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On the Move

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

One Goal— Keeping the American Dream Alive

Unions are under assault by an elite that seeks to consolidate wealth and power



BY ROBERTA LYNCH

ITS NOT JUST PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES WHO ARE "STICKIN' TO THE UNION."

When the Chicago Blackhawks secured their third Stanley Cup in mid-June, hockey fans all across Illinois hoisted their glasses—or their bottles—in celebration. And when the Blackhawks cavalcade made its way through the streets of downtown Chicago a few days later, two million elated supporters lined the sidewalks and packed Soldier Field where the victory rally was held.

JUST ABOUT EVERYONE RECOGNIZES THAT THE BLACKHAWKS, LIKE CHICAGO'S OTHER SPORTS TEAMS, are a vital part of the city's spirit—and its economy. That same kind of fervent interest, intense loyalty, and economic reverberation can be found in virtually every locale in America that has a pro sports team.

Every season these professional athletes play their hearts out, exhilarating, often electrifying, the cities that are proud to call them the 'home team.' Often overlooked in all the rah-rah is that all of these heralded players are also labor union members.

Think about it. At a time when the corporate elite in this country is waging an unprecedented war on the very existence of labor unions, some of the best-paid employees in the nation hold fast to their right to collective bargaining.

Over the years, team owners have tried every tactic to break athletes' unions, but they haven't succeeded yet. Players have seen enough, close-up, of the avarice of their bosses to hold to the fundamental union precept that "we're stronger together."

The pervasiveness of unions in professional sports offers a frontal challenge to the right-wing argument that unions undermine individual initiative and collective productivity. Who could doubt that professional athletes are giving it their all every time they suit up? Who could argue that professional sports teams don't function with an extraordinarily high level of discipline and effi-

cacy? Who could claim with even a modicum of credibility that unions are impeding the success of the teams we cheer for?

In fact, the opposite argument can be made—that having a union that assures fair treatment improves player morale and team cohesion.

That same argument holds even greater weight for employees who aren't sports superstars. The more workers can have the respect and fairness that a union helps to guarantee, the more they are motivated to concentrate on the jobs before them and give that work their all.

The economic benefits of unions for workers are undisputed. Unions helped to build the American middle class—and unions today are critical to sustaining it. One recent study found that the median earnings of union members are nearly \$10,000 higher than those of non-union workers.

But it is that very fact—that unions raise wages—that has spurred the efforts of the big-money class to obliterate unions entirely. Despite the fact that income is ever more concentrated at the very top—with the richest 3% now controlling more wealth than 90% of the people in this country—the super-rich are bound and determined to drive down the wages of average working people.

The good news is that it's not just professional athletes who are "stickin' to the union." Working people all across this country and in every sector are standing together against the

assault on their basic right to have a voice at work.

Here in Illinois, we've demonstrated unprecedented unity in packing city council and county board meetings from one end of the state to the other to block Bruce Rauner's efforts to force local governments to endorse his union-destruction agenda. And AFSCME members in state government have stood up by the thousands in recent weeks to resist Rauner's attempt to decimate their union contract.

Perhaps most encouraging, more and more young people are joining labor's ranks. A recent poll found that favorability for unions was highest of any age group among those 18-29. And the pro-union vote by employees at Gawker Media, youthful and tech-oriented, is an important indication of the potential role of unions in the technology sector.

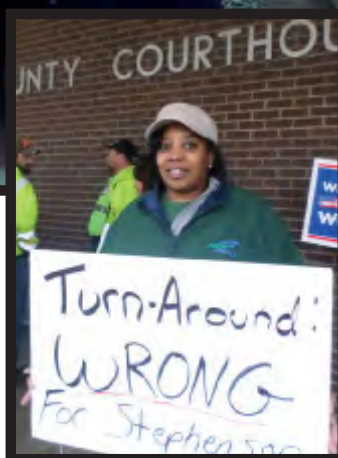
I draw particular inspiration from the young people in our own Illinois AFSCME family, like the young scholarship winners featured in this issue of On the Move. While working as a paramedic, Matthew Whalen is also attending college to become a labor lawyer who can "expand the rights of workers to collectively bargain". Jocelyn Rosas, who plans to become a teacher, believes that the labor movement "is needed more today than ever" to check the growing power of corporations. And Graham Gusloff, heading off to ISU to study theater, already plans to become a member of Actors Equity: "I hope I have the support and protection of a labor union up until my last curtain call."

I'd say that's what most of us want. But hope alone won't get us there. Like the Blackhawks, we have to focus on One Goal: doing all that we possibly can right now to defeat the ruthless assault that is underway not just on labor unions, but on the American Dream of fairness for all that unions have been so critical to building and sustaining.

Rauner's local government "turnaround" agenda meets strong resistance



In Mahomet (top), Stephenson County (middle), Oswego (bottom) and other communities, members of AFSCME and other unions persuaded local officials to block support for Gov. Rauner's radical agenda.



Throughout April and May, the debate over so-called "right-to-work" laws played out in dozens of village board, city council and county board meetings across Illinois.

◆ THAT DEBATE WAS STARTED BY GOV. BRUCE RAUNER, WHO PUSHED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS to pass resolutions supporting a "turnaround agenda" that would weaken unions and undermine middle class families.

At the center of that agenda is a plan to allow local governments to establish "right-to-work" zones, where workers covered by collective bargaining agreements would not be required to pay any dues or fees to cover the cost of the representation the union provides.

Rauner's agenda also called for allowing local governments to refuse to bargain with the unions representing their employees and to refuse to pay the prevailing wage to workers on construction projects in their communities.

Within a matter of

months, the Illinois labor movement was unified and energized – and the governor had little to show for his brazen attack on the rights of working people.

"In villages, cities and counties throughout Illinois, AFSCME members joined with members of other unions to convince local elected officials to reject the governor's extreme agenda," Council 31 political director John Cameron said. "The will of their constituents won out over Governor Rauner's threats and bullying."

Turning the tide

RAUNER PUSHED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS to support his agenda by making it clear that opposing him would put their state funding at risk. However, he may have underestimated how responsive local elected officials are to their own constituents – even in the face of a threat from Springfield.

While Rauner's resolution won support in a few local

jurisdictions, it was ignored, tabled or outright rejected in dozens of others.

And after dealing

Rauner several defeats, unions in Illinois decided to take matters into their own hands. Instead of merely responding to Rauner, they urged local elected officials to consider resolutions that expressed support for unions and policies that strengthen

the middle class.

The most recent vote came in LaSalle County, where on June 9, the County Board voted 23-2 to pass a resolution opposing "right-to-work." The resolution also opposes Rauner's plan to restrict public employee collective bargaining rights and to repeal prevailing wage laws.

The LaSalle County Board meeting was packed with hundreds of area union members, including nearly 100 AFSCME members who carried signs expressing support for state workers and public service.

Stinging rebuke in Springfield

"RIGHT-TO-WORK" MEASURES have proven so toxic that even Republicans in the General Assembly have been universally unwilling to support them.

When the House of Representatives voted in May on a bill allowing "right-to-work" zones, not a single legislator voted in support and most Republicans voted "present."

Preceding the vote, members of AFSCME and other unions had placed calls to their legislators, urging them to oppose the amendment.

"The governor's high-pressure tactics are backfiring throughout the state," Cameron said. "Instead, he's motivating people to attend meetings, make phone calls and send e-mails to let their elected officials know that 'right-to-work' is wrong for Illinois."



Rauner's budget brinksmanship putting vital services at risk

As On the Move went to press, Gov. Bruce Rauner continued his efforts to force through anti-union legislation by holding the state budget hostage. As a result, the threat of a state government shutdown in early July loomed large.

THE STATE IS FACING THE PROSPECT OF UP TO \$4 BILLION IN DEVASTATING CUTS TO SERVICES, state universities and local governments unless the General Assembly and Rauner can agree on a plan to raise desperately needed revenue.

Yet the governor has refused to consider such proposals until he gets his way on an agenda that would hurt struggling working families, weaken the ability of local governments to fund their own needs and put even more power into the hands of the corporate elite.

