

**CORE VALUES**

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*The Minnesota AFL-CIO is an organization of workers and retirees dedicated to protecting members' interests and improving wages, hours and working conditions for all; by raising the standard of living for the working class, ensuring safe working conditions, and increasing benefits for both working people and their families.*

*The Minnesota AFL-CIO envisions a future in which work and all working people are valued, respected and rewarded. While the Minnesota AFL-CIO represents hundreds of thousands of working people who belong to unions and have the benefits of union membership, we embrace **all** people who share the common bond of work.*

*Today and in the future, unions will continue to play an important role our state's workforce and the quality of life. Minnesota's working people need the representation, collective power, pride in work, and fair treatment in the workplace.*

**1 CANDIDATE COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT ORGANIZING & COLLECTIVE BARGAINING:**

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- I will support the principle that all workers, in both the public and private sectors, have the right to form a union and bargain collectively in an environment free of interference, intimidation, or reprisals;
- I will support workers' efforts to organize by issuing public statements, attending rallies supporting organizing, and sponsoring public forums;
- I will provide an effective voice for the working families in our state and work to increase the visibility of working families' issues, the union movement and oppose all anti-labor legislation;
- I will urge employers to:
  - respect employees' rights to form a union by remaining neutral during union organizing campaigns, and
  - recognize a union voluntarily when the majority of employees choose to form one via majority sign-up, and
  - bargain in good faith to reach an agreement with the union that represents the employees.
- I will support Project Labor agreements and Labor Peace agreements;
- I will oppose all attempts to make Minnesota a "Right to Work" state through legislation or Constitutional Amendment.

**Name (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Legislative District Held/Sought:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 SUPPORTING LABOR’S COLLECTIVE POLICY PRIORITIES

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Candidates will actively promote public policy that directly affects workers and their families, by supporting issues including, but not limited to:

- Creating family-sustaining, living wage jobs with benefits such as paid family leave, earned sick and safe time, fair scheduling, increased wage theft protections, and protecting minimum and prevailing wage,
- Providing adequate job safety and health protections, worker’s compensation, and unemployment insurance,
- Preserving a progressive tax system where corporations and those who make the most pay their fair share,
- Providing a sound retirement system that includes pensions and private savings for those who do not have it, and protecting those who do,
- Investing in a comprehensive, long-term, balanced, transportation system for all,
- Ensuring access to affordable health care for all,
- Ensuring quality public education, from early childhood through higher education,
- Expanding access and removing barriers to voting,
- Addressing social, economic, and racial injustice and inequities, and
- Opposing cuts to state or local government or outsourcing of public service.

## 3 SUPPORTING SPECIFIC POLICY PRIORITIES

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1. A transportation funding package must be fair and balanced between transportation modes, as well as between Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities metro.

a. Will you support a transportation system that serves ALL Minnesotans equitably?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER (please explain):**

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b. Will you support increased funding for transportation that is dedicated to building and maintaining our transit and road/bridge systems?      **YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER (please explain):**

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2. Will you support the priorities of the Working Parents’ Act legislation:

a. Provide paid family leave so workers can afford time off work to bond with a new child or care for an elderly or seriously ill family member?      **YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER (please explain):**

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b. Crack down on wage theft for workers who are denied overtime pay, refused pay for hours worked, or paid less than the minimum wage?      **YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER (please explain):**

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### 3 SUPPORTING SPECIFIC POLICY PRIORITIES (CONTINUED)

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- c. Guarantee workers have access to earned sick and safe time to care for themselves, a sick child, or loved one, or seek services due to domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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- d. Ensure more predictability in scheduling for workers, providing adequate notice of schedule changes, maintaining consistent and regular hours of work, limiting last-minute or on-call shifts?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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3. Will you oppose any attempt to raid the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, endangering Trust Fund solvency levels?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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4. After a decade of state budget deficits, the state's budget is structurally balanced and the overall tax system has been made fairer. New revenues have allowed us to once again make much needed investments in health care, all levels of education, job creation and public services. Would you propose repealing any of the new taxes?

**YES**                      **NO**

- a. If yes, which ones:

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- b. How would you propose to replace the lost revenue from the repeal of those taxes, so that we can continue to appropriately fund our state's priorities?

