

# MOVE

Illinois Council 31—American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—AFL-CIO



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# Rauner's Budget Blockade

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

# Illinois on the Brink

### *Stopping the downward spiral*

#### On the Move

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BY  
ROBERTA LYNCH

**DEMOCRATS  
MADE  
GOOD-FAITH  
EFFORTS TO  
COMPROMISE,  
WHILE RAUNER  
HAS MADE NO  
EFFORT AT ALL.**

The final bell has now rung on the 2017 legislative session, and Illinois has no budget for the third straight year. Granted, legislators can be called back into special session before the new fiscal year and adopt a budget by a three-fifths majority, but such an outcome isn't any too likely.

THE BYZANTINE AND TRULY BIZARRE BUDGET BATTLES OF THESE PAST MONTHS HAVE LEFT everyone from average citizens to astute political observers increasingly irate.

And at long last, the blame is landing right where it belongs—at Bruce Rauner's doorstep. There's growing recognition that Rauner is inflicting immense damage on our state, undermining its economic viability, destabilizing its educational system and tearing at its social fabric.

But to what end? Even Republican legislators fail to make a convincing case for the blockade that's driving Illinois deeper into debt and despair, its bond rating perched on the precipice of junk.

When pressed to explain his ever-shifting set of demands that must be met before he'll sign a budget, the foundation on which every unit of government and private business operates, Rauner remains evasive and cagey.

Is it changes to workers' compensation, probably the most frequently mentioned of his ultimatums? Rauner claims that employer costs to cover workers injured on the job are making the state uncompetitive. But actually our workers' comp costs are in line with other states and there's little evidence that they matter much to business decisions about where to locate.

Is it public employee pensions? Rauner's resurrected that issue, never mind the constitutional pension protection clause and forceful rulings of the Illinois Supreme Court.

Is it a property tax freeze? That's what Rauner likes to talk about, but when Democrats in

the Senate introduced a measure to freeze local property taxes for two years, Rauner trashed the bill, saying the freeze had to be permanent. That would be disastrous for our communities, since local governments rely on property tax revenue to maintain public services from garbage pick-up and policing to road repair and elementary schools.

So why has Rauner seized on the property tax freeze as his rationale for blocking a state budget? Maybe because it polls well. He never bothers to mention the steep cuts it would eventually require to our schools and local governments.

It's those steep cuts that Rauner's game is really about. His insistence on a property tax freeze is his back-door attempt to dismantle the workplace rights of public-sector workers. He thinks that if local governments and school districts don't have enough money to operate, they'll join his crusade to wipe out collective bargaining rights and unilaterally slash the wages and benefits of their employees.

While some of Rauner's longtime cheerleaders on newspaper editorial pages are beginning to doubt his judgment, others still insist that Democrats share blame for the budget debacle. That's dangerously misleading.

The record is very clear: Over the past four months, Senate President John Cullerton engaged in an intensive effort to address Rauner's stated goals through negotiations with Republicans in that chamber. Many, including me, believe Cullerton went too far in that regard. But at the end of the day—when

legislators of both parties had purportedly agreed—Rauner torpedoed the entire effort.

The simple fact is that the Democrats made a true good-faith effort to find common ground, while Rauner made no effort at all. His fundamental goal is unchanged: to permanently drive down the standard of living of working families by obliterating organized labor in our state.

When Rauner first took office, he boasted to a group of legislators that if his agenda was enacted, within four years there would be zero union members left in the state of Illinois. He hasn't yet come close to achieving that goal.

That's the good news.

The bad news is that Rauner is ever more enraged by his failure—and his rage is making him increasingly reckless. Worse, he has untold wealth to use in service of his damaged ego.

We don't have anything close to his riches—and, fortunately for us, we're not driven by blind fury. What we do have is our unity and our determination to defend our rights and fight back for working families.

We can best do that by starting right now to build the kind of electoral army that can knock on every door in every community in our state. That's how we can make sure that every voter understands the damage that Bruce Rauner has caused and the urgent need to evict him from the governor's office.

It's going to take more effort than we've ever put forth, and lots of sheer grit. But when the stakes are so high—the future of our state, of our jobs, of our families—we've got no choice but to give it our all.

# Lobby Day brings disability staffing crisis to light

*Coalition pushes pay raise for disability services workers*

After a coalition of AFSCME members, community disability agency heads, and families of the disabled spent all day on May 10 lobbying legislators and delivered more than 7,000 postcards to Gov. Rauner, the Senate passed Senate Bill 955, legislation to raise wages for disability services workers. The advocacy day also ensured that this critical issue received some much deserved public attention.

THE GROUP GATHERED AT THE STATE CAPITOL TO PUSH FOR HIGHER WAGES FOR DIRECT support personnel (DSPs) who work for private, non-profit agencies that contract with the state of Illinois to serve disabled individuals. These agencies haven't received an increase from the state in nearly a decade—and that's made it extraordinarily difficult to secure fair pay raises for employees.

AFSCME member Essie Martin, a DSP at Ray Graham Association who cares for several disabled men in a Lombard group home, was profiled by the Chicago Tribune on May 24. She said she has done this work for 17 years because she cares so much for the individuals she supports.

## Stunning lack of compassion

More than 34,000 DSPs like Martin assist 27,000 individuals with disabilities in residential settings across Illinois. DSPs are paid below the poverty line for a family—under \$10 an hour, which is less than Wal-Mart pays its entry-level employees. As a result, the staff turnover rate is more than 56 percent. Agencies are unable to retain or hire adequate staff and the large number of vacancies forces DSPs and their frontline supervisors to work excessive amounts of overtime.

SB 955 sponsored by Sen. Heather Steans and House Bill 2960 sponsored by Rep. Robyn Gabel, aim to raise the reimbursement rate the state pays to provider agencies to raise employee pay.

DSP pay is “obscene” writes

Chicago Tribune columnist Rex Huppke. “It reveals, once again, the state of Illinois’ stunning lack of compassion for people with disabilities,” and for the

“Direct support professionals have amazing skills. They deserve much, much better.”

people who care for them.

“After 15 years I make less than \$12 an hour—or less than \$25,000 a year—for full-time work,” AFSCME member Christine Rivera said at the Lobby Day news conference. She works as a DSP in a group home. “I’m really struggling, and like others I am forced to consider leaving work that I am extremely passionate about.”

Gov. Rauner vetoed a bill to raise wages to \$15 an hour last year, claiming that DSP wages should be addressed as part of a comprehensive state budget. However, his FY18 budget plan introduced this year included no increase.

“When Governor Rauner vetoed legislation to raise DSP wages it was an insult to both DSPs and the people we serve,” Rivera said. “Passing this critical legislation would solve the problem of staff shortages and would provide fair compensation for a tough and responsible job.”



DSPs delivered more than 7,000 postcards to Gov. Rauner's office, urging him to support fair pay for disability services workers.



Lindsay Williams, a DSP and vice president of Local 2515 at Milestone in Rockford, speaks with Sen. Steve Stadelman.

## A decade of sidestepping

As a consequence of the state's failure to pay adequate wages, a federal court monitor has found the Illinois Department of Human Services out of compliance with the Ligas consent decree that ensures people with developmental disabilities can access the services and supports they need in the setting

they choose.

“Thousands of positions go unfilled every day because of the abysmal reimbursement rates we've received from the state for a decade,” said Kim Zoeller, executive director of Ray Graham Association. She said that disability services in Illinois are in a downward spiral after years of neglect and sidestepping by lawmakers.

“Daniel leads a vulnerable life,” parent Charlotte Cronin

said of her 31-year-old son who relies on DSPs for support. “He cannot talk. He is incontinent. He has poor motor skills. He has huge behavioral challenges. When Daniel is upset, he bites and scratches. He can really hurt you.”

“Direct support professionals that care for Daniel and others like him have amazing skills. They deserve much, much better.”

# The Rauner Record

More than halfway through his term, Gov. Bruce Rauner is failing at his job and inflicting long-term damage on the people of Illinois.

