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MOVE

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The GOP's turn against workers

The fiercely anti-union takeover of the Republican Party

In an era of increasing political polarization, AFSCME has worked to maintain our long tradition of nonpartisanship.



BY
ROBERTA LYNCH

THERE'S A
NEW PARTY
ORTHODOXY
THAT DEMANDS
TOTAL
OPPOSITION
TO WORKERS'
RIGHTS

OUR UNION'S CAMPAIGN ENDORSEMENTS ARE BASED ON VOTING RECORDS, CANDIDATE interviews and questionnaires covering a broad range of issues of importance to working families, not whether an individual has a "D" or "R" after their name.

Using those metrics, it's certainly true that the majority of the candidates our union has endorsed have been Democrats. But at every level of government and in every type of office—state legislator, comptroller, county board, city council, mayor, sheriff—there have always been Republicans who garnered AFSCME endorsements because they demonstrated a willingness to stand up for union members—sometimes breaking with their own party leadership to do so.

Now those voices of moderation in the GOP are steadily being silenced as the Big Money elite tightens its grip on Republican officeholders. There's a new—and strictly enforced—party orthodoxy that not only won't support union members but demands total opposition to workers' rights and an aggressive strategy to eliminate labor unions from the political landscape.

Public sector unions are the top target of these attacks because in recent decades it is public employees who have built the strongest, most vibrant unions. Well-financed and fiercely executed, this union-destruction strategy first reared its head in Wisconsin when Republicans gained control of the governor's office and both houses of the legislature in 2010, and Scott Walker made his first act and Number One priority the elimination of collective bargaining rights for public employees.

Despite massive protests,

Walker's anti-worker Act 10 became law in a matter of months. Within a year, Wisconsin teachers, as well as state, local government and university employees had lost their right to collectively bargain over wages, benefits or conditions of employment. They were left solely at the mercy of their employers, many of whom acted quickly to strip away basic workplace rights and protections.

Now, with a Republican trifecta in Iowa after last November's election, history is all too rapidly repeating itself. No sooner had the new Assembly been sworn in than the Republican majorities in both houses moved to pass legislation that wipes out collective bargaining rights for public employees in that state. And Iowa's Republican governor has already signed the bill into law. Like their brethren in the Badger State, public servants in Iowa will soon find themselves "at-will" employees, without any of the safeguards of a union contract.

Iowa even added a new twist, making it against the law for any public employer to deduct union dues from an employee's paycheck. Laws prohibiting dues deductions are another one of the weapons in the Republican Party's new anti-union arsenal. Employees can sign up to join unions and request paycheck dues deduction, but the law won't allow it to happen. The prohibition is statewide and applies to every public employer. So even if a local mayor or school superintendent wants to agree to deduct union dues, state law will bar them from doing so.

Private sector unions have not escaped these attacks. So-called "Right-to-Work" legislation aimed right at industrial, service and building

trades unions is being rammed through in Republican-controlled legislatures, including our neighbors Kentucky and Missouri.

These RTW laws allow employees to refuse to pay any dues or fees to the union that represents them. Clearly unions are drained of resources if they are forced to represent employees who contribute nothing toward that representation. And, of course, that resource drain is exactly what this new breed of Republicans has in mind for organized labor.

This fiercely anti-union takeover of the Republican Party is driven by the likes of the Koch Brothers and other ultra-right elites and pushed by their extensive web of policy, media and advocacy groups in states across the country.

In our state the Illinois Policy Institute is the chief organizational vehicle pressing to wipe out union rights, silence workers' voices, and drive down wages and benefits. Its chief agent is Governor Bruce Rauner who, while waging an unrelenting war on his own employees in state government, is trying to eliminate collective bargaining rights for local government employees and backing a federal lawsuit aimed at outlawing the collection of union dues or fees.

Those who are out to destroy unions are highly organized with vast wealth at their disposal. We ignore them at our peril. We cannot wait until the axe is about to fall, but must act now to prevent a takeover of our state and destruction of our rights.

Bruce Rauner has already contributed \$50 million to his gubernatorial re-election campaign. He's getting ready. Let's make sure we are too.



On the Move

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RETIREE CHAPTER 31 REPRESENTATIVE

Larry Brown

State employees authorize strike

Rejecting union's settlement framework, Rauner provokes conflict

Responding to Governor Rauner's adamant refusal to negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement, state employees overwhelmingly voted to authorize their bargaining committee to call a strike if necessary—the first time such a vote has been taken in the history of Illinois state government.

THE STRIKE AUTHORIZATION VOTE TOOK PLACE OVER THREE WEEKS, FROM JANUARY 30 TO FEBRUARY 19, in dozens of cities and hundreds of voting sites across the state. A strong 81 percent of members voted yes to authorize a strike if that becomes the only recourse to gain fair treatment and respect.

A year of discord

IT'S BEEN MORE THAN A YEAR since Governor Rauner walked out on negotiations for a new state employee contract. He's refused to meet with the union ever since. Instead, at his behest, the Illinois Labor Relations Board declared negotiations to be at "impasse," paving the way for him to impose his own extreme terms on state employees.

Those terms include eliminating safeguards against irresponsible subcontracting, freezing wages and steps for four years, and a 100% hike in employee health care premiums—terms that would set employees back for many years to come.

AFSCME has appealed the Labor Board's decision in state appellate court, but it could

take years before the case is resolved. The courts have issued a temporary stay that is preventing Rauner from moving forward with his scheme to impose his extreme terms, but the stay could be lifted at any time.

Union offers path to resolution

A POTENTIAL RESOLUTION OF the conflict emerged in November when an independent arbitrator issued an award in the interest arbitration proceedings to resolve the contract dispute between the Rauner Administration and Illinois State Troopers Lodge 41/FOP.

The arbitrator's award in that case provided for a four-year wage freeze, but did not freeze all steps and rejected the governor's extreme health care cost increases. Instead the arbitrator chose much more modest health cost increases proposed by Troopers Lodge #41.

The AFSCME Bargaining Committee met in the first week of January and voted to establish a new framework for a settlement based on those terms. The proposal significantly modified the union's previous



Volunteers administer the strike authorization vote. Thousands upon thousands of state employees voted at hundreds of voting sites around the state from January 30 to February 19.

positions on core economic issues.

Under this new framework, employees would forgo any base wage increases in all four years of the contract, but would receive step increases in the last two years and would contribute 8.5 percent more toward their health insurance premiums. In laying out this framework, the union bargaining committee made clear that they stand ready to negotiate further on these and any other issues.

But within hours, Rauner rejected any possibility of com-

promise, calling the union's modifications "superficial."

"We had hoped that this unprecedented action would bring Rauner back to the bargaining table," AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "Unfortunately, the governor left state employees no choice but to consider a strike as a last resort."

The governor's terms would cost the average state employee \$10,000, a loss that would be very difficult for most families to manage.

"But there's more at stake

in this fight than economics—important as they are," Lynch said. "We know that Bruce Rauner wants to wipe out unions in state government. If we don't stand up to him now, he will continue to rush headlong down that path."

She stressed that the AFSCME Bargaining Committee will continue to explore every possible alternative to going out on strike. "At the same time, this vote makes clear that members are prepared to lay the groundwork should a strike become necessary."

Interest arbitration moves forward

After Governor Rauner walked out on contract negotiations more than a year ago, the AFSCME Bargaining Committee for the first time decided to pursue interest arbitration for security employees who are legally barred from striking—AFSCME members in the RC-6 and CU-500 bargaining units, employed by the Departments of Corrections and Juvenile Justice.