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5. Will you oppose any attempts to reduce, eliminate indexing, or add tip penalty to the current minimum wage law?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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6. Will you oppose any changes to Prevailing Wages laws in Minnesota?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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### 3 SUPPORTING SPECIFIC POLICY PRIORITIES (CONTINUED)

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7. Will you oppose efforts to undermine apprenticeship standards, licensing, and OSHA laws?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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8. Will you consistently support bonding legislation to provide for the state's infrastructure, such as HEAPR (Higher Education Asset Preservation and Renovation), and other public projects?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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9. Will you support legislation that provides funding to increase access to quality early childhood programs taught by licensed professionals by providing more early childhood and family education classes and universal, school-based preschool for all children? **YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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10. Will you work with the Minnesota AFL-CIO to address issues of racial and economic justice?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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11. Staffing levels are a major concern for those working in the health care field. Knowing that staffing impacts patient safety and patient outcomes, will you support legislation that requires patient assignment limits for all direct care nurses in hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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12. Will you support a ban on the leasing and/or ownership of private correctional facilities in Minnesota?

**YES**                      **NO**                      **OTHER** (please explain):

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## 1 TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

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Without immediate action on transportation, Minnesota will continue to fall behind - businesses and families will have higher costs, companies will lose top workers to other markets, and communities will struggle to ensure access to jobs, services, and opportunity for all residents, from seniors to new arrivals to the next generation.

Transportation projects require planning, design and construction that can take a number of years. The Minnesota legislature needs to focus on the need for ongoing, dedicated funding for highways, bridges and transit throughout Minnesota. In order for the state achieve our goal of a safer and more effective transportation system, we believe that a comprehensive funding package with stable, dedicated funding is needed.

To succeed in the 21st century, Minnesota communities need strong employment bases, productive workers who can get to jobs affordably, and ways for residents of every age and ability to access opportunity. Transportation underpins all of these.

The Minnesota Legislature must take action on existing problems and prepare for a brighter future. Better transportation options, including more transit access, and reliable roads and bridges, are essential to growing jobs, spurring economic development, and improving quality of life across the state.

## 2 WORKING PARENTS' ACT

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The Working Parents Act introduced last session included five legislative provisions:

**Earned Sick and Safe Time:** More than 1 million working Minnesotans lack access to paid sick time. This provision would guarantee Minnesota workers have access to earned sick and safe time to care for themselves, a sick child, or a loved one, or to seek services due to domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault.

**Paid Family Leave:** Only 13% of Minnesotans have access to paid family leave, meaning workers are often forced to choose between their families and their jobs. This provision would create an insurance program to provide all Minnesota employees with a percentage of their wages for up to 6 weeks so they can afford to take time off to bond with a new child, care for an elder or seriously-ill family member, or deal with pregnancy-related health concerns.

**Putting a Stop to Wage Theft:** Wage theft occurs when workers are denied overtime pay, refused pay for hours worked, or paid less than the minimum wage. This provision would crack down on wage theft by increasing penalties for wage theft, extending the statute of limitations on all wage theft to 6 years, and protecting workers from employer retaliation.

**Scheduling Fairness and Flexibility:** Many Minnesota workers lack a predictable schedule, which can affect economic security and stability for families. This provision would ensure more predictability in scheduling, limit last-minute or on-call shifts, and protect workers from employer retaliation.

**Tip Fairness for Servers:** Several Minnesota restaurants in recent years have deducted the cost of credit and debit card transaction fees from servers' tips. This provision would prohibit businesses from deducting credit card fees from tips earned by servers and put that money back into the pockets of the hardworking Minnesotans that earned them.

With the exception of Paid Family Leave (which passed as a study), no other provisions were passed last session.

The Paid Family Study was released in February of 2016, and lays out suggestions for how Minnesota could design a program that best accomplishes the goals of providing financial and economic stability for workers by: expanding Paid Family & Medical Leave (PFML) access to as many Minnesotans as possible, improve economic competitiveness of businesses by increasing workforce attachment, and creating an efficient PFML system that maximizes benefits and reduces burdens to workers and employers.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO strongly supports passage of all the Working Parents' Act provisions.

### 3 UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TRUST FUND SOLVENCY

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Here's how the system is meant to work: employers pay state unemployment taxes, which go into a trust fund. During good economic time, those funds build up, as lots of employers pay in and relatively few workers need benefits. "In theory", the fund gets big enough to last during a recession, when revenue falls and unemployment rises.

