



AFSCME



2015 Session Report Card

| Report Card – AFSCME Accomplishments | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| A | Funded agencies for state employee compensation |
| A | Secured \$138 million for nursing homes |
| A | Secured \$52 million for child protection |
| A | Expanded child care assistance for 1,239 children |
| A | Allowed DOT to tap road funds for design |
| A | Obtained new funding for state prisons |
| A | Passed felony charges for patients who assault staff at state hospitals |
| A | Blocked a cap on the number of state employees |
| A | Blocked tax breaks for big businesses |
| A | Saved MinnesotaCare from elimination |
| A | Saved DHS facilities in Carlton and Willmar |
| A | Protected state aid for AFSCME cities |
| A | Stopped GOP raid on PERA pensions |

STRONG DEFENSE

When the Legislature convened in January, a large state budget surplus promised to allow compromises that would reward all Minnesotans. With a \$2 billion surplus and a growing economy, the top priority should have been economic security for all hardworking Minnesotans. Instead, Republicans left hardworking Minnesotans behind so they could help their corporate cronies stay ahead.

But AFSCME members were not left behind, thanks to our lobbyists, activists and allies who mounted a strong defense against countless attacks. With support from Gov. Dayton and the Senate DFL majority, we were able to protect our jobs and the work we do – and make progress on safe staffing.

Here is AFSCME’s list of accomplishments for the 2015 session:

Funded agencies for state employee compensation

State employees won a “salary supplement” supported by AFSCME and Gov. Dayton. We convinced the Legislature to increase agency budgets to pay for state employee wages and benefits. That means our union negotiating team will be able to negotiate pay raises and healthcare that state employees can afford to use.

Secured \$138 million for nursing homes

Nursing home workers won a new rate system that invests \$138 million over the next two years. The typical nursing home will see an increase of 20 percent, bringing reimbursement rates up to the cost of care after decades of underfunding. These new resources are desperately needed to help Greater Minnesota nursing homes retain staff and provide even better care for our seniors.

Secured \$52 million for child protection

No child protection worker should have a caseload of more than 10 children. That’s what AFSCME members told Gov. Dayton’s Task Force on Child Protection. They listened and the Legislature appropriated \$52 million to help counties hire more case workers and improve their training. Hennepin County is already hiring 103 additional staff to protect children.

Expanded child care assistance for 1,239 children

Access to high-quality child care is essential to the healthy development and well-being of Minnesota kids. AFSCME and Child Care Providers Together Local 3400 successfully lobbied for additional resources to enable 1,239 low-income children to come off the waiting list for the Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Assistance program.

Allowed DOT to tap road funds for design

Thanks to AFSCME’s initiative, the Department of Transportation will now be able to use money from the state road construction fund to pay for internal operating costs, such as additional road designers and bridge inspectors.

Obtained new funding for state prisons

AFSCME and our Corrections Policy Committee worked successfully with the Dayton Administration and Senate to secure new funding for state prisons.

Passed felony charges for patients who assault staff at state hospitals

This safe staffing measure, proposed by AFSCME Local 404, provides assault protection to employees working with mentally-ill and dangerous patients at state security hospitals in St. Peter and Moose Lake. A law that once applied to only the sex

offender program now applies to the entire security hospital. Patients can be charged with felony assault if they inflict bodily harm or throw urine, feces, semen or blood on a staff person. If the court finds the patient competent to face charges, s/he could be sentenced to a state prison for up to two years.

Blocked a cap on the number of state employees

Despite a \$2 billion surplus, House Republicans still tried to slash state spending for the work we do. Their cost-cuts included a bill to permanently limit the total number of full-time state employees to 36,211. That's 203 fewer positions than the current workforce. We made sure their job-killing bill died in conference committee.

Blocked tax breaks for big businesses

We blocked a slew of irresponsible bills that were introduced to give huge tax breaks to billionaires and giant corporations – all at the expense of hardworking families who are struggling to get ahead in Minnesota. Worst of all was a plan to permanently phase out corporate property taxes – with a whopping price tag of \$2 billion for the first year alone.

Saved MinnesotaCare from elimination

We helped stop the Republican plan to eliminate MinnesotaCare, a health insurance program that employs 139 AFSCME members in the Twin Cities and Brainerd. By kicking 90,000 low-wage workers off their health care, Republicans had hoped to have more money to give tax breaks to giant corporations.