In interest arbitration, each party submits the contract terms it seeks. The arbitrator shapes a compromise on contract language, such as hours of work, but on economic issues, he or she must choose one party's position.

The Rauner Administration's final offer on economic issues was essentially the same as in its recent arbitration proceeding with Troopers Lodge #41, and AFSCME's offer closely mirrored that made by the Troopers. The same arbitrator is presiding over both proceedings.

On the core issues of wages and health care in the Troopers' case, the arbitrator chose the employer's proposal of a four-year wage freeze over the union's modest proposed wage increase. But he chose the union's proposal of an 8.5 percent increase in health care premiums over three years, finding the employer's proposal of a 100 percent increase "unreasonable."

The interest arbitration proceedings for AFSCME members began in June and are expected to continue for several more months.



Minority and female legislators, joined by AFSCME members, called on Gov. Rauner to negotiate, not dictate, at a February 14 news conference.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Bruce Rauner continues to hold state hostage

Governor presents another unbalanced budget with poison-pill demands

Bruce Rauner has once again failed to fulfill his constitutional duty to present a balanced budget.

IN HIS BUDGET ADDRESS ON FEBRUARY 15, GOV. RAUNER USED A MORE AMIABLE TONE to mask his continued hostage-taking tactics, refusing to bend his stance on term limits, cutting pensions, stripping workers' rights and enacting a property tax freeze that would hamstring local governments.

Despite railing on the General Assembly for failing to put together a balanced budget, Rauner has yet to do so himself.

He proposed \$37.3 billion in spending with only \$32.7 billion in revenue, leaving a \$4.5 billion hole.

Rauner's budget assumes that state and university employees—and retiree dependents—would pay double for health insurance and that state employees would not receive any wage increase. It also assumes unconstitutional pension cuts for teachers and state and university employees, while

yet again reducing the state's pension payments.

Higher education would receive just 85 percent of its fiscal year 2015 budget levels. The departments of aging, human services and juvenile justice would all sustain four to eight percent cuts. And private agencies providing care for people with disabilities would receive no increase, exacerbating the low-wage crisis for direct service personnel and the people they serve.

Rauner did include increases for some agencies and propose to reopen some corrections facilities and expand mental health care in others—as well as open a new veteran's home in Chicago—but these are only empty promises in an unbalanced budget.

Essentially, Rauner is continuing to fail at his job while making it impossible for members of the General Assembly to do theirs.

"Grand bargain" falters

RAUNER ATTEMPTED TO COVER up his massive budget shortfall with an unspecified line item, dependent on the Senate's so-called "Grand Bargain" which may never come to pass.

Senate President John Cullerton and Minority Leader Christine Radogno are attempting to forge a deal based on a series of interdependent bills that would enact a budget using a combination of cuts and new revenue.

Supposedly Republican Leader Radogno was acting totally on her own initiative when she reached across the aisle. But it became increasingly obvious that Rauner is pulling the party's strings in these negotiations. At first remaining at arm's length, the governor now praises the Senate for its "good-faith bipartisan negotiations."

Of course, Rauner's endorsement does not come free.

"If Rauner is involved, we can be sure that this budget deal will include his extreme, anti-worker priorities," said AFSCME Legislative Director Joanna Webb-Gauvin. "He has walked away from every single negotiation that doesn't give him what he wants: restrictions on collective bargaining and

BILLS TO WATCH

SUPPORT: \$15 for DSPs

HB 2960, sponsored by Rep. Robyn Gabel, and SB 955, sponsored by Sen. Heather Steans (new bill numbers), would increase pay for Direct Service Personnel at state-funded agencies providing services to children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

SUPPORT: State Employee Pay

HB 1798, sponsored by Rep. Sue Scherer, would ensure that state employee payroll continues—whether or not a budget is enacted.

SUPPORT: Taxpayer Accountability

SB 1653, sponsored by Sen. Andy Manar, and HB 3216, sponsored by Rep. Litesa Wallace, would prevent the state from privatizing services currently performed by state employees, unless the proposal meets rigorous requirements.

OPPOSE: Employee Mileage Rate

HB 1807, sponsored by Rep. Mark Batinick, allows CMS and the governor's travel control board to dictate mileage reimbursement rates for state employees who are required to travel for state business instead of using the IRS federal reimbursement rate.

cuts to pay and benefits for public employees."

Public pensions remain vulnerable

NOWHERE IS RAUNER'S HAND-iwork more evident than in the matter of public employee pensions. Despite the fact that the Illinois Constitution's pension protection clause prohibits diminishing retirement benefits, Rauner has continued to look for ways to cut them.

He included pension cuts in his budget and seems likely to insist that any eventual "grand bargain" do the same.

The first attempt to cut pensions this legislative session was not successful. Senate Bill 11—which would have reduced the pensions of all state university employees and public school teachers in our state—failed on Feb. 8 with 18 yes votes, 29 no votes, 10 present votes and two senators not voting.

The fate of the Senate's plan was in question as On the Move went to press. It makes all bills contingent on one another, and one of them will include a tax increase—something many Republicans will never approve no matter how dire the straits.



2017 Legislative Conference

AFSCME members leave conference ready to do battle

From an anti-union billionaire governor in our own state to a new U.S. President whose Cabinet picks prove him to be anything but a friend to working families, working people face enormous threats in 2017 and beyond.

“ILLINOIS IS IN GRAVE DANGER FROM THE RUTHLESS AND RADICAL AGENDA OF BRUCE RAUNER,” AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch told the crowd of more than 500 delegates and guests at the 2017 Legislative Conference in Springfield on January 14.

pled with the question: How do we work together to prevail against attacks on every front?

Workshops and speakers stressed the importance of grassroots organizing at worksites and in communities in building a strong and effective response.



The entire agenda can be found at AFSCME31.org/2017LegislativeAgenda.

State budget still a hostage

BRUCE RAUNER HAS SUPPOSEDLY narrowed his list of 40 “turnaround” demands to four: property tax freezes, cuts to workers’ compensation, term limits and pension “reform.”

While those measures may sound innocuous, in fact his plan to freeze property taxes includes taking collective bargaining rights away from all local government employees, his cuts to workers’ compensation would

make it harder for injured workers to get by when they can’t work, and his pension “reforms” are about finding ways to cut employees’ retirement benefits.

The target Rauner painted large on state employees’ backs has not gone away, but AFSCME members keep fighting back.

“The fight of state employees for a fair contract should be the fight of every union member in the state,” Lynch stressed. “This is the toughest fight of our lives but we’re not afraid.”

“Two years ago Bruce Rauner said that union membership in Illinois would be eliminated in four years. But we’re still standing,” Council 31 Deputy

Director Mike Newman said as the crowd cheered.

“We know how to compromise; we do it all the time at the bargaining table, but Rauner just won’t. He thinks middle-class wages means you’re overpaid and calls a decent pension ‘stunningly generous’—this coming from a man who made 188 million dollars last year.”

AFSCME members and all union members in Illinois need to stand together to win this battle, Newman said to close the conference.

“We need to keep working, building and fighting. We can’t back down, and we won’t back down.”



“How do we work together to prevail against attacks on every front?”

Noting that Republican-controlled legislatures in nearby states are pushing new laws to weaken unions, Lynch brought the crowd to its feet, calling Illinois “an island of resistance” against the assault on fundamental union rights: “Illinois will not bow down, we will not give in!”