Rauner's list of demands includes taking the right to collectively bargain over wages, benefits and other critical issues away from public employees, eliminating the prevailing wage for construction workers, weakened workers' compensation laws and restrictions on the ability of Illinoisans to bring consumer protection suits in state court.

"None of the governor's demands have any relation to fixing the state's budget problems," Council 31 legislative director Joanna Webb-Gauvin said. "For Bruce Rauner, this is about forcing

an extreme agenda on the state, not providing the services people depend on."

Cutbacks and closures

WITH THE DEADLINE TO ENACT A fiscal 2016 budget looming, Rauner has chosen to threaten jobs and services instead of working with lawmakers on a fair spending plan.

On June 2, the governor's office announced plans to close DOC's Hardin County Work Camp, along with "one or two" DJJ facilities and five state museums – a process that could potentially eliminate hundreds of jobs. (For more on the proposed closures, see the story on this page.)

Rauner also wants to make low-income parents pay more for child care, restrict access to programs that help seniors live at home and suspend funding that helps struggling families keep up

with energy bills.

"The governor should work with lawmakers to fairly fund public services for all Illinoisans, not threaten cuts to seniors, working families and public safety, or jeopardize adult and youth corrections, the educational mission of state museums, and potentially hundreds of good union jobs," Council 31 spokesman Anders Lindall told the Chicago Tribune. "This senseless crisis is caused by reduced tax rates that Governor Rauner pushed for as a candidate, chiefly benefiting the wealthy few."

The announced cuts were only the latest example of Rauner's willingness to make Illinoisans suffer unless he gets his way – while leaving the wealthy and powerful untouched. On Good Friday, he announced that he was freezing \$26 million in grants that help autistic children, provide burial funds for the

indigent, and fund teen after-school programs. Days later, he announced that he was green-lighting more than \$100 million in special tax breaks for some of Illinois' biggest corporations.

Those program cuts were later rescinded – but only after a vocal public outcry.

"Bruce Rauner is willing to do anything to get his way if he thinks he can get away with it," Webb-Gauvin said. "That's why it's so important for AFSCME members to talk to their friends, family and neighbors to help build community opposition to the governor's extreme agenda."

With tens of thousands of state employees facing the threat of payless paydays, she said the union is prepared to pursue every possible legal avenue to prevent the kind of chaos that could ensue if no state budget is in place.

Proposed closures would hurt surrounding communities, citizens

As part of his effort to strong-arm the General Assembly into enacting his anti-worker agenda, Gov. Bruce Rauner got an early start on slashing the state budget by announcing cutbacks and closures that would take effect in July.

RAUNER'S UNILATERAL DECISION APPEARED TO BE MORE ABOUT ESCALATING HIS BUDGET BATTLE with the General Assembly than addressing the state's problems. The governor has said he will not consider new revenue to fund the state's needs unless lawmakers enact his extreme "turnaround" agenda.

The proposed cuts won't save the state much money, but would hurt services that help children, seniors, families and many communities throughout the state.

The cuts and closures Rauner has proposed include:

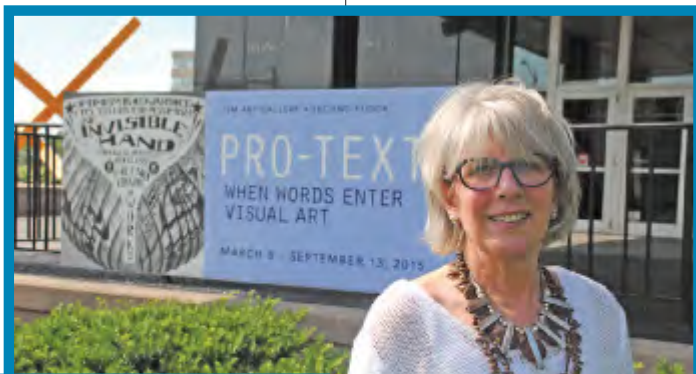
- Closing the Hardin County Work Camp, a DOC facility in southern Illinois
- Closing up to two Depart-

ment of Juvenile Justice facilities

- Closing the Illinois State Museum, which has a main facility in Springfield and four

other museums spread throughout the state

- Making low-income parents pay more for child care
- Cuts to programs that help



Sue Collins, a museum technician, works at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield.



AFSCME members call for keeping the Hardin County Work Camp open during Fair Contract Rally Days.

A resource for education and research

The Illinois State Museum system served more than 375,000 people in 2013 alone. The museum's facilities are free to all visitors and also serve as a valuable education resource for a range of people, from small children to college professors.

"There's a public side and a research side to what we do," said Meredith Mahoney, a steward in Local 1019 and a museum curator. "You can't go anywhere else and see some of our exhibits."

Mahoney works mostly at the museum's Research & Collections Center, where she conducts research and helps catalog the museum's vast collection of natural exhibits, including fossils – the museum often serves as a storage facility for ongoing archaeological digs.

"We have family events, hands-on activities and a public lecture series that draws a

seniors live independently

- Suspend state funding to a program that helps low-income families pay energy bills

"If the governor were serious about saving the state money, he'd be talking about closing corporate tax loopholes, not eliminating necessary programs in an effort to pressure legislators," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "If he cared about everyday Illinoisans, he would not be targeting programs and jobs that are vital to individuals and communities."

2015 spring legislative session wrap-up

Below are summaries of some of the bills AFSCME worked to pass, defeat or amend during the spring legislative session. Visit the Council 31 website for a more complete listing.

RAUNER'S ANTI-MIDDLE CLASS AGENDA: GOV. BRUCE RAUNER WASTED NO TIME MAKING CLEAR what his overriding priority for the spring session would be – a lengthy wish-list of proposals largely aimed at decimating unions and the rights of working people.

The “Turnaround Agenda” includes items like establishing local right-to-work zones, removing health care, wage and work rules (overtime, subcontracting) from mandatory topics of bargain-

ing for public employees under the Illinois Public Labor Relations Act, cuts to workers’ compensation and unemployment insurance benefits, banning public employees from making political contributions and more. The governor has been adamant that he will not sign a spending plan or support the needed revenue increases to fund a responsible budget until the General Assembly has approved legislation containing his agenda.

FY2016 Budget Stalemate: Rauner proposed a FY 16 budget that would have slashed programs and services, including a 31 percent cut to state universities, a 50 percent cut to state support for local governments, and a 12 percent rate cut for nursing homes and community facilities for the developmentally disabled.

Legislative



Update

Even with these draconian cuts the governor’s budget was out of balance as it relied on almost \$3 billion in savings from unconstitutional changes to the State’s pension system and wholesale concessions in state employee and university health care.

With Rauner refusing to negotiate on the budget unless the General Assembly agrees

to legislative changes that harm working families, Democrats in the House and the Senate passed an alternative budget that contains smaller – but broader and still painful – cuts. But even that budget cannot be funded without additional revenues.

Facility Closures: The Rauner administration has announced plans to close the Hardin County Work Camp within the Department of Corrections and the Illinois State Museum along with all branch sites (Lockport Gallery, Dickson Mounds Museum, Rend Lake Arts Center, Thompson Center Gallery) and the Research and Collections Center within the Department of Natural Resources, as well as “one or two” unnamed facilities in the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Notices of closure have been filed with the Commission on Government Forecast-

ing and Accountability (COGFA) officially initiating the facility closure process. COGFA is expected to hold impact hearings sometime in July – one in Southern Illinois (Hardin Work Camp) and another in Springfield (Illinois State Museum).

Direct Care Wages: AFSCME, in coalition with The Care Campaign, introduced legislation (HB 3255/SB 1822) which works towards a minimum wage of \$13 per hour for DSPs. That effort was significantly undermined when Rauner introduced a budget that would cut \$82 million from state funding to community disability agencies, resulting in cuts as deep as 12 percent for certain residential services. Such deep cuts after years without any rate increase would lead to layoffs and the elimination of needed services.

After receiving lobbying pressure, including at the grassroots level, urging lawmakers to both support a fair wage and oppose cuts to ser-

Continued on page 11

Fight to preserve retirement security gets boost after court ruling

The Illinois Supreme Court’s decision to strike down pension-cutting legislation appears likely to have a major impact on the broader effort to protect the retirement security of all public employees in Illinois.