Currently, the trust fund balance is approximately \$1.6 billion. There are some who would argue that our trust fund has a "surplus" and we should give the money back to the businesses. However, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2008, Minnesota had more than \$550 million in the Unemployment Trust Fund, but by the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2009, the trust fund was already in deficit (\$50 million). The Great Recession took a toll on the trust fund to the tune of about \$1.8 billion in a *single* year, and bottomed out with a deficit that exceeded \$700 million. We had to borrow from the Federal Government just to pay benefits to our unemployed workers – which led to increased taxes *and* an additional surcharge on businesses at the worst possible time.

Minnesota's Unemployment Insurance program is one of the best in the country in delivery of benefits and mechanics of the tax system. Because of the way our UI tax system is structured, the trust fund was able to get out of deficit quickly, ultimately triggering off the additional surcharge and allowing a reduction in overall taxes for businesses. The one-year "early" reduction passed by the Legislature in 2014 saved businesses more than \$800 million.

Underfunded UI systems can have serious consequences for workers. Several states with depleted trust funds have responded by cutting back either the duration or the amount of benefits available to workers, or both. Although the labor market is fairly strong right now, a growing number of economists are predicting that a downturn could come soon. The Minnesota AFL-CIO opposes any attempts to "spend down" the UI trust fund which could jeopardize a critical safety net for unemployed workers.

Thousands of Iron Range miners have been laid off, and another 700 more Minnesotans who work for vendors that support the mining industry have also lost their jobs. Foreign steel dumping has pushed ore prices to a 10-year low and devastated more than half the 11 mining operations on the Range. Keetac, and its hundreds of workers, has been idled indefinitely by U.S. Steel. The Mesabi Nugget iron plant near Hoyt Lakes and the Mining Resources iron concentrate plant near Chisholm will close for at least two years. Grand Rapids-based Magnetation, facing bankruptcy, idled plants in Bovey and Chisholm. United Taconite closed its mining operation in Eveleth and its pellet plant in Forbes. Northshore Mining in Silver Bay shut down in December, throwing 540 more people out of work.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO strongly supports legislation extending unemployment benefits for these workers and their families and providing desperately needed relief to these communities where mining has been the bedrock of the economy. By the time lawmakers return to work in March, almost 600 steelworkers will have run through their benefits already.

### 4 PROGRESSIVE REVENUES

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Policy choices matter in ensuring that Minnesota's tax system is fair and raises enough revenue to properly fund Minnesota's schools, roads, nursing homes and other critical services. The recent efforts to reach these goals have paid off. The gap between the share of income that the highest-income Minnesotans pay in state and local taxes and what other Minnesotans pay has closed considerably.

Minnesota's tax system is still regressive; that means as household income grows, the share of income paid in state and local taxes falls. But the tax system will be significantly less regressive in 2017 than in 2012.

On average, Minnesota state and local taxes as a share of income will be slightly lower in 2017 than in 2012, and will be 12.3 percent lower than in 1994.

Minnesota has made substantial progress in the past few years. Before 2013, Minnesota's tax system was not meeting our needs. The gap between the share of income that the wealthiest paid in state and local taxes and the share that average Minnesotans paid had grown, and the system was not raising enough revenues to avoid persistent budget deficits.

The cumulative impact of the tax changes passed in 2013 and 2014 made Minnesota's tax system more equitable, raised enough revenue to resolve the budget deficit, funded needed investments in schools, made college education more affordable, and other building blocks of a prosperous state.

Minnesota's more positive budget situation today shouldn't mean a change in direction. More action is still needed to narrow the gap between the highest-income Minnesotans and all other Minnesotans. In addition, we must avoid large tax cuts that would put the state's ability to sustainably fund critical services at risk. The lesson of the late 1990s and early 2000s is clear: too much tax cutting in the good times was followed by greater reliance on property taxes, double-digit increases in tuition at public colleges and universities, and higher fees. That combination put more of the responsibility for funding public services on to low- and middle-income Minnesotans. Repeating those mistakes would not set a wise course for our state's future.

## 5 MINIMUM WAGE

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In 2014, low-wage workers finally received a pay raise when the legislature passed an increase to our state's minimum wage from \$6.15 to \$9.50/hour, despite fierce opposition and attempts to weaken the proposal from business groups including the State Chamber of Commerce, the Grocer's Association, and Hospitality Minnesota.

Minnesota is no longer one of a handful of states with a minimum wage lower than the federal minimum wage. The higher wage means low-wage workers will regain lost purchasing power and find it easier to make ends meet. And since Minnesota has also joined a growing number of states that index their minimum wages to inflation, the wage will better keep up with increases in the cost of living.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO will actively oppose ANY attempts to weaken the new minimum wage law by eliminating indexing, implementing a tip penalty on workers who earn gratuities, or by adding more worker exemptions.

