Washington Federation of State Employees

WHERE DO YOUR UNION DUES GO?

A LOOK AT WFSE SPENDING IN FISCAL YEAR 2025 (July 2024 – June 2025)

Just 27 cents of every dollar went to representing workers.[1] The Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE, AFSCME Council 28) — the largest state-employee union in Washington, representing roughly 30,000 workers[2] — spent more paying its own staff than representing the members whose dues bankroll it. Of the $29.8 million the union disbursed in its fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, only $8.0 million went to representational activities, while another $7.8 million — 26 cents of every dollar — was shipped straight to its national parent, AFSCME, as a per capita tax.[3] The union closed the year holding $23.5 million in net assets, a surplus that grew by nearly $3.7 million in twelve months.[4]

The union's own ledger shows where the rest of the money went. After representation, WFSE's largest outlay was the $7.8 million per capita tax forwarded to AFSCME's national organization[5], followed by $5.7 million in general overhead[6] — meaning the union spent more keeping its own lights on and sending cash to Washington, D.C. than on the grievances, bargaining, and arbitration that justify its existence. Employee benefits consumed another $3.8 million.[7]

WFSE diverted $1.1 million in dues money to political activities and lobbying in a single year[8], and $9.4 million over the past decade.[9] But the dues-funded figure tells only part of the story. The union also operates a state political action committee that has poured $5.6 million into Washington politics since 2017, with 98.5% flowing to Democratic candidates and left-leaning causes and just 1.5% to Republicans.[10] Among the candidates the PAC has funded is state Senator Marko Liias, who collected roughly $6,800 and was the prime sponsor of Senate Bill 5599 — the 2023 law allowing state-licensed shelters to house minors seeking puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and other gender-transition procedures without notifying their parents.[11] On top of all this, WFSE reported $10.2 million in state lobbying expenditures to the Washington Public Disclosure Commission between 2016 and 2025.[12]

WFSE's payee records read like a travel itinerary: $730,849 spent at luxury hotels, resorts, and casinos — including $264,073 at the InterContinental Los Angeles and $255,730 at the DoubleTree Seattle Airport — categorized as union administration or representation rather than the indulgences they are.[13] That pattern extends to the payroll itself: the union disbursed $10.9 million in total employee compensation — nearly $3 million more than it spent representing members — and more than three dozen employees earned six-figure pay.[14] Executive Director

Kurt Spiegel alone collected $215,982, more than two and a half times the roughly $81,000 average salary of the Washington state employees whose dues fund his paycheck.[15]

WFSE's members have been voting with their feet. Regular membership peaked at 36,293 in 2018 and has fallen to 30,725 — a decline of 15.3%[16] — even as the union's annual receipts climbed 35% to $33.6 million and its net assets nearly doubled.[17] Counting the agency-fee payers who vanished after the Supreme Court's Janus decision, the union's total fee base collapsed from 43,290 to barely 30,000.[18]

The promise of a union is simple: to represent workers at the bargaining table, in grievance proceedings, and on the job. WFSE's own filings show an organization that has drifted from that promise. It spent more on its own employees than on representation[19], shipped a quarter of every dollar to its national parent[20], built a multimillion-dollar political and lobbying operation overwhelmingly serving one party[21], and stockpiled a growing surplus while the workers it claims to serve walked away by the thousands.[22] Washington's state employees deserve to know that the dues deducted from their paychecks fund a political machine and a well-paid staff far more reliably than they fund representation.

FINANCIAL POSITION

On paper, WFSE is financially robust. The union reported $26.7 million in total assets against just $3.2 million in liabilities at the close of its 2025 fiscal year, leaving $23.5 million in net assets — a cushion that grew by roughly $3.7 million in a single year.[23] The overwhelming majority of those assets sat in cash: $24.2 million.[24]

The union's liabilities are modest and largely internal. Its $2.9 million in other liabilities consists mostly of dues-related payables ($1.2 million) and accrued vacation and sick leave owed to its own staff ($1.1 million) — not debt to outside creditors.[25] This is not an organization under financial strain. It is an organization choosing how to spend an ample and growing pile of members' money.