THE COURT’S RULING FOCUSED ON SB 1, WHICH CUT THE PENSIONS OF STATE EMPLOYEES, UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES AND TEACHERS OUTSIDE CHICAGO. HOWEVER, THE UNANIMOUS OPINION INDICATED THE JUSTICES BELIEVE THE STATE CONSTITUTION OFFERS STRONG PROTECTIONS TO EMPLOY-

ees and retirees in other pension systems as well.

“The authority of the legislature does not include the power to diminish or impair the benefits of membership in a public retirement system,” the court stated in its opinion. “Crisis is not an excuse to abandon the rule of law. It is a summons to defend it.”

Chicago lawsuit resumes

THE COURT’S RULING QUICKLY jump-started the effort to overturn legislation (SB 1922) that cut the pensions of City of Chicago employees. A lawsuit to overturn that law – filed by AFSCME, the Chicago Teachers Union, the Illinois Nurses Association and Teamsters Local 700 – had been put on hold until SB 1’s fate had been decided.

Despite the unequivocal decision handed down by the

Supreme Court, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel – who pressed the General Assembly to pass SB 1922 – has continued to insist that his plan is constitutional.

“We had hoped that a ruling with such a high degree of clarity on SB 1 would persuade Mayor Emanuel to forgo his attempts to make similar changes to City of Chicago pensions,” Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. “Unfortunately, the mayor immediately issued a statement asserting that SB 1922 is based on different premises and therefore can pass constitutional muster.”

The law, which is already in effect, cuts benefits for active and retired city employees enrolled in the Municipal Employees Annuity and Benefit Fund (MEABF) and the Laborers Fund. It increases employee contributions and raises the

retirement age for some workers. The cuts in the law would reduce the value of a pension for many city workers by 30 percent over two decades.

On May 13, lawyers representing AFSCME and other plaintiffs asked Cook County Circuit Judge Rita Novak to move quickly to consider the merits of the union challenge to the law. Novak agreed and set a schedule for the case to proceed.

“We believe the Supreme Court’s ruling leaves no room for doubt that Chicago’s pension cuts also violate the plain language of the pension clause,” the unions said in a joint statement. “In light of that decision and the city’s credit downgrade, we urge Mayor Emanuel to stop wasting time and money in a futile attempt to defend these unconstitutional cuts, and instead work with us to develop fair and constitution-

al solutions to funding city retirement plans.”

Preckwinkle’s plan flops

THE SUPREME COURT RULING – plus grassroots pressure from public employees – may have also made the General Assembly reluctant to pass legislation to cut the pensions of Cook County employees.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle had been urging legislators to pass a bill that would have reduced and delayed cost-of-living adjustments, increased the retirement age and made other changes that would greatly erode the retirement security of county employees.

The bill passed a House committee, but then stalled in the wake of an intensive AFSCME lobbying effort which reminded lawmakers of the Supreme Court ruling and emphasized the unfair cuts in Preckwinkle’s proposal.

However, the Preckwinkle administration has made clear it will continue to press for passage of the plan later this year.

“We hope President Preckwinkle will reconsider her approach and decide to work with county employees on finding a solution to the underfunding of the county’s pension system that is both fair and constitutional,” Lynch said.

Pension case plaintiffs proud to play their part

When the Illinois Supreme Court ruled in May that legislation cutting the pensions of state employees, university employees and downstate teachers was unconstitutional, hundreds of thousands of public service workers had cause for celebration.

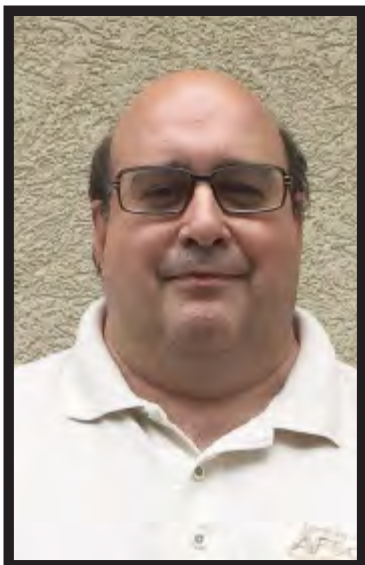
FOR EIGHT AFSCME MEMBERS – SIX ACTIVE EMPLOYEES AND TWO RETIREES – THE VICTORY WAS QUITE PERSONAL. They were among the group of public employees and retirees who were named as plaintiffs in the lawsuit filed by the We Are One Illinois coalition.

With the lawsuit now decided – and their retirement secure – the AFSCME plaintiffs in the case are able to speak about their role, the impact of the ruling and the ongoing fight to defend public employee pensions.

Gary Ciaccio
(Local 29, Illinois Department of Human Services):

“It felt great to have this opportunity. I know that one of the reasons people choose public service is because of the retirement security.

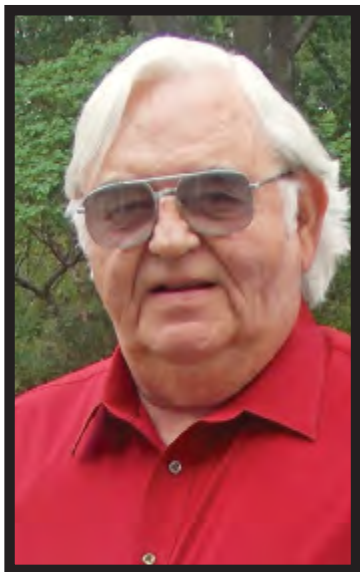
“I was very happy about the ruling, especially that it was a strong, unanimous decision that would discourage other attempts. But the governor wants to amend the constitution since it protects us, so we’ll have to keep our guard up.”



Ed Corrigan
(Retiree Sub-chapter 76, Illinois Department of Corrections):

“I did this sort of thing my whole working life. It’s just a way of life for me. You’re union and you stand up for yourself and everyone else that needs it. It’s an honor to be allowed to represent people like this.

“I thought the law was ridiculous. I couldn’t believe anyone even tried to do it. I’m hoping that now they will sit down with the unions and work out something that will be legal and help the state of Illinois.”



Gary Kroeschel
(Local 2224, Illinois Department of Central Management Services):

“I definitely thought it was an honor to represent all the state employees and retirees. I felt that my pension



was something that was guaranteed to me and couldn’t be taken away.

“I was thrilled when the ruling came down. But I’m a realist as well and I know they’re going to be right back at it to find a way to get around it. But right now, I feel justice has been done.”

Ellen Larrimore
(Local 1989, Northern Illinois University):

“I would have definitely been a lot worse off when I retired if the union hadn’t challenged this law. It was really distressing. It just put the entire burden on those of us who pay every paycheck into our pensions. It just seemed completely unfair.

“I’d like for the legislators to come to the table with the unions and work on something that’s more equitable that doesn’t create the same problem this bill did. The unions need to be brought in for their input on this kind of bill or we’ll be in the same boat as before.”

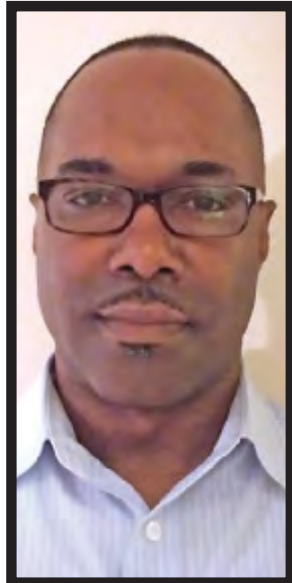


Stephen Mittons
(Local 2081, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services):

“If the law had gone into effect, the quality of life my family and I

would be able to enjoy would be reduced. No one goes into public service to be rich, but we do want to be comfortable and not have to worry in retirement.