Uniting to fight these threats was the theme of the day-long event. Members grap-

Legislative Agenda approved

LOCAL UNION PRESIDENTS and PEOPLE chairs, who serve as delegates to the conference, unanimously approved AFSCME Council 31’s 2017 Legislative Agenda, which includes:

- Protecting workers’ rights;
- Passage of a responsible budget and adequate revenues for state and local governments;
- Fighting privatization of public services and assets;
- Supporting adequate staffing levels and quality service delivery in state agencies;
- Raising wages in community disability agencies and other AFSCME-represented human service providers;
- Supporting adequate funding for state universities; and
- Opposing efforts to cut pension benefits.



“Our goal is to have a voice”

McHenry County probation employees unite with AFSCME

Employees in the McHenry County Probation Department recently joined together to organize a union in their workplace.

AFTER 25 YEARS OF SERVICE AS A PROBATION OFFICER, WENDY WESOLEK IS HAPPY THAT SHE and her co-workers will finally be able to negotiate with the County Board.

“This can be a dangerous, high-stress job,” Wesolek said. “We just really want a seat at the table to have some say in all our futures.”

“We want to have some say in all our futures.”

Compared with other similarly-sized counties, McHenry’s probation and court services employees are underpaid with fewer benefits. It was the perfect storm of low pay and high turnover that brought Wesolek and fellow probation officer Paul Varda to AFSCME’s door.

But even more than fair wages, the employees wanted to

be able to voice their concerns and have a productive dialogue with management.

“There is no consistency with how we are treated, and that’s not fair,” Varda said.

“We’re not going to get rich, and that’s not our goal. Our goal is to have a seat at the table and to have a voice.”

One worker could be suspended for something while another has no repercussions for the same actions, Varda explained. He believes having a contract in place will address these kinds of issues and bring clear cut, consistent treatment for everyone.

In addition to having a say in policies and instituting protections for staff, another goal of bargaining will be to ensure that long-term employees are rewarded and compensated for their years of service.

“They raised the floor but never raised the ceiling,” Varda said. And Wesolek agrees. There is not much difference between the pay of someone with a



McHenry County Probation Department employees will finally negotiate with the County Board as a union. Pictured left to right: Karen McCauley, Nick Hayes, Geri Keefe, Pat Varda, Mary Polnow, Wendy Wesolek, and Ryan Markowski.

few years under their belt and someone with more than 25 years, she said.

Choosing AFSCME

EMPLOYEES IN THIS NEWLY certified bargaining unit are the first in McHenry County to join AFSCME. The union’s experience with representing probation departments was a big draw, Wesolek said. But the support and constant attention from staff is what made them

most happy with their choice of union.

“We had so many questions because we had never done anything like this before,” Wesolek said. “It was a great learning experience and our work with AFSCME has done nothing but inspire confidence.”

Varda and Wesolek both feel a lot closer to their co-workers after the process of organizing their new union. “It’s helped camaraderie and morale in the office,” Varda said. “We feel

united.”

Wesolek has dedicated her career to helping people as a probation officer and she has no regrets.

“It’s emotionally draining and it doesn’t always work, but if you believe in what you’re doing, you can really help people,” she said. “Knowing that and having a sense of humor have kept me going—and my fellow employees have certainly kept me here too.”

Election is a game-changer for Lake County employees

Early in 2015, employees at the Lake County Circuit Clerk’s Office organized a union in their workplace. But the former clerk, Keith Brin, refused to negotiate with them for more than a year.

THE ILLINOIS LABOR RELATIONS BOARD CHARGED BRIN’S OFFICE WITH VIOLATING ILLINOIS labor law, issuing complaints alleging that he illegally intimidated and interfered with employees who helped organize the union—even firing one worker in retaliation for exercising her union rights.

Still, Brin refused to come to the table.

“We all wanted change. Every day we came to work not knowing who was going to be fired next. We all felt like we were walking on eggshells. We felt bullied by managing staff,” said Lisa Strandberg, a 25-year employee in the Clerk’s Office.

Instead of putting up with an anti-union employer for another four years, the largely female workforce decided to

take matters into their own hands.

When election season

arrived, they helped secure an AFSCME endorsement for Brin’s opponent, Erin Cart-



The largely female workforce at the Lake County Circuit Clerk’s office decided to take matters into their own hands and elect a new boss. Front row: Angie Guzman, Yvette Bryant, Maureen Wenzel. Back row: Liz White, Tamara Luster, Lisa Strandberg, Louise Moore.

wright Weinstein, who pledged greater accountability for taxpayers and fairness for employees. Then they did the voter outreach necessary to help Weinstein win.

“We helped Erin win by putting signs in yards, going to forums, going door-to-door to get people to vote for her, visiting churches, and putting cards on people’s cars,” said Tamara Luster, a Senior Court Clerk.

Within two months of her victory, Weinstein agreed to negotiate with the union and meetings are now underway.

“I’m hoping Erin can bring in the positive change we need to be more efficient, make our budget work, bring in more help, and have new employees trained properly,” Luster said.

What a difference a mayor makes

AFSCME members push for change in city leadership

With cities and counties around Illinois set to hold municipal elections on April 4, AFSCME members like Anna Ishmael are volunteering for the union's endorsed candidates.

"HAVING A HAND IN SELECTING OUR MAYOR, ALDERMEN, SCHOOL BOARDS—THAT'S OUR chance to get our issues heard," said Ishmael, president of local 3298 in Aurora. "When we stand together, we can get things done."

Mayoral elections are especially important for local government employees, and local unions are taking action to get involved in key races.

"I think it's critical to engage our friends, family and co-workers, to knock on doors and phone bank," Rockford's Garry Cacciapaglia said. "We've got to do more than give a financial endorsement."

Aurora employees want respect

IN AURORA, STATE REPRESENTATIVE Linda Chapa LaVia is running for mayor against three other candidates.

"Linda understands that without us, the city won't be able to operate."

Chapa LaVia's track record of standing with working people and their unions as a state legislator was decisive in securing AFSCME's endorsement in the mayoral race.

"Some of our jobs have been subcontracted out and we haven't been treated with respect," Ishmael said. "Linda understands that without us, the city won't be able to operate. We're the front line and she respects that."

Dan Piscoran is president of Local 1514 and has worked for the City of Aurora for near-

ly 30 years as a water meter repairman. He says it's important for AFSCME members to be involved in city elections because local governments have the power to resist unfair policies and protect the rights of working people.

"When Rauner tried to implement local 'Right to Work' zones, a lot of the local government bodies said no, we won't support that. And he hasn't got it done as a result," Piscoran said. "That's why having leaders in place that listen and think about the long-term effects [of anti-worker policies] is so important."

Charting a new direction in Rockford

AFSCME LOCAL 1058 PRESIDENT Garry Cacciapaglia echoed Piscoran's emphasis on the need for local officials who stand up for working families.

When Rockford's City Council passed a resolution in support of Bruce Rauner's "Turnaround Agenda" in 2015, current 3rd Ward Alderman Tom McNamara was one of the only council members to reject the governor's anti-worker plan.

It was that strong stand that helped McNamara win AFSCME's endorsement in his bid for mayor.

"He is against the Rauner agenda because he knows it would hurt all families in the state," Cacciapaglia said. "Only a handful of aldermen voted against it and he was one of them. We are very excited about him because he shares our values."

AFSCME members who work for local governments want to ensure excellent public services. They play a vital role in their community and have a unique perspective to offer leadership, but often their contributions are ignored or even deliberately excluded.

