Refusing to Take It 
or Leave It

Mary Sandstrom, Local 34, Marge Hube, Local 2822, and hundreds of other Hennepin County workers fought off huge contract concessions.

Locals Give Back to Their Communities

Jill Gatzke, of Local 404 at the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center, helps serve a community meal at “The Kitchen.”

Kim Foss, of Grand Rapids, is among in-home child-care providers organizing to gain a bigger say in the future of their profession and the children they care for.
The Year of the Protesters

Last year, Americans stood arm-in-arm to speak out for the working class. From Wisconsin to Wall Street, the 99 percent shouted “Enough!” We’re sick and tired of an economy that only works for the richest 1 percent. We pulled together to protest corporate greed and to exercise our right to assemble peaceably and to occupy public spaces.

The tents may be gone, but the Occupy Movement has just begun. It won’t stop until we put an end to corporate greed that places profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality. Time magazine appropriately named “The Protester” its Person of the Year.

People rise up

We are honored by this distinction and feel compelled to recognize a few of the worst governors who sparked protests across the country.

• In Wisconsin, Gov. Scott Walker passed a sweeping anti-union law that wipes out the collective bargaining rights of teachers, nurses, and most other public-service workers. His war on workers was bankrolled by the Koch brothers. While satisfying their corporate greed, Walker ignored hundreds of thousands of workers, students and retirees who protested for weeks. Now, Walker is fighting to save his own job from a recall drive.

• In Ohio, Gov. John Kasich forced through an unpopular bill that eliminated collective bargaining rights of teachers, nurses, and most union members. He claims it’s the key to job growth. In reality, his misleading bill offers voters the “freedom” to work for less. It provides no “rights” and no “works.” Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining. We demand this fraud be stopped.

Now the elites want to make sure Minnesotans make even less money.

Don’t be misled by false “freedom”

Last session, state Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Mazeppa) introduced legislation to establish “freedom of employment.” In reality, his misleading bill offers voters the “freedom” to work for less. Just ask workers in so-called “right to work” states – they earn about $5,000 less than the average worker in a fair-bargaining state like Minnesota. “In right to work for less” states, more residents live in poverty with poor nutrition, and their children don’t get the education they need to succeed in life.

So-called “right to work” laws also force union members to pay for free riders who refuse to pay their fair share for the benefit the union wins. Minnesota used to have a rich tradition where “we” mattered more than “me.” We aspired to be a place where every kid growing up here could get a fair shake. We shared a vision of the common good – and we could afford it when everybody contributed their fair share.

We won’t let the elites unravel the common threads that have made us strong. United, we have the courage to protest and reclaim Minnesota for the 99 percent.

When they attack labor unions, they’re really attacking the belief that everyday people should have decent wages, health care and a secure retirement.

• In Indiana, Gov. Mitch Daniels has proposed a bill to make Indiana a so-called “right to work” state. He claims it’s the key to job growth. In reality, it would weaken unions, and reduce wages and living standards for everyone. Tens of thousands of union members have organized rallies to “Ditch Mitch.”

Workers are angry for a reason

These governors are puppets of the political and economic elites. When they attack labor unions, they’re really attacking the belief that everyday people should have decent wages, health care and a secure retirement.

For a generation, the elites have enriched themselves while leaving the rest of us with stagnant wages and eroding retirement and health security. They helped insurance companies put profits ahead of patients. They excused Wall Street for gambling away our 401(k) savings. They let predatory lenders foreclose on our homes. They watched corporations ship our jobs overseas. No wonder American workers are angry – for decades, our median annual incomes have remained virtually the same, leaving us a paycheck or two from the street.
What we are fighting for at the Capitol

Here are the priorities and principles AFSCME members will fight for in this year’s Legislature.

Defeat Constitutional Amendments
The Minnesota Constitution should protect rights, not take rights away. The Constitution should not put Minnesota in bondage to policies that promote a race to the bottom. Therefore, we oppose any constitutional amendments that restrict rights or revenue.

- We will work to defeat the anti-marriage amendment that already is on the ballot.

We will also oppose legislative attempts to add these amendments in November:

- Right to work for less.
- Requiring a 60 percent (supermajority) vote of both houses of the Legislature in order to raise taxes.
- Limiting state spending to revenue collected in the previous budget.
- Requiring photo identification to vote.

