



ON THE

#181 • JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2018

MOVE

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

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Rauner pushes to weaken rights, cut benefits

He's blind to the demands and dangers many public employees face every day



BY

ROBERTA LYNCH

THIS IS THE YEAR WE CAN SET A BETTER COURSE IF WE ARE UNITED AND DETERMINED.

Bruce Rauner is at it again. He ran our state deep into debt, destabilized its institutions, demoralized its people—and his solution to the giant mess he's created is to beat up some more on public employees. Only a psychiatrist could explain why Rauner so consistently singles out middle class public employees as his targets, seeking to reduce our income and make our lives more difficult while asking nothing of our state's wealthy elite.

In the latest instance—his 2019 budget address—Rauner laid out three lines of attack against public service workers: remove health care benefits from collective bargaining so that he and other employers can impose big cost increases on state, university and local government employees; cut the pension benefits of current state and university employees; and take away health care benefits from retired teachers.

Rauner claims he doesn't think it's fair that private sector workers should pay taxes that allow public sector workers to have better benefits than they do. This is as empty an argument as you'll ever hear. After all, why should middle class taxpayers (including public employees) have to pay taxes to support the countless tax breaks (totaling over \$3 billion) that big business gets in our state? And why should lower-income taxpayers who can't afford a new car or their own home have to pay taxes so the governor can be flown around in a state plane or driven around in state SUV's and get to live in a big mansion in Springfield (when he already owns nine homes)?

Rauner's assault takes direct aim at public employees after a year which powerfully illuminates the unique and daunting challenges that so many face on the job every day—the risks they take, the sacrifices they make, and the consequences they face in the service of the public good.

I am writing these words just a few days after attending the funeral service for Pamela Sue Knight, a DCFS caseworker who died after having been brutally beaten when she attempted to rescue a two-year-old child from an abusive

parent. Where was Bruce Rauner's recognition of the courage and dedication of Pam Knight and the risks that DCFS employees take every day to protect kids?

And after introducing policy changes that made our state's correctional centers more chaotic and violent, where was Rauner's concern for the DOC and DJJ staff who are being assaulted by inmates with increasing frequency? Why did he fail to even mention employees like Mary B., an educator at IYC St. Charles, who was punched repeatedly in the face and knocked out cold by one of the incarcerated youth, causing lasting damage to her face and neck?

Or Silvia N., a correctional officer at East Moline CC, alone on duty when she was attacked by an inmate and knocked unconscious with a rock? Or the growing number of staff injuries at Pontiac CC, like the one suffered by Zack S., a correctional officer who an inmate stabbed in the head with a shank?

Does Bruce Rauner have even the faintest idea of what it's like to face the daily threat of assault just to earn a living, like Chester MHC security therapy aide Geoff F. who a forensic patient attacked and nearly choked to death?

And then there is the highly-publicized crisis at the Quincy Veterans' Home, where multiple outbreaks of Legionnaire's Disease over the past three years have left 13 residents dead. Through each outbreak, the employees—public employees—at the home have remained on the job, continuing to care for the veterans despite the risks to their own health. Employees like nursing assistant Antoi-


nette B. who had to be hospitalized after coming down with the disease.

Unfortunately, many, many more public service workers are injured in the line of duty every day in our state. Yes, their jobs carry inherent risks, but in far too many instances those risks are made far worse by an employer that fails to make any attempt to minimize them.

Everyone deserves respect on the job, affordable health care and dignity in retirement. Yet public employees in Illinois now must work under the shadow of a governor who not only dismisses the value of the work we do, but demeans us while seeking to make health care less accessible and retirement less secure.

We need a governor who acts out of basic human decency. A governor who cares about safe working conditions and works to reduce the risks that employees face on the job. We need a governor who respects and values public employees and the vital work we do, not one who batters and belittles us seeking to take away our rights and drive down our standard of living.

This is the year we can set a better course, but it won't be easy. Rauner has untold wealth at his disposal, utter ruthlessness as his modus operandi, and not even a nodding acquaintance with honesty or integrity.

It will take an epic effort to defeat him. But if we are united and determined in our own ranks, if we join with others who want a better state, if we refuse to succumb to cynicism or despair, and if we work our hearts out, this November's election can mark a new start for Illinois. 

On the Move

AFSCME Illinois On the Move is published six times annually by Illinois Public Employees Council 31 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO. Send correspondence to: nmcnamara@afscme31.org or: AFSCME, On the Move, 205 N. Michigan Ave., 21st Floor, Chicago, IL 60601

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Larry Brown

Raises make big difference

Buoyed by pay increase, community disability workers ready to fight for more

Nonprofit agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities have been among the hardest hit by Illinois' fiscal woes. They are almost entirely dependent on state funding that for years was effectively frozen, with no additional allocations to provide for employee pay increases.

Through all those years, AFSCME led the fight in the Illinois General Assembly for increased funding, joining with employers and advocates to make the case that direct support personnel (DSPs) deserve a living wage.

Even during the Rauner budget blockade, AFSCME members in community agencies kept organizing, lobbying and fighting. Legislators couldn't help but hear their message and be moved by their dedication. So when a budget was finally enacted last summer, it included an additional 75 cents an hour—nearly a nine percent pay increase for these very underpaid employees.

Poverty wages in the disability care field have made it extremely difficult for caregivers to provide for their own families and short-changed services for people with disabilities by driving dangerously high rates of staff turnover.

But now, just a few short months since the new pay rates have been implemented, AFSCME members are seeing big differences in their daily lives. And the victory has inspired them to keep fighting for better pay for their demanding and critical work.

Mary Askins-Smith

**AFSCME LOCAL 1831
SAVE (ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATED
VOCATIONAL ENTERPRISES, INC.)**

I'M IN MY 60S AND THIS is my 37th year at SAVE. I've always worked more than one job up until just a few years ago. I was a single parent and I had to make sure I could raise my kids. Seems like I was working all the time.

Since 2000, I've only received a pay raise a few times and they amounted to less than two dollars total—in nearly 20 years! It seems like even though we're committed to the people we serve, no one is committed to us.

That's why we really do appreciate AFSCME fighting for us and getting a raise for us. I wish it were more, but it's an important first step.

I absolutely love the people I work with. We do vocational work in a factory-like setting. They work hard. They're just good people.

But it's always a struggle with the bosses. They made it seem like we had to bargain just to get the state funding that is our right—and they

were threatening to give non-state-funded employees a lesser amount.

We decided to stay together. We made sure that every union employee, no matter where their funding came from, got those 75 cents. We always need to stick together.