Don't forget to vote! Local government elections will be held on April 4, 2017. A full list of AFSCME endorsements in those races can be found at AFSCME31.org/Endorsed.

"We're partners with the City of Rockford, not adversaries. It's really important to have dialogue," Cacciapaglia emphasized. "As an alderman, McNamara is very receptive to an exchange of information. Whenever we reach out to him, he is always there and always returns a call."

AFSCME members aim to have a stronger voice to

improve public services and help Rockford chart a new direction under a McNamara administration. And they want to ensure that McNamara would have the backing of a more worker-friendly city council.

Union members stepping up

MANY AFSCME MEMBERS

are taking their civic duty to the next level and running for office.

In Rockford, AFSCME is backing several City Council candidates who hail from the AFSCME family: recent AFSCME retiree Ned Friel (2nd Ward alderman), AFSCME member KayEllen DiTomassi (3rd Ward alderman) and former AFSCME member Karen Hoffman (8th Ward alderman).

"We're encouraging our members to run for office in their own towns because it's important to get directly involved in government," said AFSCME Local 1234 President Chris Larrison of East Moline.

There the union is supporting AFSCME member Ian Pavelonis' campaign for 2nd Ward alderman in neighboring Silvis. AFSCME also endorsed a former FOP member, Reggie Freeman, for Mayor of East Moline.

As in Aurora and Rockford, union members in the Quad Cities are looking for new leaders because they want a better future and a better employer.

"We believe he will listen to us and give us a fair shake," Larrison said of Ferguson. "We need a change."



Tom McNamara was one of the only Rockford City Council members to reject Bruce Rauner's anti-worker "Turnaround Agenda."



Linda Chapa LaVia (center) with area AFSCME members, from left to right: Brett Bennett, Dan Piscoran, Anna Ishmael, Tim Nobles.

Hundreds of AFSCME members and community supporters gathered for a candlelight vigil before the Rockford School Board meeting where the board voted to impose its harmful terms on school employees.



ALL-IN FOR FA

Rockford Public School employees fight for affordable health care

Following in Bruce Rauner's footsteps, the Rockford Public Schools Board of Education voted to impose its "last, best and final" offer on employees at a Jan. 24 board meeting packed with union members pressing for continued negotiations.

Earlier that evening, AFSCME members and community supporters held a candlelight vigil outside the meeting. They were protesting the board's demand for hikes in health insurance premiums, which would take more money out of many workers' paychecks than the proposed modest wage increases would add.

One school bus driver, for example, would sustain an effective annual pay cut of more than \$2,100, which would have a devastating impact on his family.

But the board dismissed employees' protests and voted to impose their last offer on 238 bus drivers in Local 1275, 165 nutritional services workers in Local 692, and 473 paraprofessionals of Local 3210.

School children depend on AFSCME members

Tracy Goodwin, Madeleine Sherod and Jacqueline McCloud all have one thing in common: They love their jobs. The three women are equally dedicated to caring for Rockford's school children, and each plays an essential role in the school community.

Goodwin and her fellow school bus drivers are the first faces the children see each morning. They make sure kids from preschool to high school get to school and back home safely, avoiding collisions,

"My husband is disabled and I pay all the bills. I have to have affordable medical insurance."

sometimes breaking up fights on the bus or helping in medical emergencies. They also build relationships that have a lasting impact.

"I know the name of every child, and when you know their name, you know their personalities," Goodwin said, chuckling. "I have a little four-year-old girl that tells her mom she's going to be a bus driver when she grows up."

You can tell that Goodwin takes joy from her job of 18 years, but she also needs it to take care of her family. "My husband is disabled and I pay all the bills," she said. "I have to have affordable medical insurance."

Madeleine Sherod manages an elementary school cafeteria. She said her job is multifaceted.

"Not only are we making sure that students get nourishing meals, we also serve as counselors, we resolve conflicts, we comfort kids when they have a difficult day and help them if they're getting bullied. We do all kinds of things that positively influence the students on a daily basis."

After 10 years on the job, Sherod's wages are not keeping up with the rising cost of living. Many nutritional services staff have only part-time hours

and they struggle even more, she said.

Documents show that the school district is in good financial health, able to afford to pay workers fairly.

With strong revenue growth and consistent budget surpluses in each of the last six years, the district forecasts a 30 percent budget surplus for the current fiscal year, totaling more than \$105 million.

"They don't want to give a fair wage," Sherod concluded. "They always seem to come up with the money for the superintendent, the heads of departments—but when it comes to us, they don't seem to want to let it trickle down."

School employees are parents too

The issue of school employee pay should matter to the whole community, Jacqueline McCloud argues. More than 80 percent of Rockford students qualified for free or reduced meals in 2015, a rate so high that the district opted into a federal program to provide free meals to all children regardless of income.

"As parents, we want to make our schools and our city great too, but we aren't paid enough to sustain ourselves."

AIRNESS

PHOTOS: MAX GERSH | USED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR AND RRSTAR.COM.

McCloud is a paraprofessional in a middle school special education classroom. A mother of three, she worries about the example the district is setting by paying poverty wages.

“As parents, we want to make our schools and our city great too, but we aren’t paid enough to sustain ourselves.”

“Not only are we making sure that students get nourishing meals, we also serve as counselors. We do all kinds of things that positively influence the students on a daily basis.”

Despite working full-time for the district the last nine years, McCloud has had to say no to special school-sponsored trips or activities for her own children because she can’t afford it.

“What kind of message are you giving kids?” McLeod asked. “They think, ‘Why should I go to college if I’d make more money working for McDonald’s?’”

Like everyone else who will be affected by the board’s action, McLeod does not get paid during winter, spring or summer breaks. Her paycheck after the holidays was just \$58.80—not even enough to cover her current health insurance premiums.

“It upsets me,” she said sadly. “The board has the power to make things better for us, but they treat us like we’re nothing, like we’re replaceable. When I testified to the board, many of them wouldn’t even look at me as I spoke to them.”

Looking for a solution

Bargaining dates are still on the calendar, but the board has made it clear they are done negotiating and the imposed health care cost hikes are set to take effect in July.

“I don’t understand how they can say we’re at an impasse when we are still willing to work with them,” Goodwin said.

The hurt and anger is palpable and has turned into action. All three locals have authorized their bargaining committees to call a strike if necessary.

Members are committed to do what it takes to make the school board do the right thing and provide good jobs that help the whole community.



Hurt and anger has turned into action: All three AFSCME locals employed by Rockford Public Schools have voted to authorize a strike if necessary.

What’s wrong with the Rockford School Board?

The Board of Education at Rockford Public Schools District 205 is sitting on a \$100 million surplus. Why are they choosing to lower the hammer on low-wage workers who care for schoolchildren?

Call Superintendent Ehren Jarrett and the members of the school board and urge them to support good jobs that lift the whole community—not poverty-wage jobs that drag us all down.

