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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Just say no

Rauner-backed Illinois Policy Institute laying groundwork for massive anti-union campaign



BY

ROBERTA LYNCH

REFUSE TO BE PLAYED BY BIG-TIME SCAMMERS, THE ILLINOIS POLICY INSTITUTE

Is it possible that someone who detests you and attacks you at every opportunity would suddenly decide to invest time, effort and even money to help you out? Doesn't seem too likely, does it? But that is the pure hokum that the Illinois Policy Institute (IPI) will soon be trying to sell to every public employee in Illinois.

The IPI is a shadowy, billionaire-backed front group that calls itself a "think tank." It's devoted to dismantling the public sector and degrading public employees of every kind. And, of course, they especially loathe the unions public sector employees have formed to improve their working lives.

Among countless other attacks on public employees, the IPI has:

- Called on the governor to "lay off the entire state workforce and close the pension system";
- Recommended reducing state workers' wages by as much as 34 percent;
- Pushed for huge hikes in health costs for state and university employees, and to raise health costs for retired state and university employees;
- Argued that "the Illinois Supreme Court can and should change its interpretation of the pension protection clause" or that voters should "end the pension protection clause through a constitutional amendment";
- Said that "a government shutdown might be exactly what Illinois needs";
- Issued skewed studies meant to create the impression that state workers are greatly overpaid;
- Supported privatization, calling Sandy Springs, Georgia, "an example of efficiency for Illinois and the rest of the country" because it has privatized all government services except police and fire; and
- Attacked state employees' union contract because it provides for paid holidays and a fair disciplinary process.

Bruce Rauner gave the IPI more than half a million dollars

in funding. In turn, the IPI aided and abetted Rauner when he tried to weaken unions representing state workers by banning Fair Share fees in state government and going to federal court to have fair share deemed unconstitutional.

The court said Rauner had no right to take such unilateral action and dismissed him from the case, but the IPI scoured state government and unearthed a DHFS employee named Mark Janus who was willing to carry their water.

Today that lawsuit—*Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*—is before the U.S. Supreme Court. Although Mark Janus remains the front man, Rauner refers to the litigation as his case and the biggest thing he's ever done. It's no surprise that Janus is represented by the Liberty Justice Center, the litigation arm of the Illinois Policy Institute.

Rauner and his IPI buddies are giddy because the Court's pro-corporate, anti-union majority is all too likely to ban public sector unions from collecting fees from represented employees who are not members.

The State Policy Network, to which the Illinois Policy Institute belongs, has hailed the Janus case as a "mortal blow" against public employee unions. They are laying the groundwork for a massive outreach campaign, contacting every public employee in Illinois to encourage them to drop out of their union.

The IPI will claim to want to help employees by letting them know that even if they're not members—and pay not a penny in dues or fees—the union will still have to represent them and they'll still benefit from the union's gains.

But there's the catch. If the IPI can get thousands of

teachers, nurses, correctional officers, sanitation workers, social workers, clerical workers and other public employees to drop their union membership, then unions will be starved of resources and won't be able to make any gains for anyone.

That's what Rauner and the Illinois Policy Institute really want.

Their true goals are weakening unions, driving down wages and benefits and shifting ever more power into the hands of the wealthy elite who already control so much of the political process in our country.


It's up to every union member to refuse to be played by the big-time scammers of the Illinois Policy Institute and their ilk.

When Bruce Rauner tried to abolish Fair Share fees in state government, more than a thousand fee-payers immediately signed up as dues-paying members. They knew exactly what Rauner's game was—not helping workers, but weakening their collective power.

That's what the Illinois Policy Institute will be up to when they or some other phony front group comes knocking at your door, ringing your phone, or accosting you on the way to work. They'll try to trick you into surrendering on the spot, giving up the fight for a decent standard of living and basic rights on the job, giving up the strength that comes from joining together as a union.

The saying is old, but it will stand us in good stead when they come: Just say no.

But when your coworkers reach out and ask you to sign a card pledging to remain a union member, just say yes.

If we all do that, together we can keep building a strong union for years to come. 



On the Move

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RETIREE CHAPTER 31 REPRESENTATIVE

Larry Brown

AFSCME renews push for passage of back pay appropriation

During the more than two years that Gov. Bruce Rauner held the state budget hostage, the only appropriations bills that could make it through the General Assembly were those mandated by the courts. State agencies, for instance, were funded only because AFSCME won a court order requiring that state employees continue to be paid.

After the budget standoff ended in July, a semblance of normalcy returned to the appropriations process. AFSCME is seizing the moment to once again press legislators to pass a special appropriation to pay all state employees monies owed for a scheduled pay increase that was withheld in 2011.

The Quinn Administration failed to pay the negotiated wage increase, citing lack of appropriated funds. AFSCME took the matter to arbitration and an independent arbitrator ruled that the union contract was binding and the increase must be paid. But the state appealed the arbitrator's decision to state court.

After a very lengthy legal battle, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the wages were indeed owed, but could not be paid without a special appropriation. AFSCME won inclusion of some \$50 million in the FY 2015 budget to pay a portion of what was owed state employees in back wages.

Newly-introduced Senate Bill 2269 will provide for an appropriation of \$63.3 million to pay the remainder of wages owed.

"Given the state's ongoing budgetary shortfall, it will be an uphill fight," said Council 31 Legislative Director Joanna Webb-Gauvin. "But every legislator should recognize that failing to pay monies owed is a form of wage theft."

AFSCME INTERVIEW

Senator Andy Manar

The Democratic State Senator from Macoupin County in central Illinois is the chief sponsor of SB 2269, legislation to appropriate funds for back wages owed to state employees.

What drives you to champion the state employee back pay bill?

This is the oldest debt in state government and it needs to be paid. This will be my fourth attempt, going back to the Quinn administration, to get state employees the money that is owed to them. I represent Springfield along with Sen. Sam McCann, who is a chief Republican co-sponsor of the bill. We represent thousands of hard-working

public servants. It's time that our state does the right thing and pays what is contractually obligated to be paid.

Do you think we have a good chance of passing this bill?

I believe we do because the facts are on our side. The state government owes compensation to employees based on a contractual agreement. Sooner or later the state will have to abide by the contract that was signed and pay this money. In my opinion this should be first on the list come 2018.

We have work to do to get the votes necessary to pass the bill and then the additional work to override a presumed veto by Gov. Rauner.

But we've shown time and again, especially during this past veto session, that we can work with our Republican colleagues to find reasonable ways to override Gov. Rauner's veto.

Why doesn't Gov. Rauner respect state employees?

Rauner and his allies believe that state employees should not be able to join a union or collectively bargain over wages, benefits and working conditions.

Yet the governor's office has awarded tens of millions of dollars to non-union state employees through bonuses. My appropriations committee heard several days' worth of testimony from agency directors about that process and the total cost of it.

So I can understand union members' frustration. I would be frustrated too. That's why we're building a coalition to get this bill passed in the spring session as soon as possible.

Why do you think unions are important for our state, our country?


I live in Macoupin County where Mother Jones is laid to rest. I just go down my street and the streets around my home and I can see in very clear terms the protections that labor unions give

to middle class families and beyond. I see what that does for our community.

I view unions as a line of defense to the ongoing attack on middle-class families. The issue of unpaid back wages is just another in the barrage of attacks coming from the right wing around the country and they are being delivered by Bruce Rauner every single day in Illinois.

What can working families do to stop Rauner's harmful attacks?

We cannot survive another four years of Bruce Rauner. I'm meeting people for the first time who want to become involved in a grassroots effort to unseat him and elect someone who actually cares about the communities they live in.