Create Jobs and Raise Revenue Fairly
Minnesota will build a prosperous future for all its residents only if we invest in quality of life; quality of services; quality, affordable education; and tax fairness. Our priorities include:

**Day on the Hill:**
March 27, 8 a.m.,
St. Paul

- Protect the jobs and livelihoods of AFSCME members, and the services they provide.

- Increase revenue by taxing the rich, who now pay lower rates than average Minnesotans.

- Extend the Taxpayer Transportation Accountability Act to all agencies. This will prevent costly privatization and guarantee that the state receives the best value in the services it pays for.

- Increase funding for child care, MinnesotaCare, nursing homes, hospitals, and other life-sustaining programs.

- Increase educational funding for the University of Minnesota and MnSCU systems.

- Reverse trends in which the state cuts funding for local units of government and abandons its stake in the well-being of its cities and counties.

Protect Bargaining Rights and Pensions
Collective bargaining is a fundamental right. It gives workers the ability to bring democracy and balance into the workplace. It builds a decent standard of living for all our communities. Our priorities include:

- Advocate for full collective bargaining rights for public employees. We oppose any attempts to weaken PELRA.

- Expand the right of child-care providers to organize.

- Oppose efforts to funnel public money into corporate coffers by privatizing work or programs currently done by public employees, or prospectively done by public employees.

- Support legislation to protect employees during a government shutdown, if that legislation does not interfere with collective bargaining.

- Protect defined-benefit pension plans, which allow workers to retire with security and dignity. We oppose any efforts to weaken Minnesota's pension programs.

Redesign Government
Tax dollars should be spent wisely and productively. Government redesign can be part of that process. But it must include these principles:

- Move more resources to the point of service and flatten organizational hierarchy. That means more frontline workers instead of more managers.

- Involve frontline workers in identifying ways to cut costs, increase efficiency, and improve service delivery.

- Realize that upfront investment is often necessary to achieve long-term efficiency.

- Give workers job security so they can embrace change.

- Drive fear from the workplace by guaranteeing that every worker has a job with equal or greater pay and benefits after reorganization. If that job requires new skills, provide the training the worker needs.

Join your precinct caucus
The Democratic-Farmer-Labor party, the Independence party, and the Republican party hold precinct caucuses on Feb. 7, beginning at 7 p.m. AFSCME members who attend these neighborhood caucuses are urged to:

- Promote the AFSCME priorities on this page.
- Run as delegates to their district conventions, which take place later in the spring. Delegates gain a voice in endorsing candidates for the Legislature and for Congress.

To find the location of the caucus in your community, go to: www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=1704

More information: Call the AFSCME political organizer in your area:

- Metro: Jon Grebner, 651-287-0587
- Northern and Western Minnesota: Chad McKenna, 218-310-8412
- Southern Minnesota: Laura Askelin, 651-287-0586

AFSCME endorses Obama re-election
AFSCME's International Executive Board voted Dec. 6 to endorse the re-election of Barack Obama as president. “President Obama is the only candidate... fighting to put people back to work, make the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share, and protect vital public services,” says AFSCME president Gerald W. McEntee.

GOP challengers, McEntee says, continue to pursue tax breaks for millionaires and other policies “that got us into this mess in the first place.”
GOOD FOR KIDS

Right now, half of Minnesota’s kids are not ready for kindergarten. Quality child care can change that, says Kathy Stevens, an in-home provider in Brainerd. “When you look at early brain development, it has been proven that quality care helps children from the very beginning.”

“It’s easier to build strong children than it is to fix broken men,” says Robert Ellis Sr. He should know: Ellis is a retired corrections officer who now helps his wife, Mary, run her child care in their St. Paul home.

“Inmates did not just become 18 and become felonious,” Ellis says. “They lost that battle when they were younger, often when they were between the ages of 1 to 5. If we do the work as we should at that age, we solve the problem at the other end.”

Like many providers, Stevens develops her own curriculum. She fills her kids’ days with art, numbers, the alphabet, reading, story-telling, show-and-tell – and play. “Play is one of the most important learning tools there is,” she says.