Item	Amount
Total Assets	$26,743,175
Total Liabilities	$3,216,540
Net Assets	**$23,526,635**
Cash on Hand	$24,196,921

SPENDING BREAKDOWN

Of the $29.8 million WFSE disbursed in fiscal year 2025, representational activities — the grievances, contract negotiations, and arbitration that are a union's core function — accounted for just $8.0 million, or 27%.[26] That left nearly three-quarters of every dues dollar going to everything else.

The second-largest category was not representation-related at all: $7.8 million in per capita tax forwarded to AFSCME's national organization, equal to 26.1% of disbursements.[27] The union sent almost as much money to its parent in Washington, D.C. as it spent representing its own members in Washington State. General overhead ($5.7 million), employee benefits ($3.8 million), union administration ($1.2 million), and direct taxes ($1.0 million) rounded out the major outlays.[28]

The full breakdown of WFSE's spending appears below.

Category	Amount	% of Total
Representational Activities	$8,042,482	27.0%
Per Capita Tax	$7,789,335	26.1%
General Overhead	$5,714,921	19.2%
Benefits	$3,798,134	12.7%
Union Administration	$1,222,496	4.1%
Political Activities & Lobbying	$1,139,691	3.8%
Direct Taxes	$1,004,180	3.4%
Contributions, Gifts & Grants	$980,269	3.3%
Purchase of Investments & Fixed Assets	$129,175	0.4%

What Do These Categories Mean?

Representational Activities: Grievance handling, collective bargaining, contract negotiation, arbitration, and organizing — a union's core function.
Per Capita Tax: Mandatory per-member payments forwarded to the parent union (here, AFSCME International).
General Overhead: Rent, utilities, office expenses, technology, insurance, and other costs of running the organization.
Benefits: Health insurance, pensions, and other benefits paid for the union's own employees and officers.
Union Administration: Internal governance: officer elections, conventions, executive board meetings, and auditing.
Political Activities & Lobbying: Dues money spent on political campaigns, ballot measures, and lobbying public officials (LM-2 Line 51).
Direct Taxes: Payroll and other taxes paid directly by the union.
Contributions, Gifts & Grants: Charitable and organizational contributions and grants (distinct from political spending).
Purchase of Investments & Fixed Assets: Money used to buy investments, property, or equipment.

POLITICAL SPENDING

WFSE reported $1.1 million in political activities and lobbying on Line 51 of its 2025 LM-2 — dues money spent on politics rather than representation.[29] Over the past decade, that dues-funded political spending totaled $9.4 million, an average of $935,306 every year.[30]

Year by year, the union's reported political spending has run in the high six and low seven figures, with no sign of slowing.

Fiscal Year	Political Spending
2016	$797,664
2017	$1,245,643
2018	$791,421
2019	$705,875
2020	$977,002
2021	$890,796
2022	$779,112
2023	$693,263
2024	$1,332,591
2025	$1,139,691
TOTAL	**$9,353,058**

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Beyond the dues reported on Line 51, WFSE's payee records show direct payments to numerous political committees and advocacy organizations, including $125,000 to the New Direction PAC (a Washington Democratic legislative-caucus committee), $50,000 to the No on I-2117 Committee (the campaign to preserve the state's carbon-pricing program), $30,000 to Peninsula Neighbors PAC, $20,000 to Vision PAC, $13,500 to Responsible Leadership PAC, and $5,000 to the Institute for a Democratic Future (a training pipeline for Democratic political operatives).[31] Every one of these payments advanced a single side of Washington's political divide.

PAC POLITICAL SPENDING

Beyond the political spending reported on its LM-2, WFSE operates a state political action committee — funded by voluntary contributions the union solicits — that has directed $5.6 million into Washington politics since 2017.[32] The partisan tilt is overwhelming: 86.1% to Democratic candidates and committees and another 12.4% to left-leaning ballot-measure and advocacy committees, against just 1.5% to Republicans.[33]

The PAC's largest beneficiaries were Democratic Party infrastructure and ballot-measure campaigns:

