

## I: INTRODUCTION

In 1992 a study was conducted by the Wilson Center for Public Research on the topic “Workers’ Views of the Value of Unions.” The study found that union members who have effective stewards are:

- Significantly more likely to feel the union is effective in helping obtain job-related improvements.
- Much more likely to feel their union representative cares about them.
- More likely to approve of grievance handling — and to file grievances.
- Much more likely to turn to the union — rather than to management — to solve contract-related problems.
- More optimistic about the negotiating ability of their local.
- More likely to see the importance of the union’s organizing efforts.
- More likely to volunteer to participate in union activities.

The study confirmed two long-held AFSCME beliefs: Stewards are the cornerstone of the union, and effective stewards build stronger unions.

AFSCME stewards carry out their responsibilities in a wide variety of workplaces. Most of you work in public-sector jobs, but many of you work in the private sector as well. You are state, county and municipal employees, but some of you work for the federal government. Some of you work for non-profit organizations. In some cases you have an agency shop, either by statute or by negotiating language in your contract. In other places, non-members are not required to pay any agency fees and you may still be required to represent them. You work in states and other jurisdictions where collective bargaining laws and negotiated contracts are in place. But many of you also carry on the struggle for dignity in those areas where public employees have not yet won that basic right to bargain collectively over wages, hours and conditions of employment.

The contents of this *AFSCME Steward Handbook* have been developed to help you become an effective steward — regardless of your particular work situation. A wealth of information is packed into these pages — everything from steward responsibilities to grievance-handling skills, from legal issues to the history of AFSCME. While every piece of information may not apply to your specific circumstances, apply those principles and guidelines that do.

Scattered throughout the handbook are a collection of “Bright Ideas,” intended to offer tips, provide guidelines or shed some light on various topics. So, the next time someone asks, “Who had that bright idea?”, you can say that you did; you’re the AFSCME steward.