Stevens is also big on science and outdoor activities. Because her home is surrounded by woods and farmland, “we do a lot of lot of bird-watching and bug-collecting.” Children visit nearby barns to visit and count animals.

By its nature, in-home care can be more creative and accommodating than a large day-care center, she says. “We’re not as regimented, we’re not cookie-cutter in our approach.”

Some home-based providers are more likely to specialize in kids with specific skills, specific physical problems, or behavior issues. In homes, children of different ages tend to be together, rather than be kept apart.

Curriculum can adjust more easily to kids’ individual needs, Stevens says. “Learning should be fun,” she says, “and a lot of what we do is fun.”

GOOD FOR PARENTS

Parents who work, or go to school, need to know that their kids are safe, healthy and learning. That’s why child-care providers are vital. Without providers doing their jobs, many parents could not go to work.

Home-based providers care for about 129,000 children in Minnesota every day. They are parents’ most affordable, most flexible, and often most-reliable option. Home-based care can be half the cost of day-care centers, a fact that can save working parents thousands of dollars a year.

Most in-home providers work far more than an 8-hour day, and some go beyond that, to accommodate parents’ needs. Sharon O’Boyle, of St. Paul Park, says she’ll take kids on weekends or even overnight if necessary. “Low-income parents, they’re the ones working these odd hours, who need it most,” she says.

Providers say they often end up mentoring parents, too. As Brainerd provider Kathy Stevens interacts with the children in her care.

Providers say they need the wisdom of a parent, the knowledge of a teacher, the heart of a social worker, the healing power of a pediatrician, the savvy of an entrepreneur, and the patience of a saint.

“We’re the mothers, the nurses, the grandmothers, the entrepreneur, and the patience of a saint. We’re uneducated, that we just sit on a couch. They just don’t understand.”

“Some people think we’re too stupid to do anything else,” says Kim French, a provider in Maplewood. “So, I start talking to them about the psychological and physiological part of brain development.”

French, like many providers, has formal education in early childhood development. She, like many providers, designs her own curriculum.

“I’m not a baby sitter, I’m an educator,” says St. Paul provider Mary Albert. “Kids don’t come to my child care to look at TV.”

Albert is a regular presence at her neighborhood school, talks with neighborhood parent-teacher groups, and has Head Start instructors and other teachers observe how she interacts with the children in her care.

Kathy Stevens, of Brainerd, mentors other providers and presents workshops and certified trainings. “People think we’re uneducated, that we just sit on a couch. They just don’t understand.”

Providers say they need the wisdom of a parent, the knowledge of a teacher, the heart of a social worker, the healing power of a pediatrician, the savvy of an entrepreneur, and the patience of a saint.

“We’re the mothers, the nurses, the grandmothers, the nutritionist, someone to hug on,” Albert says.

THE UNION ELECTION

In-home child-care providers in Minnesota have been organizing with AFSCME Council 5 for six years. In December 2010, a majority signed cards to form a union. In November 2011, Gov. Dayton issued an executive order authorizing a union representation election.

Dayton ordered the election among 4,300 in-home, licensed providers. He limited the election to providers who care for working families in the state’s Child Care Assistance Program. Council 5 would represent about 2,300 of these providers.

Election ballots were supposed to be mailed Dec. 7.

However, since summer, right-wing attack groups led by the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota have launched campaigns to stop the providers. Republican legislators, led by Sen. Mike Parry and Sen. David Hann, have spent months fighting the providers’ drive for a union. Instead of fighting to improve the lives of kids and their parents, these legislators have cut support for providers, and left 7,000 families on the waiting list for the state subsidy

Child-Care Providers

Council 5 is helping in-home providers gain a voice, lift their profession, and improve opportunities for kids and working parents.

“Good for kids,” says Meadowood’s Gwen French. “You don’t stop playing because you get old – you get old because you stop playing.”

“Far more than baby sitters,” says Karla Scapanski, an in-home provider in Sauk Rapids. “It would be nice to be ‘just a baby sitter.’ It’s not even remotely close to what our job profession is.”

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“Parents who work, or go to school, need to know that their kids are safe, healthy and learning. That’s why child-care providers are vital. Without providers doing their jobs, many parents could not go to work.”
Providers need a unified voice, they say, because it is the state that sets the rules and rates for the care they provide. Providers are self-employed business owners, says Lisa Thompson, of St. Paul. “But we’re workers, too, and we want to have a say in our workplace.”

