



***NEXT WAVE***

T o o l k i t

## WELCOME

Welcome to Next Wave! Our mission is to empower and unite young AFSCME members from across our union in the fight for dignity, respect and economic prosperity. We are young and new AFSCME members who recognize the importance of having a diverse and active union membership and want to throw our elbows into the work. We know that the future of AFSCME relies on the engagement of all members, young people included, and now more than ever the survival of our union depends on our numbers.

## WHOM IS THIS FOR?

Since Next Wave is a young worker engagement program, the typical age of most participating members is 35 or younger. However, anyone can download this toolkit and use the information inside. If you are a council or local union leader and want to find ways to get young people engaged in our union, this is for you, too!

## WHAT ARE YOU SIGNING UP FOR?

As a Next Waver, you will have three major assignments:

1. Get involved in your local union.
2. Bring others with you.
3. Build a relationship with your local union leaders.

## WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?

This document is intended to help you accomplish the above goals. As young members, it can be difficult to know how to get involved in our local unions and this toolkit will show you how to get active. Keep in mind that the ideas in this toolkit are not the only ways to get active. If you already have a role in your union, we suggest using this toolkit as an extra resource. If you don't have a role in your union, this is a great place to start.

## GETTING STARTED: SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Local: \_\_\_\_\_

### As a Next Waver you have three goals:

1. Become active in your local union
2. Bring co-workers with you
3. Build relationships with your local union leaders

This self-assessment tool is geared toward helping you decide HOW you want to get active in your local.

Below you will find three common functions of effective locals. Review each category and by answering all the questions, determine which area of work lends itself to your personal skill set. Once you've finished, find a time to talk with your local president or other elected union leader to compare your skill set and what help is actually required to strengthen your local.

## ORGANIZING

One of the best ways to maintain local union power is to continue to grow our membership numbers. This means regularly talking to potential members about their experience at work and asking them to join our union.

- Are you comfortable talking to people?
- Do you regularly interact with co-workers who aren't in our union?
- Do you like answering questions about our union, what we've won or accomplished?
- Do you enjoy giving presentations to groups?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may want to consider finding out how many potential members exist in your bargaining unit, talking to all the ones you know personally about their experience at work and asking them to join our union. You could also consider regularly attending New Employee Orientations to give a union pitch (if your contract allows).

## POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

As public service employees, we are uniquely positioned to elect our bosses. This is because many of the services we provide and the work that we do is publicly funded. Therefore, electing politicians who will support us, the work we do and the public services we provide is critical.

- Do you believe that protecting the services we provide, as public employees, is important?**
- Would you be willing to talk to your co-workers about protecting our legal rights to bargain over benefits and working conditions?**
- Can you look past party politics and focus on the candidate's track record when it comes to funding public services and supporting workers?**
- Are you interested in legislation that impacts working people?**
- Do you follow local politics?**

**If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may want to consider** conducting conversations with fellow members about the importance of PEOPLE and asking them to become contributors.



## COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS

It's important for local unions to have a variety of communication tactics. An uninformed membership is powerless. In order to communicate information like what workplace issues are being tackled, when/where local meetings are held, and who the elected leaders and stewards are, you must have a multi-pronged communication strategy. This includes one-on-one communication, email, social media and newsletters, to name a few.

- Are you willing to have conversations with co-workers and fellow union members?**
- Do you use social media?**
- Do you like to write?**
- Do you know how to do basic website coding?**
- Do you enjoy maintaining data and email lists?**

**If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may want to consider:**

**Helping with meetings:** Conducting turnout conversations to boost attendance to local meetings, using social media and email to increase attendance and/or taking responsibility for meeting logistics and planning.

**Helping with other communication:** Updating the local union bulletin boards (depending on contract language), helping produce quarterly or monthly newsletter, joining the team that handles website updates and/or maintaining the email list and social media accounts of your local union.