James Sitati

**AFSCME LOCAL 4008
LITTLE CITY FOUNDATION**

FOR MOST DSPS, IT'S NOT THE wages that keep you here. You get attached to the people you're serving, and that's what keeps you here despite the challenges of long hours, lack of sleep and low wages.

We are able to make a difference in people's lives and see the immediate impact of what we do right in front of our eyes. Whether you're teaching them how to tie their shoes or shave, or helping them learn how to do the laundry or cook a meal, you're showing them how to rely less on someone else and be more independent. That keeps us wanting to do more.

Now that we got this money from the state, it's been a shot in the arm. It's way, way overdue. Our paychecks are extending a little further now and people can do some things that were harder to do before.

I hope this helps with the turnover problem. It's hard for our clients when they get used to somebody's face, dealing with someone they know, and out of the blue that person is no longer there. We also need to give new hires more incentive to stay in this field.

Christine Rivera

**AFSCME LOCAL 3492
RAY GRAHAM ASSOCIATION**

AFTER THE 75-CENT PAY RAISE, I don't feel as stressed. I'm able to spend more time at home with my grandkids because I don't have to work as many hours. Before, I was working so much overtime just to get by. All I did was work, go home, sleep, and then go back to work. Now I can afford to fill up my gas tank and go places. I'm able to enjoy life a bit more.

I just recently had my 16-year anniversary and I can tell you that I stay here first and foremost because of the residents that we care for. I enjoy this field and I went to school for my nursing assistant certification because I want to do this work.

But the other reason I stay is this fight to get a better wage for DSPs like me. We've been working for this wage increase for years and the hope for a successful outcome has kept me active in the union. I want to help those that will come after me.

It's really exciting when you see that a difference is being made. Even if it's taken a few years and we still have a ways to go, we have to recognize that this is encouragement to keep pushing. It will happen. I have confidence in what we're doing. 🦋



Local 1831 members Paula Johnson, Tonya Walker (front), TJ Walker, Mary Askins-Smith, Karey Smith, and Vito Watson celebrate their new union contract.

Amicus briefs filed in *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*

Thirty-nine amicus briefs have been filed with the U.S. Supreme Court in opposition to the lawsuit initiated by Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner that aims to take away the freedom of working people to join together in strong unions and speak up for themselves and their communities.

Amicus briefs are legal documents filed by non-litigants with a strong interest in a court case's subject matter. The briefs advise the court of relevant, additional information or arguments that the court might wish to consider.

Collectively, the authors of the amicus briefs supporting AFSCME's position in the case of *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31* argue for upholding *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* (1977), a case in which the Supreme Court unanimously agreed that Fair Share fees for public employees are permissible under the First Amendment.

The amicus briefs filed on behalf of AFSCME and working people come from a wide-ranging set of supporters, including conservative First Amendment originalists, Nobel prize-winning economists, state and local public employers from Illinois and across the country, Republican lawmakers, child protective service workers, more than 85

civil rights groups including the Human Rights Campaign, ecumenical communities and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, mayors of major U.S. cities, as well as U.S. senators who examine the political intent behind this case. (The amicus briefs are available at SCOTUSBlog.com.)

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops particularly notes its longstanding opposition to "right-to-work" legislation, pointing to various papal statements and encyclicals in support of labor rights dating back to 1891 and as recent as Pope Francis's June 2017 address. He told delegates from the Confederation of Trade Unions in Italy: "There is no good society without a good union, and there is no good union that is not reborn every day in the peripheries, that does not transform the discarded stones of the economy into its cornerstones."

Compare this broad array of supporters to the briefs filed




Timeline for *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*

- **January 12:** Opening briefs filed
- **January 19:** Amicus briefs (39) filed in support of AFSCME
- **February 24:** National Working People's Day of Action
- **February 26:** Oral arguments
- **Decision:** Issued by Supreme Court between April and June

by the other side in this case, which are mostly authored by political interest groups funded by a small band of right-wing interests.

"It is clear that *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31* is a polit-

ical attack on the freedoms of working people by the same billionaires and corporate interests that have for years rigged our economy and politics in their own favor," said AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director

Roberta Lynch. "At a time when America desperately needs to regain its faith in our government institutions, we hope the Supreme Court will see this ruse for what it is and decide the case on the merits." 

The real Illinois Policy Institute

IPI bashes public employees non-stop

The Illinois Policy Institute suddenly claims to be incredibly concerned about the well-being of Illinois workers. They say that's why their legal arm is backing the *Janus* lawsuit against AFSCME Council 31.

But why would an organization that's been beating up on public workers since its founding suddenly decide to champion their rights? Hmm... something doesn't smell right here.

Who is the Illinois Policy Institute, really? Let's review

the facts.

The IPI:

- Called on Gov. Bruce Rauner to "lay off the entire state workforce and close the pension system."
- Said state employees should

take a 27% pay cut because "Illinois government workers are costing the state dearly" with "inflated pay" and "egregious perks."

- Pushed for huge hikes in health costs for state and university employees and retirees.
- Took more than half a million dollars in funding from Bruce Rauner's foundation.
- 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."
- Supported privatization, calling Sandy Springs, Georgia, "an example of efficiency for Illinois and the rest of the country" because it has privatized all local government services except police and fire.
- Attacked state employees' union contract because it provides for paid holidays and a fair disciplinary process.

After reading the facts, the truth is clear: The well-being of workers is the very last thing the Illinois Policy Insti-

tute cares about.

As AFSCME Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman said, the real IPI is "a shadowy, billionaire-backed front group that calls itself a 'think tank' but is actually single-mindedly devoted to dismantling the very organization that has helped workers improve their lives—public sector unions."

The IPI and Bruce Rauner share an agenda: Attack working people—strip their rights, drive down their wages, wipe out their unions and destroy the labor movement.

Continued on next page

We are AFSCME Strong!

A FSCME members have been working together for decades to improve their working lives, their families' well-being and their communities' futures. But that freedom to organize is exactly what the dark forces behind the Janus court case want to stop.

"The fact that workers have a voice on the job through their unions galls the ultra-rich," AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said, "because when workers join together they can improve their wages and benefits—and influence the decisions that affect their lives."

Without Fair Share fees that Janus seeks to outlaw, the union's power to negotiate fair contracts and lobby for legislative protections would be diminished. But AFSCME members are more steadfast than ever in the face of what an anti-worker decision in the Janus case could mean. They are joining together and recommitting themselves to our union through the AFSCME Strong program.

Jill Krippel

AFSCME LOCAL 997

GOV. RAUNER WAS ELECTED A month after I started working for the state as a revenue tax specialist. I was surprised to



"I'm AFSCME Strong for my fellow workers."

find out that state employees had a union. I thought it was just for teachers and construction workers. It threw me for a loop so I signed on as a fair share fee-payer.