“The state requires us to do a lot of things, but they don’t work with us a lot,” says Brainard provider Kathy Stevens. “With a bigger group of people, we would have a larger voice.”

“It’s OK to go in as individuals, but it’s easier to blow us off as individuals, too,” says Maplewood provider Gwen French. Rules and enforcement should be consistent, providers say. In some cases, however, in-home providers face tougher requirements than day-care centers. They also deal with inspectors who interpret requirements differently. Providers also believe a union could provide them additional professional opportunities and benefits. Goals include a health-insurance pool, more affordable and accessible training (especially in Greater Minnesota), and a back-up pool of on-call providers to help out.

Providers said they become part of their kids’ families – providers say they become part of their kids’ families – providers become part of their kids’ families – and families become part of their providers. The relationships my kids developed – they’ve developed friendships that will never end,” Scapanski says. “They’re best friends now with some of the kids I’ve had.

“We get to know these people intimately, to share their family stories, to share some of their struggles,” says Robert Ellis Sr., of St. Paul. It’s a unique opportunity to see a little person start from basically nothing, to see them grow, learn to speak, play with other kids.

“We have one family where we’ve had all four kids since they were babies,” Ellis says. “We feel like we’ve raised these children. Their mom tells us, ‘If not for you, my kids would not be the success they are. They may not have made it.’”

Providers Squeezes Their Businesses

Providers get into their profession for different reasons: the chance to run a business, to help parents and children in their community, or to have an income while staying at home to raise their own children. One thing providers learn quickly is that they’re not in it for financial gain.

“It’s always been more than a job,” says Sharon O’Boyle, a provider in St. Paul Park. “Any child-care providers still doing it are not doing it for the money. It can be really hard to survive.” Since 2000, nearly 7,000 home-based providers have gone out of business.

In the past few years, the state has balanced its budget, in part, through cuts to providers and families. Gov. Tim Pawlenty, for example, cut $11.5 million in subsidies that working parents rely on to help pay for child care.

Last year, legislators tried to restrict parents’ options for affordable care even more, and proposed prohibiting child care in rental homes. Legislators also imposed a direct pay cut of 2.5 percent on Nov. 1. It means providers now get less from the state than they did in 2001. It’s even worse when providers have to wait as long as eight weeks for their reimbursement checks to arrive. Finally, reimbursement rates vary wildly: Depending on where the providers lives, rates for toddlers in accredited, licensed care range from $2.08 to $6.06 per hour. That is less than minimum wage.

Providers want a union

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Providers in other states have a health-insurance pool, more affordable and accessible training (especially in Greater Minnesota), and a back-up pool of on-call providers to help out.

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Local 404 helps put food on the table for the entire community

It’s an early winter evening in St. Peter. In a church hall a few blocks west of Highway 169, more than a dozen members of Local 404 are scurrying around, filling plates, filling glasses, and doing whatever it takes to serve dinner to whoever walks in off the street. These union members from St. Peter Regional Treatment Center (and some of their children) are volunteering for The Kitchen. Every Monday night, the nonprofit group provides a free, home-cooked meal. “It is a real need in our community,” says Jill Gatzke, a Local 404 member who has been a regular volunteer at The Kitchen for two years.

A meal open to everyone
On the night The Kitchen opened three years ago, volunteers served eight meals. Tonight, they serve more than 100. The dinner guests are a diverse mix—individuals, families, young, old. “This is a community meal. It’s open to everyone, with absolutely no conditions or expectations of them,” Gatzke says. “The hardest thing for people in a small community like St. Peter is, people are prideful. People are a little reluctant to come and receive something, or they do not want to appear to be needy or lacking. So our message is: You don’t have to be in economic need. If you want to come, you’re welcome to be here, and that’s the bottom line.”

Doing their part
The Kitchen serves its meals at Trinity Lutheran Church. The idea came from high-school members at the church. But The Kitchen forbids preaching or proselytizing, Gatzke says.

The Kitchen now gets volunteers from nearly every church in the area, from Scout troops, and from other community groups. Members of Local 404 (and, occasionally, other nearby AFSCME locals) volunteer a couple of nights a year.