RPS 205 Superintendent

Dr. Ehren Jarrett
815-966-3101

President of the Board

Kenneth J. Scrivano, Subdistrict C
815-871-6683

Vice President of the Board

Jude Makulec, Subdistrict D
815-633-6818

Secretary of the Board

Michael Connor, Subdistrict F
815-505-7809

Members of the Board

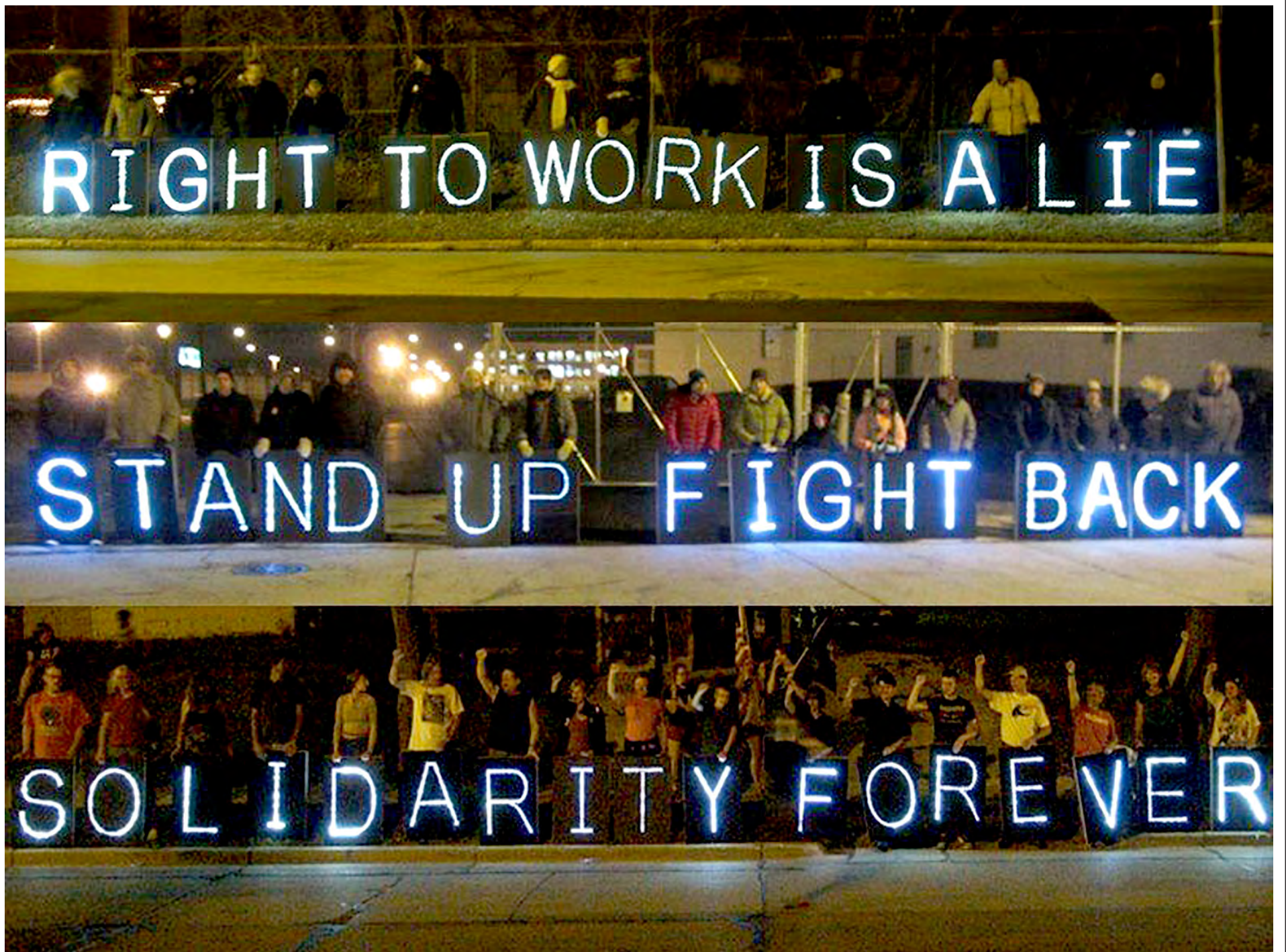
Tim Rollins, Subdistrict B
815-987-8910

David Seigel, Subdistrict E
815-608-3636

Lisa Jackson, Subdistrict A
815-375-0175

Jaime Escobedo, Subdistrict G
815-378-9104

SHORT REPORTS



So-called “Right to Work” laws aim to wreck unions

AFTER THE 2016 GENERAL election, Republicans hold 33 governor’s offices. They have majorities in 33 legislatures. And they control both these bodies in several states. That kind of control opens the door to an all-out assault on workers’ rights.

“It’s really the best opportunity in quite some time to accomplish a lot of big ticket items—not just in one or two states, but in five, 10 or 15,” said Sean Lansing, chief operating officer of the Koch-backed Americans for Prosperity. “Really, the sky’s kind of the limit.”

The first “big ticket items” on many Republican leaders’ lists are laws that restrict the rights of workers to organize

and negotiate together.

So-called “Right to Work” (RTW) laws have devastating impacts on unions and on workers’ wages in states that have implemented them by allowing workers to avoid paying dues while reaping the rewards and

annually than workers in states that uphold the right to organize. Workers in RTW states have lower rates of health care coverage and pay larger shares of their health insurance premiums.

States that restrict collec-

In states with RTW laws, workers are paid \$6,109 less and pay larger shares of their health care premiums than workers in states that uphold the right to organize.

protections that union membership provides.

In states with RTW laws, workers are paid \$6,109 less

tive bargaining also have higher poverty, infant mortality and workplace fatality rates. In fact, the rate of workplace deaths

is nearly 50 percent higher in states with anti-union laws in place.

Since the election, Kentucky and Missouri—where Republicans now control both the executive and legislative branches of government—have moved swiftly to enact “Right to Work” laws.

At the national level, the threat of sweeping limits on private and public sector workers’ rights looms large.

Republicans in Congress have already introduced legislation for a national RTW law.

At the same time, the US Supreme Court—soon to have a pro-corporate Republican majority—is poised to consider a case that would ban fair-share fees in the public sector.

In fact, an Illinois-based lawsuit, *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*, spearheaded by

Governor Bruce Rauner as part of his anti-union crusade, is most likely to be the case that would come before the court within the next year.

Trump’s anti-labor cabinet picks meet resistance

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP’S cabinet nominees defy his promise to be a champion for working people. And labor advocates refused to allow their confirmations to go unchallenged.

Trump’s nominee for Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, ran into strong headwinds as a result of her lack of commitment to public education. DeVos, an ultra-wealthy backer of charter schools, also has

investments in for-profit education companies.

Millions of Americans made calls, signed petitions and voiced their opposition to DeVos, whose only experience with public education was dismantling public schools in Michigan.

Opposition to her confirmation was so vigorous that Vice President Mike Pence had to break a tied vote in the Senate. This was the first time in history that a vice president had to take this measure to ensure confirmation of a presidential cabinet nominee.

Working people similarly voiced opposition to fast food CEO Andrew Puzder's nomination for Labor Secretary. Under his leadership, Hardee's and Carl's Jr. restaurants have been investigated and cited for numerous federal wage violations.

Puzder has spoken out against the Obama administration's new overtime rules, which help millions of workers, and griped about needing to protect his employees from injury and discrimination. He even said he preferred robots to human beings: "[Machines are] always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there's never a slip-and-fall, or an age, sex, or race discrimination case."

"Puzder would have been the most anti-labor Secretary of Labor ever," said Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman.

On February 15, Puzder withdrew his nomination amid nonstop criticism.

"President Trump said throughout his campaign that he would be a great champion for working people. The Puzder nomination called the sincerity of that promise into question," said AFSCME President Lee Saunders.

Trump nominated R. Alexander Acosta for Labor Secretary on February 16. Acosta served on the National Labor Relations Board during the Bush Administration. While invariably siding with big business against average workers, he is viewed as a moderate and is likely to be confirmed.