Illinois had the biggest population loss of any state in the country last year. And far from bringing jobs to our state, Illinois has lost more than 13,000 manufacturing jobs since Bruce Rauner took office.

## As a result of Rauner's budget blockade, the state's unpaid bills recently topped \$13 billion.

- The state still owes millions of dollars in back pay to employees in DHS, DOC and several other agencies.
- \$800 million in late-payment interest penalties have accrued.
- Illinois' unfunded pension liability has risen from \$105 billion to \$130 billion.
- The state's group health insurance program has \$4.2 billion dollars in unpaid claims, jeopardizing the health of more than 370,000 participants.
- Each of the three major credit rating agencies has downgraded Illinois twice.

## Rauner's top aides got big pay increases, while he is trying to impose a four-year wage and step freeze on state employees.

- Trey Childress, deputy governor and now also chief operating officer is paid \$198,000 a year—\$48,000 more than Pat Quinn's deputy governor.
- Education Secretary Beth Purvis is paid \$250,000.
- Former Comptroller turned Deputy Governor Leslie Munger is paid \$138,000 a year.
- Rauner created a new agency, DoIT, and pays the director \$145,000 per year—plus \$200,000 for "professional memberships."

## Rauner has pushed our education system to the brink of catastrophe.

- Higher education has sustained \$2.3 billion in cuts.
- Universities have laid off more than 1,600 people.
- Five of the state's seven public universities have junk ratings on their bonds.
- Illinois is not funding tuition grants for 130,000 low-income college students.
- Illinois ranks 50th in state support for education.
- The state of Illinois owes school districts more than a billion dollars.
- Adult literacy grants have been cut by 50%.

## Rauner's destructive policies are jeopardizing the health, safety and well-being of Illinois citizens.

- Nearly half of all local health departments across Illinois have implemented layoffs, reduced hours or cut services.
- Local governments and municipalities face increased costs from delayed and deferred state payments, causing uncertainty for budgeting and planning.
- More than 100,000 immigrants have lost access to services like citizenship assistance and language access.
- 90% of homeless service providers have been forced to cut clients, services or staff.
- Nearly 30% fewer pregnant women and families with young children have received proven, cost-effective parent coaching and home visiting services.
- No state funding has been provided for domestic violence services for more than a year, putting thousands of lives at risk.
- Illinois' 29 rape crisis centers were forced to lay off staff and cut hours, resulting in waitlists for survivors seeking help.
- 34% fewer women received life-saving breast and cervical cancer screenings.
- 80,000 people in Illinois have lost access to needed mental health services.
- More than 24,000 fewer Illinoisans were admitted to addiction treatment services.
- 21 home health care agencies serving low-income seniors and people with disabilities have closed, reduced service areas or capped intake.
- Services that divert youth from incarceration have been shut down in 24 counties across Illinois.
- As community violence rises, more than 15,000 youth have lost access to safe spaces after school.

# Rauner still blocking budget as May deadline passes

*Illinois credit rating continues to sink*

**W**ith Governor Bruce Rauner still stubbornly holding Illinois hostage to his anti-worker demands—ignoring the damage he’s doing to the state and its people—the General Assembly didn’t pass a budget for the coming fiscal year before its scheduled May 31 adjournment date.

HOUSE SPEAKER MICHAEL MADIGAN SAID THAT THE HOUSE WOULD RETURN WEEKLY FOR “continuous session,” and Senate President John Cullerton made it clear that it is Rauner’s responsibility to do his job and negotiate with legislative leaders.

With the General Assembly now in overtime, a bud-

get or any other legislation with an immediate effective date requires a three-fifths super-majority to pass. That means there will be no budget for the third straight year, unless Republican legislators stand up for their constituents instead of bowing down to the governor.

## Rauner’s budget crisis

Plunging Illinois into chaos, Rauner’s self-created budget crisis is causing myriad problems for working people, students, seniors and those in need, and driving the state’s credit rating to near junk status—all this in the name of Rauner’s so-called “reforms.”

“State employees who have had to deal with Rauner across the bargaining table and at our worksites for more than two years now know only too well that he is reckless, irresponsible and dishonest,” Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman said. “But what’s worse is he is completely indifferent to the harm he inflicts on others.”

A partial list of that harm includes:

- Nearly \$14 billion and growing in unpaid bills and interest owed by state government;
- Public universities starved of resources, forcing layoffs, driving away talented faculty and students, and increasing the likelihood of tuition hikes;
- Health care and human services cut back or eliminated;
- People who care for those with disabilities in community agencies struggling with poverty wages, adding to a workforce crisis that has reached catastrophic proportions;
- An uncertain future for public employees and retirees as Rauner pushes to cut pensions and underfund the state health insurance program, while the court order that

continues state employee paychecks could be overturned at any time.

## Hope only in 2018?

Some good things did pass the General Assembly, like the AFSCME-backed privatization bill that puts rigorous safeguards on outsourcing and the long overdue minimum wage increase, which would raise the minimum wage to \$15 over five years.

They now go to the governor’s desk, where vetoes are likely.

Meanwhile, with Rauner still blocking a budget, the short-term future is bleak—underscoring the importance of defeating Rauner and electing a new governor next year.

## LEGISLATIVE OVERTIME



would increase pay for direct service personnel at state-funded agencies providing disability services.

### SUPPORT: State Employee Pay

HB 1798 sponsored by Rep. Sue Scherer has not yet passed either chamber. The measure would ensure that state employee paychecks continue despite the ongoing budget stand-off.

### SUPPORT: Privatization Accountability

HB 3216 sponsored by Rep. Litesa Wallace and Sen. Andy Manar passed the General Assembly with bipartisan support and goes to the governor’s desk. The legislation aims to prevent the state from privatizing services currently performed by state employees without first meeting rigorous

requirements.

### SUPPORT: Stabilizing City of Chicago Pension

SB 14 sponsored by Sen. John Cullerton and Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie passed both chambers of the General Assembly and is awaiting transmission to the governor. The legislation aims to stabilize funding for Chicago pension systems by, among other things, increasing the City’s contributions to a level sufficient to bring MEABF to 90% funding by the end of 2058.

### OPPOSE: Pension-Cutting Bills

Modeled on SB 16 which passed the Senate, HB 4027 would significantly reduce the pension benefits of state employees, state university employees and teachers. Sponsored by Rep. Jim Durkin, HB 4027 cleared the House Personnel and Pension Committee in late May.

### BLOCKED: Eliminating Union Jobs

AFSCME blocked legislation to take employees out of the union. HB 738 sponsored by Rep. Terri Bryant (and companion bill SB 1752 by Sen. Dale Righter) attempted to take Public Service Administrator (PSA) Option 8N and Internal Security Investigators II—both union positions—out of their bargaining units. And Sen. Karen McConaughay’s SB 1365 attempted to take out of the bargaining unit any DHS PSA or Executive II.

### BLOCKED: Right to Work for Less

AFSCME blocked Rep. Allen Skillicorn’s attempt to enact “right to work” for all Illinois public employees. His bill removed language from state labor law requiring non-members to pay their fair share for union representation.

### BLOCKED: Strike-Breaking

SB 933 sponsored by Sen. Jil Tracy would have removed any restrictions on making—and renewing—emergency or temporary appointments for positions in state government. AFSCME blocked this bill, which would have given the state carte blanche to appoint employees without having to go through the hiring process.

### BLOCKED: Weakening Privatization Standards in Schools

Years ago, AFSCME helped pass a law that says if school districts want to privatize, they have to meet certain criteria, including offering wages and benefits that are comparable to public school employees. AFSCME helped block multiple Rauner-backed bills to alter that law and wipe out comparable benefits packages.

### SUPPORT: \$15 for DSPs

SB 955 sponsored by Sen. Heather Steans and Rep. Robyn Gabel passed the Senate but stalled in the House as the session ended. The legislation

# SHORT REPORTS

## Cook County employees prepare to bargain

THE LEADERS OF THE 15 AFSCME LOCAL UNIONS THAT COLLECTIVELY REPRESENT MORE THAN 5,000 employees of Cook County government are keenly aware of the challenges they'll face as they begin bargaining for a new contract this summer.