Among the individual candidates the PAC has funded is state Senator Marko Liias, who received roughly $6,800. Liias occupies one of the most aggressive positions in the Washington legislature on gender ideology: he was the prime sponsor of Senate Bill 5599, signed into law in 2023, which allows state-licensed shelters and host homes to take in minors seeking puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and gender-transition procedures without notifying their parents — directing the shelter to inform the state's Department of Children, Youth and Families instead.[34] That a union funded by 30,000 rank-and-file state workers — many of whom hold no such views — channels its political money to candidates like Liias underscores how far union leadership's political agenda can diverge from the members'.[35]

Recipient	Amount	Party
New Direction PAC	$2,275,000	D
Washington State Democratic Committee	$1,079,500	D
No on I-2109 Committee	$500,000	LIB
Defend Washington	$418,000	D
No on I-2117	$150,000	LIB
TOTAL	**$4,422,500**	

WFSE's political and lobbying machine operates regardless of whether individual members support it. Under the Supreme Court's 2018 decision in Janus v. AFSCME, no public employee can be compelled to pay union dues or fees as a condition of employment.[36] Yet for the workers who remain members, Janus changes nothing about how their dues are spent — the union's leadership, not its members, decides that the money flows to a per capita tax, a six-figure staff, and an overwhelmingly partisan political operation.

WASHINGTON STATE LOBBYING (2016–2025 SESSION)

WFSE is a heavyweight in Olympia. As a registered lobbyist employer, the union reported $10.2 million in state lobbying compensation and expenditures to the Washington Public Disclosure Commission between 2016 and 2025.[37] Its spending spiked to $2.5 million in 2024 — the year the union poured money into defeating ballot initiatives that threatened the state's capital-gains tax and carbon-pricing program.[38]

The union fields a paid in-house lobbying team. Its 2025 LM-2 lists staff lobbyists Kathleen Durkin ($109,252) and Nicole Gomez ($105,789), alongside Legislative and Political Action Director Dennis Eagle ($158,612) — six-figure salaries that are themselves part of the cost of WFSE's Olympia operation.[39]

Period	Amount	Filing Type
2016	$1,284,101	L-3 Annual
2017	$605,095	L-3 Annual
2018	$645,909	L-3 Annual

2019	$398,378	L-3 Annual
2020	$1,270,580	L-3 Annual
2021	$527,126	L-3 Annual
2022	$1,107,841	L-3 Annual
2023	$941,621	L-3 Annual
2024	$2,460,246	L-3 Annual
2025	$1,003,934	L-3 Annual
TOTAL	**$10,244,831 (2016–2025)**	

Lobbyist	Role	Registrant	Compensation
Dennis Eagle	Legislative & Political Action Director	WFSE (in-house)	$158,612
Kathleen Durkin	Lobbyist	WFSE (in-house)	$109,252
Nicole Gomez	Lobbyist	WFSE (in-house)	$105,789

WASTEFUL SPENDING

WFSE's vendor records read like a travel-and-leisure itinerary. The union spent $730,849 at luxury hotels, resorts, and entertainment venues — money buried in the 'union administration' and 'representational' line items rather than disclosed as the perks they are.[40]

The single largest such expense was $264,073 at the InterContinental Los Angeles, followed by $255,730 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport and $89,626 at the Hilton Seattle Airport. The tab even reached Las Vegas: $8,652 at The LINQ on the Strip and $5,354 at Lucky Strike LA.[41]

Vendor	Amount
InterContinental Los Angeles	$264,073
DoubleTree by Hilton – Seattle Airport	$255,730
Hilton Seattle Airport	$89,626
Hilton Vancouver WA	$45,000
The Davenport Grand	$37,216
TownePlace Suites by Marriott – Olympia	$13,302
The LINQ (Las Vegas)	$8,652
Hilton Garden Inn – Wenatchee	$6,480
Hilton Garden Inn – Yakima	$5,416
Lucky Strike LA	$5,354

TOTAL	**$730,849**

TOP COMPENSATION

While WFSE devoted just 27% of its budget to representation, it spent lavishly on its own staff. Total employee compensation reached $10.9 million — exceeding representational spending by nearly $3 million — and more than three dozen employees earned six-figure pay.[42]