Public support solid for labor unions

DESPITE ENDLESS ATTACKS ON America's labor unions, union members can be bolstered by the fact that the majority of Americans support them.

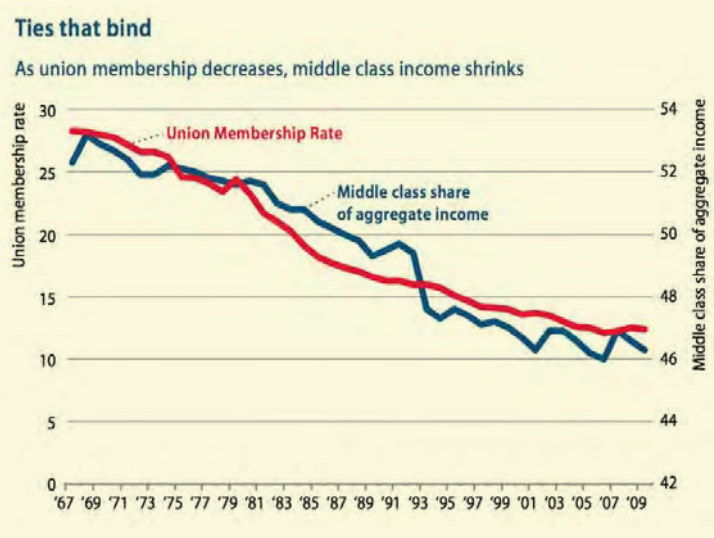
In fact, support for unions is higher than it has been in almost 10 years. Six in 10 adults support labor unions and a staggering 75 percent of Americans under age 30 view unions favorably, regardless of political affiliation.

This widespread positive outlook is not based on a gut feeling. It's grounded in fact and common sense.

Americans see that the economy is out of balance and that workers joined together in unions have an important role in putting us back on track. And with five times more members than private sector unions, public sector unions like AFSCME have an especially critical part to play.

AFSCME reported an increase in union membership in 2016 even as the overall number of workers in unions declined. Because of the union's commitment to getting back to basics and building power at the grassroots level, we are more than 12,000 members stronger going into 2017.

"Even in the face of an



Union membership and collective bargaining are proven to combat income inequality.

Union membership and collective bargaining are proven to combat income inequality. And in an economy where the rich are only getting richer as working people are pushed further and further under water, our country needs the balancing effect of unions more than ever.

As we watch the number of workers in unions decline nearly every year, the nation's wealth is settling more and more into the pockets of the richest one percent of Americans. And the decline of union membership is not happening naturally—it's the game plan of a wealthy elite seeking to consolidate their power.

anti-labor onslaught, despite efforts to manipulate laws against working people, it's clear that organizing works," AFSCME President Lee Saunders said. "As a union, we will never quit fighting

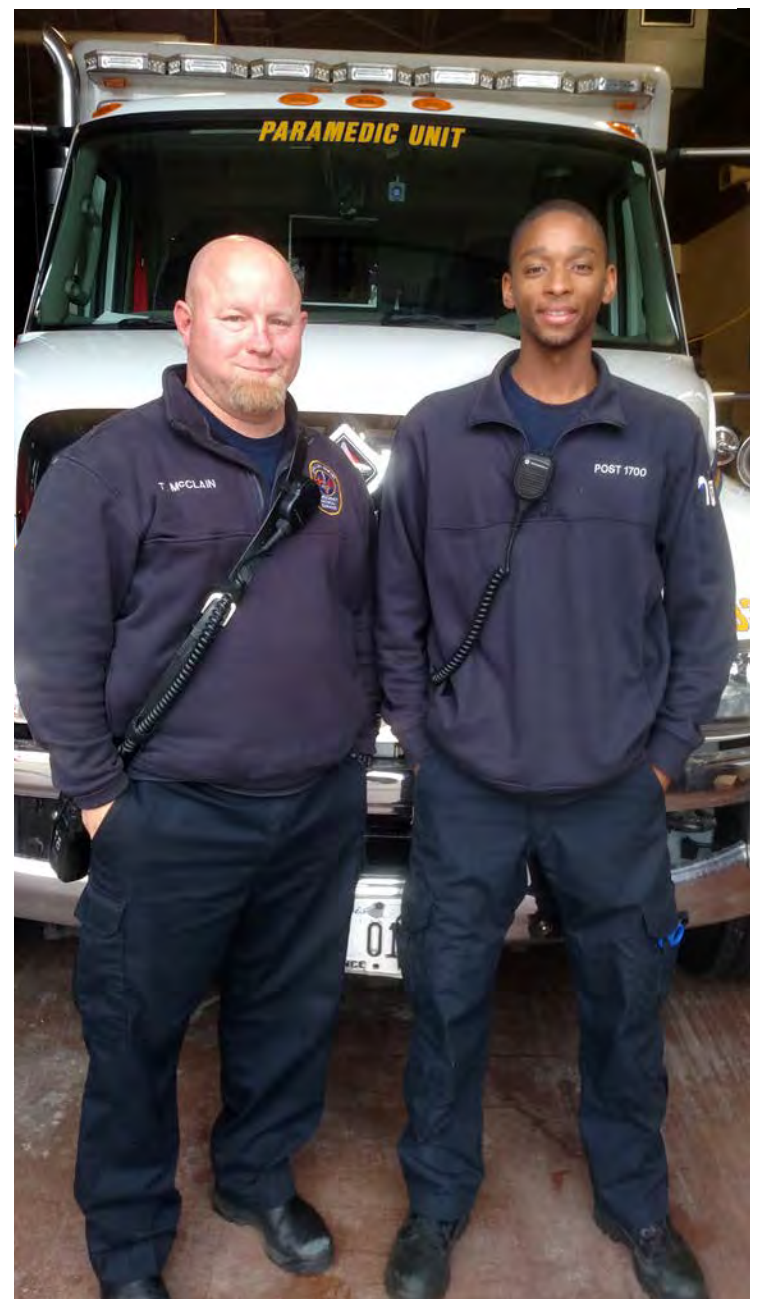
for the respect and opportunity public service workers deserve, because public service workers never quit on our communities."

Mentoring future first responders

CHRISTMAS EVE FOUND EMERGENCY Medical Technician (EMT) Tim McClain on 24-hour duty at the O'Fallon-Shiloh Emergency Medical Services station.

With McClain, a member of AFSCME Local 2817, was Darrion Meeks, a young man dedicated to hands-on learning.

Meeks was working in the station as a participant in the



AFSCME Local 2817 member Tim McClain (left) mentors Darrion Meeks, a young man who is exploring a career in emergency services.

"The Explorer program not only builds community support, it is a phenomenal experience for young people."

Boy Scouts' Fire & EMS Career Exploring program, which combines classroom training with hands-on learning and one-on-one mentorship for youth looking to discover their future.

"The Explorer program not only builds community support, it is a phenomenal experience for young people like Darrion," McClain said. "He has partnered on nine calls and has even had an actual hand in saving a life."

"The Explorer program lets me live the field before I choose it as my career," said 18-year-old Meeks, who experienced firsthand what it's like to be

an EMT. He was on-duty with McClain for a 24-hour period, prepared to help respond to medical emergencies throughout his shift.

McClain is paying it forward—he was a 16-year-old EMS Explorer who eventually found his home in the emergency services field.

"Working with the young men is rewarding," McClain said. "The Boy Scouts' career-education program instills self-confidence in the participants. It offers them opportunities to discover their interests."