One of the most important factors in gaining a fair

contract is the state of county finances. Cook County has struggled for the past several years to deal with declining revenues, and political controversy continues over efforts to raise new revenue to balance the budget.

Last year, faced with a gaping budget hole, the County Board took the bold step of enacting a tax on "sweetened beverages" such as pop, iced tea and sports drinks.

The tax is expected to bring in \$74 million for the

county in the 2017 fiscal year. In 2018 and 2019, it is expected to net about \$220 million annually. According to board president Toni Preckwinkle's administration, without the tax, close to 1,000 positions would have to be cut from the State's Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff's Office, and Health and Hospitals System.

Like cigarette taxes, the sweetened-beverage tax is intended as both a revenue-raising and a public health measure. There is a growing body of

evidence that sugary drinks are a major contributor to obesity, especially among children.

AFSCME supported the sweetened-beverage tax and will oppose its repeal absent a clear alternative revenue measure that can assure that Cook County will be able to continue to provide the public services on which citizens rely, avert layoffs, and treat employees fairly. If the tax is repealed, it will make the bargaining climate for Cook County employees even tougher.

No date has yet been set for the start of negotiations, but preparations are well under way. Bargaining surveys are being circulated to union members and the bargaining committee elected as On the Move went to press.

One top goal that many local leaders have already agreed on is the importance of having tight timelines for negotiations. No one wants to see a rerun of the last round of contract negotiations, which took more than two years to wrap up.

## Council 31 seeks nominations for 2017 Public Service Award

Nearly every workplace has people who go the extra mile to give top-quality public service, day in and day out. There are also those folks who step up at a moment of crisis to rescue those at risk or even save lives when disaster threatens.

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 20th Biennial Convention in Springfield on October 19-21.

"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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Send a completed form, along with a page (or more) describing why the nominee should receive the Public Service Award for outstanding public service, to Mike Perry.

**MAIL:** Mike Perry, AFSCME Council 31, 205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago IL 60601

**EMAIL:** mperry@afscme31.org

**FAX:** (312) 861-0979

Nominations are due **September 5**.



### Average CEO makes \$13 million a year

THE AFL-CIO'S PAYWATCH.ORG, A COMPREHENSIVE ONLINE DATABASE TRACKING CEO PAY, showed that the average CEO of an S&P 500 company made 347 times more money than the average rank-and-file worker last year.

Not surprisingly, as CEO pay for major U.S. companies steadily rises, income inequality and the outsourcing of good jobs are on the rise too.

In contrast, the AFL-CIO reported that inflation-adjusted wages for workers have been stagnant for 50 years. The average non-supervisory worker was paid \$37,600 in 2016, when the typical CEO was paid \$13 million.

"This report provides further proof that the greed of corporate CEOs is driving America's income inequality crisis," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

Last year, Mondelēz International closed its Oreo cookie line at the Nabisco factory in Chicago. While CEO Irene Rosenfeld made more than \$16.7 million in 2016—about \$8,000 per hour—the company sent 600 family-sustaining jobs from Chicago to Mexico, where workers face poor labor and safety standards.

"Too often, corporations

see workers as costs to be cut, rather than assets to be invested in," Trumka said. "It's shameful that CEOs can make tens of millions of dollars and still destroy the livelihoods of the hard-working people who make their companies profitable."

"I loved working at Nabisco, and I took pride in the work I did to make a quality product," said Michael Smith, one of the hundreds laid off in March 2016. "It's not as if the company isn't profitable. The Oreo alone brings in \$2 billion in annual revenue, and the CEO makes more in a day than most of us made in a year."

"The system is rigged," Trumka said. "Workers ought to get a bigger share of the wealth they produce."

### Laid off WIU employees win at arbitration

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN HIT HARD BY THE STATE'S BUDGET STANDOFF.

Employees were forced to take six furlough days between March and June. Due to graduation, students moving out and preparations for the summer, that's typically a very busy time for the buildings and grounds workers represented by AFSCME Local 417.

Then, just weeks after finding out about the furlough days, 47 building services

workers (BSWs) lost their jobs as part of campus-wide layoffs affecting more than 100 employees.

"We realized that because of the financial situation, with declining enrollment and no state budget, it would be very difficult to block the layoffs," said Renee Nestler, AFSCME

representative. "But members were really perplexed as to how the work was going to get done with such a drastically reduced workforce."



A few days before the layoffs took effect, AFSCME members saw a group of stu-

dent workers clock in. They soon realized that these students were going to be doing their work.

The local union found out that the students would be working full-time for six weeks. So the union filed a grievance, arguing that the university was violating civil service rules.

According to these rules, employees cannot be displaced by student workers. In addition, a provision in the Local 417 contract prohibits the employer from subcontracting any work that would result in layoffs.

"We wanted the same number of our members to be made whole as if they'd worked for as long as that group of student workers," Nestler said.

"Management disagreed with our assessment. They said they didn't believe they had violated the law or contract. So the union took the case to arbitration."

The arbitrator ruled in favor of AFSCME, finding that the university violated the collective bargaining agreement when it assigned student workers to perform employee

work while BSWs were on lay-off. The parties were directed to identify the employees impacted by the violation and determine the appropriate level of compensation needed to mitigate it.

### Labor Board orders NIU to bargain in good faith

AN ILLINOIS EDUCATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD HEARING OFFICER HAS FOUND that Northern Illinois University violated state labor law when it unilaterally increased parking permit fees for employees without negotiating with the union.

In the midst of contract negotiations with AFSCME Local 1890 that have been ongoing since February of last year, NIU imposed an increase in parking permit fees for all employees. It ignored repeated communications from AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Sara Dorner alerting the university to its duty to bargain over this change.

"Since the fee increase affected the bargaining unit employees economically, management was not supposed to implement the increase, but they went ahead and did it anyway," said Laura Harris, an office manager at NIU and a member of the bargaining committee. "It was a slap in the face because it was like they were saying, 'We're not recognizing your union.'"

Administrative law judge Nick Gutierrez ordered the university to cease and desist from refusing to bargain in good faith, making unilateral modifications to any terms or conditions of employment without bargaining, and from further violating the workers' rights under law.

He ordered further that NIU rescind the parking fee increases and reimburse any AFSCME-represented employees who purchased permits at the increased rates.

"It's a great win for us," Harris said. "This recognition from the law judge puts NIU on notice that they need to take us seriously and it feels great being able to tell our 650 members that we have your back. We fought back and we got this repealed."

AFSCME Local 1890 is still in contract negotiations, which are now being facilitated by a federal mediator. NIU can appeal the ALJ's decision to the full labor board.



Roxane Boutte

# On the

## AFSCME members work every day for the public good. We never quit.

himself.

Our union makes it more like a team. Management opens up to our ideas and suggestions. Before it was us and them. Now we're getting a whole lot more accomplished with each other.

### Roxane Boutte

SERGEANT, COOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT | AFSCME LOCAL 3692

Working in the women's division of the county jail is challenging because the women are dealing with being separated from their children, prior abuse, and serious mental health issues.

But as a woman, I'm able to mentor the inmates. I help motivate them to have a plan upon release so they don't fall back into the same lifestyle or make the same mistakes that landed them here.

I encourage them to make sure the people around them have the same goals that they have. You are essentially the company that you keep and sometimes we have to leave people behind in order to make better choices in life.

When I see former inmates who are doing well out in the world, that's rewarding. I see women who come in and really get themselves together. When it's time for them to go, they look and feel better and are in a different state of mind.

It's very empowering to be able to make a difference.

As a union member, I have a say in the change of policies and can incorporate my own ideas and actually be heard. It's exciting fighting for what's right, improving conditions for all members and making sure that we are being treated fairly and with dignity as workers.

We have a voice in change.