But when I heard that Rauner was trying to get rid

of fair share fees altogether, I thought back to my union orientation when they said the most powerful tool we have is our numbers. I decided to become a full dues-paying member because the union takes care of everybody and I wanted to pay my fair share.

For young people like me, it's really hard to find an entry-level position that pays a fair wage because of the wage stagnation in our country. And when you turn 26 you also need to worry about where you can get good, affordable health insurance. The union does all that for us and that's why it's so important to me.

We get decent wages and fair benefits because of the union. It wasn't always like this, and in a lot of other jobs it's not like this. The only reason private-sector jobs are decent is because of union jobs.

That's why it's important for us to stay united. I'm AFSCME Strong for my fellow workers and for people hoping for a good job. If we don't stand together, the things we've fought for—our wages, our benefits, our rights—can be taken away from us.

Chuck Coulter

AFSCME LOCAL 3537

I'VE WORKED FOR DEKALB County for two years as a



"I'm AFSCME Strong because the union has our backs."

maintenance worker and I was sworn in as president of our local union in November. I love sticking up for people who didn't think they had a voice.


We are signing our members up in the AFSCME Strong program because there is power in numbers and with the challenges we're facing, our unity is more important than ever. We are the union. Every one of us is part of it. That's what makes us strong.

I come from a middle class family. My dad was a military man and had 30-plus years as a factory plant engineer. I've always been taught that you wake up in the morning and you go to work. I've worked in nonunion jobs and it's a lot harder if you're going it alone.

It's a lot easier to go to work every day and do your best when you know someone has your back.

We're the lifeblood of this community. The work we're doing is so important but it can be undervalued. We work in the highway department, in the health department and in the county nursing home. We're average people taking care of average people and we deserve to be taken care of too.

One person might not be heard and can be easily ignored. But if we're united, then they can't ignore us.

I'm AFSCME Strong because the union has our back. There is strength in numbers. Together we can have a voice. 

THE REAL IPI

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A massive anti-union campaign

THE IPI IS COUNTING ON THE Supreme Court's pro-corporate, anti-union majority to ban public sector unions from collecting fees from represented employees who are not members—creating national "right-to-work" for the public sector.

The State Policy Network, to which the Illinois Policy Institute belongs, has hailed the Janus case as a "mortal blow" against public employee unions.

To help it along, the IPI is laying the groundwork for a massive outreach campaign in which they will contact every public employee in Illinois to encourage them to drop out of their union.

The IPI claims they're

helping employees by letting them know that the union will have to represent them—and they'll still benefit from the union's gains—whether they're members or not.

But their assertions don't pass the smell test. 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 real gains for anyone.

What the Illinois Policy Institute fails to say is that if enough members quit the union, there will no longer be a union. And that's exactly what Rauner and the Illinois Policy Institute really want.



Illinois Policy Institute CEO John Tillman cozies up to Gov. Bruce Rauner in 2014.

Ready for change in 2018

AFSCME members set legislative agenda and electoral strategy



AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch addresses delegates to the Jan. 27 PEOPLE Conference, where members and retirees voted on the union's legislative agenda and electoral endorsements.

Hundreds of delegates from AFSCME local unions across the state gathered in Springfield on January 27 for the AFSCME PEOPLE Conference to set the union's 2018 legislative agenda and formulate a plan to elect pro-worker candidates in the March primary and November general elections.

They met at a time of unprecedented challenge as a powerful network of the super-rich seek to strip working people of our ability to come together in strong unions. As we're fighting back at the bargaining table,

at our worksites, at rallies and on picket lines, and in the state and federal courts, we must also fight back at the polls.

Anti-union forces are marshaling piles of money in their determination to re-elect Bruce

Rauner as governor and gain control of the Illinois General Assembly. It's more important than ever for union members to come together to support candidates who will stand with working people. And that was a key theme for speakers and workshops at the conference.

"If it weren't for being involved in politics and making our voices heard in that arena, public employees in Illinois wouldn't have their unions today," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch told the packed crowd.

Describing the growing influence of the Koch Brothers and the shadowy network of millionaires and billionaires

who are consolidating ever greater wealth and power, Lynch stressed the critical importance of grassroots involvement in the 2018 elections. "This is the year that people power beats dark money!" she said.

"We can't keep rewarding the rich and abandoning the poor," Sen. Don Harmon told the AFSCME members and retirees. He said the time is now to protect working families and create a fair tax structure in Illinois: "Supporting unions is the key to supporting middle class families."

AFSCME members and retirees also met in small-group workshops to tackle big challenges that union members face in 2018 and beyond. They focused in particular on getting the message out to co-workers, friends and neighbors in order to win key races in 2018.

"We have a vision where work is valued over wealth and people are valued over greed," Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman said as he closed the conference. Members and retirees were called to work toward a better future for everyone in Illinois.

Electoral endorsements

LOCAL UNION PRESIDENTS, retiree sub-chapter presidents and PEOPLE chairs of AFSCME Council 31 met on a regional basis in advance of the con-

ference to review the voting records of incumbent state legislators and interview new candidates. The PEOPLE Executive Committee, comprised of the regional committee chairs, made final endorsements for state legislative races based on those recommendations.

And at the Jan. 27 conference, the full body of delegates voted on endorsements in statewide and Congressional races.

The PEOPLE conference did not make any endorsement in the Democratic gubernatorial primary. Recognizing the importance of focusing all of our union's efforts on defeating Bruce Rauner in November, the conference voted to delegate authority to the PEOPLE Executive Committee to make an official endorsement in the general election as soon as the primary election is over.

In the race for attorney general, the PEOPLE Executive Committee recommended the endorsement of state Sen. Kwame Raoul, currently serving as a state senator, based on his Senate voting record and his pledge to make the attorney general's office more responsive to the issues of importance to Illinois workers. The conference accepted the recommendation and voted to endorse Sen. Raoul for AG in the Democratic primary.

Urge your legislators to support back pay appropriation bill!

AFSCME's lobbying team is working hard to build support in the Illinois General Assembly for new legislation to fund the remaining back pay still owed to thousands of state employees since a pay raise was withheld in 2011. Senate Bill 2269 is sponsored by Sen. Andy Manar (D) and Sen. Sam McCann (R); Rep. Jerry Costello sponsors House Bill 4290.

The Illinois Supreme Court has ruled that the wages are owed to employees, but that they cannot be paid without a legislative appropriation.

Sen. Manar points out that these back wages are "the oldest debt in state government." He believes the bill has a good chance of passing because "the facts are on our side."

