

8033 Excelsior Drive  
Madison, WI 53717



608-826-1932  
[www.afscme32.org](http://www.afscme32.org)

August 17, 2017

Brothers and Sisters,

During the last few months, there have been many conversations about Council 32's shift from a "service mindset" to an "organizing mindset." At the last Executive Board meeting, the Board voted to begin rapidly shifting to an organizing mindset.

This change to an organizing mindset is overdue and necessary if we are going to be an effective and sustainable organization.

We have written this piece to start a conversation about why we are changing our focus and what specific changes locals will see.

However, before we talk about specific changes, we must define the terms "service mindset" and "organizing mindset." It is our belief that these terms represent the philosophy that guides our organization's primary goals.

In the old "service mindset" we focused extensively on the legal aspects of the union. It was critical that we maintained good relations with management, there was very little turnover in leadership, and members viewed the union as a third party to call when they had a problem. Most critically, the service mindset was built on using the very laws that now restrict us.

The "organizing mindset" represents a fundamentally different approach. It is about being willing to sacrifice good relations with management in order to defend our members and ensuring that members take personal responsibility for the success or failure of their organization. The organizing mindset empowers us to stand with our co-workers for change regardless of existing legislation or who is Governor.

Pre-Act 10, all three councils were firmly entrenched in the service mindset. Knowing this, Governor Walker tried to use the service mindset against us. He took away dues deduction, eliminated a real grievance process, and stole our ability to bargain. He hoped that we would be so dependent on the service mindset, that when he made service impossible, we would collapse. Unfortunately, many of us did.

The deep roots of the service model in our state can still be felt today. Potential members, as well as current ones, will often ask, "What can the union do for me?" or "What benefit

do I get if I join the union?" These questions are direct descendants of the service mindset and, when we try to answer them, we fall into a trap – that the service mindset is heavily transactional and not suited to our current environment.

**But if we think back to where this union came from, it becomes clear that transactions were never what we were supposed to be. Organized labor is built on the idea that if we all stand together, sacrifice together, and fight together we can achieve better lives for all.**

To survive in this current environment, we have to get back to where we started over 80 years ago. We cannot rely on a field representative to be the union in the workplace and only feeling as if the union is there when staff is present. The union must be an around-the-clock presence built on the strength of its members.

We explain all of this because we are striking out in a bold new direction in an effort to fundamentally change the way this organization has operated for decades. Our end goal is to build an organization driven by engaged, empowered members who demand and get respect from an Administration that has taken so much away.

We have been through a lot over the last six years, but no matter how hard our enemies tried, we have persevered. It is at this crucial tipping point that we must stand together. Now is the time to lay the groundwork and take the fight to those who tried so hard to destroy us! Now is our chance to take ownership over our union, embrace the organizing mindset, and take personal responsibility for our success!

We have been given an opportunity that comes once in a generation. By working hard and digging deep we can fundamentally change the lives of people all over the state of Wisconsin for the better and we have taken the first steps to do so.

In Solidarity,

Paul Spink - President AFSCME Wisconsin

Rick Badger - Executive Director AFSCME Wisconsin