AFSCME Council 32 “Lobby Day 2017” Q & A

Q: What is Lobby Day?
A: AFSCME Lobby Day is a chance for AFSCME members to:

- Meet or visit their state senator and state representative in the Capitol building
- Talk about their jobs and the services they provide to the public
- Give their legislators an opportunity get to know about the concerns of AFSCME members who live in their legislative districts
- See first-hand what happens in the Capitol and familiarize themselves with some of the happenings in the state legislature
- Build and improve relationships with elected officials who make laws and determine budgets that affect the livelihood, the services they provide, and communities in which we live

Q: What will be happening in the Capitol on May 10?
A: May 10 will be a perfect time for our visit. Most legislators will be in the Capitol and there will be lots of activity. Lawmakers are in the thick of the legislative session, so they’re busy with committee hearings on specific bills and they’re wrestling with some big issues in the proposed state budget bill.

Some legislators might be unavailable because they’re in committee hearings, even with appointments that were made in advance. It happens sometimes that the legislator cannot get away, in which case AFSCME members may meet with staff. Please don’t be offended by that. Most staffers have a lot of influence within their offices and will share your concerns to the legislator.

Q: What will we be talking about with legislators during our Lobby Day visits?
A: It’s important to tell your own story so legislators can have a better understanding of the front-line realities of public service. We also will want to focus on some key areas that are being actively debated in the current budget deliberations. In addition to reminding legislators that the fallout from Act 10 is real and continues to compromise services and undermine our economy, let legislators know:

- **Public employees need a real pay raise.** With many agencies having trouble hiring and keeping workers, it’s clear that the market is speaking. The delayed two-part 4% state employee raise being dangled by the governor is the bare minimum.
- **Public education has taken major hits in past budgets, and the shifting of resources to private schools continues to undermine schools in every community.** It’s time to **begin re-investing in public education at all levels.**
- The state’s **24/7 facilities urgently need more staff** to reduce the crushing costs and burdens of overtime and burnout.
• Wisconsin needs to **take better care of infrastructure.** The governor’s budget proposes some long-overdue reinvestment in local road aids. But, sadly, the governor refuses to get serious about finding a sustainable way to pay for his promises. We need more than empty promises!

**Q:** I’m not comfortable speaking to my representative/senator. I’ve never met the person, and I think they might not be friendly. Why should I bother?

**A:** Come to our pre-briefing at 10 a.m. at the Masonic Temple (301 Wisconsin Ave.) AFSCME leaders and staff will give participants a briefing - an overview of what to expect, talking points, how to present yourself, etc. In this post-Act 10 world, it is more challenging, but we think meetings with legislator – of any political stripe – are important. It’s always a good idea to try to build relationships with elected officials and let them know of your concerns.

First, you are a voting constituent of theirs; and it is their obligation to listen to citizens, especially the ones they represent. Second, your work involves public service, and Lobby Day is an opportunity for you to talk about the services you provide, and why they are essential to your community! For example, if you’re a highway worker, talk about snowplowing or the summer road maintenance work you do. If you’re a child care provider, talk about child care funding or rules. If you’re a probation and parole agent, talk about issues in your job.

Most of our members’ jobs depend on state funding or are regulated by state law in some fashion. It’s the job of legislators to allocate those funds or write the rules that affect your job. In other words – they hold the purse strings to the services you provide, and they probably have no idea how things are on the front lines. Come tell your story. It may be the start of a dialogue that could be very productive and surprising.

You and a friend or a group of other AFSCME members can go together to your pre-assigned meeting. We’ll work out the details so you don’t have to go alone on your Lobby Day visit unless you choose to. We provide the materials, and we’ll make appointments for you. All we ask that you sign up, in advance, so we can make these arrangements.

**Q:** What time is the AFSCME Lobby Day?

**A:** It starts at 10 a.m. and goes until about 3 p.m. Participants are asked to meet at the Masonic Temple (301 Wisconsin Ave.) to check in, collect handouts and hear a briefing by AFSCME leaders and staff on the day’s activities, including participant’s lobby appointment, lunch, etc. We will have sandwiches, chips, cookies, soda and water at the Masonic Temple and we’ll have staff there from 10 to 3.

In addition, we will have a “satellite office” or home base for AFSCME members in the Capitol. It’ll be in a hearing room inside the Capitol where AFSCME members can meet or wait between appointments. We’ll also have handouts at the satellite office for those who come directly to the Capitol.
Q: What if I live in the Madison/Dane County area, but cannot attend the briefing?
A: Anyone in the Madison area who cannot meet at 10 a.m. is welcome to participate. We have an alternative Lobby Day plan for you! We have reserved a room in the Capitol. Come there and we’ll give you our handouts and directions on where to go. Again, we ask you to sign up in advance so we can make appointments for you, to maximize your lobby visit.

Q: Do I need to register with AFSCME in advance?
A: YES! Please let us know ASAP. Give us your home address, and that way we can make appointments with legislators in advance for you, and have your lobby visits go as smoothly as possible. This way, too, we can keep track of what legislators our members are visiting.

Q: We had buses in the past, will there be buses for the 2017 AFSCME Lobby Day?
A: Unfortunately, no, we can’t offer coach bus travel, as in the past. If there is a large group of AFSCME members from one geographic area committed to attending, we might be able to arrange for a school bus or van. Otherwise, members are encouraged to find others to travel with and share costs.

Q: How will I arrange to meet with my senator and my assembly representative?
A: You don’t because WE will make appointments for you! That is why we ask you to notify us, and register with us IN ADVANCE of lobby day! We’ll take care of all of the appointments. Please be prepared to meet with your senator and assembly rep. We can’t guarantee that the meetings will be back to back, and in fact you’ll likely to have wait. That’s why we’ve arranged to have food at the Masonic Temple and/or a “home base” in a hearing room in the Capitol.

Q: Will there be food, and is there a charge for the food?
A: We offer food and drinks at the Masonic Temple at no charge to you. But, again, to make sure we have enough, you must register in advance.

Q: I have other questions. Who can answer them?
A: Please call the AFSCME office in Madison at 608-826-1932 or 800-362-8261 or email us at council32@afscme32.org and we will get the answers you need!

Thank you for your interest in AFSCME’s 2017 Lobby Day! See you there!