Projects bring Local 66 members closer to community—and to each other
Volunteer projects create more than good feelings for members and good deeds for your community. They also create solidarity at work. Just ask members of Local 66 at the Western Lake Superior Sanitarie District.

Among their community projects, members have been serving a monthly meal at Union Gospel Mission in Duluth since 2003. What they’ve found, says unit chair Lori Blais, is: “You get to know more about the people you work with. When you get to know more about each other and your lives, you stay together better when the going gets tough.”

Local 66 members typically serve 50-70 guests at the monthly meal. “You see temporary hardship, you see long-term hardship,” Blais says. “What really breaks our hearts is to see so many kids.”

Union Gospel Mission prepares the meal, but Local 66 members add a signature contribution of their own—typically a banana to every tray. “Everybody’s getting a healthy meal, but it’s institutional,” Blais says. “So we decided to make sure they get fresh fruit, too.” They settled on a banana because it is something even diners with bad teeth can eat.

The monthly meal is one reason members won the Minnesota AFL-CIO’s Bea Kersten Community Services Award in 2008. It takes only about a half-dozen volunteers to make the meal project work, Blais says. “I really challenge people to find something they can do in their own unit.”

Heavenly heroes

Local 404 members (and their kids) staff The Kitchen.


Shut down cost workers $65 million
It’s official: State employees bore the brunt of this summer’s 20-day government shutdown, the state’s office of Management and Budget says.

Financially, the state budget budgetly broke even during the state shutdown. But that is because the 19,000 state workers who were laid off lost $65 million in wages. Those “savings” offset the state’s extra expenses and lost revenue. About 3,500 workers remained on the job, the report says, but often had to work longer hours to make up for short staffing.

Hennepin County workers fight back
With their contract only weeks from expiring, 400 Hennepin County workers rallied to fight the continuing degradation of their jobs. The show of force paid off. The demonstration turned the tide in negotiations. It helped derail the county’s demands for huge shifts in health costs. It also reversed the county’s plan for two more years of complete wage freezes. Instead, the 4,100 workers in Locals 34, 552, 1719, 2822, 2864, and 2938 ratified a two-year contract that includes raises, steps, and stability pay.

Transition workers ratify first contract
After a year of sticking together in the face of hostile employer tactics, home health aides at six Transition Health
Members of Local 1337 overwhelmingly ratified the one-year agreement in which they gained – for the first time – the security, power and respect a union brings. Many of the 175 workers first time – the year agreement Local 1337 Members of contract. achieved their Care communities

- are refugees from Africa. They staff assisted-living
- communities operated by Lang Nelson Associates in Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Burnsville,
- Crystal, and Richfield. The workers first organized in November 2010. It was AFSCME’s largest private-sector
- organizing victory that year.

**The last laugh**

To break the mood set by oppressive supervisors and managers – and to bring some joy back to their workplace – members of Local 8 in Ramsey County’s property and records division have started holding a “laugh in” during break time. Workers gather, usually in an outdoor courtyard, for five minutes of laughter and fun. One recent “laugh in” included a dance performance by Local 600’s Robert Bryan.

**Corrections officer breaks up assault, rescues HCMC worker**

Tracy Nagurski wasn’t scheduled to work the night shift at Hennepin County Medical Center. Local 600 corrections officer Robert Bryan wasn’t supposed to be on duty at the hospital that night, either. But Nagurski is alive today because Bryan was the right person in the right place at the right time. Nagurski has no idea how long the attack lasted, she says, before her attacker suddenly got up. That’s when she heard – for the first time – Bryan yelling. “I heard someone say ‘Stay right there. You’re not going anywhere.’ It took me a while to get myself together.”

She stepped forward, and Bryan cleared a path for her to get out safely. Nagurski stepped into the hallway, where security staff took her for medical treatment. Other security came in and took the suspect, Bryan says.

**DOC honors actions**

“Sergeant Bryan demonstrated a real command presence. He just assumed control of the situation,” says John Schadl, a spokesman for the Department of Corrections.

“My training just kicked in,” says Bryan, who is also a union steward. “We’re trained in verbal directives. As soon as he came around the corner, and he saw I was some sort of officer, he stepped back and complied with all my directives.”