Saved DHS facilities in Carlton and Willmar

AFSCME women won their ongoing battle to save Liberalis, an all-female addiction and chemical dependency program in Carlton County. Their campaign was backed by the Minnesota Women's Consortium and their online petition garnered 1,465 signatures. The Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Services facility in Willmar was also saved from closure. Both victories come with concessions, as the programs will carry on minus some beds and without some employees.

Protected state aid for AFSCME cities

We beat back a partisan attack to slash \$84 million in state aid to Minnesota's three largest cities: Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth. It would have forced Duluth to either lay off 300 city employees or double the city's property taxes. Such a devastating loss of services – or a crippling hike in property taxes – would have harmed thousands of AFSCME members who live and work in the three cities.

Stopped GOP raid on PERA pensions

AFSCME stopped House Republicans from raiding PERA, which provides pension benefits to public workers who retire from local governments. Our retirement security is continually under attack by politicians. This attack came from Rep. Sarah Anderson (R-Plymouth) and Rep. Tim O'Driscoll (R-Sartell). They attempted to cut \$21 million of local government contributions to our pensions, plus \$8 million for the MERF merger into PERA.

| Report Card – House Republican Failures | |
|--|---|
| F | Finish the work on time |
| F | Get “dark money” out of politics |
| F | Put hardworking families first |
| F | Make college affordable |
| F | Improve family budgets |
| F | Fix our roads, bridges and transit |
| F | Fight for Greater Minnesota |
| F | Invest in our children |

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

The 2015 legislative session began with a healthy budget surplus and great opportunities to keep Minnesota rising. Sorry to say, the regular session ended May 18 in chaos with few accomplishments to benefit working families.

Minnesotans chose divided government in last year’s election, giving Gov. Dayton a second term while flipping control of the House to Republicans. Division is what we got. Budget gridlock made a special session a certainty and a shutdown a possibility for 9,500 state workers.

In the end, the budget for the next two years shortchanges our children, our communities in Greater Minnesota, our transportation infrastructure, and our future.

Here is AFSCME’s list of opportunities missed by our divided state Legislature:

Failed to finish the work on time

With a \$2 billion budget surplus, most believed that the Legislature would be able to work with Gov. Mark Dayton and finish on time. Unfortunately, the House Republican majority forced a special session over their refusal to compromise with the governor on early education.

Failed to get “dark money” out of politics

The previous election saw millions of dollars in secretive spending by corporate special-interest groups on endless mailings and TV and radio ads in targeted legislative districts. House Republicans repeatedly blocked efforts to increase disclosure of this spending so voters know who is trying to influence their vote.

Failed to put hardworking families first

On top of trying to cut the minimum wage for tens of thousands of restaurant servers, Republicans blocked progress on the Working Parents Act this session. The act would have ensured that working Minnesotans have access to paid family leave and earned sick time, improving the work-life balance for Minnesota families.

Failed to make college affordable

House Republicans shortchanged Minnesota college students and their families in a time of surplus, guaranteeing tuitions will rise at public colleges for thousands of students around the state.

Failed to improve family budgets

Despite their rhetoric about putting family budgets first, House Republicans passed a tax bill that included billions in permanent tax giveaways to the richest Minnesotans and most-profitable corporations. Meanwhile, Republicans refused to help working families with tax credits for child care and early education.

Failed to fix our roads, bridges and transit

Even though this was supposed to be the “transportation session” — with all parties agreeing on the need for billions of new dollars to fix our roads and bridges and statewide transit system, the House Republicans’ failure to compromise on a package yielded a “lights on” status-quo bill.

Failed Greater Minnesota

During the last election, Republicans promised to focus on Greater Minnesota, but this turned out to be another case of politicians saying one thing and doing another. Their failure to compromise on taxes and transportation — while shortchanging education and economic development — hurt Greater Minnesota most.

Failed to invest in our kids

Sadly, House Republicans forced a special session over their stark opposition to early education. When a family has extra money, they invest in their kids’ future. With a \$2 billion surplus, Minnesota should have done the same. We should not only fund our schools, but also ensure that all of Minnesota’s youngest learners have an equal opportunity to get ahead.

Minnesota’s working families are right to expect more from the new Republican majority in the Minnesota House. AFSCME stands ready to work with the governor, and all legislators, to keep Minnesota rising.