Call the AFSCME hotline today at 888.912.5959 and urge your state legislators to vote YES on SB 2269 and HB 4290!

Continued on next page

AFSCME Recommendations 2018 March Primary



The following candidates have been endorsed by AFSCME Illinois PEOPLE.
AFSCME does not normally make endorsements in uncontested races.

NATIONAL

Congressional District 2: Robin Kelly (D)
 Congressional District 3: Dan Lipinski (D)
 Congressional District 4: Jesus "Chuy" Garcia (D)
 Congressional District 5: Mike Quigley (D)
 Congressional District 7: Danny Davis (D)
 Congressional District 12: Brendan Kelly (D)

STATEWIDE

Illinois Attorney General: Kwame Raoul (D)

STATE LEGISLATURE

State Senate

Senate 20: Iris Martinez (D)
 Senate 27: Anne Gillespie (D)
 Senate 36: Gregg Johnson (D)
 Senate 54: Rafael Him (R)

State House

House 1: Dan Burke (D)
 House 4: Delia Ramirez (D)
 House 5: Lamont Robinson (D)

House 14: Kelly Cassidy (D)
 House 17: Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz (D)
 House 19: Robert Martwick (D)
 House 24: Lisa Hernandez (D)
 House 27: Justin Slaughter (D)
 House 28: Bob Rita (D)
 House 29: Thaddeus Jones (D)
 House 31: Mary Flowers (D)
 House 38: David Bonner (D)
 House 47: Anne Sommerkamp (D)
 House 59: Daniel Didech (D)
 House 76: Lance Yednock (D)
 House 104: Cynthia Cunningham (D)
 House 107: Laura Myers (R)
 House 115: Marsha Griffin (D) and Terri Bryant (R)

COUNTY

Champaign County

County Board 6th District: Mike Ingram (D)

Cook County

County Board 1st District: Brandon Johnson (D)
 County Board 2nd District: Dennis Deer (D)

County Board 3rd District: Bill Lowry (D)
 County Board 4th District: Stanley Moore (D)
 County Board 5th District: Deborah Sims (D)
 County Board 12th District: Bridget Degnen (D)
 County Board 13th District: Larry Suffredin (D)
 County Board 15th District: Kevin Morrison (D)

Grundy County

Sheriff: Ken Briley (R)

Kane County

County Board 1st District: Myrna Molina (D)
 County Board 3rd District: Don Ishmael (D)
 County Board 7th District: Monica Silva (D)
 County Board 17th District: Janice Bennett (D)

LaSalle County

County Clerk: Vickie Leadingham (D)

Will County

County Board 9th District: Sherry Williams (D)

Winnebago County

Sheriff: Gary Caruana (R)

Register to Vote & Vote Early!

- February 8: Early voting begins in most parts of the state (except Chicago and suburban Cook County)
- February 21: Early voting begins in City of Chicago
- March 5: Early voting begins in suburban Cook County
- March 19: Last day for early voting
- March 20: Election Day!**

Visit AFSCME31.org/ReadySetVote for more information.



AFSCME members and retirees committed the union to protecting workers' rights and supporting a fair and equitable budget.

READY FOR CHANGE

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Legislative agenda

IN ADDITION TO ELECTORAL endorsements, delegates also approved AFSCME Council 31's 2018 legislative agenda.

The union pledges to work for the following in the 2018 legislative session:

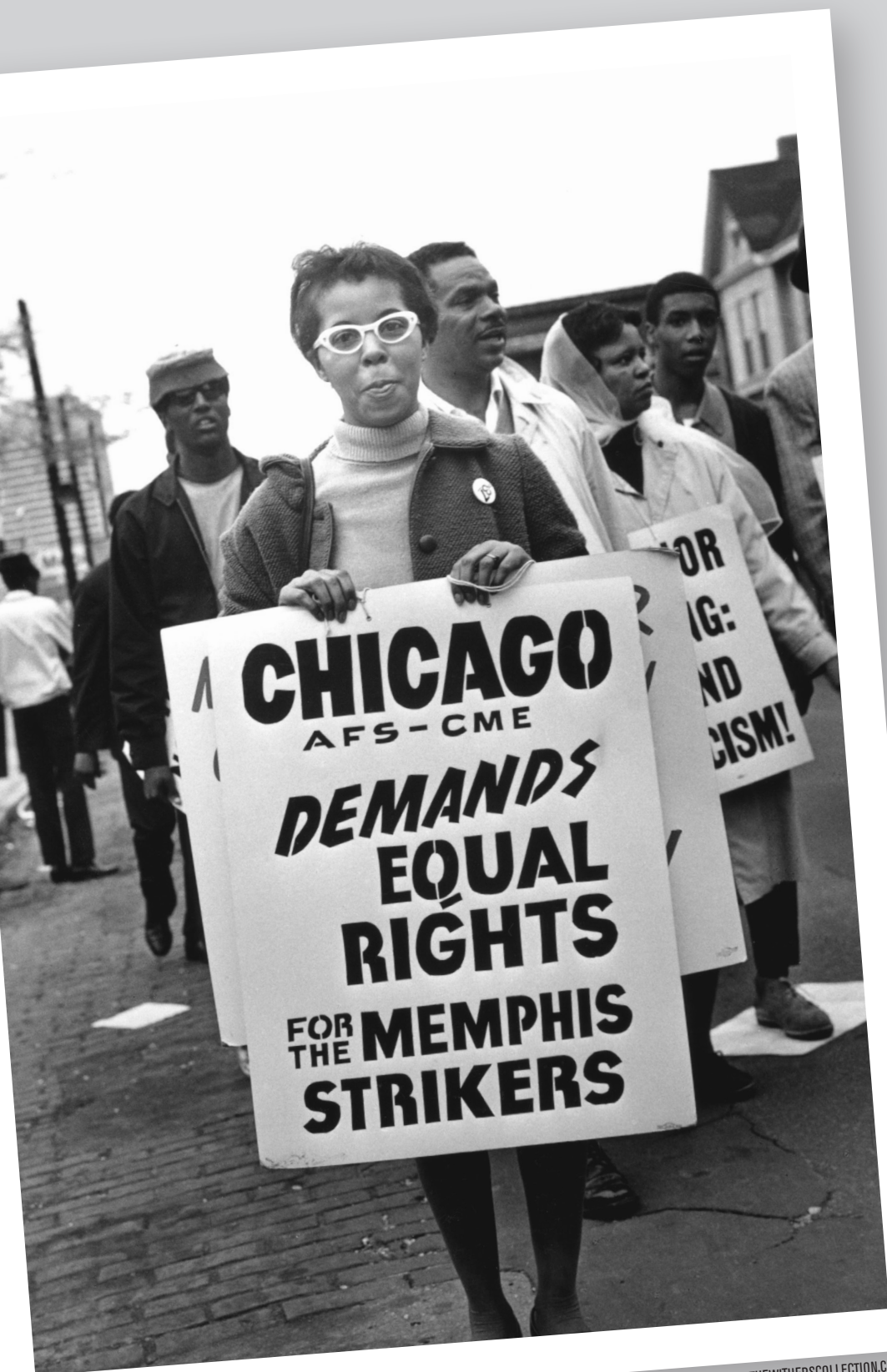
- Protect workers' rights:
 - Fight any effort to weaken or diminish collective bargaining rights;
 - Work to defeat any effort to pass any version of so-called "Right-to-Work" legislation;
 - Oppose any efforts to diminish workers' compensation or unemployment insurance benefits;
 - Support efforts to raise the minimum wage in Illinois;
 - Support legislation requir-