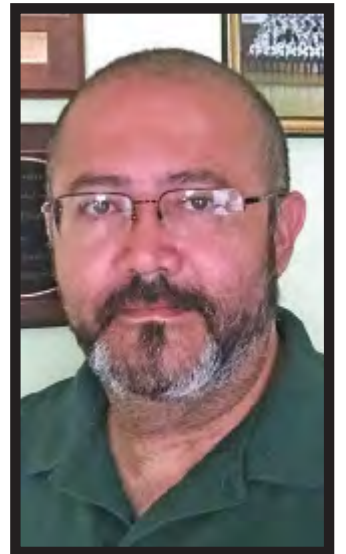
“We understand the financial situation the state’s in. Hopefully this time they’ll sit at the table with us and have meaningful discussions and be a working partner instead of an adversary.”



Jose Prado
(Local 1866, Illinois Department of Corrections):

“I felt that it was my duty to help the public know what they had been doing with our pensions. I felt good doing it on behalf of my fellow brothers and sisters.

“The way things are going right now, I’m pretty sure there’s going to be more fights. We still need to go out there and fight and talk to our community, our neighbors, our families and our friends. We need to get the message out there: State employees are essential and deserve security in their retirement.”



James Sheridan
(Local 1275, Northern Illinois University):

“I served here in DeKalb County on the county board. I took the oath of office and it included upholding the constitution of the state of Illinois. I took that oath seriously.

“This law being struck down is directly attributable to union membership. If people ever wonder if their membership is effective, here’s a prime example of what it does for you, your co-workers, family and community.”



Caryl Wadley-Foy
(Retiree Sub-chapter 57, Illinois Department of Human Services):

“I’ve had some health issues since I retired and have not been able to be as physically involved as I wanted to be. The opportunity to be a part of this lawsuit felt great.”

“I was confident that we’d prevail, but our work is not done. I believe that the people of my generation should do everything they can to talk to the younger workers about the future. I’d hate to see them go through this again.”



As Rauner seeks confrontation, state employees affirm commitment to service

As *On the Move* went to press, the master contract covering state employees was set to expire – and the chances of Gov. Bruce Rauner backing away from his extreme demands at the bargaining table seemed remote.

THE RAUNER ADMINISTRATION CONTINUES TO INSIST ON SWEEPING CHANGES TO THE UNION contract that are unacceptable to the AFSCME Bargaining Committee, including:

- No restrictions on forced overtime
- No wage increases
- No limits on privatization
- Gutting pensions
- Weakening the union's ability to advocate for members and the services they provide
- Increases in employee health care costs and reductions in coverage that would put Illinois behind all other states

"The governor's list of demands makes it clear that he's intent on keeping his campaign promise to shut down state government by forcing a strike or locking out employees," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "But while Bruce Rauner is committed to confrontation, AFSCME members remain committed to providing quality public services."

At press time, the Rauner administration had not responded to the Bargaining Committee's request to extend the contract if an agreement is not reached by the June 30 expiration date.

Acting in the public interest

IN AN UNPRECEDENTED STEP aimed at keeping public services functioning while also allowing the negotiation of a fair contract, the AFSCME State Bargaining Committee voted unanimously to back legislation introduced in the final days of the legislative session that would prevent Rauner from forcing a strike or lockout.

The bill, SB 1229, would



prevent the disruption of public services by providing for interest arbitration as a means of resolving an impasse in contract negotiations – the same process that already exists for public safety personnel. The legislation would affect employees of state agencies under the governor for a period of four years.

SB 1229 allows either the union or the employer, after a period of mediation, to invoke the interest arbitration process under which both sides submit their proposals to an independent arbitrator. Once the arbitration hearing begins, union members could not strike. The terms of the expired contract would remain in place until the arbitrator ruled.

"Going on strike is a serious decision that should be made state employees, not by a reckless governor," Lynch said. "SB 1229 would preserve that right up until arbitration begins while preventing the governor from seeking to provoke a conflict with the goal of breaking the union."

The legislation passed by a veto-proof margin in the Senate and nearly hit that threshold in the House. At press time, Rauner had not announced whether he would veto the bill.



"If the governor chooses to veto the bill, then he will have sent a clear signal that he prefers conflict over constructive solutions," Lynch said. "We are hopeful that we can work with lawmakers to override that veto, but that vote could be months away."

Time to prepare

THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES MEAN that state employees still need to be prepared for a lockout

or strike.

The union is already encouraging state employees to save money and take other steps to ensure they and their families can take care of personal needs in the event of a work stoppage. AFSCME members are also working to strengthen ties with the community and raise awareness of their role in providing vital public services.

Already, lawn signs expressing support for state

workers have become a common sight. In June, thousands of state employees staged rallies, marches and other public events to urge support for a fair contract and public services (see page 8).

"We are committed to maintaining the public services we provide and to reaching agreement on a fair union contract that recognizes the importance of these services to the people of Illinois," Lynch said.

State employees

STAND UP TO DEFEND

public services, call for a fair contract



The local also launched green balloons into the air as a visual reminder of their aspirations.

Other locals used the opportunity to emphasize their strong ties to the communities they serve.

In the Quad Cities area, Local 2615 collected food and money donations for a community shelter for domestic abuse victims.

"We just thought it was important for people to see us as members of the community that are invested in the people the governor is trying to cut out of the budget," Local 2615 President Carlene Erno said. "We want to bring strength and unity to our community."

Connecting with local communities – and educating them – was a primary goal of the actions.

"I think that the union needs to put out as much information as possible to let the citizens and taxpayers of Illinois know exactly what's going on," said Joe Stolte, president of Local 632, which represents employees at Decatur CC. "Everything we can get out to the public puts us that much closer to getting all of them behind us."

The marches, rallies and other activities also helped prepare union members for what could be a protracted battle to secure a fair contract and defend their right to union representation.

"We have a large number of new hires who have just started their careers here," said Shaun Dawson, president of Local 2073, Logan CC. "They're all new to this – never seen it, dealt with it, understood it – but they were fired up. We had 18, 19, 20-year-olds out demonstrating. I was overwhelmed."

No matter what part of the state they were from, and no matter whether they were new to the union or veterans of many contract struggles, those who took to the streets had a common goal: a fair contract that will let them serve the public.

"I am out here because I need a contract. I need to work. I need Rauner to hear us," said Brandi Brown, a DHS caseworker in Local 2854. "This isn't about numbers on paper. These are real people you're affecting by making cuts and by refusing to compromise."

With their contract on the verge of expiring and a potential government shutdown looming, state employees are turning out in force to reach out to the communities they serve.

On AFSCME Illinois Fair Contract Rally Days, June 9-11, thousands of state workers joined in a wide range of public events at more than 100 worksites that highlighted the value of the services they provide and demonstrated their unity in the face of unrelenting hostility from Gov. Bruce Rauner.

"One of the main reasons we're doing this is to show the people of Illinois that we're united and coming together to make sure their services aren't disrupted," said Donna Wellman, the DHS chapter chair for Local 448. "We want to show management we will not be intimidated, that we're here and we're all in this together."

Wellman's local union, which represents multiple worksites and departments in the Rockford area, held coordinated activities that included employees demonstrating outside with signs highlighting their support for the veterans and children they serve.





Privatization: A growing threat in state government



Since entering office, Gov. Bruce Rauner has been trying to lay the groundwork for selling off parts of state government to the highest bidder.

THE GOVERNOR'S EAGERNESS TO LET THE WEALTHY ELITE PROFIT OFF PUBLIC SERVICES IS EVIDENT in his hardline stance at the bargaining table. He wants the next state master contract to eliminate any safeguards against rampant privatization. "Governor Rauner believes government should be run by people more



Donna Arduin

accountable to Wall Street and shareholders than they are to the Illinois citizens," Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman said. "We obviously disagree. We think public services should remain under public control, with public oversight, transparency and accountability."

The AFSCME State Bargaining Committee is determined to ensure that the governor's power to privatize is kept in check.

"Privatization doesn't serve the interests of the public or of public employees," Newman said.

"Pin-stripe patronage"

SOON AFTER TAKING OFFICE, Rauner proposed partially privatizing the state's Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, which is intended to help bring jobs to the state.

The governor wants to allow a privately-run group to negotiate tax incentives with companies considering moving to the state.