We have to harness that energy. We have to be organized and we can't take our foot off the gas pedal. But if we stay focused we'll be successful in 2018. 



SEN. ANDY MANAR

"I view unions as a line of defense to the ongoing attack on middle-class families.

"The issue of unpaid back wages is just another in the barrage of attacks."

Rauner overridden again and again

Repeated rejection of governor's vetoes indicate waning support

Gov. Rauner used his veto power 39 times this legislative session. In his first two years in office, Rauner was overridden just once. But this year, the General Assembly voted to override the governor's veto 15 times.

Most famously, the General Assembly voted in July to override Rauner's veto and enact the first state budget Illinois has seen since he took office. But in October and November during the veto session, the House and Senate found their footing and bucked the governor again and again.

In a stunning display of dissent, the Illinois House of

Representatives voted to reject 11 of Rauner's vetoes in one day, October 25.

Comptroller wins transparency

ONE OF THOSE VETOS WAS A unanimous (112-0) override of Rauner's veto of Comptroller Susana Mendoza's Debt Transparency Act. The Senate

followed suit in November with a vote of 52-3.

Now it is law that state agencies report on their backlog of bills every month, rather than annually as the law previously required, including how much interest is owed on those bills. Comptroller Mendoza points out that such reporting is especially needed in order to reliably track the state's growing liabilities and interest rates as the state's bill backlog has nearly tripled under Rauner to some \$17 billion.

"This is common-sense reform that will ensure the government is being transparent with its taxpayers," said Democratic State Senator Scott Bennett of Champaign. "In order for Illinois to become more fiscally sound, we need

real-time accurate information of the state's financial status, and this bill is a good first step in achieving that."

Rauner said he vetoed the legislation because it was an attempt to micromanage state agencies. But even Republican lawmakers saw how flimsy that excuse was and voted to enact the law over the governor's wishes.

"This is a good bill," Barrington Hills Republican Rep. David McSweeney said. "Nobody should oppose this bill. Stop the madness. Vote yes."

Student bill of rights

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ALSO voted to override Rauner's veto

of Rep. Will Guzzardi's student loan bill of rights.

Student loan borrowers are often preyed upon, given inaccurate information and not adequately educated about their repayment or forgiveness options. This law attempts to hold the loan servicers accountable. Lawmakers saw fit to override the governor and enact some of the most stringent regulations in the nation.

"The student loan crisis is a huge drain on our state's economy and on the next generation of Illinoisans," Guzzardi said. "We came together to make sure that millions of Illinoisans get the most favorable terms for paying those loans back."

Rauner vetoes of pro-worker bills hold

RAUNER'S TOP PRIORITY WAS persuading legislators not to override his vetoes of two pro-labor bills, and he succeeded.

"When push came to shove, Rauner was willing to let these other overrides go so long as he was not overridden on his anti-union agenda," said AFSCME Council 31 Legislative Director Joanna Webb-Gauvin. "When it came to bills that would have a positive impact on the rights of workers, that's where Rauner doubled down."

Senate Bill 1905 would have prevented local governments from forming so-called "right-to-work zones," one of Rauner's favorite anti-worker and anti-union ploys. The override attempt fell short twice in the House.

Rauner also vetoed an AFSCME-backed bill to require strict accountability standards when the state attempts to privatize public services. The override motion on HB 3216 fell four votes shy of passing.

Legislative session ahead

PRESIDENTS OF AFSCME LOCAL unions, PEOPLE chairs and presidents of retiree sub-chapters will gather for the union's legislative conference on January 27 in Springfield. At that time AFSCME will set its legislative agenda for the session that begins that same month.



Cook County Board votes to lay off hundreds

Frontline workers bear burden of massive budget shortfall



After months of battling, first over a controversial tax on sweetened beverages and then over a plan to lay off more than 500 employees, on November 21 the Cook County Board unanimously passed a budget that included 321 layoffs to fill a \$200 million hole.

The repeal of the sweetened beverage tax all but ensured layoffs would occur as board members refused to seriously consider alternative means of new revenue. But a vigorous grassroots lobbying effort helped to reduce the number of AFSCME members who will be laid off by more than 100.

“The voices of AFSCME members made a big impact,” said Council 31 Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Adrienne Alexander. “But because so many commissioners were unwilling to support any new revenue, it was impossible to prevent all layoffs.”

More than 60 AFSCME members will be laid off in the plan that board president Toni Preckwinkle called “heart-breaking.” Those AFSCME members affected are primar-

ily in the Office of the Chief Judge and the Health and Hospitals System.

Members of other unions and management personnel will also be laid off in the Chief Judge’s office and the Sheriff’s Office.

A huge loss

AFSCME MEMBERS CROWDED the Nov. 21 meeting and pleaded with board members to find a way to prevent the layoffs.

AFSCME Local 3696 member Amy Carioscia, a clerical in the juvenile probation department, will be laid off after her husband was laid off earlier this year.

“I’ve been at the county for 19.5 years,” she said to the board, crying. “I’ve always been a dedicated employee,

but here I am begging for my job. I haven’t slept in days knowing that I would be laid off, and I would just beg you to reconsider.”

“The burden of the county’s massive budget shortfall shouldn’t be borne by frontline workers,” AFSCME Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman testified. “AFSCME members who will lose their jobs are support staff who are often paid the least, but without whom this county cannot function adequately.”

No new revenue

AFSCME MEMBERS IN COOK County were part of a grassroots groundswell that helped temporarily block a repeal of the tax on sweetened beverages, which was essential to filling the county’s budget gap. But the Cook County board voted to repeal the tax on October 11—with only commissioners Larry Suffredin and Jerry Butler voting against the repeal.

AFSCME members attended public hearings on the budget to insist that those commissioners who led the charge to repeal the pop tax put forward other revenue measures that can avert service cutbacks and layoffs.

Despite the threat of

layoffs, Cook County commissioners who repealed the pop tax failed to offer any alternative revenue proposals—except to target county employees, demanding that they take furlough days or make economic concessions at the bargaining table.

AFSCME objected strongly. Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch wrote a letter to county commissioners urging them to cease targeting employees.

She called on the commis-

that will hurt Cook County residents, reduce services and scapegoat employees.”

But the budget was enacted as planned.

Negotiations continue

UNION CONTRACTS FOR COUNTY employees expire on December 31. AFSCME’s bargaining committee, which includes elected representatives from all 15 local unions of Cook County employees, began

“The burden of the county’s massive budget shortfall shouldn’t be borne by frontline workers.”

sioners to “reject unfair and unworkable cuts that would harm the county’s vital public services and the dedicated workers who provide them.”

She urged the board “to develop responsible solutions that provide the revenue necessary to fund the county government that residents rely on. It is better to delay the budget calendar in order to find a fair solution than to rush into a flawed approach

negotiating with the county in July.

No new revenue ideas and impending layoffs will make those negotiations all the more challenging.

“Our Bargaining Committee is firm in its demand for a fair contract. We need new revenue to help us achieve that goal,” Council 31 Regional Director Helen Thornton said.



Danger on the job

Department of Children and Family Services employees seek reforms

DCFCS child protective investigator and AFSCME Local 448 member Pam Knight is still in a coma eight weeks after being brutally beaten by an endangered child's father on September 29.

Reeling from this tragedy, Knight's co-workers and fellow DCFS employees are anxious and angry. The attack crystallized what they already know: Their jobs can be very dangerous.

DCFS employees do vital work to protect children. It's tough, demanding and high-stress to intervene directly with families in crisis who are often dealing with domestic violence,

worker and sometimes their families as well. Workers have been shoved, punched and choked.