ing paid family leave for all workers; and

- Support efforts to stop sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Support responsible budgets and adequate revenues for state and local governments.
- Pay state employees back wages owed.
- Oppose any attempts to cut public employee pensions.
- Demand safer working conditions.
- Fight privatization of public services and assets.
- Support adequate funding for state universities.
- Fight to raise wages in AFSCME-represented non-profit agencies.

Visit afscme31.org/legislative-agenda2018 for the full list of priorities.

In 1968, they marched for justice and equality



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On February 1, 1968, a storm forced Memphis sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker to seek shelter in the back of their truck. The workers' repeated warnings to management about faulty equipment proved tragically prophetic that day when the truck's compactor kicked on, crushing the two young men to death.

It was the Jim Crow South. African-American sanitation workers were called "boy." They faced poverty wages, a plantation-style work environment, and degrading, unsafe working conditions. The city refused to recognize their union or even their basic humanity.

After Cole's and Walker's deaths, their co-workers decided they had had enough. So 1,300 members of AFSCME Local 1733 stood together, risked everything, and went on strike, demanding dignity and respect.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. joined their struggle. He traveled to Memphis to rally the community and express his solidarity because he understood the connection between labor rights, economic rights, human rights and civil rights.

He marched in solidarity with the striking workers as they carried placards with four simple, but powerful words: "I AM A MAN." And workers across the country, including AFSCME members in Illinois (left), rallied in solidarity with the strikers and their fight for justice.

On the evening of April 3 at the historic Mason Temple, the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) International Headquarters, Dr. King delivered his famous "Mountaintop" speech.

"Let us rise up," King told the crowd. "Let us stand with a greater determination... We have an opportunity to make America a better nation."

Less than 24 hours later, he was gunned down on the balcony of Memphis' Lorraine Motel.

Honoring their legacy with action

AFSCME's **I AM 2018** initiative is honoring the 50th anniversary of King's assassination, bridging the past and the present by re-dedicating our union to the fight for justice and equality.

On February 1, AFSCME members commemorated the deaths of Cole and Walker with a Nationwide Moment of Silence. And on April 2-4, AFSCME, COGIC, and civil, human and workers' rights leaders will gather in Memphis for a series of events to honor Dr. King's legacy and the courage and sacrifice of the sanitation workers.

I AM 2018 is an urgent call to fight poverty and prejudice, advance the freedom of all working people and remind America that there can be no racial justice without economic justice and no economic justice without racial justice.

50 years later, we carry it on

Sherry Carter-Allen

RETIREE SUB-CHAPTER 78
PEORIA

To me, AFSCME is not a union, it's a movement. Everything Dr. King fought for and what we continue to fight for is the fundamental foundation of the labor movement. You can't have labor rights without women's rights. You can't have labor rights without civil rights.

I remember when I was a little girl there was a café in Peoria called, ironically, the Red, White and Blue Café. Every Sunday after church my grandfather would take us riding in his Chevy on Main Street. I remember seeing people eating in the window of the café and I asked my grandmother why we never ate there. She said, because we're colored and we're not allowed to eat in there, honey.

Now fast-forward to a few years ago and I'm sitting at the Red, White and Blue Café for a union meeting, a place where I couldn't even eat as a child.

That was Dr. King's dream. It inspires me to want to do even more to keep his dream alive.

We must understand that unity brings power. We must stand in solidarity and fight to the end for justice for all people. That's what AFSCME means.



Vonnie Moore

AFSCME LOCAL 1891
CITY OF EVANSTON

Martin Luther King put forth a tremendous effort in his life and his work for equality is still being carried out. It's a struggle we're still involved with today and it has great importance in my life.

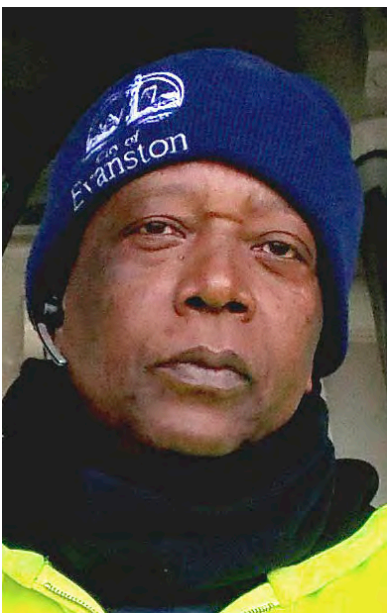
Workers in my sanitation division drive one-man recycling trucks, making 450 stops a day, in the rain, snow or shine. You can imagine the toll of that workload every day.

Unions help in that struggle by negotiating fairness, from competitive wages to safe equipment to health insurance and all the things you need to sustain life. If there were no negotiations, the powers that be would play on an unbalanced playing field. Unions help balance the field; they make sure it's just and fair.

As a union, we need to be dedicated to educating the millennials about how we got to this point. That not so long ago, we didn't have the equipment that we have, we didn't have the rights and wages that we have. We need to show pride in our union.

We need to be diligent in remembering who Martin Luther King was and what he stood for, so his commitment to labor and the betterment of mankind never dies. King—and many others—died in order to get to the point where we are today. And there's still a lot of work to be done.

For King, it was his faith and his belief in God that kept him going. It's easy if your faith is strong. We need to have faith that in the end we can make a difference.



Kirk Hynson

AFSCME LOCAL 805
STATE OF ILLINOIS, SPRINGFIELD

If the civil rights movement hadn't happened, our country wouldn't be what it is now. Civil rights, union rights, voting rights, women's rights—it all stemmed from that activism. People were demanding things instead of taking whatever they were given.

Martin Luther King was a powerful person who motivated people and helped shape our economy. He drew attention to the Memphis strike and to the importance of the labor movement. He helped lift up the strikers to show that if you band together you can make changes.