Executive Director Kurt Spiegel topped the payroll at $215,982, more than two and a half times the roughly $81,000 average salary of a Washington state employee.[43] He was followed by Field Program Director Tawny Brown ($167,097), Negotiations Director Amy Spiegel ($162,552), Legislative and Political Action Director Dennis Eagle ($158,612), and Organizing Director Timothy Tharp ($150,059).[44]

Employee	Total Compensation
1. Kurt Spiegel — Executive Director	$215,982
2. Tawny Brown — Field Program Director	$167,097
3. Amy Spiegel — Negotiations Director	$162,552
4. Dennis Eagle — Leg. & Political Action Director	$158,612
5. Timothy Tharp — Organizing Director	$150,059
TOTAL EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION	**$10,946,237**

Employee	FY 2016 Pay	FY 2025 Pay	% Change
Timothy Tharp — Organizing Director	$82,427	$150,059	**82.1%**
Teresa Parsons — Labor Negotiator	$70,224	$122,418	**74.3%**
Mark Hamilton — Labor Negotiator	$83,818	$127,494	**52.1%**
Cumulative Inflation (reference)			~33%

Staff pay has also climbed far faster than inflation. Over the past decade, the salaries of long-tenured WFSE employees grew at multiples of the roughly 33% rise in consumer prices over the same period:[45]

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

WFSE spent $3.8 million on employee benefits in fiscal 2025 — 12.7% of total disbursements, and nearly half of what it spent representing members.[46] The two largest components were $2.0 million in employee health-insurance premiums paid to Washington's Health Care Authority and $1.8 million in employer pension contributions routed to AFSCME International.[47]

Benefit Type	Amount
Employee Health Insurance Premiums (Health Care Authority)	$1,979,652
Employer Pension Contributions (AFSCME International)	$1,775,738
Workers Comp Premiums	$34,383
Flexible Benefit Plan	$3,868
Employee Assistance Program	$3,750
AFSCME Salary Savings Plan Fees	$743
TOTAL BENEFITS	**$3,798,134**

MEMBERSHIP DECLINE

WFSE's membership tells the story of an organization its own workers are leaving. Regular membership peaked at 36,293 in fiscal 2018 — the year the Supreme Court decided Janus — and has since fallen to 30,725, a drop of 5,568 members, or 15.3%.[48]

The decline is starker when agency-fee payers are counted. In 2018 the union collected from 43,290 workers; by 2025, with compelled agency fees abolished, that base had shrunk to 30,732 — even as annual receipts rose 35% to $33.6 million and net assets nearly doubled. WFSE is collecting more money from fewer people.[49]

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
33,694	35,521	36,293	31,441	32,649	29,210	27,968	27,671	29,855	**30,725**

YOUR RIGHT TO LEAVE

Washington public employees have the right to decline union membership and refuse to fund WFSE. The 2018 Janus v. AFSCME Supreme Court decision guarantees that no public-sector worker can be required to pay union dues or fees as a condition of employment, and that a union cannot deduct dues or fees from a worker's paycheck without their affirmative consent.[50]

Employees who want to understand their rights or need help leaving can find resources at americansforfairtreatment.org or by calling (833) 969-FAIR.

Data sourced from the Washington Federation of State Employees' Form LM-2 filing with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor-Management Standards (File No. 544-112), for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, and historical filings 2016–2025; state campaign finance filings via the State PAC Partisan Tracker (2017–2026); and Washington Public Disclosure Commission lobbyist-employer (Form L-3) annual reports (Employer ID 17121, 2016–2025).

NUMBERS TO HIGHLIGHT

Key statistics from WFSE's FY 2025 (July 2024 – June 2025) LM-2 filing

27%	Share of spending on representing workers
$10.9M	Employee compensation — more than representation
$7.8M	Per capita tax shipped to AFSCME (26% of spending)
$5.6M	PAC political spending since 2017
98.5%	PAC dollars to left-leaning candidates & causes
$10.2M	State lobbying reported to WA PDC, 2016–2025
$9.4M	Dues-funded political spending, 10-year total
-15.3%	Membership decline from 2018 peak
$215,982	Executive Director's compensation
$730K	Spent at hotels, resorts & casinos
$23.5M	Net assets — a growing surplus

[1] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 50 (Representational Activities), FY 2025.
[2] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 13 / Item 20 (Membership), FY 2025.