## 6 PREVAILING WAGE

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The Davis-Bacon Act, at both the federal and state levels, is designed to outlaw wage exploitation in public construction contracts by preventing the undercutting of local standards.

Under current state law, prevailing wages must be paid only on state-contracted work for a building or facility in which a public agency will rent, lease or purchase at least 50% of the project. But there are many types of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) that don't meet that threshold – organized labor supports requiring that prevailing wage standards be expanded to apply to all PPPs.

There is no evidence that prevailing wage laws result in higher costs for government. In fact, 2008 research by the Economic Policy Institute reviewing dozens of studies of prevailing wage laws, refutes the claims that prevailing wage laws raise the cost of government public works projects. That research concludes that prevailing wage laws also help to reduce occupational injuries and fatalities, increase the pool of skilled construction workers, and actually enhance state revenues. When our tax dollars are spent on public construction – whether independently or with participation from the private sector – family-wage jobs should be created or maintained and superior work should be expected.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO will aggressively oppose attempts to weaken our state's prevailing wage law or to exempt certain public projects from prevailing wage standards. When contractors compete on the basis of skill and productivity, we all benefit. When they compete to have the lowest wages or labor standards, we all lose.



## 7 APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS, LICENSING, AND OSHA LAWS

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Over the years attempts have been made to weaken apprenticeship and licensing standards and move Minnesota OSHA (MNOSHA) from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) to the U. S. Department of Labor. Organized labor has fought all of these attempts to undermine a highly skilled, quality workforce.

The DLI's Division of Apprenticeship has provided assistance and supervision of quality programs for over 68 years. Quality union programs have provided a means of educating and training tens of thousands of individuals. The Minnesota Building and Construction Trades' unions and the Minnesota AFL-CIO have always opposed attempts to reduce apprenticeship funding and/or lessen the assistance DLI provides.

Licensing standards adopted by the legislature and regulated by various state agencies have led to a well-educated and highly skilled workforce. Licensing is an integral method to insure everyone has the necessary skills to provide quality work and instruction. Labor has fought legislative efforts to lessen licensing standards for teachers, electricians, nurses, boiler operators, and others, as well as weakening building code standards.

Many states OSHA systems are operated by the Federal Government. Minnesota runs its own OSHA system in large part via Federal funding – both compliance (inspections and fines) and safety consultation (preventative). Minnesota OSHA is noted across the country as one of the best run OSHA programs in the country. In addition to complying and administering Federal OSHA laws and guidelines, MNOSHA has additional safeguards for workers. Many Minnesota employers are required to have a Workplace Accident and Injury Reduction (AWAIR) program and all employers with more than 25 employees or a high lost workday cases has to have a joint labor-management safety committee. Minnesota workers are protected by the "Employer Right-to-Know" about hazardous substances law, employer paid personal protective equipment, lockout devices in construction, enhanced record keeping, a confined space law and many other protections that Federal OSHA does not have.

## 8 BONDING

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Bonding bills, the process the state uses to pay for capital projects, requires by state constitution a three-fifths majority vote in each chamber of the Legislature to pass - that means 81 votes in the House and 41 votes in the Senate.

Simply stated, bonds are a form of debt that's very similar to a loan. Government agencies borrow money by selling bonds to investors. In return, investors get a regular stream of interest payments from the state and the promise of a full refund at the end of the bond's life. The maximum term of Minnesota bonds is 20 years, according to the constitution, but many don't last that long. There are several different types of bonds, but Minnesota issues general obligation bonds for infrastructure, which guarantees repayment to investors.

Substantial bonding bills create thousands of good-paying jobs while making critical investments statewide in projects like: higher education projects to make buildings more energy efficient and improve the education and job training for students, transportation and transit projects that improve and expand access and modes, housing, and basic infrastructure.

## 9 EDUCATION FUNDING

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Minnesota's future economic health and vitality depends on legislators making smart investments in today's students and quality learning environments, from their preschool years to their postsecondary degrees, by;

- increasing access to quality early childhood programs taught by licensed professionals by providing more early childhood and family education classes and universal, school-based preschool for all children;
- providing additional resources for school districts to restore student support staff cut in the past few years, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications; and
- investing in infrastructure so that all students – no matter where they live – are in quality, safe learning environments.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO will actively support legislation that provides funding to increase access to quality early childhood programs taught by licensed professionals by providing more early childhood and family education classes and universal, school-based preschool for all children.