DCFS workers are not allowed to carry Mace or other weapons.

Systemic changes needed

"IT'S DANGEROUS WORK, BUT that doesn't mean that we

"It's dangerous work, but that doesn't mean that we should have to accept being attacked as part of the job."

drug abuse and more.

Employees regularly deal with violence and harassment as part of their job. During home visits, workers have been threatened with guns, locked in closets and taken hostage. Threats are made against the

should have to accept being attacked as part of the job," said AFSCME Council 31 Policy Director Anne Irving, who serves as the union's liaison to DCFS.

The Chicago Tribune reported that at least a dozen



AFSCME Council 31's DCFS Standing Committee presented the administration with a series of action steps to protect employees.

DCFS employees have been attacked or seriously threatened since 2013, with several employees hospitalized due to their injuries.

State lawmakers have responded with calls to increase penalties for assaults on DCFS workers.

"We will support that legislation, but we want to create systemic changes," Irving said. "It's important to have significant consequences for DCFS attacks, but we also must put safeguards in place so workers aren't attacked in the first place."

Proposals for such safeguards were presented to DCFS management at a special emergency meeting of AFSCME's DCFS Standing Committee,

made up of 16 frontline employees from all over the state, with DCFS Director Beverly "B.J." Walker.


The series of action steps proposed by the union include:

- Worker training on identifying threats and de-escalating volatile situations, and optional classes on self-defense;
- Allow frontline workers more autonomy to determine if a home visit or other situation is potentially dangerous and requires a pair of workers or police escort;
- Commitment from management that hitting numerical goals on paper will not take precedent over safety;
- High-level agency outreach to police departments

with goals of better communication and faster response times;

- Meaningful public outreach to highlight the important and difficult work of child protection and the valuable contributions of DCFS employees.

After hearing firsthand stories of the dangers employees face on a daily basis, DCFS management said they will collaborate with the union and look at potential policy improvements.

"The emergency meeting was a good first step, but the proof of the agency's commitment will be in its actions going forward," Irving said. "We want to know DCFS is not only listening, but taking concrete steps to minimize risk." 



AFSCME Local 448 President Kathy Lane accepted the Public Service Award on behalf of Pam Knight.

AFSCME honors Pam Knight with Public Service Award


At the 20th Biennial Convention in October, AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch presented a special award to DCFS child protection investigator Pam Knight who was viciously attacked while protecting the welfare of a two-year-old child.

Since that day Knight has been in a coma with her family and her co-workers at her bedside hoping desperately that she will regain consciousness.

"Pam Knight embodies what public service is all about," Lynch said. "She represents the kind of dedication that hundreds of thousands of public employees bring to their work every day."

The award was accepted by Local 448 President Kathy Lane.

The inscription reads:

Public Service Award Presented to Pamela Knight in recognition of exemplary dedication to the mission of child protection and family support, for going above and beyond the call of duty, and for providing to all Illinois citizens a powerful reminder of the vital work that public service employees perform every day. With our deepest gratitude, admiration and hope for the future we hold you in our hearts. 

Corrections employees speak out against violent assaults

On October 12, leaders from AFSCME local unions representing employees of the Departments of Corrections and Juvenile Justice traveled to Springfield for a press conference to call attention to the alarming increase in the number and severity of inmate assaults on employees.

Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch called on DOC and DJJ management to take immediate steps to prevent further injuries to correctional staff in state prisons and youth centers.

Alanea Lewis (Pontiac CC), Cody Dornes (East Moline CC), Linda Mangrum (IYC-Harrisburg), and Corey Knop (Lawrence CC) described violent assaults that occurred at their facilities and corrective action that should be taken.

Lynch presented the union's analysis of the department's own tracking data

which demonstrates that over the past two years there has been a 49 percent increase in assaults on staff in DJJ facilities and a 51 percent increase in assaults on staff in DOC facilities.

"Illinois prison and youth centers have seen disturbing incidents of violence against employees in recent months," Lynch said. "Working in corrections is risky, but the state can eliminate unnecessary risk."

Both departments are failing to hold those who commit such attacks accountable



Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch speaks at the Oct. 12 news conference.

for their actions. When five inmates at Pontiac Correctional Center attacked staff, sending several to the hospital, the facility refused to impose any penalties. It was only after AFSCME Local 494 leaders met with the state's attorney that criminal charges against the inmates were filed.

And the Department of Corrections is making the


normal risks of working in a prison greater by reclassifying inmates from more secure to less secure facilities without any input from frontline staff.

Dornes, president of Local 46 at East Moline Correctional Center, and Knop, president of Local 3600 at Lawrence Correctional Center, described serious assaults at their facilities in which the inmates

involved had been recently transferred in from higher level facilities.

At East Moline CC, an officer was working alone on a double unit with more than 100 inmates when she was violently attacked and beaten. Standards were recently changed to allow convicted murderers and sex offenders to be housed at the facility.

The inmate who assaulted the officer—beating her head with a rock—was actually a Class X felon who'd been convicted of aggravated vehicular hijacking with a weapon.

Lynch called on both departments to take action to better protect employees, including improving staffing levels, holding inmates and youth accountable for their behavior, halting budget-driven inmate reclassifications, improving mental health treatment and assuring that equipment is in good working order. 

Court rules Rauner wrong to halt step increases

Gov. Bruce Rauner's administration is violating state labor law by refusing to allow thousands of state workers to move as scheduled through the state pay plan over the past two years, a state appellate court ruled on November 6.

The state pay plan and collective bargaining agreements provide for state employees to progress via step increases after being hired. But Rauner's Department of Central Management Services (CMS) has blocked employees represented by AFSCME from progressing through the steps since July 1, 2015, when the union's most recent state contract was scheduled to expire.

AFSCME charged the Rauner Administration with an unfair labor practice, but the Rauner-appointed Illinois Labor Relations Board (ILRB) dismissed it. However, the appellate court's decision reverses that dismissal, ruling that the administration committed an

unfair labor practice by blocking step progression through the pay plan.


"We're pleased that the court has faulted Governor Rauner's illegal action preventing thousands of public service workers from receiving their lawful step increases," AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "This is money that working people were promised when they were hired, money they have earned and are counting on to help support their families and pay their bills."

In its initial charge and its appeal, AFSCME pointed out that state law prevents either party to a collective bargaining

agreement from making unilateral changes to the terms and conditions of employment while a new agreement is being negotiated, and requires employers to maintain the status quo.

"[T]here is no dispute that the step increases are a term or condition of employment, and there is no real question that [the Rauner administration] made a unilateral decision to withhold the step increases during negotiations," the court found. "... [T]he ILRB's finding that CMS did not commit an unfair labor practice was clearly erroneous."

The court's unanimous decision was issued by a panel of three judges in the fifth appellate district.

"Illegally denying steps to the newest-hired and lowest-paid state employees fits Bruce Rauner's pattern of anti-worker behavior," Lynch said. "Rauner should refrain from appealing this decision and move swiftly to place employees at the appropriate step on the pay scale." 



AFSCME STRONG



Tom Opolony

Tom Opolony

LOCAL 89, VILLAGE OF LOMBARD

What's your job and how does it benefit your community?

I work in the Village of Lombard's public works department, in the technical services division as a maintenance worker. I make and install street signs so people can navigate safely through the village. But this job is anything and everything. If it's snowing, we're plowing. If a tornado or high winds come through we're picking up downed trees. Our job is a job of public service.

What does AFSCME Strong mean to you?

My father did public works in Oak Park and I used to go to union picnics and pickets with him. He passed last year and I feel I'm following in his footsteps. AFSCME Strong is a way for all our members to contribute to our ultimate goal. You come into this job because you want to give back to the community, and now we're part of an organization that's doing something a lot bigger—for the middle class.