“Our people are good,” Schadl says. “It’s pretty hard to rattle somebody who essentially spends day and night surrounded by hardened criminals.”

**In no uncertain terms, Bryan – who stands 6-foot-4 and weighs 240 – told the man to…**

“Sergeant Bryan was on duty at the hospital that night, either. But Bryan was never supposed to be on the night shift at Hennepin County Medical Center. Local 600 corrections officer Robert Bryan wasn’t supposed to be on duty at the hospital that night, either. But Nagurski is alive today because Bryan was the right person in the right place at the right time.

**The suspect is charged with third-degree assault, rescues HCMC worker**

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**Unable to speak for two weeks**

Nagurski is the mother of Local 2474 member Reta Nagurski, who also works at HCMC. She was injured badly enough that she was off work for a month. She couldn’t speak for two weeks. She still has scars from the attack, and still receives medical treatment.

The suspect is charged with third-degree assault. Bryan says he actually noticed the man earlier that night, and thought, “This guy ain’t right.” But the man was outside the psychiatric unit, Bryan says, so “I figured he was trying to get help.”

“I think he was just trying to be admitted,” Nagurski says. “He was mad about not being admitted. He was mad about waiting for medication. But even if he was just hoping to get caught, I don’t know what he would have done if Robert hadn’t been there.”
After a year of aggressively trying to destroy collective bargaining for public workers, right-wingers are also trying to finish off worker rights in the private sector, too. In Congress, tea party and corporate legislators have made more than 50 attempts to cripple enforcement of federal labor law or even put the National Labor Relations Board out of commission. One attempt cuts off all funding for the NLRB, which enforces much of federal labor law. Another attempt shuts down the board entirely and scattering its duties to other agencies. Meanwhile, state legislators are trying to expand and contract the rights of workers in the North and South. Indiana is the first battleground, but a proposed right-to-work-for-less constitutional amendment remains alive in the Minnesota Legislature, too. These deceptive laws make it illegal to require workers to pay union dues or fair-share fees. The laws weaken unions financially. That weakens workers’ ability to coordinate power on the job, in the legislature, and in elections. One result: In so-called “right to work” states, workers make $5,000 a year less in wages and benefits. 

How to make sure the tires you buy are union-made

The U.S. Department of Transportation requires that all tires sold in the United States be stamped with a code. The code looks something like this: DOT XX XX XXX XXX. The two figures that immediately follow “DOT” are the code for the company and the plant that made the tire. This two-figure code can be two letters or a number and a letter. For example, if the code is DOT BF XX XXX XXX or DOT BE XX XXX XXX, it means the tire was made by B.F. Goodrich. Here are the codes for union-made tires, built by United Steel Workers members, listed alphabetically by brand:

- B.F. Goodrich: BE, BF
- Bridgestone/Firestone: D2, E3, VE, W1, Y7, VE, YU, 2C, 4D, 5D, 8B
- Cooper: UR UT
- Denman: DY
- Dunlop: DA
- Goodyear: JE, JJ, JN, JT, JU, MC, MD, MJ, MK, PC, PT, PU, PY, TA, UK
- Kelly-Springfield: JF, MM, PJ
- Yokohama: CC

In addition:
- Private-label brands made by these companies will have the same codes, indicating they also are union-made.
- All Goodrich racing tires and off-road tires are made in the U.S.
- All Goodyear racing tires are made in the U.S.

TAX DODGING

In total, 78 profitable corporations had a federal tax bill of zero (or less) at least once in 2008, 2009 or 2010. Similarly, 68 of the profitable companies paid no state income taxes in at least one of those three years. That cost state and local governments an estimated $42.7 billion in revenue.

The lost revenue means public agencies don’t have the money they need for the services they provide. This type of corporate tax dodging also shifts the tax burden onto businesses and people who do pay their taxes.

The two reports examine more than half the nation’s Fortune 500 corporations. Every one of them made money every year between 2008 and 2010. Their combined profits totaled $1.4 trillion – enough to pay off this year’s federal budget deficit.

The final insult: These profitable corporations paid an average federal tax rate of only 17.3 percent in 2009 and 2010. That means they paid less than half of what the corporate tax rate is – on paper.