"Illinois is already suffer-

ing due to billions in tax breaks handed out to the wealthy and large corporations," Newman said. "The governor's proposal would make this problem even worse by putting negotiations entirely in private hands."

While the privately-run group would be not-for-profit, it would still give the wealthy another way to influence state government.

"I'm not sure that the best way you eliminate pin-stripe patronage is to hand the decisions over to the guys in pin stripes," Ralph Martire, Executive Director of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, told the Associated Press. "I just think it's a horrible idea."

Privatization of economic development programs has

also failed to live up to expectations in neighboring states.

"The Michigan Economic Development Corporation significantly overstated job creation, essentially taking companies' word," the AP reported. "In Indiana, a federal audit last year found that a company contracted by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation improperly funneled almost half a million dollars to a business run by the contractor's chairman."

Private prisons?

ANOTHER RAUNER DECISION HAS raised concerns that his administration will push to privatize parts of the state's correctional system.

One of Rauner's top budget advisers, Donna Arduin, was brought in under a \$30,000-a-month contract even as the governor slashed spending on programs that help children and seniors.

Arduin has been accused of pay-to-play schemes involving the private prison industry. During her time directing budgets for California and Florida, Arduin developed deep connections to the private prison company GEO Group.

Shortly after Arduin left California as budget director, the state unexpectedly decided to reopen a prison and gave GEO a \$3.5 million no-bid contract. Arduin's boyfriend was a lobbyist for the company and she had recently joined the board of the company's real-estate spinoff, Correctional Properties.

"We have no doubt that Donna Arduin is going to be a voice in favor of privatization, especially of prisons," Newman said. "We fought hard for the law that outlaws private prisons in Illinois, and we're going to fight to defend it, too."

Closures

Continued from page 4

good crowd," Mahoney said. "It's a place for lifelong learning."

"People know that we're

here and that we're free," said Sue Collins, a Local 1019 member who helps build exhibits for the museum's main building. "When you

don't have money you can come here and learn crafts or attend lectures. Grandparents bring their grandchildren here during the summer and they don't need money to enjoy it. The museum is a little jewel."

Proud to serve the community

The Hardin County Work Camp, located in a sparsely populated section of southern Illinois, does more than put

inmates to work. It also serves as a vital resource for cash-strapped downstate communities.

"The man hours these crews can provide to these small towns are invaluable," said Jon Winters, a correctional officer at the camp. "There's two towns I can think of that would have been underwater from flooding a few years ago if not for work camp inmates filling sandbags."

Inmates at the work

camp, a minimum security facility, also maintain extensive gardens that provide fresh fruits and vegetables to local food pantries. They also help maintain clean roadways and even help with maintenance and landscaping at government buildings.

"Work camps are a necessary part of the prison system," Winters said. "It's something that we've come up with to benefit society. Why would you shut that down?"

AFSCME scholarships open up opportunities for members and their families



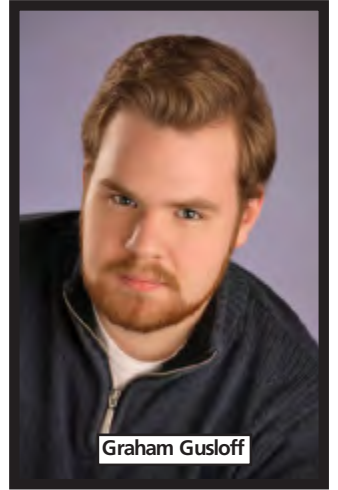
Local 2464 member Matthew Whalen is the first winner of the International Union's Gerald W. McEntee Scholarship.



Kaylyn Shankle



Joselyn Rosas



Graham Gusloff

Larry Marquardt Scholarship winners announced

COUNCIL 31 HAS SELECTED THE children of three AFSCME members as recipients of this year's Larry Marquardt Scholarship, which awards \$1,000 to each winner.

Graham Gusloff, the son of Local 3367 member Bradley Gusloff, will attend Illinois State University this fall to study theater. Gusloff, who lives in Freeport, plans on joining a union, Actors' Equity, as a professional actor.

"I recognize that as a touring actor with varying hours and lengths of employment, I will need contract protection and help to obtain health benefits as well as

retirement benefits," Gusloff wrote in his essay. "I hope I have the support and protection of a labor union up until my last curtain call."

Joselyn Rosas, of Belvidere, is the daughter of Local 448 member Veronica Rosas. She will attend Rockford University this fall and plans on becoming a teacher.

"The labor movement is relevant and needed more today than ever because while the middle class is suffering from layoffs, stagnant wages and unemployment, CEO and executive compensation is increasing drastically," Rosas wrote. "Most corporations are focusing on creating profits at the expense of their employees."

Kaylyn Shankle, of

Newark, is the daughter of Local 472 member James Shankle. She will attend Joliet Junior College and plans on becoming a teacher.

"Without the labor movement, children would be working in sweatshops, companies would be trimming down employee benefits and safety rights, and qualified women would be paid unfair wages," Shankle wrote. "The labor union is about equality."

The Larry Marquardt Scholarship is named for the first executive director of Council 31, a tireless organizer and union leader who dedicated his life to improving the lives of working people. For more information, visit AFSCME31.org.

The International union and Council 31 both award scholarships to qualified applicants that help defray the cost of college tuition.

THE NEWEST OF THOSE SCHOLARSHIPS, NAMED AFTER FORMER INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT Gerald McEntee, has been awarded to Matthew Whalen, a paramedic in Jackson County and a member of Local 2464.

Whalen found out about the Gerald W. McEntee Scholarship through the Union Plus website, which provides information on benefits, discount programs and scholarships available to union members.

"I saw it was only open to AFSCME members so I thought I would give it a shot," Whalen said. "When I found out I won I was ecstatic. I feel like I'm very lucky. I know a lot of people applied for it."

Council 31 staff representative Jeremy Noelle personally recommended Whalen for the scholarship.

"Matthew has shown me over the past five years he has a tremendous ability to lead and motivate his peers and does not stop until his task has been completed," Noelle wrote in his recommendation letter.

The \$5,000 scholarship goes to the candidate who best exemplifies a commitment to strengthening the union through organizing, building political power for

working families, defending workers' rights and supporting public services. It is awarded annually by the International union.

Whalen touched on those themes in his application.

"Organizing is one of the key things that not only built our great union but must be used going forward to make the union stronger," he wrote. "Organizers are not unlike professional educators in today's world. There is so much false information that is being spread about organized labor by its opponents that it takes a special kind of person to cut through the lies."

While working as a paramedic, Whalen is also a student at Southern Illinois University studying history. His ultimate goal, though, is to attend law school and become an attorney for the union.

"My main goals are to take the fight to Springfield and to Washington to help expand the rights of workers to collectively bargain and no longer have to fear unjust managers or unscrupulous corporations," Whalen wrote in his application.

More information on the Gerald W. McEntee Scholarship is available at the International union's website, AFSCME.org.

Legislative update

Continued from page 5

vices, the General Assembly passed a budget that does not cut rates for community agencies serving the developmentally disabled. But the governor is expected to veto that budget.

Unfortunately, the legislation to raise wages did not advance as the General Assembly grappled with the revenue gap created by the sunset of the temporary income tax increase.

Bills AFSCME supports

FAIR RESOLUTION TO STATE Contract (SB 1229 – Sen. Harmon/Rep. Smiddy): After many months of negotiations for a new State of Illinois Master Agreement, there is no sign

that Rauner is willing to compromise on his extreme and far-reaching demands that would harm employees' economic status and their rights on the job. Instead Rauner has threatened to force a strike and shut down state government. SB 1229 would prevent the disruption of public services by providing for interest arbitration for all employees in agencies under the governor as a means of resolving disputes in contract negotiations—the same process that already exists for public safety personnel. STATUS: Passed both houses.

State Employee Back Wages: SB 2038 provides for a supplemental appropriation of approximately \$63 million to pay contractually obligated back wages earned from July

2011 to July 2013 by some 24,000 state employees in various agencies. An independent arbitrator, the Circuit Court and the Appellate Court have all ruled that wages must be paid and applicable interest is owed. STATUS: SB 2038 has passed the Senate and has been assigned to the House Executive Committee where it awaits hearing.