## 10 ADDRESSING RACIAL & ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

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Today, in the face of dramatically increasing economic inequality, decreasing union density and growing instability for the majority of Minnesotans, the need for all workers to strengthen common interests in achieving economic justice is clear. At the same time our different experiences organized around race, gender identity, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation often challenge and complicate this shared experience.

To understand how important this is, consider the issue of jobs. We fight for full employment. However, African Americans in Minnesota are three times more likely as whites to be unemployed and three times less likely to own a home. In Minneapolis minorities make up 40 percent of the population but hold only 17 percent of the jobs. And the achievement gap between whites and minorities in Minneapolis Public Schools is one of the largest in the nation. To stand together on jobs, we have to learn from each other about the different experiences we live.

Or consider the criminal justice system. The growing movement for racial justice around these issues is greater than anything we've seen since the Civil Rights era. It is a movement responding to facts - African Americans make up 13% of our population, but 38% of the incarcerated. We incarcerate a greater percentage of our people than any other developed nation. Young African American males are 21 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement than young white males. Those who suffer are our members and our members' children.

The demand for racial justice cannot be separated from the fight for economic justice. The fight for economic justice cannot be pursued without considering educational equity. It is no secret that communities of color continue to face higher unemployment rates, lower wages, job discrimination and more economic insecurity - one consequence is more encounters with the criminal justice system. Negative encounters with our criminal justice system have long-lasting impacts on families and their surrounding communities, and they harm our efforts to create shared prosperity for all.

All working people share a common experience of employers choosing to pay less and rising economic insecurity. To build a different, better economy we need to begin with having all our voices be heard, on all sides of those color lines. We have to start by honestly addressing issues that communities face - both the problems and solutions.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO strongly encourages the legislature to discuss the issues pertaining to the persistence of racial and economic injustice in the workforce and in communities and provide meaningful policy solutions to ensure that all working people are heard.

## 11 STAFFING LEVEL REQUIREMENTS FOR DIRECT CARE NURSES

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Hospital nurse staffing has an important relationship to patient safety and quality of care. Research shows that hospitals with low nurse staffing levels tend to have higher rates of poor patient outcomes such as pneumonia, shock, cardiac arrest, and urinary tract infections.

When people are hospitalized, in a nursing home, having a baby, or learning to manage a chronic condition in their own home - some of their most vulnerable moments - nurses are the health care providers they are most likely to encounter; spend the greatest amount of time with; and, along with other health care providers, depend on for their recovery.

Research is now beginning to document what physicians, patients, other health care providers, and nurses themselves have long known: how well we are cared for by nurses affects our health, and sometimes can be a matter of life or death. As physicians in the American College of Critical Care Medicine have noted: "Critical care nurses do the majority of patient assessment, evaluation, and care in the ICU [intensive care unit]" (Brilli et al., 2001:2011). Nursing actions, such as ongoing monitoring of patients' health status, are directly related to better patient outcomes (Kahn et al., 1990; Mitchell and Shortell, 1997; Rubenstein et al., 1992).

Many hospital restructuring and redesign initiatives that have been widely adopted over the last two decades have changed the ways in which licensed nurses and nurse assistants are organized to provide patient care. Many of these changes have been focused largely on increasing efficiency and done in a way that damaged trust between nursing staff and management. Changes were poorly managed so that intended results were not achieved, rarely involved nurses in decision making

pertaining to the redesign of their work, and did not employ practices that encouraged the uptake and dissemination of knowledge throughout the organization.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO strongly supports legislation that requires patient assignment limits for all direct care nurses in hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities.

## 12 PRIVATIZATION OF STATE FACILITIES/OUTSOURCING OF PUBLIC SERVICES

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In December 2013, In the Public Interest released a nationwide report detailing nearly two dozen outsourcing schemes that cost taxpayers more, not less. That includes a \$143 million technology contract Minneapolis gave to Unisys, and renewed twice without competitive bidding, despite Unisys not providing the favorable pricing its contract required. The report also highlights how performing public work in-house can result in better quality at a lower price. For example, MnDOT's highway striping crews can paint epoxy stripes for half the cost of private competitors.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO strongly opposes any attempts to outsource public services to for-profit corporations. We must hold the state, counties, cities, and school districts accountable if they even consider outsourcing services or selling off public infrastructure. The goal is to ensure taxpayers – not corporations – control what taxes pay for, and protect the basic principles of transparency, accountability, oversight, and public control of public services.

