



**WE
ARE
ONE**

We Are One: Public Employees Serve All of Us

Public employees fight fires and crime to keep us safe. They build our future by teaching our children. They safeguard the quality of our food, air, and water. They engineer our buildings, bridges, and roads. They care for our young, our old, our sick, and our vulnerable family and friends. Our communities want and need the services that public employees provide. Those services are crucial to our democracy, our middle class, and our standards of living.

The 23 unions affiliated with the Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO represent professional and technical people in the private, public, and federal sectors. Our members and leaders know the integrity, knowledge, and hard work that public employees bring to serving all of us.

These basic facts explain our disbelief and horror at seeing good people villainized. Across the country, recently elected governors and state legislators are using a financial downturn to camouflage attacks on the rights of public employees to organize and bargain collectively.

While millions of Americans cannot find jobs, these political attacks make the situation worse. They hinder library workers who assist searches for employment, social workers who reach out to families in peril, and aid workers who provide what is left of an ever more tattered safety net.

Too many workers in the private sector lack jobs, health care, and pensions. The solution is not to deprive public employees of those things. The solution is to end the vicious anti-union onslaught by private-sector employers, rebuild strong private-sector unions, and restore jobs, decent wages, quality health care, and secure pensions.

Take away collective bargaining, freedom of association, and meaningful due process, and we chill the readiness of professionals to speak out for quality services and access. We should not embrace narrow, top-down decision-making. Instead, we should seek out the voices of professional employees whose expertise and experience are vital to developing and implementing sound policy. Unions allow those voices to be heard, for the good of all.

But the good of all is not the objective of the recently elected governors and state legislators attacking workers' rights. Their goal is to weaken any organization that might have opposed them politically or might oppose them in the future. Nowhere is the pattern clearer than in the assault on teachers and faculty:

- In Florida, the governor and legislature are trying to re-establish a political spoils system for public education. Teachers hired after July 2011 would be subject to dismissal for any reason and without recourse. Merit protections would be weakened severely for all teachers.
- In Idaho and Tennessee, governors are pushing legislation to strip teachers of a collective voice, meaningful due process, and bargaining rights.
- In Indiana, the governor wants legislation to severely narrow the scope of bargaining for teachers.
- In Kansas, the governor seeks legislation to bar public employees from participating in the political process.
- In New Mexico, legislation would establish a system for evaluating schools that relies solely on student performance on standardized tests and excludes the voice and participation of professional educators.
- In Ohio, a sleeper provision would outlaw collective bargaining for higher education faculty by re-defining them as management employees ineligible to participate in unions.
- And in Wisconsin, despite the agreement of public employees to sacrifice pay and benefits, Governor Scott Walker worked with a Republican legislature to end collective bargaining rights for all public workers, including the faculty at five University of Wisconsin campuses who recently voted for collective bargaining.

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions commit to taking all appropriate necessary measures to join common cause with our allies in the professions, labor, civil rights, religion, and the greater social justice community to stop and reverse these and other attacks on public services and public sector workers. We will:

- 1) Spread our message to local unions and community allies;

- 2) Post the “We Are One” pledge included below, tailored as appropriate for each organization (with thanks to the American Federation of Teachers, which originated a slightly different version), so individuals – members, family, and friends – can offer their commitment, too;
- 3) Suggest possibilities for action during the week of April 4, 2011 – a national Week of Action – and thereafter (see www.We-R-1.org); and
- 4) Take action now, then, and afterwards.

We Are One Pledge

I pledge to stand with union members and other allies to make sure our voice is not suppressed or silenced.

I pledge to make a difference every day and strive to improve my workplace and my community.

I pledge to join my colleagues across the country to support fairness, justice, democracy, and workers’ rights.

I pledge to participate in the “We Are One” Week of Action by taking part in events in my community and showing my solidarity online, to help spread the message that unions matter, to working families, our communities, and our country.