### Armando Tejada

ANIMAL CARE AIDE, CHICAGO ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL | AFSCME LOCAL 2912

You never know what's going to come in our doors.

I've always worked with wildlife, I used to be a zoo keeper and I also worked with wildlife in Africa. I thought I was giving that up when I took this job, but we see everything: snakes, alligators, pigs, deer, opossums, raccoons, migratory birds.

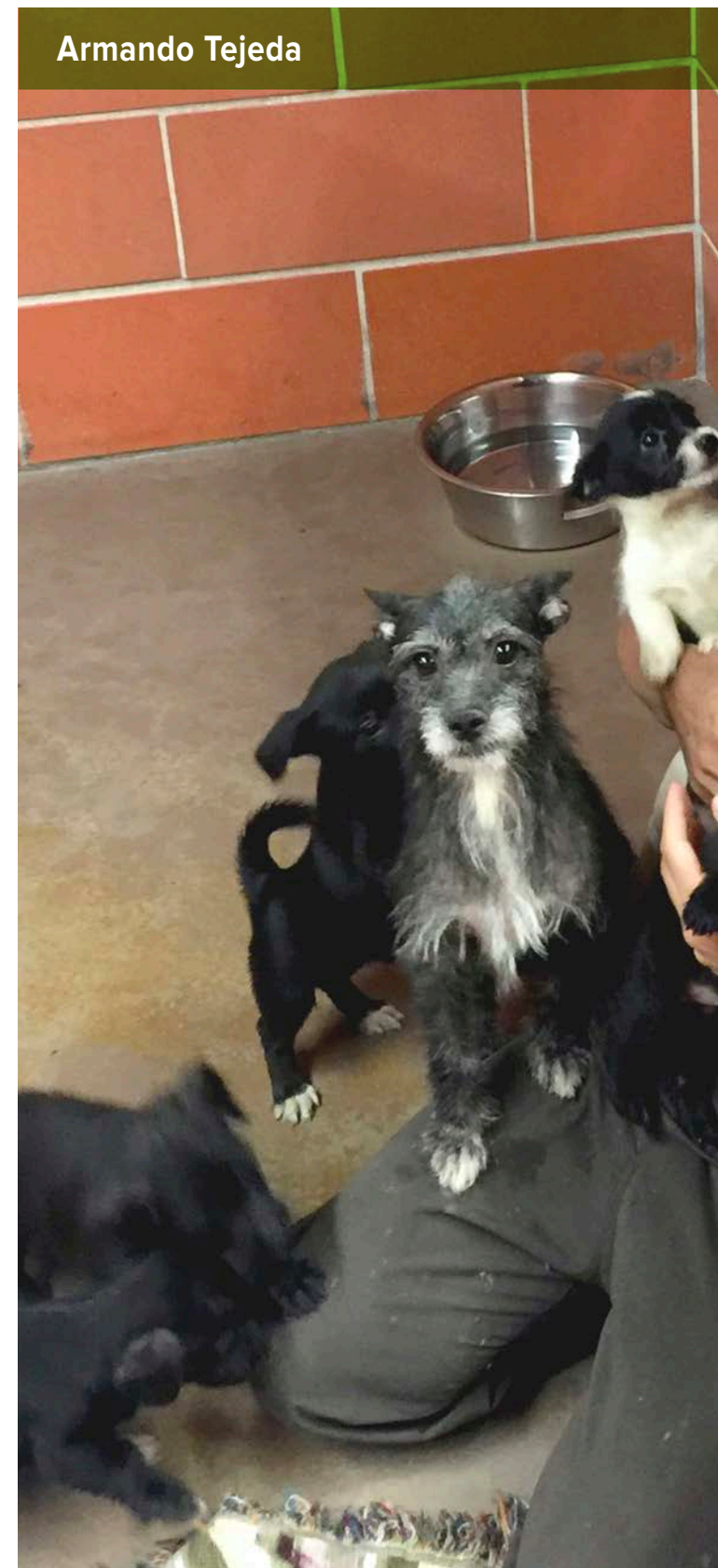
Our awesome vets can treat almost any kind of animal. We also work with organizations that rehabilitate and release animals.

We primarily get cats and dogs. In the summer we easily get 40 dogs in a day. Sometimes we'll have 60 cats come in from one home.

One of the hardest things for us is how the public perceives animal euthanasia. We have extremely low euthanasia rates for a city shelter, but sometimes it's the best thing for an animal that has bitten a child or has extreme medical issues. It can't live its life in a cage.

We get dogs who are victims of cruelty. They come in skin and bones. They are terrified. Then you slowly see them come out of their shell. First the dog won't even eat in front of me, and then all of a sudden he wags his tail.

Every now and then I see one of the former cruelty cases having fun at the dog park with his new owner. The dog will recognize me, jump up on me and start licking me. That whole week I'm energized. We are part of a really good thing.



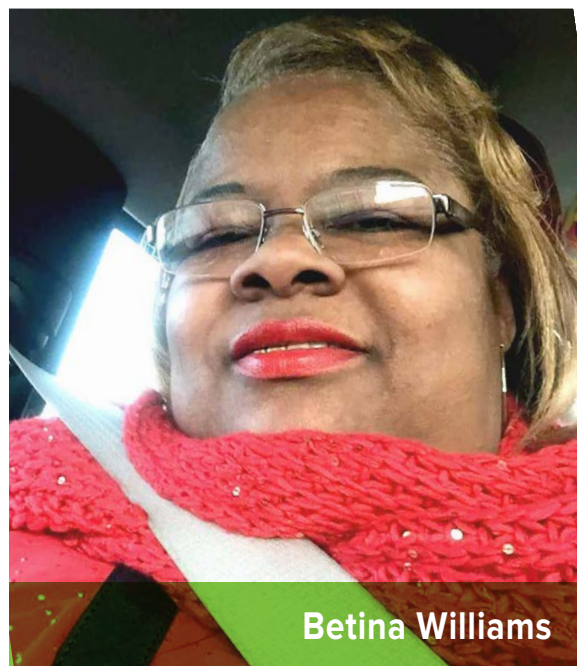
Armando Tejada

### Betina Williams

BUS DRIVER, PEORIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS | AFSCME LOCAL 3716

I started driving a school bus almost 16 years ago. I safely transport children of all ages and young adults with special needs to and from school, sports, work and other activities. They all call me Miss B.

If you establish a rapport with the kids in the first week, then the rest of the school year goes pretty good. I'm not mean, but I'm strict. They



Betina Williams

respect me and I respect them—because it works both ways on my bus.

I had a 9th grader a few years ago. He wasn't the best-dressed kid on the bus. Around Christmas time he didn't come back with anything new. My bus monitor and I worked together to get him a new shirt, shoes, cologne, and 15 dollars to get a haircut. We put it all in a new backpack.

When he got on the bus the next day, he looked cleaned up, smelling good. He was so excited and he just walked up like a peacock. Everybody was happy for him. He was so proud, and that made me feel good because he felt good about



# Job

## Day for the

### Martha Stroger

YOUTH CARE WORKER, MARYVILLE ACADEMY | AFSCME LOCAL 55

We help troubled young girls who are pregnant and new mothers learn to be good mothers to their babies.

Every girl that comes to us needs so much love and they didn't get that love at home. That's why they ended up at our facility. We teach them how to love, how to show love, and we give them love. It's not just a paycheck. We really care.

I've been here 24 years. For the first six months I cried every day. I wanted to quit. I came from a family of love and I didn't know about all the molestation, sexual harassment and abuse that was out there. It was like I was from a different world. I



Martha Stroger

couldn't believe how these kids were living.

I did a lot of praying and thought God put me here for a reason so I'm going to do the best I can. I work with a lot of good people so I stayed. Every year got better and better.

I can't change the world. But I help these girls believe in themselves and believe their past is not their future.

I always tell my girls, set your goals. Don't allow anyone to discourage you. Be positive. Don't abuse yourself and don't allow other people to abuse you.

I love our union. I love being part of it because I really think I'm making a difference.

