

35th Biennial Convention

August 24 - 26, 2023

Columbus, Ohio

Thursday, August 24, 2023 Convention highlights

Thursday's OCSEA Convention agenda was jam packed with speakers, learning opportunities and action items starting with two "welcomes" from friends of labor Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther and Franklin County Commissioner Erica Crawley.

Board Member Cynthia Watiker who introduced her "boss," explained to delegates that it's important union leaders have people on the other side of the bargaining table who respect us and who value our work like Commissioner Crawley.

Delegates stepped up in a big way during this morning session to donate tens of thousands of dollars in relief to our AFSCME union brothers and sister in Maui ravaged by the wildfires. Nearly 300 AFSCME members live the city. In total, chapters and subordinate bodies and OCSEA have pledged a total of \$55,350. Amazing!!!

During the morning General Session OCSEA President Chris Mabe broke down the State of the Union, letting delegates know that the union is strong and will continue to fight off attacks in the state legislature and beyond. He explained that emergency pay, which is currently in the court system could have political twists and turns such as being heard by Mike DeWine's son on the Ohio Supreme Court. But he also said the union wouldn't stop fighting for that and other COVID grievances until the very last gavel.

Former Governor Dick Celeste and Former OCSEA President Ron Alexander helped the body celebrate and look back on 40 years of collective bargaining. Gov. Celeste thanked activists for carrying on a strong labor tradition with Senate Bill 5 and then again, more recently, with Issue 1.

In the afternoon Tom Juravich, a Futurist, impressed on delegates the need for union members to engage in discussion of technology and Artificial Intelligence. He said any discussion of the Future of Work had to include the human element. Juravich, a Labor Studies Professor at the University of Massachusetts, has recently conducted a major study of the National AFL-CIO workers, union and new technology.

Finally, the afternoon concluded with a lively panel discussion from some new and old leaders of OCSEA who talked about how they got involved in the union and what advice they would give to new leaders. Jon Fannin, one of the panelists and Montgomery Chap. 5700 President, said he got involved with the union because he wanted to make ODOT a better place to work for his son when he got older. Cindy Whicker, Vice Pres. of Chap. 2510-School for the Deaf, said she got involved because a union leader helped her apply for other positions and really took an interest in her career goals. "When she came tapping on my shoulder to come to a chapter meeting, I said 'yes'," she said.

Staff the Front Lines rally

AFSCME is hitting the road with one message: Staff the Front Lines! And OCSEA delegates are going to help spread that important message! Join your fellow delegates today at Noon for the Staff the Front Lines Rally. It will take place outside the Convention Center in Sensenbrenner Park at the corner of Nationwide Blvd. and N. High streets (SW corner). Together we will rally to bring attention to the public sector staffing crisis.

There are over 500,000 vacancies in the public sector nationwide - and as you know, many of them are in Ohio. Too many state facilities are being left to run short-staffed, making burn-out and stress a major issue. But getting staff in the door comes with many obstacles. Not only must compensation and benefits reflect our changing reality, but policies create hurdles and delays. Both must be addressed by our State and by OUR BOSSES!

It's OUR work that makes Ohio work!

Join members from all of Ohio's AFSCME affiliates, Marion Correctional Chapter 5110 President Brian Miller, and AFSCME International President Lee Saunders to rally for staffing! FREE T-Shirts will be available to show our solidarity in a solid wave of AFSCME green. See you at Noon!

Special Event at the Clippers

The mascots from the Columbus Clippers baseball, Krash and Lou Seal, joined us this morning at general session to announce tonight's special delegate event!!!!

They made a special trip to deliver a personal invitation to all OCSEA delegates to come out to see the Columbus Clippers at Huntington Park for their home game against the Jackson Jumbo Shrimp tonight.

OCSEA delegates to the 35th Biennial Convention will have a special, reserved spot in the right field plaza for food and game watching. The pre-party event and food starts at Huntington Park promptly at 5:30 p.m. The park is straight down Nationwide Boulevard right outside the Hyatt Convention Center, if you'd like to walk. The address is 330 Huntington Park Ln, Columbus, OH 43215. **Shuttles will be available on the second floor of the Hyatt in the East Connector, right at the bottom of the escalators starting at 5:00 p.m.**

Wear casual clothing and comfortable shoes, and bring your appetite. Food will be served from 5:30 to 7:30. Extra tickets for guests or family are \$10 each and can be purchased at the customer service desk. Don't forget your ID badge.