Increase Protection for Public Safety Workers (HB 3184 – Rep. Hurley/Sen. Mulroe): Enhances the criminal penalties for assaulting peace officers, firefighters, emergency management workers, or emergency medical technicians while performing official duties; to prevent performance of official duties; or in retaliation for performing official duties. STATUS: HB 3184 passed both houses and is awaiting action by the Governor.

Bills AFSCME opposed

REPEAL TUITION WAIVERS FOR University Employees (HB 403/HB 2528 – Rep.

Continued on page 15

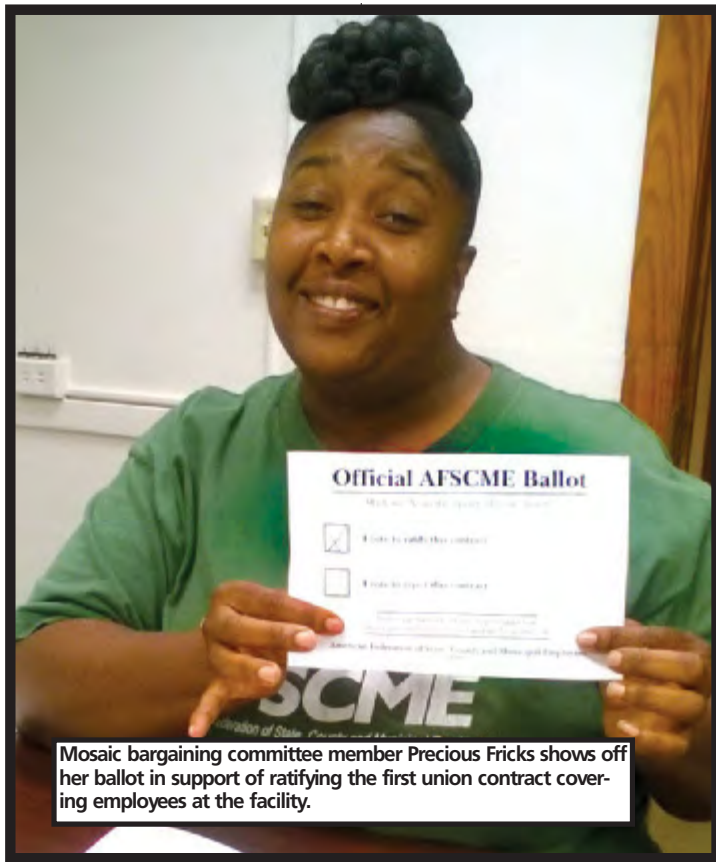
ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Mosaic employees win raises, holidays in first contract

MORE THAN A YEAR AFTER VOTING to form a union, employees at Mosaic, a community disability services agency in Rockford, have ratified their first contract.

The four-year agreement includes wage increases for all employees, establishes a step plan, provides added pay for employees who work on weekends and provides for six paid holidays.

“The holidays and the pay were the biggest issues,” said LaToya Johnson, a member of the bargaining team. “In this job you sometimes have to miss out on family events and holidays because you’re at work, so getting holiday pay was really important. The pay increase means a lot to second-shift workers, who are there on nights and weekends.”



Mosaic bargaining committee member Precious Fricks shows off her ballot in support of ratifying the first union contract covering employees at the facility.

Council 31 staff representative Sara Dorner said man-

agement generally took a constructive approach through-

out bargaining – though Mosaic’s corporate ownership made an attempt to keep union security language out of the agreement.

“Management’s generally been fair in letting people exercise their rights, but toward the end of bargaining the corporate office in Omaha said they weren’t comfortable with union shop language,” Dorner said. “The bargaining unit flooded the voicemail in Omaha saying they made their choice and at the next meeting, management gave us the language we wanted.”

The staff at Mosaic will form a chapter of Local 2515, which already includes employees at Milestone, another Rockford disability services provider.

Dorner led the bargaining team, which included Johnson, Precious Fricks, Debbie Parrish and Nicole Triplett.

Columbia EMS employees settle first contract

IN JANUARY, MORE THAN A YEAR after voting to join AFSCME, EMS employees in the City of Columbia ratified their first contract.

Just having a contract means the bargaining team attained one of its goals in forming a union: Getting rules and policies on paper, preventing management from making arbitrary changes.

“The motivation to organize came out of a lack of consistency in policies and procedures,” Council 31 staff representative Ed LaPorte said. “This contract gives them a voice and an avenue to deal with these issues.”

The agreement, which includes a 7.5 percent wage increase spread over three years, leaves employees cer-

Continued on the facing page

Council 31 seeks nominations for 2015 Public Service Award

Nearly every workplace has someone like this – people who go the extra mile to give top-quality public service, day in and day out. And then there are those special folks who rise to the occasion to rescue those at risk or even save lives when disaster threatens. They are the ones who help give public-service workers a good name and counteract the anti-government attitudes that foster privatization.

Now it’s time to recognize that kind of dedication to public service. Nominations are open for the AFSCME Council 31 Public Service Award, which will be presented at the Council 31 19th Biennial Convention which will be held in Springfield on October 16-17.

“We are looking for union members who exemplify the best in public service,” said Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch.

Council 31 Public Service Award Nomination Form

Name of AFSCME member nominated: _____

The nominee is a member of AFSCME Local# _____

Name of AFSCME member making the nomination: _____

Your phone number: (w) _____ (h) _____

Signature: _____ Local # _____

Mail to Minnie Perez, AFSCME Council 31, 205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago IL 60601 or send a fax to (312) 861-0979.

Nominations are due September 13.

Please attach a page (or more) describing why the nominee should receive the Public Service Award for outstanding public service.

Continued from the facing page

tain of their benefits, said Darin Hartman, a member of the bargaining team.

"We had benefits before but they were never set in stone," he said. "For example, there'd only be a uniform allowance if there was money left in the budget."

Hartman said the bargaining team fought hard to ensure that workers called "volunteers" by the city – even though they work 12-hour shifts and are paid – were reclassified as employees and members of the bargaining unit.

"There was a big conflict and we had to fight to make sure they were part of our group," he said. "Once we agreed on that, we were able to move forward on everything else."

LaPorte and Hartman negotiated the agreement on behalf of the entire bargaining unit.

Wauconda employees win raises, staffing guarantees

AFTER A SLOW START TO NEGOTIATIONS, Village of Wauconda employees managed to secure a five-year contract that will increase wages by 9 percent and also help ensure adequate staffing levels.

The bargaining team also won a no-layoff guarantee in the first two years of the agreement as well as the establishment of a retiree health savings account program funded by comp time accrued by employees in excess of 80 hours. In exchange, employees accepted a slight increase in health insurance premiums.

Local 2904 President Jacob Mann said the staffing guarantees in the contract directly helped two members who had lost their jobs earlier.

"We had a couple of guys that were let go in the last couple years but we got them back," he said.

Council 31 staff representative Chris Hooser said the agreement was especially impressive given early management resistance to union proposals.

"The first few sessions had some posturing but then the employer got pretty reasonable," he said. "The raises and steps more than covered the increase in health insurance. At the end of the day every-

one ends up on the plus side."

The bargaining team included Hooser, Mann and Mark Gedde.

Sick leave policy improves in Sycamore

City of Sycamore employees will no longer be penalized for taking sick leave, thanks to a new contract won by the Local 3957 bargaining team.

Previously, sick leave was not counted when determining whether employees had passed the 40-hour threshold necessary to receive overtime pay – a policy that discouraged workers from taking time off while ill.

"There was a risk of people coming in sick just so they wouldn't lose their overtime," Local 3957 President Brad Dewey said. "Now, basically anything over eight hours a day will function as overtime."

The policy change was especially important because employees' busiest time of the year also coincides with a time when illnesses are common.

"When there's a snow emergency or a water main break, they're all working," Council 31 staff representative Sara Dorner said. "It was important, especially because snow storms happen during flu season."

The bargaining committee also won language to increase wages by 9.5 percent over four years and creates a step for employees with 30 years of service.

The bargaining team included Dorner, Dewey, Randy Jennings and Brad Ziegler.

