American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Collections
Walter P. Reuther Library
Wayne State University, Detroit

AFSCME History

The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) traces its roots to Madison, Wisconsin in 1932. In 1936, the group gained recognition from the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and became AFSCME. By 1955 when the AFL merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), AFSCME’s composition was expanding to include blue-collar public employees, and its focus had shifted to collective bargaining. Since that time, AFSCME has grown to one of the largest unions in the AFL-CIO. AFSCME represents workers in a variety of roles including corrections, emergency services, education, health care, law enforcement, public administration, public works, housing, and transportation. In recent years, public service workers in a dozen states and Puerto Rico have joined AFSCME.

The Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University became the official repository for AFSCME in 1974. Since that time, it has collected the records of the union's international headquarters and some locals, as well as the personal papers of prominent union members.

The AFSCME collection abstracts, audio files, and images on our website are just a part of our total AFSCME Collection. Please contact the AFSCME Archivist if you have any questions.

For more information about AFSCME please visit the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Web site.

Scope of AFSCME Archives at the Reuther Library

The Reuther Library collects archival materials about AFSCME’s past and present. These documents provide evidence of the union's functions, members, leadership, and long-term planning. Documents exist in many formats, from paper items such as correspondence, memoranda and flyers to audio-visual materials and digital records.

- AFSCME materials at the Reuther primarily represent the International, with a few select Locals and individuals
- Most of the collection is made up of paper documents
- AV Content can be found in a few places
  - Most AV materials described in the AFSCME Communications Department Records, with some audio in Lucy Records
  - Many images available through our web gallery at www.reuther.wayne.edu/image/tid/25
- Oral Histories available at reuther.wayne.edu/memory
  - Joseph Ames
  - Joan Goddard
  - Roy Kubista
  - William J. McEntee
  - Dr. Joseph Mire
  - Flora Walker
- **Publications Collection** includes serials produced by the international union, councils, and locals including
  - Constitutions
  - The Public Employee/AFSCME Works Magazine
  - Biennial Convention Proceedings, including officers’ reports
Finding Content

Labor history tends to intersect with many social movements and political shifts, so broad search terms may be useful at the beginning of your research process.

1. By time period:
   a. 1930s-1960s:
      i. AFSCME Office of the President: Arnold Zander Records
      ii. AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: Gordon Chapman Records
      iii. AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: Government and Civic Employees Organizing Committee (GCEOC) Records
   b. 1960s-1980s
      i. AFSCME Office of the President: Jerry Wurf Records
      ii. AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: Gordon Chapman/Joseph Ames Records
      iii. AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: William Lucy Records
      iv. AFSCME Career Development Program Records
      v. AFSCME Central Files Department Records
      vi. AFSCME Communications Department Records
      vii. AFSCME Program Development Department Records, Parts 1 and 2
      viii. AFSCME Public Policy Analysis Department Records, Parts 1 and 2
   c. 1980s-2000s
      i. AFSCME Office of the President: Gerald W. McEntee Records, Parts 1 and 2
      ii. AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: William Lucy Records
      iii. AFSCME Communications Department Records

2. State, Council, and Local Materials
   a. AFSCME Central Files Department
   b. Office of the President and Office of the Secretary-Treasurer AFSCME Communications Department Records

3. 1968 Sanitation Workers Strike
   a. AFSCME Local 1733: Memphis, Tennessee Records
   b. AFSCME Communications Department Records
   c. AFSCME Office of the President: Jerry Wurf Records
   d. AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: William Lucy Records
   e. https://www.reuther.wayne.edu/taxonomy/term/392

4. Women in the union
   a. AFSCME Women’s Rights Department Records
   b. AFSCME Program Development Department Records
   c. AFSCME Office of the President: Jerry Wurf Records
   d. AFSCME Office of the President: Gerald W. McEntee Records
   e. AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: William Lucy Records
   f. Russ, Johanna, “Pay Equity and the Public Employee” at http://reuther.wayne.edu/node/10830

5. International labor involvement
   a. AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: William Lucy Records
   b. AFSCME Office of the President: Jack Howard Records
   c. AFSCME Office of the President: Gerald McEntee Records, Part 2
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Archival Collections Available for Research at the Reuther Library

Organizational Records:
- AFSCME Administration Department Records
- AFSCME Business Office Records
- AFSCME Career Development Program Records
- AFSCME Central Files Department Records
- AFSCME Communications Department Records
- AFSCME Education and Leadership Training Department Records
- AFSCME International Executive Board (I.E.B.) Records
- AFSCME Legislation and Political Education Department Records
- AFSCME Local 1259: Detroit Public Library Records
- AFSCME Local 1733: Memphis, Tennessee Records
- AFSCME Local 496: Genesee County, Michigan Records
- AFSCME Office of the President: Arnold S. Zander Records
- AFSCME Office of the President: Gerald W. McEntee Records, Part 1 & 2
- AFSCME Office of the President: Jack Howard Records
- AFSCME Office of the President: Jerry Wurf Records
- AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: Gordon Chapman Records
- AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: Gordon Chapman/Joseph Ames Records
- AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: Government and Civic Employees Organizing Committee Records
- AFSCME Office of the Secretary-Treasurer: William Lucy Records
- AFSCME Organizing Department Records
- AFSCME Program Development Department Records, Part 1 & 2
- AFSCME Public Policy Analysis Department Records
- AFSCME Publications
- AFSCME Retiree Department Records
- AFSCME Women’s Rights Department Records

Personal Papers:
- Olive R. Beasley Papers
- Thelma Bernstein Papers
- Al Bilik Papers
- Gordon W. Chapman Papers
- Alton Cobb Papers
- Elaine Graves Papers
- Susan Holleran Papers
- Bob Johnson Papers
- Leo Kramer Papers
- Milton Tambor Papers
- Jerry and Mildred Wurf Papers
- Holgate Young Papers
- Richard Zweiback Papers
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Scholarly Books about AFSCME
Beifuss, Joan Turner. *At the River I Stand: Memphis, the 1968 Strike, and Martin Luther King*, 1985

Billings, Richard N. and John Greenya. *Power to the Public Worker*, 1974

Goulden, Joseph. *Labor’s Last Angry Man*, 1982
  Biography of AFSCME President Jerry Wurf


Scholarly Articles about AFSCME


AFSCME Leadership Timeline
President
1936-1964: Arnold Zander
1964-1981: Jerry Wurf
1981-2012: Gerald McEntee
2012-present: Lee Saunders

Secretary-Treasurer
1935-1936: Roy Kubista
1936-July 15, 1937: David Kanes
July 15, 1937-October 4, 1944: Gordon Chapman
October 5, 1944-1948: H.Z. Collier
1948-May 1962: Gordon Chapman
June 1961-1962: James McCormack
1962-1966: Gordon Chapman
1966-1972: Joseph Ames
1972-2010: William Lucy
2010-2012: Lee Saunders
2012-present: Laura Reyes

Please note
While the Reuther Library is AFSCME’s official repository for archival records, many other repositories collect material related to AFSCME, especially for councils and locals in their respective geographic area. The Kheel Center at Cornell, Wisconsin Historical Society Library and Archives, Minnesota Historical Society, and the Tamiment Library at New York University all hold numerous archival collections of AFSCME material. Please consult the AFSCME Archivist if you require assistance locating material.