### Robert Nehring

SITE TECHNICIAN, LAKE MURPHYSBORO STATE PARK | AFSCME LOCAL 1048

I love my job. I love being outside all the time. I don't like being cooped up. We do a little bit of everything—painting, maintenance, cleaning, operating equipment. Basically maintaining the park.

I love interacting with the people here, campers, hikers, people renting shelters for birthday parties. It's wonderful.

I have worked for the state for 14 years. I used to work in the Department of Corrections, but used the Upward Mobility Program to move into the park system.

About a year ago I was one of the seven people who got laid off from the World Shooting Complex, but I had enough seniority to transfer to Lake Murphysboro State Park.

I became a union steward because I didn't think we were being treated right when everything happened at the shooting complex and I wanted to educate myself. If it wasn't for the union and the Upward Mobility Program, I wouldn't be where I am today.

It's unbelievable how many people come up to us and thank us for keeping the parks looking as good as we do despite the budget mess.

I love that people actually take notice that we're not just there to get a paycheck, but to serve the people of Illinois. I've got a great job.

### Dana Oltmanns

REGISTERED NURSE, LOGAN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT | AFSCME LOCAL 1277

I wear a lot of hats. I coordinate multiple programs: Women, Infants and Children (WIC), family case management, and breastfeeding programs and task forces. I'm also a certified lactation consultant and I see clients as a nurse.

At the public health department, our ultimate goal is to help a family be healthier, have better family dynamics, and reduce the risk of disease, abuse or drug use through prevention, better nutrition and family support.

My favorite thing is working with kids and with breastfeeding moms. Breastfeeding prevents numerous health problems, from cancer to obesity. It promotes health, reduces medical costs, reduces obesity, heart disease and diabetes in the babies and decreases health risks in moms too.



Dana Oltmanns

Our families rely on us. It's hard seeing some of the situations that we see and realizing that you can't help with everything that they need. You have to develop a protective shield and accept that you can't do everything.

We formed a union here because it gives us job security and allows us to work with the administration on an equal level. We're all here to do the same thing: help the community.

I started here when I was 25 and now I'm 57. I see children I helped who are now parents, raising their own kids—and they are so proud. It's nice to see how I've made an impact in their lives.



Robert Nehring

# Inmate rehabilitation requires resources

*AFSCME members help reduce recidivism but need more support*

Part of the mission of the Illinois Department of Corrections is to promote positive change in offender behavior. But achieving that goal requires much more staff and funding than our state has committed.

AFSCME LOCAL 3585 MEMBER MELISSA JOHNSON IS A CORRECTIONAL COUNSELOR AT Illinois River Correctional Facility. She is the one of only eight counselors on staff assigned to programs that aim to change offender behavior and reduce recidivism.

"I am passionate about my work because I feel I am making a difference," Johnson said. "Clinical service programming

and continuing education are the key components to reducing recidivism. That's not just me talking; the numbers speak for themselves."

Cognitive-behavioral treatment programs are proven to reduce recidivism by 25 to 35 percent. Preventing inmates from re-offending means saving taxpayer money on incarceration and ensuring safer communities and healthier families.

A program Johnson runs called *Thinking for a Change* has a nationwide track record of success. "It gets to root causes of the inmates' behaviors that got them into prison, and helps them change the way they think so they can make better choices when they get out," Johnson said.

## Lack of funding holding us back

STEVE HOWERTER WORKS alongside Johnson as a correctional counselor at Illinois River, but his job is much different. He and several other counselors help a caseload of nearly 500 inmates each with their various needs while incarcerated.

On a given day, Howerter might help a prisoner deal with family issues, notify an inmate

of a death in the family, or help assign inmates to jobs in the facility.

Howerter believes programs to prepare inmates to return to their communities are critical, but they're "not something the public cares enough about to push for investment."

"To the public, it's 'out of sight out of mind. We don't care as long as they're locked up,'" he said. "But 97 percent of prisoners are going home someday and they won't know how to cope with it."

## Education and job readiness

A 2013 RAND CORPORATION study showed that participation in academic and vocational education while incarcerated is associated with a more than 40 percent reduction in recidivism.

AFSCME Local 3605 member A.J. Schmid, a teacher at Shawnee Correctional Center for 18 years, says underfunding of educational programs is made worse by the state's budget stalemate.

Illinois prisons offer remedial education classes, GED classes, college degrees and an array of vocational programs where prisoners learn valuable skills like metal-working, welding and upholstery. The demand for classes is strong. But there are simply not enough teachers.

"A certified welder makes very good money, and a good job like that could help keep them out of prison," Schmid said. "But even if they are just going to be able to help their son with math when they get out, that's going to build self-esteem, which can help put them on the right path."

## A simple solution

IF YOU TALK TO ANY STAFF working in rehabilitation programs, they will tell you the solution is simple: more money, more programs, more teachers, and more staff. But simple doesn't mean easy.

"It's kind of overwhelming: I'm one person and there's a huge demand," Melissa Johnson said. "I face daily challenges with meeting the needs of the population. Of the 11 programs that I run, each one has a waiting list between 130 and 250 offenders."

When the research is so clear on the positive effects of supportive programming—including better behavior and safer conditions within the prison itself—it's hard to understand why the state won't make smart investments.

Johnson said she often poses this question to skeptical friends and family: "Wouldn't you much rather give them the tools to be a taxpaying citizen than to pay your tax dollars for them to sit in a prison cell?"

"Most of these men have an 'out' date. If you give them nothing in prison, you can expect the same behavior when they get out," Johnson said. "I'm not so naïve to believe it will affect everybody, but with guys that really want to change their lives, I see a difference in them from Day One."



# Court to rule on Rauner's claim of bargaining impasse

*State employees remain on the alert*



“State employees have refused to let Rauner bully them into submission.”

When AFSCME announced in December that members would vote at some 700 worksites across the state on whether to authorize their Bargaining Committee to call a strike, media attention focused intensively on the possibility of a total shutdown of state government.

In response, the Rauner Administration ramped up its pressure on employees, attempting to frighten them into voting against a strike. But when the voting concluded in February and all the ballots were tallied, a resounding 81% voted to authorize the strike.

A few weeks later, as local unions were laying the groundwork to conduct a successful strike, the Appellate Court issued its ruling, granting AFSCME's request to stay the Labor Board finding of impasse and blocking Rauner's efforts to impose his harsh terms on state employees while the case is pending.

## Ready for the next round

NOW THE UNION'S APPEAL IS before that court for a full hearing. Oral arguments will likely be in the fall, and a decision may come at the end of this year or early in 2018.

“If we lose at the Appellate Court, we'll appeal to the Illinois Supreme Court,” Lynch said, “and seek to keep the stay in place.”

“AFSCME members need to remain prepared for any outcome, but I am hopeful that we can prevail.”

“State employees have refused to let Rauner bully them into submission,” Lynch concluded. “We've demonstrated what can be accomplished when we stand together and fight back. We're not going to stop now.”

**W**ith the fate of their contract now pending in court, AFSCME members in state government who have battled nonstop for two years are finally getting a respite from Bruce Rauner's obsessive assaults on their standard of living and fundamental job rights.

STATE LAW REQUIRES THAT A NEW COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT BE NEGOTIATED when a governor first comes into office, so negotiations for the 38,000 AFSCME-represented state employees got underway in early 2017. It didn't take long to realize that Rauner wasn't interested in reaching a contract settlement on any terms but his own—which would have cost employees thousands of dollars.

For more than a year the AFSCME Bargaining Committee made every effort to find common ground—even eventually offering a four-year wage freeze. But Rauner barely budged from his initial demands. On January 6, 2016,

he walked out on negotiations altogether, making the false claim that the parties were at impasse.

## Pulling out all the stops

“I'VE NEVER SEEN A BARGAINING committee work harder to reach an agreement than this one did,” said Council 31 Executive Director, Roberta Lynch, who served as the chief negotiator.