New titles added to ISU bargaining unit

ONE HIGHLIGHT OF THE THREE-year contract covering Illinois State University employees is language that recognizes two job titles as members of the bargaining unit.

The Local 1110 bargaining team pushed to have the titles – snack bar attendant and grounds gardener – added. The change adds 16 employees to the local's membership.

"For the snack bar attendants, they would be assigned to specific venues when they got hired and would have to remain there," Council 31 staff representative Renee Nestler said. "Now they'll have a bid process and some say in their work assignments on a

daily basis."

Wages will rise by 2 percent in the first year of the contract, with the second year's increase determined by management. In the final year, the local and management will negotiate wages in a reopener.

Local 1110 President Phil Hatfield was pleased about improved language on disciplinary procedures.

"The disciplinary process was quite severe. We had six levels of discipline," he said. "That has evolved to a more professional way of dealing with those issues."

Nestler led the bargaining team, which included Hatfield, Ronald Terven, Mike Brandt, Kody Key, Daniel Livers and Dwayne Price.

ISU health care employees address wage inequities

THE TWO-YEAR CONTRACT COVERING health care employees at Illinois State University marks the first step in addressing a management practice that had wrongly brought down wages for Local 3236 members.

The agreement establishes a labor-management committee to address contract language meant to ensure that new hires were not paid more than existing employees who had built up seniority. Under management's interpretation, though, that language hasn't had the desired effect.

"There's a provision in the contract meant to make it so that someone who's hired off the street will get credit for previous nursing experience but won't get paid more than someone already in the unit," Council 31 staff representative Renee Nestler said. "What has actually happened is that management interpreted that incorrectly and shoved everyone lower in the pay range."

Wages will also increase by 2 percent in the first year of the agreement, followed by a reopener in the second year.

Local 3236 President Ken Huls said the bargaining committee also pushed for the contract to include language that will help members pay for continuing education courses that are often required to maintain certificates or registrations.

"A lot of people here have to be certified or registered and join certain organiza-

tions," Huls said. "One of the things the contract does is allow money to be used for memberships in those organizations if your membership allows you to get the education you need to be certified."

Nestler led the negotiating team and was joined by Huls, Michele Cheever and Jennifer Duvall.

Toll Highway employees lose transponders but make gains elsewhere

ILLINOIS TOLL HIGHWAY Authority employees have long benefited from not having to pay tolls on the roads they protect and maintain.

So when management made clear it was determined to end that benefit by taking away I-PASS transponders, the Local 3883 bargaining team pressed to make sure their new contract would provide compensation for the loss.

The four-year contract increases wages by 7.5 percent and also adds \$250 to the base salary of employees. Further, it stipulates that employees cannot lose their transponders until the employer's non-union personnel lose them as well.

The \$250 is specifically aimed at compensating employees for tolls incurred while commuting to and from work. Dawn Sirianni, the local's president, said making that money a permanent fixture was important.

"We didn't want it as a lump sum," she said. "We wanted it added to our base pay."

Sirianni spoke very highly of her bargaining team.

"They were fabulous," she said. "There were a lot of good discussions, back and forth, and compromising. People made a lot of good arguments and were able to persuade others to agree with them."

The bargaining team also held firm against increased health care costs, preserving a free HMO insurance option at all salary levels.

"This is still a pretty young group, only on its third contract," Council 31 staff representative Maggie Lorenc said. "They were more active in this fight than they had been in previous contracts."

The bargaining team, led by Lorenc, included Sirianni, Brian Bottomley, Mike Orłowski, Mike Pustelnik and

Jeff Agonath.

Peoria Park District employees keep health costs contained

NEGOTIATIONS OVER A NEW contract for Peoria Park District employees coincided with the employer's decision to change health plan providers.

The Local 3774 bargaining team ensured the three-year agreement placed caps on employee insurance costs while also winning wage increases that will more than offset an increase in premiums. Wages will rise by 7 percent over the life of the contract.

"We really pushed hard for the caps and that was the biggest sticking point in negotiations," said Roger Halleen, the local's president. "They didn't want a cap at all."

A history of good relations with the employer allowed the two sides to overcome differences, Halleen said.

"We don't always agree, but we can always talk to them," he said. "The tone of the talks was pretty positive."

Council 31 staff representative Tim Lavelle led the bargaining team, which included Halleen, Elona Mason, Christine Barron, Roger Slama and Doug Holmes.

Stopgap agreement raises wages for Dr. John Warner Hospital workers

AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR WITHOUT a contract, employees at Dr. John Warner Hospital in Clinton have ratified a one-year agreement that will raise wages by at least 2 percent.

The bargaining process was often difficult, requiring Local 3329 to file an unfair labor practice charge against the City of Clinton, which owns the facility.

"They came to the negotiating table and had changed things after we had already reached an agreement," said the local's president, Charity Clary. "That's where the ULP came in."

Council 31 staff representative Randy Hellman said the bargaining team eventually resolved issues with the employer, reaching an agreement that includes more money for employees at the bottom of the wage scale.

"We addressed the low-

Continued on page 15

RETIREE NOTES



AFSCME Retirees stand with state workers in fight for a fair contract

AT MORE THAN 100 PUBLIC EVENTS ACROSS THE state in June, members of AFSCME Retiree Chapter 31 stood shoulder-to-shoulder with state workers to build public support for settling a fair contract.

State of Illinois employees have been attempting to negotiate a new contract for more than six months, but the Rauner administration is continuing to make extreme demands, including dismantling retiree health care benefits.

"We are supporting state workers in their fight for a contract, because retirees have a big stake in having a strong union in state government," said Don Todd, president of the sub-chapter 86 in Sangamon County. "Rauner isn't

just targeting current workers. He has made it clear since he came into office that our health care and pensions would come under attack as well."

From Rockford to Springfield to Anna, and at dozens of worksites in between, AFSCME retirees marched, picketed, and leafleted with state locals.

"We want to send a message to the governor that retirees support state workers and we will be behind them every step of the way," Todd said. "Whether you are a state worker, a retiree, a friend or family member, or just someone that values public service, we are all in this together now."



Retirees send strong rebuke to Rauner's "turnaround" agenda

GOV. BRUCE RAUNER HAS BEEN targeting counties and municipalities across the state, asking local officials to pass resolutions in support of his extreme anti-worker agenda.

AFSCME Retirees, along with AFSCME members and allies from other unions and community groups, have stood up to Rauner at the local level, sending a clear message of solidarity and strength.

Dorothy Asbury, president of retiree sub-chapter 59, attended an Edwardsville city council meeting where Rauner's "Turnaround Resolution" was being debated.

"This resolution does not just attack union members – this attacks our entire community," Asbury said. "Rauner may be used to having his way in boardrooms, but we will not let him push his destructive agenda onto our communities."

Asbury, along with 150 other union supporters, watched as the Edwardsville City Council voted down Rauner's resolution by a 5-2 margin.

While the "right-to-work" and prevailing wage provisions of these resolutions have been getting the bulk of

media attention, also included in the resolutions is a provision that would allow local governments to enact their own pension "reform."

"As an IMRF [Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund] retiree, I am especially concerned by Rauner's attempts to mess with local government pensions," said Bea Stratton, vice-president of retiree sub-chapter 88. "IMRF is well-funded because politicians weren't able to mess with it, yet Rauner still wants to attack our modest benefits."

State and university retirees receive premium refunds

THROUGHOUT JUNE, STATE AND university retirees received refunds of health care premiums that were unconstitutionally deducted from their pension checks between July 2013 and October 2014.

This is the culmination of a long legal battle led by AFSCME and other unions, in which the Supreme Court ruled that charging premiums to state and university retirees for their health care violated the state constitution. As a result, the state has been ordered to refund the money they collected from affected retirees.

While the lawsuit also secured interest on the money held from retirees, this additional money went entirely to pay for the attorney fees of non-union groups also involved in the lawsuit.

According to the State Employee Retirement System, retirees will not have to claim the refund on their taxes. Payments should be complete by July 1, 2015. Affected retirees who have not received their refund by this date should contact their retirement systems.



