



How Can I Be Active in My Union?

AFSCME local unions are powered by volunteers who are dedicated to improving members' working lives. AFSCME encourages members to get involved. We hope that you will roll up your sleeves and help your union by offering your energy and expertise. Here are some of the ways you can become more involved:

Be There: Come to regularly scheduled union meetings. Many locals send out notices of all meetings; some have a regularly scheduled meeting time and location. Check with your steward or local president to find out when your local union meets. Participate in scheduled union events and activities like workplace meetings, rallies, pickets, even parties or picnics—activities that bring members together and make our unity stronger.

Volunteer: The strength of our union is crucially dependent on members who volunteer to help. There are many opportunities for members to get involved, for example:

- Helping with political activity –registering voters; telephoning and knocking on doors to get the vote out
- Helping to lobby elected officials on issues of importance to union members
- Helping our union to organize the unorganized
- Reaching out to like-minded organizations in our community to build a stronger labor movement and a more just society

Step Up: as a Member Action Team Activist or as a Steward

MAT Activists are communicators and organizers in their immediate work areas who:

- Sign up fair share fee payers and new employees as members
- Mentor and involve new employees in union activities
- Conduct regular one-to-one conversations with co-workers about workplace issues
- Educate and inform co-workers about issues that affect them
- Distribute written communications from the union (newsletter, flyers, surveys)

- Help mobilize members when action is needed on an issue or workplace problem (e.g., signing a petition, T shirt days, informational pickets, etc.)

Check with your local president to see if your local has a Member Action Team and if so, volunteer to be a MAT Activist.

Stewards: Stewards are the official representatives of our union in the workplace. They perform many of the same functions as the MAT Activist plus a number of other important tasks:

- Explaining the contract to members
- Filing and presenting grievances to management to enforce the contract
- Meeting with management to resolve workplace problems that may not be contract violations but that are important to members.
- Mobilizing members to pressure management to solve these workplace problems

In some local unions stewards are elected; in other locals they are appointed by the local president. Ask your local union officers how you can become a Steward. AFSCME Council 31 works with local unions to provide training for all of the local's stewards.

Run for office: Pursuant to the local constitution, each AFSCME local union has an elected leadership team, which normally includes positions such as: Trustee, Executive Board member, Recording Secretary, Secretary-Treasurer, Vice President, and President. The local constitution also defines how frequently elections are held—and both local and International Union constitutions set out requirements to ensure a democratic election process. Each of these positions carries significant responsibilities and involves a willingness to devote considerable time to the work of the local union. Notices of the meetings where nominations and elections will be held are sent out to all members and any member in good standing is eligible to run for office.