In addition to dealing with the complexities of negotiating strategy, the Bargaining Committee also led an intensive grassroots mobilization that included a legislative battle to change state labor law, numer-

ous worksite pickets, regional rallies, community outreach, and a massive multi-union rally at the state capitol.

AFSCME challenged Rauner's claim of impasse at the state labor board. But after months of hearings, the Board—which is appointed by Rauner—upheld his claim and he moved swiftly to try to impose his terms on employees, including a 100% increase in health care costs.

The union appealed the board's decision in state appellate court and sought a stay to block his efforts to impose his

vote by the membership.

## Public support stays strong

WITH RAUNER WAGING A NON-stop media war attacking state workers, AFSCME fought back with a statewide TV ad campaign that featured state workers speaking directly about their work and their lives. Polls consistently found that despite Rauner's lies and distortions, public support for state workers remained strong.

“Thanks to outreach by

Polls consistently found that despite Rauner's lies and distortions, public support for state workers remains strong.

terms. But without any certainty as to what the court would do, the Bargaining Committee decided the only recourse was to prepare to go out on strike—which would first require a strike authorization

local unions in their communities and our media campaign at the state level, we've been able to get the real facts out to our fellow Illinoisans,” said Council 31 Public Affairs Director Anders Lindall.

# RETIREE NOTES



## Retiree Spotlight: Park Ranger Walt Garrison

WALT GARRISON RETIRED LAST AUGUST AFTER NEARLY 40 YEARS SERVING THE STATE OF ILLINOIS. A member of AFSCME Local 1048, Garrison spent his public service career at the Wayne Fitzgerald State Recreation Area. Starting out as a maintenance worker, Garrison was a

park ranger for 13 years and ended his career as an assistant site superintendent.

Garrison's favorite part of his job was dealing with the public and working outdoors every day. The 1300-acre Fitzgerald Park overlooks Rend Lake Reservoir. With 245 camping sites, it's a gem in Southern Illinois, perfect for hunting, fishing, swimming, birding and hiking.

"I was in the campground a lot and got to deal with people from all over the country, even people from around the world," Garrison said.

### Budget woes

ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING experiences of his career, Garrison said, came just before he retired. The state had no budget in place to allow for maintenance on equipment, facilities and buildings.

"As we know, our governor is not an ally for working people. But really, without a budget I just don't understand

how they expect these parks to operate," Garrison said.

"The state is pushing tourism but they don't maintain parks the way they should be," he said. "There should be upgrades for water hydrants, electrical work, shower buildings."

### A dream realized

GARRISON HAD WANTED TO BE a park ranger since high school and he feels fortunate to have achieved his dream.

"I got to work the job that I wanted to do all along. I got to do something that I really enjoyed, be outdoors and be around people."

Some of those people are co-workers who remain close friends—"the camaraderie was really unique"—and are now enjoying their retirement together.

### The union difference

"WHEN I STARTED, WE weren't covered under a col-

## State Plan Shifts to Aetna

AFSCME retirees in the State of Illinois group health plan who have Cigna as their insurance carrier were switched by the state to Aetna on May 31, 2017. Illinois' contract with Cigna expired, and the state chose Aetna in a competitive bidding process. If you received a letter regarding this change, your insurance plan costs and benefits remain the same. But under Aetna's network, your current physicians may not be in-network. You can check if your physicians are in-network under Aetna by calling 855-339-9731 or visiting [aetnastateofillinois.com](http://aetnastateofillinois.com).

lective bargaining agreement," Garrison said.

"Things were a lot different back then. They didn't have to offer overtime based on seniority, people hadn't received raises, and management treated you like you were a second-class citizen."

Garrison said being part of a union is critical for job security, to fight off privatization of jobs, for decent health insurance and for a worker's ability to retire.

"I really enjoyed my career," Garrison said. "Not everybody can say that they can get up every day and enjoy going to work."

## Rauner undercuts program for vulnerable seniors

GOV. BRUCE RAUNER HAS PROPOSED CREATING A PROGRAM CALLED THE COMMUNITY Reinvestment Program, which will cut \$120 million from the Community Care Program that allows seniors to stay safe and healthy in their own homes.

Rauner's plan risks leaving 36,000 Illinois seniors with nowhere to turn but a nursing home for care.

In response, Illinois House Democrats are pushing bills to preserve community-based services for the elderly—HB 1424, sponsored by State Representative Anna Moeller, and SB 399, sponsored by State Senator Dan Biss.

"We are fed up with Gov. Rauner's attacks on senior citizens," said Barbara Franklin, President of the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans.

"That is why we are standing with our allies in support of House Bill 1424 to ensure that the Community Care Program continues to keep elderly Illinoisans in their homes as long as possible. Every senior deserves to receive the full care that they need."

## A sad day for affordable health care

ON MAY 4, THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSED HR 1628, WHICH WOULD REPEAL and purportedly replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The bill allows states to waive insurance protections for pre-existing conditions and removes caps that protect older individuals from inflated insurance costs. The legislation also cuts funding for Medicaid and endangers the solvency of the critical program by also cutting the high-earner Medicare tax.

Every Republican Congressman in Illinois voted yes for HR 1628, despite the fact that there was no budget analysis available. Instead of analyzing the bill and listening to constituents, those Illinois congressmen dodged town halls and ignored thousands of phone calls from constituents worried about losing their health care.

This harmful bill is currently under consideration in the Senate where Illinois Senators Duckworth and Durbin are working for its defeat.



Sub-Chapter 87 Hillsboro (top) and Sub-Chapter 77 Galesburg members gather together.

# AFSCME Council 31: Class of 2017

*Union helps inspire students to achieve their dreams*

## Illinois student wins AFSCME Family Scholarship

ANDREW ARCHUNDIA, SON OF AFSCME LOCAL 2854 MEMBER VICTORIA ARCHUNDIA, WAS one of 11 nationwide winners of the AFSCME International Family Scholarship. He will attend Elmhurst College this fall.

"I grew up in an immigrant family who made an immense sacrifice to make sure that my brother and I have a better life," Andrew said. "Through my family I have learned that with hard work and resilience I can reach my goals."

Victoria Archundia has worked for the state for 20 years. She taught her son the value of union representation and public service. In addition to maintaining excellent grades that landed him on the honor roll for four years at Lyons Township High School, Andrew volunteers in his community.

"Andrew has been listening to the advice of his family: Focus on studies and prioritize family, work and his community," Victoria said. "That's why he's a volunteer. He wants to



give back."

"I feel very fortunate," Victoria said of her career and union membership. "Being an AFSCME member means I'm treated with dignity and respect in the workplace. The union plays a crucial role in my life."

Andrew said a good job has a "domino effect. It benefits everybody around us, even our extended family." And he plans to follow in his mother's footsteps.

"I intend to get a good job, serve my community and be part of a union like my mom," he said. "I believe that working together we can become a better society and provide a decent life for all workers."

## 2017 Larry Marquardt Scholarship Winners

*The first executive director of Council 31, Larry Marquardt, dedicated his life to improving the lives of working people. In his honor, two AFSCME Council 31 members—or members' children—win an academic scholarship each year.*

### Nicole Eatmon is grateful to her grandmother, AFSCME Local 2858 member Mary Gardner, for helping shape her future.

"IF IT WASN'T FOR MY GRANDMOTHER I DON'T KNOW WHERE I WOULD BE," NICOLE SAID. "She told me that she doesn't care what my grades are as long as I'm trying my best—and I decided to do my best."

A graduate of Crete-Monee High School, Nicole will attend Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia. She is a Posse Foundation Scholar, part of a program set up by the college to aid students with extraordinary potential.

Nicole plans to be a civil rights attorney.

"I've always been passionate, being an African-American woman, about women's rights

and civil rights. The director of Posse said [he aims] to shorten the gap between what the world is supposed to be like and what it is now. I guess we're pushing for the same goal."



Gardner is a Human Services Casework Manager with the State of Illinois.

Nicole said her grandmother has "always been a hard worker. She talks about what she's gotten through in order to get to the place where she is right now. I admire her drive to help people.

