
IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS

1 **WHEREAS:**

2 The COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis have highlighted critical gaps in public
3 service workers' rights to healthy, fair and equitable workplaces and treatment; and

4 **WHEREAS:**

5 Public service employees perform some of the most hazardous work that society demands to
6 make our lives safe and enjoyable, with 473 public sector employees having been killed on the job in
7 2019 and over 700,000 public sector employees reporting recordable injuries each year. Despite this,
8 only 26 states have state-run Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act plans that cover public
9 sector employees and only five states have a "public employee only" plan; and

10 **WHEREAS:**

11 Public service employees are on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19. Thousands of
12 them have contracted the disease on the job and hundreds have died from it. Despite the risk to and
13 sacrifice of public service employees, the Trump Occupational Safety and Health
14 Administration (OSHA) is refusing to issue an emergency temporary standard for infectious disease
15 to protect workers from COVID-19; and

16 **WHEREAS:**

17 Public Safety Telecommunicators are 9-1-1 professionals that deal with the stress of life or
18 death situations and serve as the thin GOLD line holding it all together all day, every day. Classifying
19 them as a "protective" occupation in the same category as Police Officers, Firefighters, Lifeguards,
20 Crossing Guards and TSA screeners (instead of with Clerks and Secretaries) is appropriate; and

21 **WHEREAS:**

22 Tens of thousands of public service workers, including many AFSCME members, are enrolled
23 in and rely on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program that provides that the remaining
24 balance of student loans will be forgiven after making 10 years' worth of payments. Unfortunately,
25 the Trump administration has consistently sought to end the PSLF program, and Trump's
26 Department of Education has rejected 99% of loan forgiveness requests under the program, even
27 when borrowers met the program's requirements, denying public sector workers a benefit they are

28 entitled to by law. These borrowers face severe financial hardship if the federal government does not
29 honor the promise it made them when they committed their careers to public service; and

30 **WHEREAS:**

31 AFSCME members are putting themselves on the line every day to provide the public with
32 essential health care, public safety, education, housing and social services during the health
33 emergency, even when they do not have the option of working from home.

34 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:**

35 That AFSCME continue to work towards the establishment of state OSHA laws which protect
36 public sector employees and support federal legislation that would cover all public workers under the
37 OSH Act; and

38 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

39 That AFSCME urges OSHA to issue an emergency temporary standard (ETS) to protect all
40 workers at potential risk of occupational exposure to infectious diseases, including COVID-19.
41 Specifically, workers must have access to the appropriate resources, training, equipment and
42 protocols to protect themselves and avoid infecting other people. The standard must extend to all
43 public sector workers, not just those who are in states with OSHA-approved state plans; and

44 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

45 AFSCME will actively work to promote legislative changes at the federal and state level to
46 provide a professional certification program for 9-1-1 Public Safety Telecommunicators and to
47 reclassify these positions from Office and Administrative Support Occupations to Police, Fire and
48 Ambulance Dispatchers; and

49 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

50 That AFSCME will work to highlight the harmful effects of the federal government's failure
51 to honor the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and will continue to oppose the Trump
52 administration's attempts to end PSLF. AFSCME will demand the U.S. Congress properly fund PSLF
53 and ensure that the Department of Education honors its obligation to public service
54 employees. AFSCME supports efforts to aid individuals enrolled in the Public Service Loan
55 Forgiveness Program and will work with Congress and the federal government to ensure that more
56 public service workers can qualify for this valuable benefit; and

57 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:**

58 AFSCME salutes all public service and other front-line workers who “never quit” on the
59 public during the ongoing pandemic. It is public service workers who provide the vital health and
60 personal care, sanitation, financial support and other essential services to support our communities in
61 need, often at great sacrifice to themselves.

SUBMITTED BY: Resolutions Committee

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