Retiree Chapter 31 Secretary Treasurer Mary Jones received the Addie Wyatt Award.

Retiree receives prestigious labor award

MARY JONES, SECRETARY TREASURER of Retiree Chapter 31, received the Addie Wyatt Award from the Chicago Chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) at a banquet on April 18.

The Addie Wyatt Award is conferred upon one woman union leader each year who distinguishes herself through involvement in the CBTU, her union, her community, politics and other organizations.

Along with her position as an officer with Chapter 31, Mary was recognized for her work as president of AFSCME Retiree sub-chapter 60, as well as her efforts as a member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. She is also a previous recipient of the Olga

Madar award from CLUW for her contributions to the Chicago labor movement. Mary also contributes to her community by serving on the board of Garfield Counseling Center.

Before retirement, Mary worked as a Senior Data Entry Operator at the City of Chicago Public Library for more than 33 years. During that time she served as an executive board member, steward, and negotiator for AFSCME Local 1215.

The CBTU described Mary as a "true labor leader and advocate," who can be found "on picket lines, testifying in front of State of Illinois committees, Chicago City Council, and television cameras, all in defense and support of the rights of workers."

Legislative update

Continued from page 5

Franks/Rep. Tryon): These measures would bar state universities from offering any form of tuition waiver to the children of university employees or seek to tax the value of tuition waivers granted to university employees and their dependents. STATUS: Passage was blocked and these measures are in House Rules Committee.

Repeal Limits on Privatization of School Services (HB 1378/SB 1198 – Rep. Sosnowski/Sen. Barickman): These measures would weaken taxpayer protections by removing oversight and accountability standards provided by current law when school districts are looking to privatize services currently performed by school district employees. STATUS: Passage was blocked and these measures are now in Rules and Education Subcommittee respectively.

Cuts to Funding for Local Government Services (HB 200 - SA#1 - Sen. Trotter): Senate Amendment 1 to HB 200 would drastically reduce revenues available to local governments by cutting their share of the State's income tax revenue by 50 percent placing further strain on public services and the people who provide them. STATUS: HB 200-SA#1 failed by a vote of 0-39-20.

Permit Municipal Bankruptcy (HB 298/HB 1605 - HA#1 - Rep. Sandack): These measures would allow municipalities to declare bankruptcy and restructure their debts to void collective bargaining agreements and renege on pension obligations, as happened in the City of Detroit. STATUS: These measures were blocked and are now in House Rules Committee.

Privatization of DCEO

(HB 314/HB 574 - HA#1/SB 773 – Rep. Sosnowski/Rep. Currie/Sen. Connelly): These measures would create not-for-profit corporations charged with the development and implementation of economic development policy for the State of Illinois. This corporate-driven model has been tried in others state and has been plagued with scandals involving misuse of taxpayer funds, excessive executive bonuses, conflicts of interest and lack of accountability. STATUS: HB 314/HB 574 – House Rules Committee/SB 773 – On 3rd Reading in the Senate.

Collective Bargaining Exclusions (SB 981, SA#1,2 – Sen. McConaughay): SB 981-SA#1 and SA#2 was introduced as a so-called solution to a hiring scandal that occurred at the Illinois Department of Transportation. Instead of addressing the real problem – agencies' ability to circumvent the Personnel Code – the Rauner administration is seeking definition changes that would strip collective bargaining rights from many state and local government employees. STATUS: SB 981-SA#1, 2 has been assigned to the Senate Executive Committee.

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Continued from page 13

wage employees by adding an extra 50 cents an hour on top of the 2 percent everyone got," he said. "We have too many people here making as little as \$8.60 an hour. Some of them will end up getting a 70 or 80 cents-an-hour increase."

Hellmann led the negotiations, joined by Clary, Linda Koeberlein, Cindy Simpson and Mary Brown.

Randolph County nursing home employees make best of bad situation

HEADING INTO NEGOTIATIONS for a new contract, the bargaining team representing Randolph County Care Center employees knew their employer had serious fiscal issues.

Given that situation,

Local 2402 members are happy with their two-year contract that includes a 5 percent increase in wages.

"We realized the county was not flush with money," Council 31 staff representative Ty Petersen said. "We worked with the administration and the county board to work out something acceptable to all parties. In the end, we got a raise and didn't make any concessions."

Local 2402 President Crystal Kempfer said the bargaining team was unified throughout the entire process.

"We may have wanted more than what we got, but we did hold our ground for the final offer we said we could accept, and we got that," she said.

Petersen led the bargaining team and was joined by Kempfer, Sherri Horner and Vicki Rednour.

Council 31 seeks nominations for 2015 Fitzgerald Award

The Jane Fitzgerald Award is presented at each AFSCME Council 31 biennial convention to a dedicated local union activist. Council 31 is now accepting nominations for the award to be presented at the 19th Biennial Convention, October 16-17.

Fitzgerald was an executive vice president of Local 2081, an international vice president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, a member of the state employees bargaining committee and the PEOPLE chair for her local.

A tireless worker for justice and equality, Fitzgerald, who died at the age of 53 on Nov. 1, 1996, never gave up the fight. Only a few days before she lost her battle with cancer, she was on the phone, organizing AFSCME members for a get-out-the-vote project.

"Jane was always ready for the next job and always trying to get one more person involved in the union," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "She understood the connection between the success of her local union and the success of the entire labor movement. The Jane Fitzgerald Award will go to the person who exemplifies that spirit of dedication, farsightedness and energy."

Council 31 Jane Fitzgerald Nomination Form

Name of AFSCME member nominated: _____

The nominee is a member of AFSCME Local# _____

Name of AFSCME member making the nomination: _____

Your phone number: (w) _____ (h) _____

Signature: _____ Local # _____

Mail to Minnie Perez, AFSCME Council 31, 205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago IL 60601 or send a fax to (312) 861-0979.

Union steward overcomes challenges to help others

Paul Petersen sees the importance of union rights

Many public employees face obstacles that stand in the way of doing their job – lack of funding, mismanagement, aging equipment, short-staffing and more.

Paul Petersen, a member of Local 2813, has successfully navigated these challenges during his years working for the state Department of Transportation. What's more, he's done so without the ability to see – Petersen is completely blind.

After years of state service in which he's convinced skeptical managers of his value and pushed to obtain the tools needed to do his job effectively, Petersen is now helping his co-workers do the same as one of his local's newest stewards.

"When I had a chance to learn how to be a union steward, I figured I'd be doing my union some good," said Petersen, an office assistant who works in Springfield. "We didn't have one in this office, and it's an important role because they help union members understand their rights and responsibilities."

Council 31 staff representative Frank Prochaska, who provides training for the Local 2813 stewards, said Petersen was able to actively participate in training after some accommodations were made that allowed him to prepare, including creating documents his computer software could dictate aloud.

"We provided Word versions of the contract, the grievance form, and the various handouts and exercises for the steward class ahead of time so he could study some before the course," he said. "Paul took notes during the course using a small hand-held voice recorder."

Petersen's presence benefited the entire class, Prochaska said.

"The rest of the class also appreciated him being there and several took an active role in helping accommodate his disability," he said.



Local 2813 steward Paul Petersen played an active role in June's Fair Contract Rally Days (top). At home (bottom), Petersen uses special software to access the Internet and run an online radio station.



"A REAL ASSET"

Petersen has already proven himself effective in one of a steward's most essential roles – motivating co-workers to take action when needed.

Ahead of the Fair Contract Rally Days in June, Petersen made sure his co-workers were informed about the state of contract negotiations and the importance of participating in a roadside demonstration involving IDOT and Environmental Protection Agency employees.

"He's a real asset to the local," Local 2813 President Greg Keen said. "He's got a really good rapport with all of his co-workers which we really need over there because they're at a different worksite away from the main body of the membership."

Council 31 is also working on converting forms and contract documents to a format that will allow Petersen to perform the steward's role of advocating for members and helping them with the grievance process.

Petersen says that work will be a new challenge – but one he's ready to take on.

"I'll be working a lot after hours," he said. "But I became a steward because I wanted to help people and do something that's worthwhile."