Why is your union important for you and your family?

At a young age I was exposed to unions and their benefits. Years later you realize how union activities play a role in our families. The union instills those values of community and service.

Why is unity important for all of us?

When new members become part of our local, we show them all the signatures of our founding members to explain that our contract wasn't just given to us. These guys came together for good reasons to form a union. We can't sit back just because we have this contract, it's always a continued adjustment. Unity at the local level means your ability to negotiate a contract is more powerful. That unity becomes even more powerful when you go to the village, county, state and national levels. Unity starts here and it grows.

What's your outlook for our union?

When I first started in the local, I was the new guy amongst a lot of older seasoned veterans. Now I'm starting to see the younger people come up through the ranks and grow into leadership roles. I feel very strong about the direction that Council 31 and the labor movement is going because these people aren't just paying dues. There's a hunger in them to put their footprint on the labor movement. Rome wasn't built overnight. We have to keep working on getting stronger.

Supreme Court takes aim at public employees

JANUS V. AFSCME COUNCIL 31 is a lawsuit now before the US Supreme Court that aims to take away the freedom of working people to join together in strong unions to speak up for themselves and their communities.

The billionaires and corporate special interests funding this case view unions as a threat to their power. So they are trying to get the courts to rig the system even more toward those at the top by eliminating fair share fees in an effort to defund unions.

AFSCME members are fighting back. We're recommitting to our union and signing new membership cards pledging to remain dues-paying union members.

Bruce Rauner instigated this case to pursue his goal of eliminating unions in the public sector. He's already crowing about how it will alter the balance of power in our country by shutting out the voices of public employees. AFSCME Strong is our response to Rauner. We're going to keep on building our union to be stronger than ever.

Cathi Gitchoff

LOCAL 799, MADISON COUNTY EMPLOYEES

What's your job and how does it benefit your community?

I'm a secretary in the State's Attorney's Office, Child Support Division. We help establish and enforce child support for custodial parents. Because of our work, Madison County has increased collections for families by \$3 million over the last fiscal year.

What does AFSCME Strong mean to you?

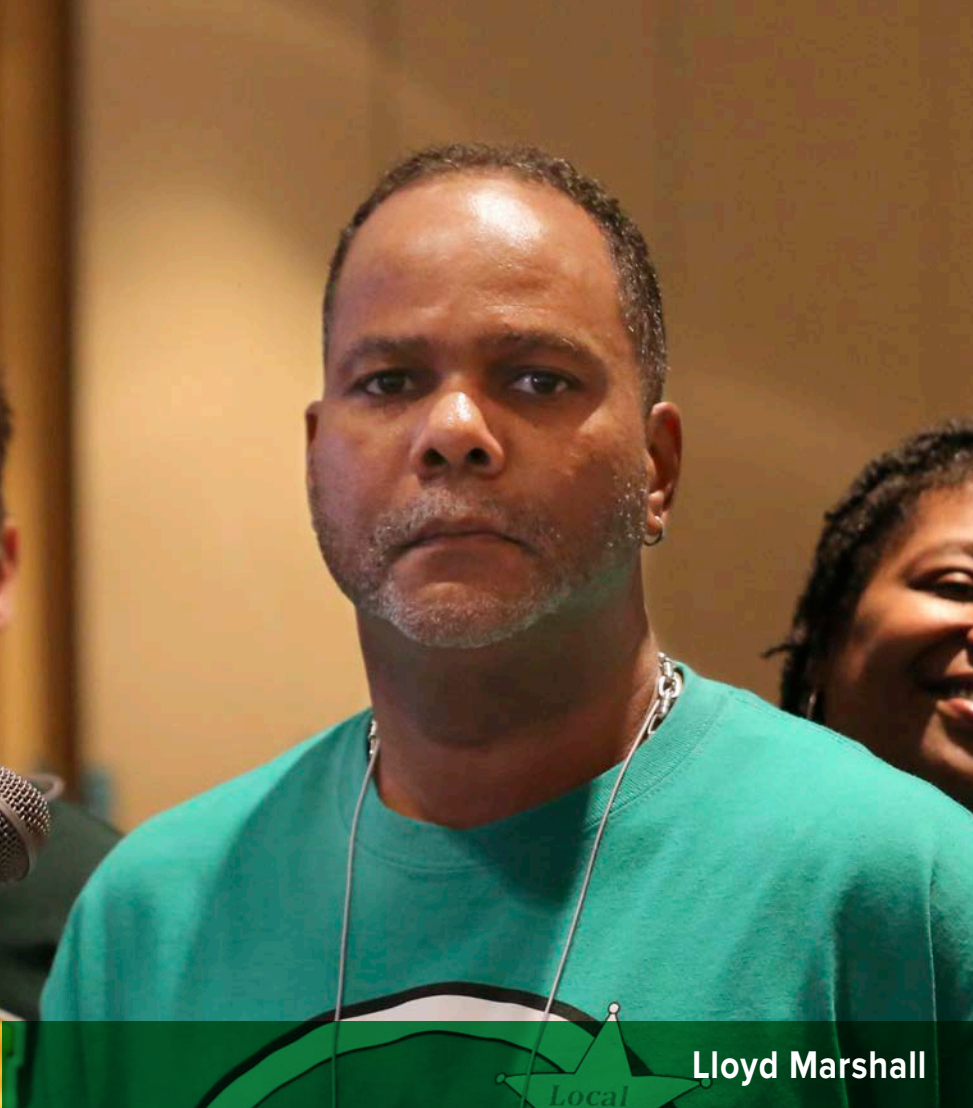
AFSCME Strong means we're recommitting to the labor movement and to AFSCME because right now we're under siege and we need to stand together more than we ever have.

Why is your union important for you and your family?

I grew up in a labor family; my father was a member of the Steelworkers. We have what we have today—our wages, hours, conditions, and the right to bargain, everything—because people sacrificed for those rights. My father and people before him fought for what we have now, and I'm fighting to



Cathi Gitchoff



Lloyd Marshall

keep that so my grandchildren and their children will continue to have what we have.

Why is unity important for all of us?

We have to stand together because the stronger you are the more power you have. When we were on strike 12 years ago it was the longest 13 days of my life. It wasn't something that we wanted to do, it was something that we had to do. We were dedicated to each other—and we got what we wanted.

What's your outlook for our union?

I've never doubted the power of AFSCME because we have always been so solid together. They can't take that away from us. If we put our minds to it and continue to believe in ourselves and fight for what we believe in, nothing is going to tear us apart.

Lloyd Marshall

LOCAL 3477, COOK COUNTY JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICERS

What's your job and how does it benefit your community?

We do an amazing job at what we do and we're serving the community. Juvenile probation officers work with a population of youth that most of society has turned their backs on. But we won't quit on them. Sometimes we're the only positive influence that they have in their lives. We make sure they go to school. We just took 15 kids to go see Hamilton. Some of them had never been to a play or seen all the effort that goes into a production. Things like that could change their lives forever and put them back on the right track.

What does AFSCME Strong mean to you?

AFSCME Strong means everybody is rededicating ourselves to the union so we become stronger. Collectively we're stronger than individually, any day. AFSCME Strong means there are no cracks in our foundation.

Why is your union important for you and your family?

There are so many benefits to being union, but the biggest benefit is that we have a collective voice; it's stronger and louder than any individual voice could ever be heard.

I started in 1992. I was part of the very first contract our local had. Ever since, we've strived for better working conditions, fair wages, fair health care. And we've won. Without a union, those things would not have been possible. We'd have been at the beck and call of management: They can pick and choose who they want to give raises to or dismiss your job as a whole.

