

PCS POLITICAL FUND 2015

VOTE YES!

**A VOICE FOR
MEMBERS**

BALLOTING 19 OCTOBER – 10 NOVEMBER



Public and Commercial Services Union | pcs.org.uk

Foreword

Trade union members need a political voice. Politicians make decisions which affect the lives of union members at work and at home. Unions need to be able to influence those decisions. For that we need to have a political fund.

PCS members voted to establish a political fund in 2005 and unions are required by law to hold a full postal ballot of members every 10 years to retain their political fund. A Yes vote is vital so that we can continue our campaigning for jobs, pay and pensions, and against cuts and privatisation.

Postal votes will be sent to every member's home, but the campaign will be in the workplace. Workplace reps, along with local officers and branch officials, are the most important link with union members at work. You are the key to persuading members to vote Yes.

This booklet is designed to help you make the case for a Yes vote. Only you can win the vote. There is nothing as effective as face-to-face campaigning and only you can deliver that.

Retaining the political fund is about keeping our ability to campaign effectively for members. Political funds also enable unions to keep members informed on political issues and to work with campaigning organisations.

Our aim is to maintain PCS's reputation as an effective, independent campaigning union. And that's down to you.

Mark Serwotka
General secretary

Janice Godrich
President

Why a political fund?

Since setting up the political fund in 2005, PCS has run major political campaigns on civil service pensions, job cuts, pay and opposing privatisation. To protect our members' interests we have established a strong voice in Westminster, the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament.

This campaigning has saved members' jobs, stopped public services being privatised or cut, and won concessions from employers.

Many of the public services and rights at work we now have were only won by trade unions campaigning for them – often using their political funds. Today, as we face the most brutal onslaught of government cuts in living memory, we need more than ever to be able to campaign to defend members' jobs and the public services we provide and we all rely on.

Support a Yes vote to keep the political fund.



What have we achieved with the political fund since 2005?

PCS has used the political fund to raise our members' concerns in parliament, lobby MPs, influence ministerial decisions, input into legislation, campaign against racism, hold hustings and seek the support of candidates during elections for policies such as opposing job cuts and privatisation, ending zero hour contracts and supporting the living wage.

During the last ten years we have developed large and highly effective parliamentary groups in all of the parliaments of the UK. These are built up of sympathetic MPs, MSPs and AMs from a range of parties.



We regularly brief these groups on matters affecting PCS members. They have then taken forward these issues in parliament by lobbying ministers, holding debates, tabling hundreds of parliamentary questions, early day motions and amendments to legislation.

OUR SUCCESSES

Political campaigning secures funds at Kew Gardens

In an unprecedented move, there was a one-off evidence session of the science and technology select committee at Kew in 2014, which PCS submitted written and oral evidence to and which, together with other cross-party parliamentary activity, helped secure £3.8m of cut funding back into the Kew budget.

Helping members engage

We also use the political fund to help members to engage with their local representatives.

By helping members to meet their MPs at mass lobbies of parliament or simply by arranging an e-action for members to email their MPs on an issue which affects them, PCS has ensured that



members' concerns are heard at all levels.

WINNING IN THE LAND REGISTRY

Stopping privatisation of the Land Registry may not have been possible without the political fund.

We used parliamentary drop-ins to raise awareness and demand commitments from all political parties to keep the Land Registry public.

BNP OUSTED IN BARKING & DAGENHAM

PCS's Make Your Vote Count campaign raises awareness during elections of where all parties stand on issues affecting PCS members, including parties who disguise racism in the form of political policies.

PCS members and reps took part in a campaign which meant that the BNP were not able to secure a seat in the 2010 local elections and lost all 12 of their council seats in the area.

What would happen without a political fund?

It is a legal requirement to have a political fund for a union to campaign politically.

The High Court has previously ruled against a union who didn't have a political fund because its campaign to defend public services against cuts was deemed to be a criticism of the then Conservative government during an election period.

As most PCS members are employed by the government or by private companies delivering government contracts, much of our campaigning to protect members could be seen as political.

Losing the political fund ballot could therefore risk limiting our ability to campaign to defend members.

FAQ

So what does the political fund pay for?

It pays for us to campaign in members' interests. That may include:

- Paying for the production and distribution of campaign materials
- Advertising and campaigning for or against a political policy (e.g. for tax justice or defending welfare)
- Campaigning against a political party – e.g. our joint campaigning against the BNP and far-right parties
- Exposing political attacks on workers, and putting an alternative – like we have against austerity
- Any expenditure on voter registration – which we need to do to ensure working people keep their vote.

Mythbuster (Answers to questions members might ask)

If I vote yes, will my union subscriptions go up?

NO, your union subscriptions will not be affected by the ballot result.

I am not interested in politics, why should I vote yes?

YES, you should vote yes. This is not about party politics, but about our union having a political voice, to defend your job and workplace rights.

Does my money go towards the Labour party?

NO, PCS is not affiliated to any political party therefore we do not give any money to the Labour party.

PCS should focus on members' terms and conditions, we don't need a political fund.

YES, we do. The decisions politicians make affect members' working lives as well as our families and communities. Losing the fund would undermine our ability to campaign for members' terms and conditions.

Would a YES vote mean a change in PCS policy?

NO, PCS already has a political fund but we are legally obliged to ballot our members every 10 years. We are asking members to vote YES to continue campaigning politically to protect members.

Will it be a secret ballot?

YES, independent scrutineers will ensure the ballot is conducted according to strict rules and individual votes are completely confidential.

Defending members

“ PCS has been at the forefront of calling for an end to austerity and for an alternative vision of a well funded public sector

Now more than ever we need a strong voice to defend members. PCS has been at the forefront of opposing austerity and for an alternative vision of a well funded public sector, paid for by closing the tax gap and investing in jobs which make our local economies prosper.

Tough challenges lay ahead as the government has announced

four more years of the 1% pay cap and a further 40% cuts across government departments.

Not only will our members' working lives be affected but many members will also be affected by cuts to local services and benefits which they rely on.

Make sure PCS continues to have a strong voice. Campaign for a Yes vote.

HOW DO MEMBERS VOTE?

Members will receive a ballot paper in the post to their home address from 19 October.

As reps and activists it is your role to ensure that members use their vote to maintain our ability to campaign political for members' rights at work.

If any members have not received a ballot paper by 27 October, please email balloting@pcs.org.uk or ask members to call 020 7801 2810 with their membership number and full address. The final date for requesting a replacement ballot paper is 6 November. The ballot closes on 10 November.