"My grandmother talked about coming up against discrimination, against people talking down to her, believing she didn't deserve the job. The union ensures that people like my grandma get all the benefits and promotions they deserve. No ifs, ands or buts about it."

### Olivia Mullenax wants to break down barriers to equality.

OLIVIA IS A GRADUATE OF GLENBARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL AND WILL ATTEND the University of Minnesota this fall.

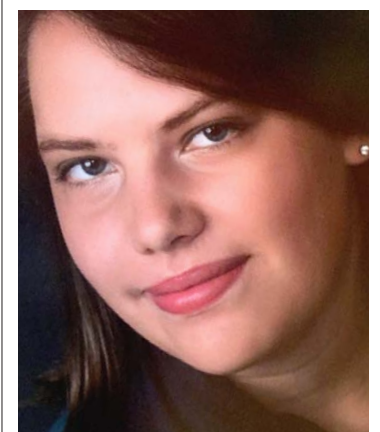
She's the president of her school's Women's Empowerment Society and a member of Prism, the student group for LGBTQ rights. She is also the recipient of the Livingston Human Relations Award, which honors students who have demonstrated real concern for others and promoted positive diverse relationships.

"Workers deserve to have a voice," she said. "And unions are a way to empower its members in an age where big business seems to dictate."

Karen Mullenax, member of AFSCME Local 1334 and an administrative assistant at Forest Glen Elementary school, is proud of her daughter's passion for workers' rights. She says it's due in part to her family's union background.

"I've seen the benefits of

what a union can do for equality, job security and representation," Karen said. "I'd like to see the day that my daughters have equality in the workforce. My girls are capable of doing



everything. There's nothing that should stop them."

And Olivia has learned from her mother that a union is a great equalizer.

"My mom's union makes sure that her efforts are protected and allows her to continue excelling at work. Everyone deserves these kinds of opportunities, and [that's what happens when] individual workers come together to negotiate and advocate for themselves."

*AFSCME members and their families are eligible for several scholarships to help them pursue their educational goals at colleges, universities, labor programs and technical schools. For more information on available scholarships, visit [AFSCME31.org/union-scholarships](http://AFSCME31.org/union-scholarships).*

# ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



Monica Skelley, Amanda Young, Sue Bishop and Kathy Collett helped bargain a ten-year agreement for Decatur Public Library employees.

“We walked in with respect for each other and what we do. It’s better to work together because we are all here to serve the public.”

## Rare 10-year agreement for Decatur library local

MEMBERS OF AFSCME LOCAL 268 SECURED A UNIQUE 10-YEAR AGREEMENT WITH the Decatur Public Library and City Council that will protect against rising health care costs for employees.

Library Chapter Chair Kathy

Collett said that when management came to them with the 10-year proposal, the union bargaining committee was a little shocked by the request.

“We were hesitant because everything would be set in concrete for 10 years,” Collett said. “But we also saw the benefits to it.”

The new contract—which has an insurance and wage reopener halfway through—

includes raises totaling more than 15 percent and no increases in health care contributions for current employees. Members also received two signing bonuses.

The library board wanted to make its sick leave policy stricter. In exchange for agreeing to the new language, the bargaining committee negotiated an increase in personal time.

Collett is a junior cataloguer who has worked her way up the library promotional chain for 25 years. She credits the union for enabling her to build a career that allowed her to support her son as a single mother.

“I like the work,” Collett said. “You meet a lot of different people. And I love books and movies. We provide a lot of services and I like how the patrons

make your job fun. It’s a neat place.”

Collett said the key to negotiating a good contract is compromise and respect.

“We walked in with respect for each other and what we do. We went back and forth until we had something that was doable for both sides,” she said. “It’s better to work together because we are all here to serve the public.”

The AFSCME bargaining committee was led by Council 31 Staff Representative Randy Hellman and included Collett, Monica Skelley, Sue Bishop and Amanda Young.

## Rockford Housing Authority employees gain pay raise

AFSCME LOCAL 1058-A SETTLED A ONE-YEAR CONTRACT WITH THE ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY (RHA) which included bringing formerly privatized properties back under public management and adding five full-time positions to the bargaining unit.

Chapter Chair Elias Soria, a case manager with the housing authority since 1999, said that negotiations occurred amidst major leadership changes at both the agency and city level.

“We decided to negotiate a one-year deal and then return to the table to negotiate with new RHA leadership,” Soria said. “We won a 2.5 percent cost-of-living raise for the year and a 1.5 percent step increase with a

longevity increase for everyone, and a 1.5 percent bonus for members who are beyond the step system.”

But the biggest victory for the local was bringing back one of multiple housing authority properties that the city outsourced to private for-profit companies, including Gorman & Associates. The pattern of outsourcing has alarming consequences for both staff and services.

“Gorman is nonunion. If the RHA outsources a program or a complex, we have to apply for positions we were already working,” Soria said. “We lose our union membership or we lose our jobs. It’s a rough wake-up call for us.”

Services for residents suffer as well. Gorman received poor scores from HUD for Brewington Oaks, a high rise complex it previously took over from the Rockford Housing Authority, Soria said. Gorman promised the city that the building would continue to perform at the same level or better, but those promises were broken.

RHA employees were informed that they could bid to take back management of the high-rise and succeeded. The local is eager to bring the property back up to the highest standards.

The difference in quality between for-profit and public management is huge, Soria said.

“Sometimes outsiders come

*continued on next page*



AFSCME Local 1058-A settled a one-year contract with the Rockford Housing Authority, bringing formerly privatized properties back under public management and adding five full-time positions to the bargaining unit.

# Rockford school bus drivers ratify contract

*AFSCME members block privatization*

**B**us drivers at Rockford Public Schools District 205, members of AFSCME Local 1275, overwhelmingly voted to ratify a new union contract with school district management on May 26, blocking the board's privatization scheme and ensuring that school bus operations will remain in public hands.

AFTER REFUSING TO NEGOTIATE WITH ITS EMPLOYEES FOR MONTHS ON END, THE ROCKFORD SCHOOL BOARD VOTED ON MAY 9 TO NEGOTIATE INSTEAD WITH A FOR-PROFIT COMPANY, OHIO-BASED FIRST STUDENT. THE BOARD WAS MOVING RAPIDLY TO OUTSOURCE SCHOOL BUS OPERATIONS AND WAS ALSO SEEKING BIDS TO OUTSOURCE NUTRITION SERVICES.

Although bargaining sessions have continued over the past months, it's been very clear that the board had no intention of moving off its previous position on health insurance and wages.

Given the very limited time before which the outsourcing deal would move forward, a strong majority of school bus drivers wanted to formally accept the board's terms so that their union contract would be in

place. Under state law, privatization is barred when a union contract is in effect.

While some employees will pay higher costs for health

"AFSCME members have made it clear all along that we are ready to bargain in good faith and make compromises," said Ashley Smith, a school bus driver and president of Local 1275. "We decided to ratify this contract to ensure we keep bus operations in the hands of the people and continue providing excellent services for Rockford's children."

As On the Move went to press, the board was expected to ratify the union contract at its next meeting where they would also vote on privatizing with First Student.

## Refusing to budge

THE BOARD IMPOSED ITS

**"These three locals have been unwavering in their insistence that RPS employees deserve fair treatment and a decent standard of living."**

insurance in this three-year agreement, it also raises wages. And most importantly, this contract should put to rest all discussion of outsourcing bus service to a private operator.

"last, best and final offer"—which included hikes in health insurance costs—in January. In the months since, school employees of AFSCME Locals

*continued from previous page*

into town thinking they have a better formula but they come out short," he said. "They come here to make a quick buck and get the heck out."

On the other hand, public service workers care about the outcome long-term because they are part of the community.

"We have a personal mandate to make lives better for the tenants. We respect them," Soria said. "We are part of Rockford and we want to make Rockford proud."