Why is unity important for all of us?

Just because the Supreme Court decision might not go in our favor, that means nothing to us. Nothing. We're not subscribing to that. We're still committed strongly to the union.

What's your outlook for our union?

Collectively we're strong; we're a force to be reckoned with.

Nancy Anderson

LOCAL 978, LASALLE COUNTY EMPLOYEES

What's your job and why is it important for your community?

I'm a secretary in the probation department of the 13th Judicial Circuit Court in LaSalle County. There are clericals and probation officers in our unit. We monitor people on probation. We are a critical part of the legal system. I see part of my job as treating everybody with respect. To me, even if you're on probation you're still a person and you still have the right to be treated like one. You're still important.

What does AFSCME Strong mean to you?

I've worked for the county since 1981. We weren't always union and we've come a long way in all these years. So for me, AFSCME Strong is what we need to instill in the newer, younger members. We need to educate them and help the next generation step up and carry on because we won't always be here.

Why is unity important for all of us?

People don't realize what we could lose because of the threat of the Janus case. They take for granted what we have and assume they're always going to have it. But we might not.



Nancy Anderson

Unity is important because we can't let them take away our basic rights. We can still hold together and keep our union if we stay united. Management, politicians, they say a lot of stuff and it doesn't hold true. But I've never been let down by the union.

Why is your union important for you and your family?

I've been a widow the last five years and my husband was a union member too. Since he's been gone I've taken more time to step up and be active because the union has given me so much. I've had job security—I've been here 37 years. I have a pension. I've never been laid off.

You can't rely on management. Without a union, they will pit us against each other. That's the same strategy in society—pit people against each other so they all lose. If we stay together, we can survive.

What's your outlook for our union?

I think Illinois with Council 31 is very strong. You see it when you listen to Roberta speak and her passion gets you fired up. Or when you go to a rally or a union meeting and see the power behind you. Being in a union, you know somebody's got your back and that's powerful. 🦅



Rise up!

20th Biennial Convention sets course for challenges ahead

Rise Up was the rallying cry for AFSCME Council 31's 20th Biennial Convention in Springfield on October 20-21. Hundreds of delegates gathered to celebrate 40 years of accomplishments and carve out the union's direction for the next two years.

The convention hall pulsed with the collective energy of AFSCME members from all across the state, from universities and school districts, cities and counties, state agencies and nonprofit organizations.

Everyone was there with the same goal: Unite to fight back against ongoing assaults from anti-worker corporations, billionaires and politicians like Gov. Bruce Rauner.

"Those who have targeted us want unlimited power to do whatever they want to anyone at any time, regardless of what's best for families, communities or our nation," said Matt Lukow, president of AFSCME Local 1964, as he welcomed everyone to the convention. "They want to knock us down. They want to divide us and pit us against each other because only then can they break us. So we need to rise up!"

"Illinois is ground zero in the war on workers," said Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch in her convention address. "If we stay united, we will not fall."

Lynch was reelected to lead the union for the next four years. She and a new executive board were sworn in at the end of the convention.

"Through cuts, closures, privatization attempts and anti-worker attacks at every level of government, in higher education and in the private sector, Roberta Lynch never gives an inch," said Lukow. "She gives her all for our union and she will never quit fighting for us."

AFSCME members, delegates, guests and staff attended workshops to prepare for the challenges of the next two years, from our union's AFSCME Strong program to



Hundreds gathered in Springfield for AFSCME Council 31's biennial convention to chart the union's direction for the next two years.

the statewide election in 2018. They passed 16 resolutions to guide the union's work, which can be found online at afscme31.org/resolutions.

Attendees also enjoyed rousing speeches from guests Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza and VoteVets Legislative Director Will Fischer.

AFSCME President Lee Saunders got the crowd to their feet as he pledged the full support of the union to Council 31.

"AFSCME Council 31 members wake up each day to serve your community," Saunders said. "You are everyday heroes. You never quit and you are not alone."

Deputy Director Mike Newman closed the convention, urging everyone to keep the momentum going and stay united and determined.

"We are truly brothers and sisters," Newman said. "We have the strength and courage to be the voice for fairness."



The convention celebrated AFSCME locals that have signed up 100 percent of their membership in the AFSCME Strong campaign.

Voices from the Frontlines

AFSCME members tell their stories of progress

Matthew Whalen

PARAMEDIC AT JACKSON COUNTY AMBULANCE SERVICE, PRESIDENT OF AFSCME LOCAL 2464

Our local was coming up on contract negotiations and we knew it would be tough. The biggest complaint was that there was no longevity pay—you made the same if you were an EMS one year or 17.

We created a plan, meeting with co-workers off-hours to build solidarity and improve the lines of communication. With 24-hour shifts, this meant a lot of 3 a.m. meetings over pots of coffee at our ambulance bases.

We had been without a contract for 18 months when the county said they wouldn't meet with us anymore. So we overwhelmingly voted to authorize a strike.

On the day that the board was set to vote to impose management's last, best, final offer, the bargaining committee met in the hallway outside chambers with the county attorneys and got a tentative agreement right there.

We kept our health insurance costs low and got a longevity bonus, double time for mandatory overtime, paid time for mandatory training and a 12 percent raise.

We navigated our way through with a strong team, constant internal organizing and undeterred focus. We built deeper connections with the people we work with and learned what solidarity really means.

Susanne Littlefield

AUDITOR AT THE CITY OF CHICAGO, PRESIDENT OF AFSCME LOCAL 2912

The labor movement and the values we represent are under attack. The forces behind the case that is now before the Supreme Court—*Janus vs. AFSCME Council 31*—including Gov. Rauner, want to cripple our union. By banning fair share fees, they hope they can make us weak so they can eliminate us altogether.

But we have news for the billionaires: We're going to emerge from this fight stronger than before. In order to do that, we have to have a plan and do what we do best—organize.

In our local, we held small group meetings at every work location and identified mem-

bers for our Member Action Team (MAT).

From there, we organized an AFSCME Strong training for our MAT activists to make a plan to talk with every person in the bargaining unit and give them the opportunity to recommit to our union by signing an AFSCME Strong membership card.

And you know what happened? In just two weeks, more than 70% of our membership signed those cards! We are taking up the challenge of Rauner's attack and our local is AFSCME Strong!

Tawny Proulx

MENTAL HEALTH TECHNICIAN AT MABLEY DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER IN DIXON, PRESIDENT OF AFSCME LOCAL 172

I was elected president of my local last fall, along with a brand new executive board, secretary and treasurer. The governor would not negotiate and we knew the state bargaining committee was considering a strike vote.

Talking about a strike can be scary. Our members didn't want to walk out on the residents we care for. We talked to the Mabley Parent Association about what Rauner was trying to do to us. The parents and families know how well we take care of their loved ones. They told me: If you go out on strike, we'll be right there with you.

Between our facility and Dixon Correctional Center, we built support all over the community. Block by block you would see signs in yards and cars and windows: We Support State Workers!

By the time we took the strike authorization vote in January, 98 percent of our members were ready to strike!

Our union is at a real crossroads in Illinois. We have to be ready to fight for what we have.

Timothy Olaosebikan

DIRECT SUPPORT STAFF AT THE RAY GRAHAM ASSOCIATION IN DUPAGE COUNTY, PRESIDENT OF AFSCME LOCAL 3492

Throughout the state, at non-profit agencies like Ray Graham, direct support personnel (DSPs) like me care for the most vulnerable members of our society—the developmentally disabled. We work around

the clock and our job is incredibly rewarding.

