks on our health care and mental health professionals. State, local and private jobs all depend upon Medicaid funding and the House budget blueprint is clearly taking aim at entitlements and funding for programs where we work. The International Union will deal with the lawsuits in D.C. but we need to be prepared for the work here.

After these last ten years, I truly believe the leaders and activists of AFSCME in Wisconsin are better prepared for the times ahead than almost anyone in the country. We have seen what happens when public service is undermined. and we have weathered the attacks. As we sit here today, we are very close to the victory we have worked so long to achieve and I am proud to be with you as we cross that line. Our Council has faced the worst and I truly believe we are positioned for a future where we are on offense, in elections and upon the shop floor, as long as we commit to do the work.

Solidarity!

Paul Spink, President  
AFSCME Council 32