



# AFSCME NEWS

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## **The Fairness Act: Antidote to Court-Eroded Workers' Civil Rights**

**Washington, DC** – For nearly a decade, court decisions have eroded the nation's fundamental civil rights protections, and now the situation has reached crisis level.

The Civil Rights Act of 2004 (the Fairness Act) will restore basic protections to working families, and the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO, calls for its swift passage.

“Wage and overtime violations run rampant in state governments, and state workers have no recourse for these violations,” said AFSCME President Gerald W. McEntee.

“Everyone – regardless of employer, national origin, sex, disability or age – must be treated equally and afforded the same protections under the law,” McEntee continued.

The Fairness Act will give state employees the right to speak out loud and clear about age discrimination, allowing older workers to sue their state employers for violations of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.

The legislation will prohibit mandatory arbitration clauses in employment contracts that force workers to choose between their jobs and the ability to have their discrimination claims heard by a judge.

In addition, The Fairness Act will require that gender-based differences in pay be directly addressed and will allow victims of wage discrimination to recover compensatory and punitive damages from employers.

“The courts should have never removed these fundamental civil rights. It is up to Congress to right these wrongs and protect workers' civil rights not only for today but for the future as well,” McEntee added.

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The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) has 1.4 million members, making it one of the largest and fastest-growing unions within the AFL-CIO. AFSCME organizes for social and economic justice in the workplace and through political action and legislative advocacy.

**American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO**

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