

# WASHINGTON FEDERATION OF STATE EMPLOYEES AFSCME, Council 28

## Steward Policy

The following policies and guidelines apply to all locals in the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE), Council 28 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

### I. GOALS

- A. To ensure that all stewards carry out their roles and responsibilities in a responsible, knowledgeable, and effective manner.
- B. To ensure that stewards adhere to the principles set forth in the constitution of WFSE, as well as those in the AFSCME International Constitution.
- C. To ensure that stewards fulfill the union's "duty of fair representation" (see AFSCME Steward Handbook) to every member of a represented bargaining unit, without exception.
- D. The goal of WFSE is that there is one (1) steward per shift per thirty (30) bargaining unit employees at each job site.

### II. STEWARD ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The roles and responsibilities of the steward are those described in the *AFSCME Steward Handbook*, published by the International Union, and the WFSE Policy for Processing Grievances. These include:
  - 1. Protecting the rights of bargaining unit employees and the union by enforcing the collective bargaining agreement, other established work rules, or laws, and assisting members in workplace investigations or disputes.
  - 2. Representing bargaining unit employees in the formal grievance procedure, when necessary and appropriate, in a professional manner consistent with the duty of fair representation.
  - 3. Reaching out to new employees to share information about the union, invite them to participate and collect union membership cards.
  - 4. Representing co-workers in informal discussions with management to resolve workplace problems.
  - 5. Organizing co-workers around workplace concerns.

Adopted by the WFSE Council 28 Executive Board via email poll on August 31, 2018

Adopted by the WFSE Council 28 Executive Board as amended on October 12, 2017

Previous adopted amendments: Feb. 2007, Dec. 2007, Sept. 2008, March 2009, March 2014, Sept. 2016

Policy adopted by the WFSE Council 28 Executive Board – July 15, 2006

6. Communicating accurate information to bargaining unit employees, potential members, other stewards, and local union officers and providing follow up when necessary.
7. Motivating and mobilizing members to become actively involved in addressing workplace issues and problems that affect them.
8. Promoting union values, principles and ideals in the workplace.
9. Engaging in political activity in support of workplace concerns.
10. In addition to the roles and responsibilities described above, the “2017 WFSE Steward Program” introduces new levels of Stewards --New, Apprentice, Journey and Mentor-- and Steward Specialty areas such as Representation, Organizing/Mobilization, Political Action and Communications.

### **III. TRAINING OF STEWARDS**

- A. All new stewards entering training after November 2017 will attend and participate in WFSE’s 8 hour “Stewards In Action” training, and fulfill other requirements as required by the Council and Locals and outlined in “2017 Steward Program”.
- B. WFSE is responsible for providing instructors and scheduling dates/locations for the “Stewards in Action” training in a manner that will ensure the most accessibility for stewards. WFSE will communicate the training schedule to appropriate local officers and chief stewards.
- C. Each local union is responsible for ensuring that its stewards attend this training program. It is the local’s responsibility to communicate training opportunities to its members.
- D. All stewards are required to attend Continuing Steward Education.
- E. In order to maintain your title as a Steward you must attend a CBA training for each new union contract cycle negotiated for your bargaining unit and meet other continuing education requirements in the WFSE Steward Program. Any Steward that has not completed the requirements within each new union contract cycle negotiated for your appropriate bargaining unit will be removed from the Steward list.
- F. If stewards removed due to these new requirements wish to appeal they can request review to the Council Executive Committee within thirty (30) days of the Council President’s decision. The decision of the Council President will remain in effect pending the final decision of the Council Executive Committee.

### **IV. SELECTION OF STEWARDS**

- A. To be a steward, a bargaining unit employee must be a member in good standing of WFSE.

- B. The Council President is responsible for the appointment of all stewards, including those elected, in accordance with the Council Constitution and Council Steward Policy, and upon the recommendation of the appropriate Local union President. Steward elections, where they occur, will be held in accordance with the AFSCME Elections Code.
- C. Members certified as a steward will remain a steward when transferring between Locals so long as all ongoing training requirements are met.
- D. If a Local President recommends a steward appointment and the Council President denies that appointment, the Local President may appeal that decision to the Council Executive Committee, within thirty (30) days.
- E. Stewards may also request a 'sabbatical' to waive requirements for a time period when they are inactive due to illness or other personal circumstances preventing them from participating in shop steward duties. These requests must be submitted in writing to the Council President.