Council 31 Staff Repre-

sentative Ed Sadlowski led the Bargaining Committee, along with Soria, Garry Cacciapaglia (Local 1058 president), Christina Loudermilk (vice president), Monique Jones (secretary), Lynn Feirn, Lucy Burton, and Taip Asani.

## Massac County public works wins raises, protects jobs

NEGOTIATIONS FOR MEMBERS OF AFSCME LOCAL 2321 IN MASSAC COUNTY WERE COMPLETED IN JUST TWO MEETINGS.

The members won raises and protected jobs from potential privatization.

Steve Pritchett, president of the local, and AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Kevan Plumlee negotiated the three-year agreement, which included a seven-percent raise over the life of the contract.

A member since 2011, Pritchett does a little bit of everything for the Massac County highway department.

"I'm a laborer, a truck driver, a mechanic helper," he said. "There are just 10 of us so we all pitch in."

Pritchett said this round of bargaining was similar to many in the past. Management came in with wage increases as low as they could and the union negotiated to bring them closer to their own goals.

"I felt like it was a fair contract and everybody else did too, for the times," Pritch-



692 (paraprofessionals), 1275 (bus drivers) and 3210 (nutrition services) diligently attempted to negotiate fair wages and affordable health care for their families, but the board refused to budge.

In an effort to get the school district back to the bargaining table, AFSCME filed an unfair labor practice charge, challenging the claim that negotiations were at impasse, and nearly 1,000 school employees went on a three-day strike in March.

But after the strike, despite Superintendent Ehren Jarrett's assurances to parents that the district would bargain in good faith, RPS never altered its offer even while union members put forth significant compromises.

## Fighting for a better future

"MEMBERS OF THESE THREE locals have been unwavering in their insistence that RPS employees deserve fair treatment and a decent standard of living," said AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch. "But RPS—under the direction of the right-wing forces who have taken control of the School Board—has proven to be an especially ruthless and heartless employer."

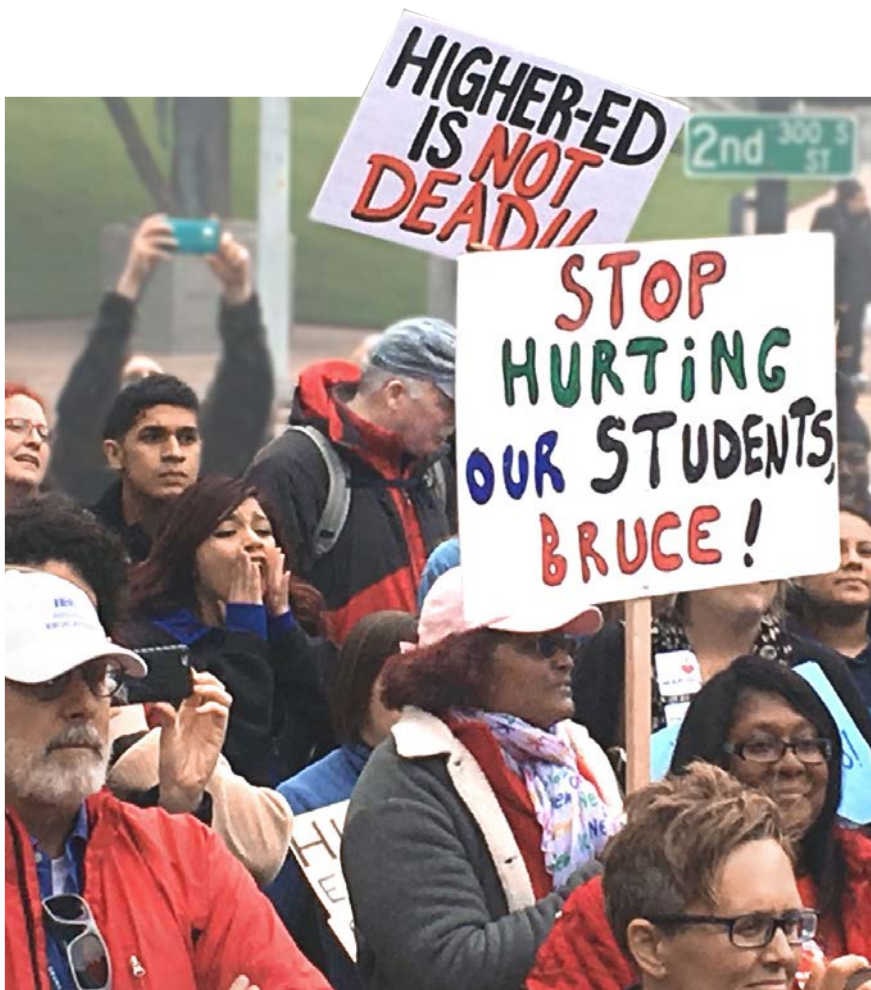
The agreement only pertains to school bus drivers. No agreement has been reached for the paraprofessionals or nutrition services staff. The two bargaining committees continue to meet with management with the assistance of a federal mediator.

"We must keep fighting to ensure that public services remain public and accountable to the people of Rockford," said AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Edward Sadlowski. "We will not stop working to make these critical positions good jobs that can sustain families and build a better future for RPS employees and for the entire community."

**"We're as far south as you can get and there's not a lot of money to go around. But we have to live too."**

# STATE UNIVERSITIES IN CRISIS

- **\$2.3 billion** in cuts.
- More than **1,600** layoffs.
- **5 of the state's 7** public universities have junk ratings on their bonds.
- **45%** of Illinois high school graduates enroll in out-of-state schools.
- **130,000** low-income college students are losing tuition grants.



## University cutbacks spark protest

Bruce Rauner's budget blockade is inflicting long-term damage to our state's higher education system—but university communities across the state are coming together to fight back.

"Higher education is being starved," AFSCME Council 31 Associate Director Tracey Abman said. "This funding crisis is sending Illinois students to other states because there is no guarantee that schools here will be functioning. And it's hurting the faculty and staff that care deeply about the services they provide."

On April 11, members of AFSCME Local 1989 at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) joined student groups and the faculty union, UPI, at an informational picket and news conference to protest the university's dire fiscal situation.

"Apparently the message hasn't reached Gov. Rauner that public education is really important to all of us," AFSCME member Stacy Alikakos said as protesters chanted. "Enough is enough! We need to get our message out by being vocal and showing up physically to the doorstep of the governor."

## Stopping the tide

Alikakos works as an academic advisor at NEIU while also pursuing her master's degree at the university.

She worries that layoffs, furlough days and cutbacks will cause professors to seek positions outside of Illinois' university system.

In fact, thousands of students are already heading out of state. Nearly half of Illinois high school graduates are enrolling in out-of-state universities.

The crisis is also hurting the towns, cities and regions that universities call home. "Gov. Rauner says he's a job creator, but public universities help create good jobs, not only in the communities where they're located but throughout the state," Abman said.

Alikakos said all this turmoil has not discouraged her from remaining at NEIU and fighting to stop the tide of Rauner's cuts.

"I can't say enough about NEIU; I love it here," Alikakos said. "I'm proud to be a student and an employee. I'm happy to give back to a university that's given me so much."

But there's only so much employees can do with dwindling resources.

"We can't serve students like this," Alikakos said.

## Rauner's budget mess

Rauner's proposed budget would cut funding to state universities by \$60 million, putting this money into a performance-based funding pool that would be allocated according to metrics established by the Board of Higher Education. Under this funding scheme, some universities might win and others might lose.

But that's not the worst of it. Universities have already undergone funding cuts, so Rauner would effectively be cutting higher education by 42 percent compared to funding levels of a few years ago.

"MAP grants have been cut, which is a real shame," Abman said. "Public universities are an important opportunity for first generation and low-income students to get a quality education, but this crisis is taking that opportunity away."

As the budget standoff continues, the situation will only get worse for state universities that are already strained to the breaking point.

"We had to set up a food bank for our members who work at NEIU," Abman said. "The fact that this governor is starving these universities in order to achieve his ideological demands is outrageous."

**"We can't serve students like this"**