Right now we're still in a battle. People are struggling even though

they work full-time jobs or even two jobs. If you work eight hours a day, you shouldn't have to lead a desolate existence. Everybody should have the opportunity to live a comfortable life and nobody should have to make a choice between eating and paying their rent on time.

That's what Dr. King stood for and that's what we have to fight for today.

Volunteering during this year's elections is extremely important to our fight. I've knocked on doors and done cold-calling and I know it can be uncomfortable. But when you have a face-to-face conversation, and really listen, you can change that person's vote. And that one vote can make the difference—especially at the local level.

If we continue to let corporations and CEOs control the money, they control everything. We need to stay focused on the future that we want to have. As long as we keep fighting, we will achieve it. It's on the horizon.

Shirley Byrd


RETIREE SUB-CHAPTER 57
KANKAKEE

I certainly remember the strike and the King assassination. I remember watching the news with shock and dismay.

I lived through the civil rights movement. I started working for the state in 1963 at just \$245 a month and I didn't know when I was going to get paid. The things we had to go through!

Everything was totally different when we won the union in 1971. I've really benefited from the union. Without it, I wouldn't have gotten anything.

I worry because I feel like now we're going backwards. I have a great-grandson and I wonder what it's going to be like for him. But then I see things like the Women's March and I think people are waking up and smelling the coffee. They are realizing they need to get involved.

For me, it's innate. If I don't like things, I say something about it or do something about it. One month after I retired, I was at the retirees meeting. I was on the retiree executive board from 1995 until 2017. I didn't like what was going on in my home town, so I ran for mayor and I won. So I'm not sitting around and twiddling my thumbs. 



“We need to stay focused on the future that we want to have. As long as we keep fighting, we will achieve it.”



Rauner mismanagement revealed

A slew of blunders leaves a messy campaign trail

Bruce Rauner ran for governor as a savvy businessman who would bring Illinois back from a financial downslide. But after three years with Rauner as CEO the state is nothing short of a mess.

Seemingly every day there is a new example of Gov. Rauner's mismanagement. On his watch, state operations have steadily deteriorated. And with Election Day on the horizon, voters aren't impressed.

A purported technology overhaul that created a whole new agency (DoIT) has been plagued by confusion and mismanagement. In DCFS the failure to hire adequate staff has put intense pressure on caseworkers. And in DOC and DJJ, hasty and ill-conceived implementation of policy changes has significantly increased the incidence of inmate and youth assaults on staff.

Now three more recent examples further showcase Rauner's failures as governor.

Crisis at Quincy Veterans' Home

AFTER THREE YEARS OF Legionnaires disease outbreaks due to persistent pres-

ence of the Legionella bacteria in the Quincy Veterans' Home water system, 13 residents have lost their lives and many more residents and employees have been stricken.

Rauner's administration has been under fire for mismanaging the situation, especially the state's failure to notify families and workers in a timely manner.

When lawmakers demanded an inquiry into the matter, AFSCME provided testimony to two legislative hearings that examined the crisis.

In addition to highlighting the dedication of the nearly 350 union members who work at the home and advocating against closure of the facility, AFSCME's testimony focused on the Rauner administration's harmful lack of transparency.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs consistently refused to share information with employees or the union

from the outset of the outbreaks, ignoring efforts by AFSCME members to provide input. The union was forced to seek information from the federal Center for Disease Control and the county health department because the state was largely unresponsive to requests for information.

The occurrence of Legionnaires' disease at the Quincy Veterans' Home has been a source of great anxiety for AFSCME members who are dedicated to caring for residents. Employees welcome increased scrutiny by lawmakers and look forward to working toward a better future for the home, its dedicated staff and the heroes they serve.

Medicaid audit points finger at Rauner

A STINGING NEW STATE AUDIT raises big red flags about how the governor has mishandled the state's Medicaid managed care program.

Last year, Rauner was pushing to further privatize the program. He ushered in Illinois' largest procurement ever—worth an estimated \$60 billion over four years—with six new insurers. Because of the immensity of

the privatization and the lack of open-bidding on the contracts, lawmakers called for an audit of the program.

And rightly so. The audit found that in six years, the state has not checked its books for excess profit-taking by participating insurance companies. This check is necessary to ensure that insurance companies spend a contracted percentage of state money on medical care, and don't heartlessly deny care

After three years with Rauner as CEO the state is nothing short of a mess.

and pocket the money.

Case in point: In 2012, the last time this process was done, the state recovered nearly \$22 million from insurers. The auditor also found duplicate payments and a deficiency of critical data collection throughout the program.

Rauner touted this mas-

sive deal as a way to save the state money, but the state isn't tracking where money is going and how it's being spent. Instead Rauner is allowing private insurance companies to line their pockets.

Families lose help before holidays

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS, Rauner left many low-income families without food on their tables. The state sought to change the way it managed its Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the largest government hunger safety net, as well as other forms of aid to families, seniors and people with disabilities. Rauner chose to continue to sink millions into the project, run by the giant consulting company Deloitte, which has had poor outcomes in many other states and is even being sued as a result of their performance.

After years of delay, the new computer program was put in place—despite warnings from AFSCME members that the state was launching the program before it was ready. As a result, tens of thousands of families were

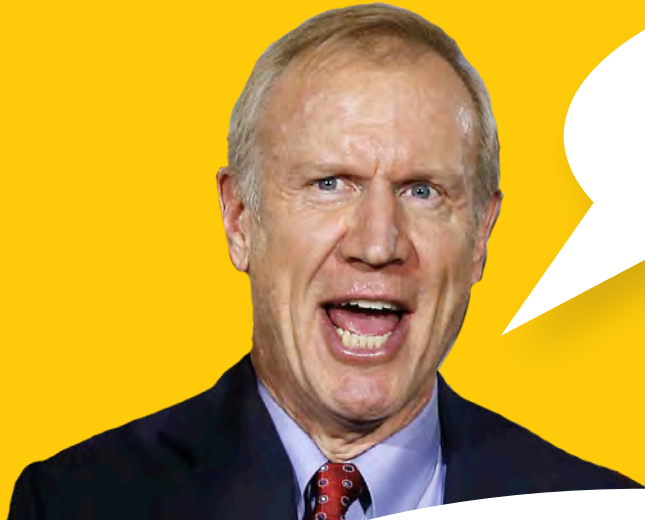
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Gov. Rauner's administration has been under fire for mismanagement of the health crisis at the Quincy Veterans' Home, where Legionnaires disease outbreaks have stricken residents and employees.

Bruce Rauner's top priority if he's re-elected: Crushing unions

HE TOLD THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE...



