



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Submitted by Leigh Tomlinson, President

AFSCME Retirees Michigan Chapter 255

OCTOBER 11, 2025

Welcome to the 4th Biennial Constitutional Convention of AFSCME Michigan Retiree Chapter 255. 2025 has been an unprecedented year for retirees, and for our families, friends and communities, full of challenges and uncertainty. My hope is that the members of Chapter 255 can agree together on the need for involvement in what happens in our government and what we can do to maintain quality of life. Focusing on organizing new members should always be a goal as there is strength in numbers, especially when there is unity among them. As retirees of public service jobs, I believe we are up for the fight. Why? Because we have lived it.

OUTREACH AND ORGANIZING

Some History

Members of Retiree Chapter 255, including SubChapter 38 and SubChapter 98, have attended events that were also attended by working AFSCME members over the past couple of years. They have reported that many aren't aware that AFSCME has a retiree chapter in Michigan. In 2024 and 2025, we have made some good attempts to get the word out and I would like to share some of them with you. I have included a lot of details because like to share openly about things I have knowledge of and to give credit where credit is due.

In July 2024, AFSCME Michigan 925 did an email blast on our behalf to distribute information we provided about the retiree chapter. The emails went to all active locals.

In September 2024, Vice President Pam Shelton and Region 1 Executive Board Member Danny Craig represented Chapter 255 at AFSCME International's annual Retiree Conference in 2024. Because the Convention was also held at the same time, contacts were made with others who were unaware of the retiree chapter and expressed interest in it.

In May 2025, Region 11 Executive Board Member Shana Thornton and another retiree member represented the retirees at the AFSCME Michigan Educational Conference this past spring and received a warm welcome and a positive response. There were only 15 members attending but they received our information and one retiree who attended signed up to be a member.

Treasurer EdMcNeil and Secretary Kathie Sherrill attended the U of M picnic this past summer and are getting the word out in that local. Their local is the largest in Michigan and their President is supportive of the retiree chapter.

Region 5 Executive Board Member Bill Farmer has had lunch meetings with members in Western Michigan.

Treasurer Ed McNeil, along with members of Subchapters 38 and 98, represented Retiree Chapter 255 at an event at the Detroit Eastern Market in June where over 4,000 retirees and guests and around 20 vendors attended. They talked to retirees about AFSCME and the work our retiree department and legislative department have been working on to fight cuts to Social Security and Medicare and are fighting on behalf of our members working for the federal government.

Ed McNeil, Julie Bauman, and other SubChapter 38 retiree members attended the recent Political Conference held by AFSCME Michigan 925 and made our presence known. They handed out flyers inviting people to our Convention workshops and Reception.

These are only some of the organizing efforts that have been done over the past couple of years and I recognize there are others who are also doing their part.

A Look to the Future

My goal is to partner with Wayne County SubChapter 38 and City of Detroit Subchapter 98 to sign up retirees in their jurisdiction who are not currently members.

I also plan to request attendance at membership meetings with active Michigan AFSCME locals to inform them about our retiree chapter. I intend to start with some of the outstate locals including locals across Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Your input and assistance with these endeavors will be welcome and appreciated.

Picnics have proven to be successful in some areas but it has been difficult to find interest in others. My vision includes contacting active locals and arranging to attend their local meetings to present information about the retiree chapter and also to attend community functions where we can have space to handout information and talk with people. To accomplish this, I am asking for help from all of our membership. It can only be successful if we are all in!

The Executive Board of AFSCME Michigan Retiree Chapter 255 has presented the Go Get Organized Resolution this year and we are committed to finding new ways organize. Let's do this face-to-face.

My goal is to partner with Wayne County SubChapter 38 and City of Detroit Subchapter 98 and sign up retirees who are not currently members. I also hope to attend membership meetings with our active locals to inform them about our retiree chapter. I will try to start with some of our larger locals such as McLaren Hospital, Michigan State University, Western Michigan University and across Michigan's Upper Peninsula by having an informational booth at the Labor Day parade in Marquette. Your input will be welcome and appreciated.

Organizing is not just done to collect dues. It is important to have a large base of like-minded people who can help with election screenings, legislative issues, and other needs across the State of Michigan.

MLK DINNER DANCE

Retiree Chapter 255 hosted its first, albeit AFSCME Michigan's 47th, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr dinner dance on February 22, 2025. The event was held at The International Banquet and Conference Center in Detroit. It was a beautiful and thoughtful evening with dinner, dancing, and an inspiring speech by keynote speaker Lieutenant Governor Garland Gilchrist II. The event was well-attended and honored the life and legacy of Dr. King.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

AFSCME International's PALS Program

The "AFSCME PAL program" refers to a Political Action Liaison or Political and Legislative program, which serves as a grassroots effort to lobby on behalf of union and support worker-friendly political candidates.

I was contacted by Steve Rzeppa, AFSCME's Political Liaison to Michigan, in January. He had been referred to our chapter to solicit help with lobbying in districts they wanted to target. They contacted Chapter 255 to ask if we had folks who live in the following areas that may be interested in getting involved.

District 3, Scholten – we have no members in this district

District 4, Huizenga – Executive Board Member Bill Farmer

agreed to be a PAL in this district

District 7, Barrett – Myself and another member in the Lansing area agreed to be PALs in this district

District 8, McDonald Rivet - we have no members in this District

District 10, James – we don't have a PALs representative in this area per se; however, Kathie Sherrill agreed to and has been filmed for an ad regarding John James. If our technology is working at Convention, you might see the recording.

US Senator Gary Peters – Executive Board Member Dennis Nauss agreed to be a PALs representative with this Senator

US Senator Elissa Slotkin – Political Liaison Julie Bauman, a member of SubChapter 38 and Chapter 225's Political Liaison, is the PALs representative with this office. In April, Julie met with Senator Slotkin, along with Steve and others from AFSCME Michigan 925 to discuss AFSCME issues.

Some of the information you have received today was distributed to the members of PALs. You can see the need for members in all areas of the state as it would be beneficial in accomplishing good communication with all of Michigan's political representatives.

Thursday, September 25, 2025 was "Call to Action Day". Our voices were heard!

Candidate Screenings

Steve Rzeppa leads the political screenings in Michigan. This year, members of Retiree Chapter 255 were well represented in the screenings. There were 6 members of SubChapter 38 who attended; Julie Bauman, John McCall, Kim Curry-Smith, Pam Hyde Shelton, Hugh Macdonald, and Faith Cairgle.

Michigan Alliance of Retired Americans

This alliance is active in keeping watch over all things that affect retired Americans. Kathie Sherrill is a First Vice President on the Board and Julie Bauman is a member. Chapter 255 pays annual dues to partnership with this important organization.

IN CONCLUSION

In addition to names mentioned in this report, I know there are many others in this room who have been in the fight. Maybe you have helped with elections, called your representatives, served in a political office or campaign, attended town hall meetings, are active in your communities affairs, etc. Whatever it is, you make a difference. I encourage you to reach out and let us know how you would like to be involved as a member of AFSCME Michigan Retiree Chapter 255. Contact information is listed on the website, www.afscme255mi.com.

It has been said that it takes a village, sometimes it takes an army, and sometimes it takes a union.