RETIREE NOTES



Mary Jones, president of sub-chapter 161, and Charles Hogan, president of sub-chapter 60, make calls to state employees.

Hands off my health care!

AFSCME RETIREE SUB-CHAPTERS across the state are joining with the Alliance of Retired Americans in its “Hands Off My Medicare” initiative.

Retirees need to know where their Members of Congress stands on House Speaker Paul Ryan’s plan to gut Medicare. His changes would be devastating to the millions of retired Americans who depend on this federal health insurance program.

Retirees have met with Rep. Rodney Davis in Decatur and Rep. Randy Hultgren in Woodstock, as well as the staff of U.S. Representative Darin LaHood in Peoria and Rep. John Shimkus in Danville.

These meetings shed light on the misleading partisan rhetoric about Medicare, which Republican legislators use to confuse constituents regarding the harmful cuts they intend to impose.

For example, Congressman Rodney Davis said that a “pre-

mium support system” might be necessary to save Medicare—but it’s the same plan as the irresponsible and harmful “voucher system.”

AFSCME and the IARA will continue to work closely together and retirees will be notified of opportunities to get involved in the fight to save Medicare.

Retirees stand ready to help state workers

AFSCME RETIREEES STAND IN solidarity with state employees, who overwhelmingly voted to authorize their Bargaining Committee to call a strike if all other options for a fair contract have been exhausted.

Retirees across the state helped ensure high turnout during the three-week strike authorization vote by organizing get-out-the-vote phone banks.

Retirees like sub-chapter 86 President Don Todd got involved because the fight for a fair state contract will impact them directly and threatens all the gains made over years of

hard work and struggle.

“People need to know what is really going on,” Todd said. “The contract battle does affect us and retirees need to be ready to fight.”

Rauner’s extreme terms would hurt retirees

WHEN THE RAUNER-APPOINTED Illinois Labor Relations Board ruled that contract negotiations between AFSCME and Governor Rauner were at an impasse, Rauner was given a green light to impose his “last, best and final offer” on state employees.

If he does, thousands of retirees will feel the burden too.

Under Rauner’s extreme terms, state retirees that have non-Medicare-eligible dependents would see their dependent premium contributions double if they want to stay on their current health plan.

The state will offer additional managed care and Quality Care health plans from which retirees can choose. But while

these new health plan options will have lower dependent premium costs, they will have significantly higher deductibles, co-pays and out-of-pocket expenses—costs which fall heaviest on retirees.

Rauner’s terms also eliminate Appendix B in the contract, which contains language that guarantees retiree health care coverage.

The Rauner Administration claims the language in Appendix B is already in state law and therefore unnecessary in the contract. But state law can be changed at any time with legislative action, whereas contractual rights are legally enforceable and can’t be changed without further negotiation with the union.

That’s why Rauner wants Appendix B out of the contract, and that’s why retirees are joining with state employees to fight back against his harmful attacks.

Sub-chapter meetings a boost for retirees

RETIREMENT SECURITY IS threatened at both the state and national level. One way to get critical information is to attend your AFSCME retiree sub-chapter meeting.

“We invite speakers to our sub-chapter meetings and they really help explain the issues clearly. I can ask questions and actually get answers,” said Dave Patnaude, member of sub-chapter 76.

AFSCME Chapter 31 retirees currently have 35 sub-chapters located throughout the state. Each sub-chapter meets once a month and discusses current issues affecting retirees.

“At meetings, we can present in-depth information, brainstorm and have a Q & A

that you can’t get in emails,” sub-chapter 93 President Alan Latoza said. “I believe that having engaging retiree discussions has benefits for all.”

To find a meeting place and time near you, visit AFSCME31.org/retirees/meeting-in-my-area.

Social Security under attack

THREATS TO SOCIAL SECURITY have resurfaced with a bill introduced by Sam Johnson, a Republican Congressman from Texas, which would cut most Social Security recipients’ benefits by 27 percent.

Johnson’s plan to “save Social Security” is to cut the program’s benefits instead of raising revenue by applying higher payroll taxes to wealthier citizens. His bill raises the retirement age from 65 to 69, changes the benefit-computation formula, and cuts cost-of-living adjustments.

“Seniors in this country are opposed to any cuts to Social Security because this benefit is vital to so many,” said Barbara Franklin, sub-chapter 88 president and president of the Illinois Alliance of Retired Americans (IARA).

A third of seniors rely on Social Security for 90 percent or more of their income. Two-thirds count on it to supply at least half of their income. The program lifts nearly 20 million Americans out of poverty.

AFSCME is working closely with the IARA to aggressively advocate for the protection of retiree benefit programs.

AFSCME and IARA will continue to act proactively, applying pressure to legislators and informing them of the serious impact of their actions.



Sub-chapter 69 (Rockford)



Sub-chapter 79 (Bloomington)

"Don't take away the bootstraps"

One AFSCME member tells her story on Twitter



Christina Stearns, a State of Illinois employee and member of AFSCME Local 2767, tweeted her experience to the world last November. AFSCME Council 31 talked to Christina to get the whole story.

"WHEN I GOT HIRED BY the state it was like a dream come true.

"My dad was a farmer in the early 80s when the recession hit and we were pretty poor. When he got a job at the coal mine, we

had health insurance and things were pretty good. But then he lost his job and we were barely scraping by.

"I didn't have lunch money, a vehicle, a phone. I was a really smart kid and I did well in school, but everything affects

you. I dropped out of school.

"I joined the army and after that, for a long time, I just had crummy jobs, barely making ends meet.

"I started out with the state as an office assistant at the Department of Revenue making \$28,000 eight years ago.

"After I'd been with the state for two or three years, I went back to school with the help of the Upward Mobility Program. Having that opportunity pushed me to finish my degree.

"Now I'm an office coordinator at the Office of the Inspector General. I'm paid

pretty well and have good benefits for me and my kids.

"For the last two years, the state contract has been constantly hanging over my head.

"I run marathons, and even when I run, I'm thinking about it.

"One morning I was thinking of everything that was going on and the phrase, 'people need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps' came into my head. I heard that a lot growing up. People think that's an effective way to succeed, to fix it yourself.

"But we aren't all born with the same opportunity. People are out there trying to pull themselves up by their bootstraps but it doesn't always work. And it can't work if you take those bootstraps away.

"You can't say, 'You need to fix it but we're not going to do anything to help.'

"I've done everything that they say you're supposed to do and I'm proud of where I am. I can take care of my kids, take my daughter to the movies and pay for her braces. I can help my 20-year-old son make ends meet—something my own mom couldn't do for me.

"But the governor doesn't care. He's just trying to take everything away. He's trying to take away the union, take away the help people need—the bootstraps—to pull themselves up.

"Bruce Rauner and John Terranova keep saying they want the best for us. Rauner talks about how he loves state workers. If you want to say that, then at least sit back down at the table with us.

"If Rauner gets his way, both my husband (a state employee) and I will have double health care costs. That's hundreds of dollars a month that we would lose. That's a big deal for us. How can I pay that and still support my family and pay off my student loans?

"And it's not just me that will hurt, it's our community. So many of us here in Springfield are employed by the state. Losing state jobs and income would be devastating to the local economy.

"The state gives people a chance. It gives people like me—who grew up with nothing or not enough—it gives us a chance in life, which gives our children a better chance in life.

"Bruce Rauner has to see that ... but he just doesn't care.

"My job right now is to organize. A lot of days I feel like there's nothing I can do. But today I'm going to do what I can to resist the things I know are wrong.