[I'M] COUNTING ON THE COURTS TO GIVE [ME] SEVERAL "TRANSFORMATIVE" WINS OVER ORGANIZED LABOR.

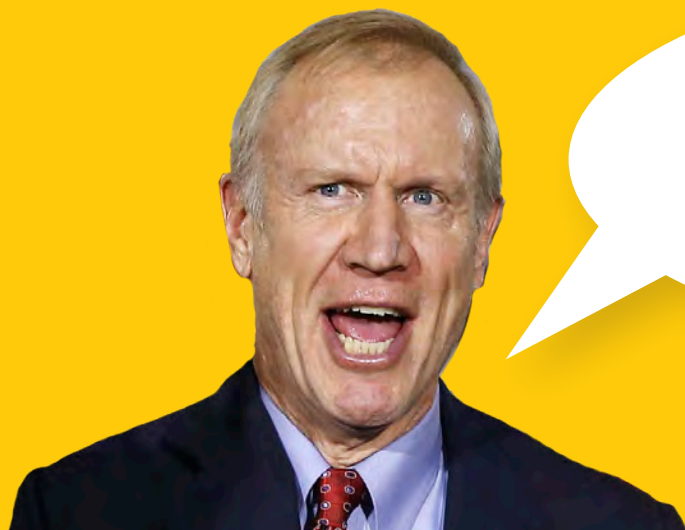
He's referring to Janus v. AFSCME, a case Rauner initiated and calls his own. It's a scheme to rob unions of resources and take away our freedom to join together in strong unions.

IF WE WIN, IT WILL TRANSFORM STATE GOVERNMENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS. I WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE THOUSANDS OF EMPLOYEES NOT BE IN THE UNION.



[I MEAN TO] CHANGE THE POWER STRUCTURE IN ILLINOIS AND ACROSS AMERICA.

Rauner's idea of "changing the power structure" is taking power away from working people and giving it to his fellow millionaires and billionaires.



Rauner wants to divide us, but if every member re-commits to our union, we can turn back his attacks and stay AFSCME Strong!

MISMANAGEMENT

Continued from previous page

dropped from SNAP, losing their food assistance right before the holidays through no fault of their own.

Lori Gladson, president of AFSCME Local 51, said that the state should have had a lot more input from frontline staff before going forward with the premature October 2017 launch date.

"If you receive food

stamps you're approved for one year, but you have to resubmit your paperwork at six months to ensure you're still eligible," Gladson explained. "If your paperwork isn't there in time, you're cut off."

She said that individuals used to submit their paperwork to the local office, where a caseworker would immediately enter the data so aid would continue. But in


the new system, verifications for hundreds of thousands of cases are sent to a central location staffed by a handful of people. And the system that was supposed to file those documents was not working properly. As a result, 40,000 people had no funds available when they went to buy food for their families.

Moreover, DHS had apparently not factored in the time needed to fix problems that resulted when cases were moved from the old system.

When customers brought the necessary documents to their local DHS office to get their food assistance restored, staff had to hand-convert each case onto the new system before they could restore benefits. That meant office waiting rooms were overflowing with angry customers.

Workers have asked for numerous technical fixes to streamline the system and for ongoing, on-the-job training as the new system is constantly reconfigured to fix glitches.

"Everybody's learning the new system, but the problem is we're learning on the backs of poor people," AFSCME Local 2808 President Vonceil Metts told the Chicago Tribune.

Yet Rauner doesn't seem to learn a lesson. Instead of paying more attention to the basic functions of state government, he's obsessed with anti-worker attacks. Hurting workers is clearly more important to Rauner than doing his job. 

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



Members of the Local 1028 Bargaining Committee: Recording Secretary Cynthia Solomon-Rogers, Vice President Sherry Williams, President Dave Delrose (standing), Ken Swanson, and Council 31 Staff Representative Jeff Dexter.

Will County local wins first contract since 2013 strike

MORE THAN 500 MEMBERS of AFSCME Local 1028 won a new five-year contract that will establish economic terms for nearly all Will County employees.

In 2013, management had refused to offer fair wages or back off a plan to double employee health care costs after 15 months of negotiations. So in November of that year—just before Thanksgiving—1,200 employees in the county court system, health department, highway department, Sunny Hill Nursing Home, county jail, and in the offices of the sheriff, coroner, recorder, assessor, clerk, chief judge, circuit clerk, executive and state's attorney went on strike for 16 days.

This time around, negotiations were completed in about eight months.

"It was very good to be able to reach an agreement without having to go down that road again," said David Delrose, president of the local and a behavioral health counselor in the county's mental health program for 29 years. "We were thoroughly prepared to do that, but the employer seemed to be very motivated as well to avoid that possibility."

This agreement is the largest of the six contracts affecting Local 1028 members. It's always negotiated first and generally sets the wage increases and health insurance plans for the others.

The bargaining committee secured a 10-percent wage increase over the five-year agreement, plus a \$500 signing bonus. Members will incrementally increase contributions to their health insurance premiums from the current 10 percent to 15 percent by 2021. They also added a third health care plan option, a health savings account, which will not see any contribution increase

over the life of the agreement.

"We anticipated that management would come in with more demands on health insurance, since that was their big demand last time," Delrose said. "But they were much more willing to compromise. I think they understood after the strike that we weren't going to walk away from the table with our members taking a loss. We want to come out ahead."

The bargaining committee also won improvements in the dental plan, increased uniform allowance and increased bilingual pay.

"We got a very fair deal,"

Delrose said. "I think our hard work and sacrifice over the years helped us achieve that."

The bargaining committee was led by AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Jeff Dexter and included President Delrose, John Bilecki, Rick Breen, Mark Colewell, Kelly Christopher, Eric Fasbender, Becky Gilliam, Traci Jasper, Kim Stephanski, Teri Riney, Carolyn Thomas, Dedra Thompson, J. P. Rasmussen, Christopher Rios, Cynthia Rodgers, Tim Sellars, Cynthia Solomon-Rogers, Ken Swanson, Anna Wallace, Sherry Williams and Minda Williamson.

New union members win first contract

TWO YEARS AFTER ORGANIZING a union with AFSCME, Indian Oaks Academy employees have won their first union contract.

"It felt really good to be able to sit down at the table with management and hash out the things that we want," said Fred Turner, a senior counselor to juvenile sex offenders at the facility and a member of the bargaining committee. "They never thought it would come to that, I don't think."

But it did. AFSCME filed multiple unfair labor practices charges against the agency, which is owned by the out-of-state parent company Nexus. Management attempted to impose health insurance cost increases before a contract was in place and the union successfully stopped that through the labor board.