But with no increase in state funding for nine years we make poverty wages. In my local, many members have a very difficult time paying their bills.

Low wages hurt our members, but also the services we provide. Low wages lead to high staff turnover and instability at our workplace exacerbates individuals' uncontrollable behavioral problems. Those of us who stay work so much overtime that we are exhausted.

AFSCME locals across the state joined together to fight for a fair raise for DSPs. We worked with our employers to lobby for more money from the state, meeting with legislators in their district and at the capitol, and delivered thousands of postcards to Gov. Rauner.

Our hard work paid off. When the budget finally passed, over Rauner's veto, the

state provided for a raise of 75 cents per hour to DSPs and other frontline staff. This raise will provide much needed relief for our members who work so hard.

Tikisha Ellis

CAFE MANAGER AT THE ROCKFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT, PRESIDENT OF AFSCME LOCAL 3210

In the Rockford Public School district, nutritional service workers were making poverty-level wages. We thought we deserved better.

We united with two other school locals, the bus drivers and the paraprofessionals, and had months of hard bargaining. The increase in insurance costs would have eaten up the raise the board imposed on us, and they threatened to privatize our work.

Our members wanted to

strike, but some stated that they couldn't afford it—we were just coming off winter break with no pay—so we planned a three-day strike.

RPS thought we'd fail. But we didn't. They underestimated us.

On March 18, 900 AFSCME members walked off the job and 25,000 school children had no bus service, lunch or classroom support.

The strike was very emotional. It was bittersweet walking away from the job I love. But we were solid, standing together for what we are worth.

Our strike made a difference. We got a three-year contract with three-percent raises each year.

Losing three days of pay was nothing compared to what we gained—not just the money but the respect. If people in Rockford didn't know about AFSCME before the strike, they know now. 🦋

AFSCME Members Recognized



At this year's convention, AFSCME Council 31 recognized extraordinary members with special awards. AFSCME Local 978, employees of the LaSalle County Nursing Home (far left and center left), received this year's Public Service Award for working together to protect the health and safety of elderly and ailing residents during a devastating tornado. Benjamin Habing of AFSCME Local 3600 at Lawrence Correctional Center (center right) is our Steward of the Year because he helps provide a safer and more secure work environment for his fellow members by ensuring they are informed, fully supported and well represented. And Danny Williams of AFSCME Local 29 (far right) at Shapiro Developmental Center has distinguished himself with three decades of service, activism and dedication to AFSCME members and to justice for all working people; he was recognized with the Jane Fitzgerald Award, in remembrance of another extraordinary union activist who passed away in 1996. 🦋

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



Members of the Wexford bargaining committee along with AFSCME Council 31 staff representatives Joe Plugger and Roger Griffith.

Correctional health care employees stand united

MORE THAN 800 NURSES, LPNs, CNAs, nurse practitioners, medical assistants, dental assistants, psychiatrists and mental health professionals work in adult correctional facilities across the state, employed by the private medical contractor, Wexford. These AFSCME members fought hard to protect what they have and prevent the for-profit company from taking anything away from them.

It's hard working for the "lowest bidder," said AFSCME Local 494 member Kathy Kissiar, a medical records assistant at Pontiac Correctional Center who has worked for nine different vendors in her career.

"I've been in the prison system for 28 years and it seems like every time we go to the bargaining table we have to convince them again that we're valuable—that we're human beings doing an important job," Kissiar said. "Their cuts seem to always be off the backs of the people who are doing this work."

This time was different. "This was the most united team that we've ever had," Kissiar said. "That was evident from the very beginning. We stood fast and they didn't take

anything away."

Negotiations dragged on for almost a year, said Christine Vinyard of AFSCME Local 203, a nurse at Centralia Correctional Center.

"It was a long uphill battle," she said. "The condition of the state and money owed to Wexford made it difficult. But we managed to reach an agreement in an environment where the government is anti-union."

She said it was clear after the state budget was finally enacted this summer that Wexford felt it had some breathing room. The state owes the contractor \$250 million.

The bargaining team held the line on insurance costs and beat back the employer's attempts to cut their hard-won benefits. They also secured a half-percent increase for the first two years of the five-year deal with a wage reopener in 2019.

There is a medical staffing shortage that's nearing crisis proportions at the prisons. It's hard for a company to hire employees to work in the prison system for significantly less money and fewer benefits than state employees.

Plus, Vinyard said, it's about more than the money. The prison system "is a difficult environment to provide the best nursing care you can, with antiquated equipment and limited supplies," she said. Also, "not a lot of nurses want

to work in a facility where you have to deal with taunting or having urine or feces thrown at you."

Kissiar said that being an AFSCME member has made a world of difference in a hard job. During the first 10 years of her employment, she didn't have a union.

With the union came a "successorship" law that AFSCME successfully lobbied for. "It means that whoever the vendor is, our union stays and we don't miss a beat," Kissiar said. "Before the union we had no recourse for unfair treatment or terminations when a new vendor came in."

Kissiar, Vinyard and their entire bargaining team are proud of the work they accomplished together. And they are proud of their union.

The bargaining team was led by AFSCME Council Staff Representatives Joe Plugger and Roger Griffith. Kissiar and Vinyard were joined by members from every Wexford local: Jennifer Jones, Trent Lapp, Christine Alexander, Patrick Pemberton, Natasha Woods, April Hunt, Mary Rogers, Amy Jones, Jacob Weatherford, Paula Young, Joan Lake, Alice (Kym) VanVickle, Merisa Wilson Smith, Joshua Fulhorst (no longer a Wexford employee), Bettie Jones, Jennifer Tabit, Susie Flesner, Stacey Howarter, Kevin Blevins, Kim Stephens, Angie Lupton, Shaliza Odom, Judy Lampley and Belinda Ruppert.

reduced staff hours and shuttered programming.

Dana Chavis is a medical assistant in a school-based program who has worked with the district for 27 years. She helps provide medical services to school-aged children, including physicals, immunizations, STD and pregnancy tests, and more. Before coming to the school program she worked for more than two decades in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, serving mothers and young children.

Chavis said that negotiations were fairly smooth after a state budget was enacted. Before that, layoffs were the norm and there were no wage increases. The reduction in staff only made Chavis and her co-workers work even harder, she said.

"You still want the community, the children, to have the services. It's not their fault that the budget wasn't signed."

For a few months, employees had to work one day fewer each week and the school program was closed for four months.

"It was a hard and trying time," Chavis said. And that's why she feels it's critical for AFSCME members and communities across the state to get active in the upcoming gubernatorial election.

"We have to get out and get supporters to make sure this doesn't happen again. Rauner being in office has not been a good thing. A lot of state programs were cut and people need those services. We need everybody to come out and vote."

Now that Chavis is back serving the students since the school program reopened, there are two staff working there instead of four. Local 3565 members know they have a long way to go just to get back to what they had before the budget crisis and the local's nutritionists, environmental health employees, clericals, maintenance workers, nurses and medical assistants are ready to keep fighting for more.

The bargaining team included Chavis and Juanita Jefferson, and was led by AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Carla Gillespie.



AFSCME Local 3565 members Brittany Bean and Dana Chavis.

Eastside Health District workers serve their community

AFSCME LOCAL 3565 MEMBERS at the Eastside Health District in East Saint Louis won a three-percent pay raise in the most successful negotiations they've ever had.

The last few years have been very tough on the community health care provider. Gov. Rauner's budget blockade forced three rounds of layoffs,

SHORT REPORTS



AFSCME helped Local 3492 member Yolanda Randle win her job back.