[3] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Lines 56 and 68, FY 2025.
[4] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement A, Lines 29–35, FY 2025.
[5] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 56 (Per Capita Tax), FY 2025.
[6] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 53 (General Overhead), FY 2025.
[7] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 55 (Benefits), FY 2025.
[8] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 51 (Political Activities and Lobbying), FY 2025.
[9] Form LM-2 historical filings 2016–2025 (File No. 544-112), Line 51.
[10] State campaign finance filings via the State PAC Partisan Tracker, 2017–2026.
[11] Washington Senate Bill 5599 (2023 Reg. Sess.), prime sponsor Sen. Marko Liias; signed May 9, 2023 (permits licensed shelters to house minors seeking gender-transition or reproductive care without parental notification).
[12] Washington Public Disclosure Commission, Lobbyist Employer (Form L-3) annual reports (Employer ID 17121), 2016–2025.
[13] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedules 18–19 (General Overhead and Union Administration payees), FY 2025.
[14] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 12 (Disbursements to Employees), FY 2025.
[15] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 12, FY 2025; Washington Office of Financial Management, average state employee salary, 2024.
[16] Form LM-2 historical filings 2016–2025 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 13 (Membership).
[17] Form LM-2 historical filings 2016–2025 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 49 and Statement A, Line 35.
[18] Janus v. AFSCME, Council 31, 138 S. Ct. 2448 (2018); Form LM-2 historical filings 2016–2025 (File No. 544-112), Item 20.
[19] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 50 and Schedule 12, FY 2025.
[20] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 56, FY 2025.
[21] State campaign finance filings via the State PAC Partisan Tracker; Washington PDC Form L-3 filings (Employer ID 17121).
[22] Form LM-2 historical filings 2016–2025 (File No. 544-112), Item 20 and Statement A, Line 35.
[23] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement A, Lines 29, 34, and 35, FY 2025.
[24] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement A, Line 22 (Cash), FY 2025.
[25] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 10 (Other Liabilities), FY 2025.
[26] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 50 and Line 68, FY 2025.
[27] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 56, FY 2025.
[28] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Lines 53, 54, 55, and 65, FY 2025.
[29] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 51, FY 2025.
[30] Form LM-2 historical filings 2016–2025 (File No. 544-112), Line 51.
[31] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 16 (Political Activities and Lobbying payees), FY 2025.
[32] State campaign finance filings via the State PAC Partisan Tracker, 2017–2026.
[33] State campaign finance filings via the State PAC Partisan Tracker (party breakdown), 2017–2026.
[34] Washington Senate Bill 5599 (2023 Reg. Sess.), prime sponsor Sen. Marko Liias; signed May 9, 2023.
[35] State campaign finance filings via the State PAC Partisan Tracker (recipient detail).
[36] Janus v. AFSCME, Council 31, 138 S. Ct. 2448 (2018).
[37] Washington Public Disclosure Commission, Lobbyist Employer (Form L-3) annual reports (Employer ID 17121), 2016–2025.
[38] Washington Public Disclosure Commission, Lobbyist Employer (Form L-3) annual report (Employer ID 17121), reporting year 2024.
[39] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 12, FY 2025.
[40] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedules 18–19 (General Overhead and Union Administration payees), FY 2025.
[41] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedules 15, 18, and 19 (itemized payees), FY 2025.
[42] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 12, FY 2025.
[43] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 12, FY 2025; Washington Office of Financial Management, average state employee salary, 2024.
[44] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 12, FY 2025.
[45] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 12, FY 2016 and FY 2025; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI-U, June 2016 through June 2025.
[46] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 55 and Schedule 20 (Benefits), FY 2025.
[47] Form LM-2 (File No. 544-112), Schedule 20 (Benefits), FY 2025.
[48] Form LM-2 historical filings 2016–2025 (File No. 544-112), Item 20 (Membership).
[49] Form LM-2 historical filings 2016–2025 (File No. 544-112), Statement B, Line 49, Statement A, Line 35, and Item 20.
[50] Janus v. AFSCME, Council 31, 138 S. Ct. 2448 (2018).