## **V. DISTRIBUTION OF STEWARDS**

- A. To insure that stewards cover all bargaining unit employees, each local will develop a list of job sites.
- B. Ideally, each job site should be represented by a steward who works at the job site. However, smaller job sites and shifts may be combined for steward representation purposes.
- C. It is vital that bargaining unit employees be kept informed about who their stewards are. Communication tools such as newsletters, bulletin boards, etc. should be used for this purpose.

## **VI. STEWARD STRUCTURE**

- A. Each local union will have a steward committee that will consist of all stewards in the local.
- B. Steward committees should meet regularly, preferably once a month.
- C. In addition to the requirements of the applicable local steward policy, steward activities will be directed and assisted by Council staff.
- D. Locals may establish chief steward positions that will be appointed or elected in accordance with the local's policy or constitution.
- E. In accordance with the local steward policy, a chief steward's responsibilities may include:
  - 1. Chairing meetings of the steward committee.
  - 2. Mentoring and educating New and Apprentice stewards.

3. Working with Council staff in directing stewards.
  4. Acting as a resource for other stewards and local officers.
  5. Maintaining the local's grievance file.
  6. Compiling recommendations for contract language improvements.
  7. Serving as a Mentor Steward if authorized.
- F. Levels of Stewards and Specialty Areas are described in the "2017 Steward Program" document but do not impact the above ongoing steward structures.

## **VII. MAINTAINING GRIEVANCE FILES**

- A. Stewards should maintain a file on any grievance they file, using the WFSE Grievance Fact Sheet form as a starting point to gather information.
- B. The information in a grievance file can be used by any union official (steward, chief steward, grievance committee member, staff representative, etc.) who subsequently works on processing the grievance.
- C. The files on all concluded grievances (cases that have been won, lost, settled, dropped, etc.) should be forwarded to the appropriate WFSE field office for retention and as much as possible entered by stewards into WFSE Online Grievance Tracking system. .
- D. The local should use the information from concluded grievances to help:
  1. Prepare future grievances on similar topics.
  2. Prepare for future contract negotiations by documenting problem areas in the collective bargaining agreement.
- E. Stewards should also maintain grievance files in accordance with best practices as recommended by the WFSE Member Connection Center.

## **VIII. STEWARDS AND MEMBER ACTION TEAMS**

- A. To aid in the vital work of communicating with and mobilizing members on workplace issues, all locals are strongly encouraged to develop a Member Action Team (MAT) structure.
- B. All stewards, as well as local union officers and executive board members, should be part of the MAT structure.
- C. MATs should be used in several ways, including:
  1. Communicating with bargaining unit employees, one-on-one.

2. Distributing written information such as newsletters, flyers, etc.
3. Conducting surveys and gathering information.
4. Learning about workplace issues and problems.
5. Mobilizing member involvement to solve problems.
6. Identifying and developing union activists and leaders.

## **IX. REMOVING STEWARDS/COMPLAINTS AGAINST STEWARDS**

- A. Complaints against stewards will be handled at the Local level in accordance with the Local steward policy whenever possible
- B. A Steward can be removed for misconduct only when this request is authorized by the Council President. If a Local President receives or initiates a request to remove a steward, the Local President must conduct an investigation into allegations of steward misconduct and provide written summary of their findings before forwarding the recommendation for removal to the Council President.
- C. A steward may be removed from his/her position of steward by the Council President on the basis of substantiated charges on the subjects contained in Article X (Judicial Procedure) of the AFSCME International Constitution; or for not acting in accordance with Council policy; or for failure to perform his/her duties and responsibilities as a steward. The Council President will consult with the Local President prior to such action.
- D. A steward who is removed from their steward position will have the right to appeal the decision to the Council Executive Committee within thirty (30) days of the Council President's decision. The decision of the Council President will remain in effect pending the final decision of the Council Executive Committee.
- E. If a steward no longer wishes to serve they can request in writing to be removed from the list.
- F. Stewards who fail to meet ongoing continuing education requirements as determined by the "2017 Steward Program" or WFSE Steward Policy will be removed.

## **X. STEWARD OATH**

- A. Upon appointment as a Journey Steward, a shop steward oath will be given.
- B. I, (state your name), agree to adhere to the principles set forth in the constitution of WFSE, as well as those in the AFSCME International Constitution. I agree to fulfill the union's duty of fair representation to every member of a represented bargaining unit, without exception. I recognize as a steward that I am the face of the union and I agree to carry out my roles and responsibilities in a responsible, knowledgeable and effective manner. I agree that I will deliver to the Local President all books, papers, and other property of this union which are in my possession when my position as shop steward has ended.