Righting a wrong

AFTER 10 YEARS WITH THE Ray Graham Association caring for individuals with developmental disabilities, Yolanda Randle, a member of AFSCME Local 3492, was terminated based on a false allegation that she had pushed a client.

The evidence showed that the client had physically attacked Randle, who called 911. The operator instructed her to lock herself in a bathroom to protect her safety. While proceeding to the bathroom, Randle made incidental contact with the client.

But when the client accused Randle of abuse, Ray Graham had no choice but to terminate her employment, as required by the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Randle turned to her union for help. Audrey Lake, her union steward, helped her through the grievance process.

"Audrey and [local president] Tim Olaosebikan were excellent," Randle said. "Every time I reached out they answered the phone and if they didn't know the answer, they got back to me. They said I had a good case; they kept it positive, which kept me sane."

Six months later, an arbitrator reversed the discharge and Randle was back on the

job.

"I'm very excited to get my job back," said Randle, who struggled to care for her disabled son while she was off work. "It was really hard. I was denied unemployment. I worried, how was I going to live day to day. I wouldn't wish this on anybody."

During the arbitration, Ray Graham management said only

"It helped me so much knowing that I had the union behind me."

positive things about Randle; they had dismissed her because of the state requirement but felt strongly that she had been wrongfully terminated. After that supportive feedback from her employer, Randle felt more comfortable and hopeful.

Randle has been back on the job now for two months. And she's happy to be there.

"I like what I'm doing," she said. "The pay is not great, but I like working with people, helping them accomplish their goals and be there for them during

their trials."

Randle now makes sure to talk to her co-workers, especially new hires, about their rights and how important it is to be part of the union.

"It helped me so much knowing that I had the union behind me," she said. "If I was crying, I could talk to my people and they'd lift me up and I'd have a smile on my face."

Union members elected to pension fund boards

TWO AFSCME-BACKED CANDIDATES—both union members—were elected to Chicago-area pension fund boards in two October elections.

AFSCME Local 3315 President Kevin Ochalla, an Assistant Public Defender in the Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender, is the first AFSCME representative on the Cook County Pension Board.

"You can count on me to do all that I can in this position to make sure that our pension fund is strong and stable—and our pension benefits protected," Ochalla told his fellow Cook County employees after the election.

AFSCME-backed Verna Thompson was elected to the Municipal Employees' Annuity and Benefit Fund (MEABF) board, representing city of Chicago employees and non-educational employees in the Chicago Public Schools.

Thompson is an SEIU Local 73 member at the Chicago Traffic Management Authority.

"I am looking forward to being a strong advocate for the workers covered by MEABF,"

"You can count on me to do all that I can to make sure that our pension fund is strong and stable."

Thompson said after her victory over an incumbent. "Now the hard work begins."

U.S. Congress pushing massive tax cut for corporations

CORPORATIONS AND SUPER-rich executives love the GOP tax plan.

On Nov. 16, House Republicans—including every Republican representative from Illinois—passed a major revision of the tax code which gives big tax breaks to corporations, while weakening access to health care for many middle-income families.

Republicans in the Senate passed their version of the

corporate tax giveaway bill on December 1. The Senate bill would actually increase taxes on families making less than \$75,000 a year.


The GOP tax plan is very unpopular. Recent polls say only 30 percent of Americans support the plan and most believe they won't see a cut.

The so-called tax reform package could hurt middle income homeowners, anyone with student debt to pay off, and taxpayers in states like Illinois who will lose an important deduction.

Both the House and Senate versions of the tax legislation cut the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 20 percent, reduce some personal taxpayers' rates and erase or reduce available deductions for individuals. The bills both are projected to grow federal deficits by \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years.

Fundamentally, it's a "bait and switch" scheme because the cuts that are available for individuals will eventually be phased out, while the corporate tax cuts are locked in place.

As On the Move went to press, the House and Senate were crafting a final version of the bill. Republicans rushed this overhaul with as little scrutiny as possible because the more Americans know about this so-called "tax reform" the less they like it.

Around the country AFSCME members mobilized to try to block passage of the disastrous legislation. 



AFSCME-backed Kevin Ochalla (Local 3315) and Verna Thompson (SEIU Local 73) were elected to Chicago-area pension fund boards.

Iowa GOP decimates workers' rights

Severe limits on collective bargaining show party's true colors

Iowa has one of the oldest state “right to work” laws in the country. Since 1947, Iowans have worked under the kind of law that is proven to result in lower pay, fewer benefits and higher risk of workplace injury and death.

But despite the obstacles such a law presents, members of AFSCME and other public sector unions have managed to make significant gains in improving their working lives.

And that’s just what Republicans in that state did not want to see happening. So when Republicans took control of the state legislature and governorship in 2017 for the first time in nearly 20 years, they immediately set about passing a new law that effectively eliminates collective bargaining rights for public employees.

The new law limits union contract negotiations to base wages only and bans bargaining over all other workplace issues, such as health insurance, seniority, job safety or grievance procedures.

The law also bars employers from deducting union dues or political contributions from members’ pay checks, creating a costly administrative burden for unions who must develop other means of dues payment.

One of the law’s most burdensome requirements is that public employees are required to re-certify their unions with each new contract.

In order to re-certify, a majority of workers in a bargaining unit must vote in favor of the union, not just a majority of voters. Employees who do not vote are counted as “no” votes. “The rules are such that there is not a single elected official—including all of those who voted for this crap—who could be elected under them,” said Ken Sagar, president of the Iowa Federation of Labor.


If the union loses a recertification vote, it is immediately decertified, the current contract is rendered unenforceable and workers can’t negotiate collectively again for two years, when they would have the opportunity to form a new union. The union itself must pay for the every one of the elections that take place.

Iowa is home to 180,000

public sector employees, 40,000 of which are represented by AFSCME Council 61. They will be forced to vote to retain their union every two to three years. Modeled after Wisconsin’s 2011 collective bargaining law, this law could mean for Iowa what it has meant for Wisconsin—tens of thousands of workers losing their union.

“The biggest losers are the people of Iowa,” said Iowa Democratic Sen. Joe Bolkcom.

When it became apparent during a roll-call vote that the state Senate would pass the bill in February, a crowd in the gallery booed and chanted, “Shame, shame, shame.”

In both chambers, only Republicans voted in favor of the legislation. Gov. Bruce Rauner in Illinois has long been an admirer of Wisconsin’s anti-worker strategy; if he retains his governorship and the legislature becomes majority Republican with the help of Rauner’s millions, Illinois workers could be facing the same fate. 



“The biggest losers are the people of Iowa.”

Iowa workers vote: Union yes


Iowa Republicans thought they had struck a death blow against public employee unions in their state when they passed House File 291 last February. The law requires that in order for workers to be able to keep their union, they must have a majority vote to re-certify every two years.

And here’s the real Catch-22: A majority of workers in each unit—not just a majority of those voting—must vote yes in order to retain their union. So in a unit of 100 workers, where 49 vote for the union and one votes against, the workers would still lose their union.

In October, Iowa public sector unions held the first round of these “re-certification” votes. The results sent a resounding

message to Republican elected officials who thought they had union members boxed in.

Thousands of workers came out to vote in an incredible show of unity, especially in a long-time “right to work” state. The Iowa Public Employment Relations Board showed that 436 out of 468 bargaining units voted to re-certify and voter participation was at 88 percent, significantly higher than Iowa’s voter turnout rate in recent presidential elections.

The election result “shows that public sector employees, working men and women, both members and non-members, want to have a union, want to have a voice at the table,” said Danny Homan, president of AFSCME Iowa Council 61. “I believe this sends a very strong message.” 