Friday, August 25, 2023 Convention highlights

The second day of convention was another action-packed day. The convention started out with a bang with some true heroes of labor. Ohio AFL-CIO President **Tim Burga** and AFSCME International President **Lee Saunders** were the morning's special guests. Both are fan favorites with union activists, not only for their straightforward talk, but for their grit and determination that keeps unions strong in Ohio and across our country.

Pres. Burga thanked OCSEA members for all they do to keep Ohio safe and moving. He passed along a union strong message as we head into bargaining later this year: "You need a damn good contract, and that's worth fighting for."

Both Pres. Burga and Pres. Saunders, a former OCSEA member, talked about the power of union members being a tour de force at the polls and around issues that impact public workers, their unions and the democracy we all celebrate. This includes the recent defeat of the Issue 1 attack on Ohio democracy which was led by a united labor front in Ohio. "Issue 1 was an opportunity to unite labor here," said Burga, "And we are united as one of the strongest entities in the state."

"Forty years ago we didn't have a voice at the table, but we do now, and it needs to be protected," said Pres. Saunders who was at the very first OCSEA bargaining table after Gov. Dick Celeste signed the bill into law in 1983. He couldn't be more proud to have been a part of union history that continues this week.

But he warns, that everything we fight for could be taken from us if we don't fight to protect it. "The ambush could come at anytime because there are so many groups who want to take everything away from you, take away your seat at the table. They want to take that power away from you. But we can't let them," said Saunders.

The power of bargaining was on full display during an afternoon panel discussion. Delegates were introduced to three activists who know what it's like to organize their workplaces. **Guests discussing their organizing successes and challenges included Kyle Stoller from the Franklin County Public Defenders Office; Jo Snyder, from the Wexner Center for the Arts; and Zach Frye from the Legal Aid Society of Cincinnati.**

"These are people who took a huge leap of faith at great personal cost," said OCSEA Pres. **Chris Mabe.** "But they knew that having a union in their workplace was key to having a voice on the job," he said.

The panel discussed how they were each able to energize their members to organize for the first time ever. Some of the tools they utilized included activating Member Action Teams to map their workplaces as well as keeping members mobilized during "down" time by reaching out just to touch base. Moderator Luke Ward from AFSCME Ohio Council 8 told delegates that there are important lessons to be learned from the newly organized that can apply to OCSEA chapters who have had collective bargaining for decades.

Down to Business

In the afternoon, delegates got down to business by adopting eight resolutions including ones recommitting to New Employee Orientation, celebrating 40 years of collective bargaining, electing labor-friendly candidates, fighting public sector attacks, standing up to privatization and others. Go here for a complete list of adopted resolutions [HERE](#).

Additionally, delegates took up a constitutional amendment giving the Judicial and Internal Affairs Committee (JIAC) the ability to explore and recommend electronic or phone voting that will allow greater participation. Another amendment clarified members must utilize the chapter transfer form if they are seeking to transfer to another chapter. Other housekeeping changes were proposed and accepted by the delegates.

Mabe, Jolly re-elected by acclamation

OCSEA President Christopher Mabe and OCSEA Vice President Gerard "Rocky" Jolly were both re-elected by acclamation Thursday afternoon at the OCSEA 35th Biennial Convention. Because neither officers were faced with opposition, the election rules certified that both officers were re-elected by acclamation. An election for the office of Secretary-Treasurer will take place Friday starting after morning session in Franklin A. All seated delegates are permitted to vote. An OCSEA ID badge is required to vote.

Gersper re-elected as Secretary-Treasurer

During Friday's election, delegates to the 35th OCSEA Biennial Convention re-elected Kathy Gersper to the office of Secretary-Treasurer. She received a majority of the vote. This will be Gersper's sixth four-year term as Secretary-Treasurer.