"I can't do much but tell my story and how the union has helped me. Working for the state has completely changed my life. I know where I'll be when it comes time to fight."



ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



Community supporters rallied with AFSCME members to stop cuts at Aurora Public Library.



Pat Schwartz, a member of AFSCME Local 2283 and a librarian at Aurora Public Library.

Victory in Aurora

WHEN ADMINISTRATORS OF the Aurora Public Library announced layoffs and service cuts in June, they didn't expect the kind of grassroots protest that AFSCME Local 2283 sparked.

The administration announced cuts to staff, library hours and programs 15 months into negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement with library employees. Local 2283 members knew they had to fight, not just for their jobs, but to protect the vital commu-

nity services provided by the library—and they knew they needed help.

Reaching out to the community, library employees staged a read-in at a city council meeting, started an online petition at SaveAuroraLibraries.org, and worked with patrons to provide powerful testimony to the library board and city council.

After weeks of coordinated public protest, the library board agreed to restore some of the harmful cuts. Fresh off this public victory, the energized membership set out to win a contract that rewarded their loyalty and expertise.

The new contract will include wage increases of 3.5 percent per year for those who receive steps and cost-of-living raises of 2.5 percent per year for workers who have maxed out their step increases.

Employees created a sick leave pool, eliminated management's ability to discipline employees by delaying steps and increased bilingual and supervisory pay. The local also fought successfully to hold the line on health care costs. While some layoffs were still necessary, every employee was offered a vacant position and some voluntarily accepted a lay-off package.

"We just kept hammering at them, we didn't give up," AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Carla Williams

said. With the help of a federal mediator, she said, bargaining was a two-way street: "Management can't stop members from getting steps now, and we tried to alter our proposals to meet management's concerns in ways that did not negatively impact our members."

On January 6, the AFSCME members voted unanimously to ratify the new agreement.

Bonnie Bogden, President of Local 2283, said that the key to keeping members engaged and unified throughout the long negotiating process was constant communication. Led by AFSCME Staff Representative Carla Williams, Bogden sat on the bargaining committee with fellow members Shirley Garza and Barbara Wilkins.

"After every negotiation we put out updates and I think that really helped everyone stick together through the long slog to victory," Bogden said. "It is always a struggle with management, but in the end, because of the union, everyone got a fair deal!"

Richton Park employees make gains

MEMBERS OF AFSCME LOCAL 3748 secured raises and new positions in one of the smoothest negotiations the union has had with Richton Park in years.

"Usually this process takes more than a year and we were able to come to an agreement this time in just six months, so we were really proud of that," said first-time local

president Australia Williams. She was joined on the bargaining committee by co-workers Pat Stewart, Cambria Jordan, Tyler Hubbartt, Sharita Baker and Brad Dankowski. Negotiations were led by AFSCME Staff Representative Kevin Watson.

The 26 members of the local work in finance, code enforcement, police records, office administration and public works for the village. They will receive a 2.75 percent raise each year and all the positions will now enjoy the same level of step increases (\$2,500) instead of varying rates depending on position. The local was also able to add new part-time positions into the bargaining unit and clarify language regarding health insurance.

Williams made it a priority to communicate with her fellow members during negotiations to keep them informed and engaged in the process. The local wore matching shirts during bargaining, a first for the unit, which helped foster unity and build momentum.

"I'm hoping to build our union up," Williams said. "I'd like to have meetings more often to talk about what's happening statewide and to see how everything is going for individuals in the different departments."

The bargaining committee took all their co-workers' concerns to the table and most of them were addressed. Williams feels that kind of success is why it's important for workers to stick together. She and her fellow officer, Earnest



Earnest Walls and Australia Williams, members of AFSCME Local 3748, joined the May 18 rally in Springfield calling on Gov. Rauner to compromise.



AFSCME Local 3350 President Amanda Meyers is a youth services librarian in Rockford. She teaches children like Lenin Dorner to love to read.

Walls, joined the May 18 rally in Springfield calling on Gov. Rauner to compromise.

“It was awesome. Going from my small local to this massive group of people was unbelievable,” Williams said of the rally that drew 10,000 workers together. “The number of people in our movement is a phenomenal resource and I’m so glad I’m a part of it.”

All for one and one for all in Rockford

THE 18 NEWEST MEMBERS OF AFSCME Local 3350—library pages at the Rockford Public Library—now enjoy paid time off and other benefits guaranteed their co-workers for the first time as they helped win a new contract with the library board.

The Rockford City Council ratified the collective bargaining agreement won by library employees in November. The contract included raises and better benefits, but the members of this local were most proud of helping bring library pages into their bargaining unit and getting them the same benefits as other part-time employees.

“When the unit was started about 30 years ago, pages were high school kids who would come and go,” said Local 3350 President Amanda Meyers. “But now these are people who are trying to make ends meet for their families and they stay a long time. Some have been here 10 years and didn’t have the benefit of paid time off.”

Union members escalated pressure by wearing stickers, holding special events and testifying at the library board meetings in order to win a fair and inclusive contract. And they did.

“Whenever someone tells me they were finally able to take time off when they’re sick, I feel like we’ve accomplished something really important,” Meyers said.

“I’m most excited that everyone will be treated equally,” said Asia Housen, a library page and one of the new members of the union. She said the member actions “really showed we were all united. It was very nice to see how many people were behind the union and supported us.”

Housen has worked at the library for eight years and during that time she has never

had a paid vacation. In previous years she said she would have to work extra hours to make up for being off on Christmas and New Year’s Eve.

“A lot of the pages have been here for even longer than I have and are really excited to have paid time off to spend with their families,” said Housen.

Meyers was very happy

with the outcome of her first time bargaining as local president. The bargaining committee (Janella Harper Herbig, David Fagen, Jean Lythgoe, Liliana Padilla, Holly Cook and Asia Housen, led by AFSCME Staff Representative Ed Sadlowski) had to navigate a complex system of working with library management, the library board and the city council.

“Everybody on the negotiating team worked really hard and we’re proud of what we did,” Meyers said. “We looked out for everybody’s best interest.”

Fair pay for helping needy residents

THE SMALL BUT MIGHTY GENERAL Assistance Program staff at Decatur Township won a four-year agreement that includes new anniversary-date raises and a new longevity bonus for long-time service for the five employees there who are members of AFSCME Local 674.

Administrative Office Manager Kelsey Fields has worked for the township for almost two years. “We all have a good relationship and enjoy

working together, helping people and getting the job done,” Fields said.

Fields and his co-workers administer a program that helps needy residents pay their medical and utility bills. Some residents are able to contribute community service in exchange for their benefits.

The former township supervisor had attempted to cut worker pay by 20 percent, but the new supervisor supported the employees and was willing to recognize and reward their longevity.

All the members attended the board meeting the night the vote took place and made a public statement asking the board to support their agreement. The board voted in favor of ratifying the deal.

“We’re all very satisfied,” Fields said. “In addition to our annual three percent cost-of-living increases at the start of each fiscal year, we were also able to add another three percent raise on our anniversary each year.”

Negotiations were led by AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Renee Nestler. Fields was joined on the bargaining committee by co-worker Susie Tulak and Local 674 President Barbara Jackson.

“We all enjoy working together, helping people and getting the job done.”



Helping families in need in Decatur Township (left to right): Shemaiah Brummett, Janice Love, Kelsey Fields, Susie Tulak, and Lindsey Thomas.



STANDING TOGETHER!