RETIREE NOTES



The new AFSCME Chapter 31 Executive Board was sworn in at the biennial Retirees Convention in October.

AFSCME Retirees ready for fights ahead

THE BIENNIAL AFSCME Chapter 31 Retirees Convention was held in Springfield on October 18-19. Discussions ranged from current and future battles to how to be an effective advocate.

Members set the chapter's agenda for the next two years, vowing that AFSCME Retirees Chapter 31 will act relentlessly to meet the demands of protecting retirement security:

Work against the reelection of Bruce Rauner

BRUCE RAUNER HAS MADE IT clear that his top priority is to demolish the only movement that gives workers and retirees a strong unified voice—the labor movement. The labor movement is responsible for tirelessly protecting retiree pensions, retiree health insurance, and programs dedicated to grant seniors dignity and respect in their retirement years. AFSCME Chapter 31 will work with Council 31 to develop a massive volunteer force that will act to prevent Bruce Rauner from being reelected.

Protect pensions

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSIONS in Illinois represent a key element of employee compensation for thousands of workers. Those who have worked hard and played by the rules should be able to retire and live out their years with dignity and security. AFSCME Chapter 31 will contin-

ue to oppose and educate members of pension threats.

Protect Social Security and Medicare

CHAPTER 31 REJECTS ALL efforts to balance the federal budget on the backs of seniors and people with disabilities by cutting benefits in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid for either current or future beneficiaries. These programs provide dignity and security to senior citizens. Chapter 31 will work in coalition with all other concerned organizations to build the strongest possible bulwark against all those who seek to shred the retirement safety net that Social Security and Medicare provide.

New members voted into Hall of Fame

FIVE NEW MEMBERS WERE voted into the AFSCME Retiree Hall of Fame at this year's retiree convention. Hall of Fame nominations are reserved for members who have exhibited stellar advocacy and dedication to AFSCME and the labor movement. Congratulations to the new inductees.

ALMA WINGARD worked at the Chicago Public Library for 35 years and was a dedicated union member. Alma held various positions in her union until retirement in 2003. Upon retirement, she joined Sub-chapter 60 and was elected Chapter 31's

secretary-treasurer at the 2017 AFSCME Retirees Convention.

DON TODD was a longtime activist at the Lincoln Developmental Center where he helped to build a strong local union. He went on to work for AFSCME Council 31 to help organize new members. Upon leaving Council 31, he became president of Retiree Sub-chapter 86. Don is also a Chapter 31 executive board member.

JAY FERRARO started as a member of AFSCME Local 1058 in September 1974. He worked for the city of Rockford and served as the union steward for the Water Department. In 1976 he became president of Local 1058 and subsequently joined the staff of Council 31, where he was a staff representative for more than two decades. After retiring, he joined Retirees Sub-chapter 69 and in 2013 was elected president. He also serves on AFSCME Chapter 31's retiree executive board.

KIM JOHNSON retired in 2007. While working, she was a union activist in Locals 1866 and 416. Kim became a member of AFSCME Retirees in late 2007 and was AFSCME Sub-chapter 73 recording secretary. In 2009, she began organizing Sub-chapter 68, which was chartered in 2010. Soon after, Kim was elected president of Sub-chapter 68 and then elected to the Chapter's executive board in 2011.

LARRY BROWN was active in Local 1275 at Menard Correctional since 1984. He was elected

trustee, executive board member, and vice president as a working member. Larry was chief steward for many years before he retired in 2002. After joining the retirees, he became Sub-chapter 56 president, an executive board member and then president of Chapter 31 Retirees.


GOP tax plan dangerous for retirees

THE REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN—which takes its cues from President Trump's budget—will strip retirees of tax deductions while giving out massive tax breaks to corporations and the wealthy.

The plans would eliminate deductions for medical expenses,

which help older Americans with chronic conditions afford care. In fact, three-quarters of Americans who claim the medical expense deduction are 50 years or older. Older Americans who are saddled with large out-of-pocket medical expenses can currently report the figure as a deduction on their taxes, but if the tax plan passes, that option will no longer exist and fixed-income seniors will suffer dramatic losses.

Retirees will also be unable to deduct property taxes under the GOP tax plan, which eliminates deductions for state and local taxes. This tax break currently helps retirees afford to stay in their home longer. Without it, seniors will sustain a heavy financial blow.

Read more about the tax scam on page 13. 

AFSCME RETIREES

Fighting for Dignity and Security

You worked hard to earn a decent retirement—but the fight for retirement security isn't over. Pensions, Medicare, Social Security—they're all under attack by the wealthy and powerful.

Retirees Chapter 31 is helping to lead the battle to protect retirement security. Be part of that fight! Dues are just \$3 per month and will be deducted directly from your pension check.



JOIN US!
AFSCME31.ORG/RETIREES

Gemillia Staple

Social Worker

AFSCME Local 1038, Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES



“All of our ICRE staff are passionate about the students that we work with. ... Having a stable, dedicated staff team makes a huge difference for these students.”

accesses all the resources available to them as they transition into independence. I help them obtain all the benefits to which they are entitled, such as Social Security, health insurance, transportation assistance, home care services and housing.”

isn't the next best fit for you, where will you go and how will you learn the skills you need to be productive in society?

“At the end of our two- to three-year program, students are in the process of finding a lease on their own place. They are the payee on their Social Security benefits and they know how to budget and manage their own bills. They can call transportation services for a ride. They are well-equipped to be a part of society and live independently. That's all for the best, for them and for our state.”

What is ICRE?

“The Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education is a residential transition program for students with severe physical disabilities, ages 18 to 22 years. Half the students stay here overnight during the week in dormitories. We have an educational program that teaches daily living skills and offers vocational training for employment. We offer physical, speech, activity and occupational therapies.

“Our goal is to help the students be as independent as possible. We teach them money and home-management skills, as well as daily living skills so they can handle their own personal care or learn how to direct a personal assistant to help them complete those tasks.”

What is your role in the program?

“As a social worker, I work with the students on the social-emotional component of life. I conduct group therapy sessions, as well as individual and group counseling. Together we discuss things like etiquette in social and professional situations, being a vocal advocate for yourself, and work-life skills such as stress management, decision-making, conflict resolution and communication skills.

“Individually, I ensure each student

How did you become a social worker at ICRE?

“I've worked for the state for 10 years. I started at ICRE as a residential care worker and worked in the residential program for five years. I liked what I was doing but I wanted to be able to make more of a difference in a broader scope. I had my bachelor's degree, but I wanted to do more. So, using AFSCME's Upward Mobility Program, I went back to school and got my social work degree.”

What's your favorite part of the job?

“Working with the students and building that relationship is the best thing. I enjoy being someone that the students can trust, someone they can come to with issues and concerns and feel their needs are going to be met when they meet with me. It's so fulfilling to know where each student started, then see the steps they've taken in the program to become independent.”

Why is ICRE important to both students and our state?

“There aren't many programs that serve individuals with physical disabilities. If you graduate high school and college

Why is the union important to ICRE and to you?

“All of our ICRE staff are passionate about the students that we work with. They love making a difference and they stay for many years. Having a stable, dedicated staff team makes a huge difference for these students.

“For me, working in this program has prepared me for what was to come in my own life. I have twin six-year-old sons.

They were born extremely premature at five months, and my younger son was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. I knew exactly what I needed to do to help him be as successful as possible.

“I needed special accommodations and the union offered that support for me. My sons were in the hospital for four months and the bills were tremendous. Then I needed more time off to care for them when they were ready to come home. So with help from the union—my health insurance, my paid leave and the EAP [Personal Support Program]—I was able to work through all that and keep providing for my family.”