## STEP ONE COMPLETE!

Now it's time to meet with your local president or other local union leader to discuss the best ways you and your fellow Next Wavers can plug into your local union's work.

## ADVANCED TIPS

### ORGANIZING

The source of our union's strength and power is an active membership. Organizing is about improving members' lives by solving real problems on the job and growing our numbers while we are at it. This is done through direct conversations one-on-one, at New Employee Orientations, or at union meetings and other union events.

During all these interactions, the goal of the conversation is the same: Identify what the person you're talking to cares about and involve her or him more deeply in our union. We do this by following the four steps of an organizing conversation.

#### Step 1: Introduction

Clearly state to your co-workers why you're talking to them today. Reasons might include: "We're about to go into contract negotiations and want to hear what issues you'd like tackled at the table," or "We're getting ready for a big membership meeting and are reaching out to non-members in preparation."

#### Step 2: Getting the Story

This step is all about getting to know your fellow workers. We want to learn about our co-workers, what work is like for them and what could be improved. This is done through open-ended questions including:

- How are things going for you since you started working here?**
- How have things changed since you first started?**
- What changes or improvements would you like to see?**
- What do you think is most important for us to work for and protect through our union?**

**If you don't know the person very well:**

- How long have you worked here?**
- What do you do?**

## Step 3: Union Vision

Once you know what is affecting this co-worker, take some time to talk about the strength of our union. This is a good opportunity to point out what our union has already won and how being an active participant can help us tackle the issues she/he cares about.

## Step 4: Move to Action

Finally, ask them to join our union by signing a membership card (if they are non-members) or to get active in another way (if they are already members). It's important to make clear that in this moment they are making a choice to work to make things better or to let things stay the same or get worse.

Example: "You told me you're worried that we're going to lose our health insurance in the next set of negotiations, but the only way to protect our benefits is to have a united force at the negotiation table. Will you join our union to show management that they can't mess with our hard-earned benefits?"

**PRO TIP:** Think of every interaction with a co-worker as a chance to build our union. There are probably non-members whom you work with every day. Some may even be your friends: Start with your closest friends and acquaintances first, using the four steps of the organizing conversation and ask them to join. The only way to grow our union is to purposefully increase our numbers every chance we get!

## POLITICAL ACTION

As it stands today, Americans are facing an out-of-balance economy that favors the wealthy while wages remain stagnant for so many of us. Not only are we struggling to get ahead but the important public services that we provide are too often under attack. Our best opportunity to fight back is through building political power in elections and legislative cycles, and it's never too early to start preparing.

### Getting Ready for Upcoming Elections

It is never too early to start preparing for an upcoming electoral season. Here are five steps you can take:

1. Talk issues, not politics. It's important to remain nonpartisan. This isn't about any political party but instead about politicians who support working people.
2. Keep in touch. In preparation for GOTV and other political activities to come update your co-workers' contact information, especially home/cell phone numbers and personal email addresses.

### Join PEOPLE

The best way to prepare for an upcoming electoral season is to grow AFSCME's political action fund, PEOPLE. Together we can elect candidates who care about our struggle, and we can hold them accountable once they're in office.

With all our contributions, **AFSCME PEOPLE** makes sure we can keep on fighting until we win justice for every worker everywhere.

It's hard to ask others to do something we aren't willing to do ourselves, so we urge you to become a contributor and ask your fellow union members to join you. The easiest contribution link is:

[AFSCME.org/People](https://www.afscme.org/People)



## Pres. Lee Saunders on NEXT WAVE

“So much of AFSCME’s energy and passion comes from members who have more tomorrows than yesterdays. This new generation is helping transform our union, building a culture of activism that has us ready to meet any challenge. We need to continue nurturing their growth through Next Wave — not just so we can succeed in the future, but so we can be stronger right now.”

Got other ideas for resources we should include in this toolkit? Let us know at [NextWave@afscme.org](mailto:NextWave@afscme.org).





# ***NEXT WAVE***

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