



## Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act

When working people form unions, they have a voice on the job and the power to act collectively. During this ongoing pandemic, public service workers – nurses, teachers, EMS workers, custodians, corrections officers, child care providers and so many more – have stood courageously on the front lines of the fight against the pandemic, doing everything in their power to keep their communities safe, healthy and strong while putting their lives on the line. By standing together, union members can demand workplace protections and safety standards, the ability to use paid leave and stay connected to their jobs during these uncertain times.

**The Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act guarantees that public service employees in every state have the freedom to stand together and negotiate for fair wages and working conditions.**

- The bill sets a minimum nationwide standard for collective bargaining rights that all states must provide to public sector workers.
- Among these standards, public employers are required to recognize employees' labor unions that are freely chosen by a majority of the employees voting, and to bargain with the labor organization over wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment.
- In states that fail to meet these standards, the bill gives the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) the authority to intervene on behalf of public-service workers and ensure their rights to form a union and negotiate with their employer are protected.

**The Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act gives states the flexibility to write and administer their own labor laws.**

- The bill offers states wide flexibility to write and administer their own labor laws that are tailored to the unique needs of their workforce, as long as they meet the minimum standards.
- The bill will not apply to states that provide public employees with collective bargaining rights that meet or exceed the minimum federal standard. It does not override state laws prohibiting strikes by police and emergency personnel.

**Unions are proven to improve the quality of life for workers and their families through higher wages and better access to medical benefits, paid family leave, and retirement security.**

- Union members employed by a state government earn 17% more than their non-union counterparts. Union members employed by a local government earn 35% more than their non-union counterparts.
- Public service workers are frequently underpaid despite the value they provide to our communities. For example, adjusted for inflation, public school teacher wages dropped \$30 per week from 1996-2015.

The Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act was introduced in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress as H.R. 3463 in the House by Rep. Matt Cartwright (D-Pa.), and as S. 1970 in the Senate by Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii). The bills will soon be introduced in the new 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. AFSCME strongly supports this important legislation and asks for your support.

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*AFSCME's 1.4 million members provide the vital services that make America happen. With members in communities across the nation, serving in hundreds of different occupations — from nurses to corrections officers, child care providers to sanitation workers — AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence in public services and freedom and opportunity for all working families.*