The new contract provides for retroactive raises of three percent for 2016 and between 2.5 and 4.5% for 2017, with another three-percent raise across the board in 2018. The bargaining committee also secured a higher starting rate for new hires.

Now 125 members of AFSCME Local 893A can enjoy fundamental workers' rights and the protections of



Members of AFSCME Local 1028 in Will County went on strike in 2013 after months of negotiations.

Nationwide Moment of Silence

On February 1, AFSCME members across the country observed a moment of silence in honor of two sanitation workers who were killed in Memphis 50 years ago. Dozens of Council 31 local union members joined the tribute in cities and worksites across Illinois (pictured, right: Locals 2226, 2813, 1669, 2081, 1175, 674 and 2645).

Memphis sanitation workers Echol Cole and Robert Walker sought shelter from a storm in the back of their truck on February 1, 1968. They were tragically crushed to death by the truck's faulty compacter.

Their deaths sparked a strike of more than 1,000 sanitation workers, members of AFSCME Local 1733, which drew national attention in the midst of the civil rights movement. Dr. Martin Luther King came to Memphis to support the strike and was assassinated there a day after giving his historic "Mountaintop" address to the strikers and their families.

AFSCME members are carrying on their struggle for justice today.

Learn more at iam2018.org



a union contract, including labor-management meetings, a grievance procedure, just cause requirement for terminations, layoff recall rights, protections against subcontracting and more.

"We didn't have a voice or a say-so, and now we do," said Turner. "After 24 years, I've seen how they treat staff. They

would let people go whenever they felt like it. Now we have a voice in the decisions that they make and it will be better for everybody all around, the staff and the youth too."

Turner and his co-workers are dedicated to the youth they serve. That's a big part of why they wanted to organize a union in the first place, to

improve services by reducing staff turnover.

"To see a kid actually come from nothing and make something out of life, that's what it's all about," Turner said. "As a counselor, I can help somebody better their life when they thought they didn't even have a chance. That feels really good."

Deputies, court security weather fiscal storm

DESPITE A CHALLENGING financial situation in Randolph County, sheriff's deputies and court security officers of AFSCME Local 2402 were able to negotiate a fair two-year agreement.

"Our county currently has a slew of financial issues and they are in a bad way," said Local 2402 member Shane Rinehart. "With that in mind, we really sat down and put our heads together."

The bargaining team of Rinehart and Rich Tooley—led by AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Patricia Rensing—worked with the board and agreed to a two-year contract. The union members will receive a 2.5% wage increase in the first year and negotiate again with a wage reopener in year two.

In addition to the raise, the team was able to increase the amount of comp time they can accumulate and use in a year, from 80 hours to

100 hours.

"We felt pretty happy with our agreement," Rinehart said. "We have a good contract already and they didn't ask for any kind of give-backs or increases in our health insurance premiums. Overall we got a decent raise and we'll go back this fall and see what we can do for next year."

Rinehart feels that Randolph County Sheriff Shannon Wolff understands the value of his employees and tries to work with them to create a positive relationship.

The sheriff agrees: "AFSCME has always worked with management to provide the best possible working conditions and working environment for Randolph County employees," Wolff said.

Rinehart comes from a family of police officers. His father and brother are in law enforcement, and his son is at the police academy.

"We are a service-minded family," said Rinehart, who has served for nearly 26 years. "From the time I was a small child that's what I wanted to do. It's always been who I am."



Chief Deputy Jared Peters and Sheriff Shannon Wolff with Local 2402 bargaining team members Shane Rinehart and Rich Tooley.



SHORT REPORTS

Rauner appeals on step increases

ON DEC. 12, GOV. BRUCE Rauner's administration asked the Illinois Supreme Court to consider an appeal of a lower court ruling that step increases must be paid to state employees.

When Rauner froze the steps in July 2015—backed up by the Illinois Labor Relations Board (ILRB)—AFSCME filed suit in state court.

On Nov. 6 a panel of three judges in the fifth appellate district court unanimously ruled in AFSCME's favor, finding that Rauner 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.

"Illegally denying steps to the newest-hired and lower-paid state employees fits Bruce Rauner's pattern of anti-worker behavior," AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch

said. "Unfortunately, despite the court's ruling, he is unrelenting in refusing to honor the law."

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 from progressing through the pay plan's steps when the union's most recent contract was scheduled to expire.

The appellate court's decision reverses the Rauner-appointed labor board's dismissal of the union's charge that the administration had committed an unfair labor practice by blocking step progression through the pay plan.

"We're very pleased that the court has found that the governor is violating the law," Lynch said after the ruling. "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."

Illinois is union strong

ILLINOIS STANDS OUT IN THE Midwest, adding more union members in 2017 than four of its neighboring states.

More than 15,000 workers joined union ranks last

year in Illinois, but union membership dropped in the bordering states of Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky and Missouri.

So-called "right-to-work" (RTW) laws have had a negative impact in what used to be a union-heavy area of the U.S. Iowa has long been an RTW state and recently Indiana and Kentucky have joined that shameful club.

Missouri's Republican-controlled legislature and governor passed a RTW law last year, but more than 300,000 Missourians signed petitions demanding a public vote to repeal the new law, effectively blocking its implementation.

RTW laws have one goal: Drain unions of resources so that working people won't have a powerful voice in decisions that affect their lives.

In RTW states, workers are paid \$6,109 less annually than workers in states that uphold the right to have strong unions. Also, workers in RTW states have lower rates of health care coverage and pay larger shares of their health insurance premiums.

even further. While the new tax system will give relief to some middle class families, it will give the largest tax breaks to wealthy individuals. And the new tax code is really just a "bait and switch" scheme: The cuts that are available for individuals are temporary, while the corporate tax cuts are locked in place.

In Illinois, the income gap is fed by the state's flat income tax rate. With a flat tax, struggling middle class families pay the same percentage of their income in taxes as billionaires like Bruce Rauner.

That's why AFSCME supports a fair tax structure in Illinois. A graduated income tax could cut taxes for 90 percent of families and still raise more revenue than our current flat tax. A fair tax would narrow the ever-widening gap between working families and the ultra-wealthy.


ALEC spreads to city halls

THE RIGHT-WING AMERICAN Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is a membership organization of state legislators funded by the Koch brothers and powerful corporate interests. The conservative group has provided model legislation for states to undercut workers' rights for decades.

Now, with the establishment of the American City County Exchange, ALEC has a new local government arm.

The group is urging state legislators to overrule county governments and city councils by prohibiting them from passing tax increases or raising their local minimum wage.

It's also spurred passage of legislation in local governments to prohibit automatic paycheck deduction of union dues.

"We've had to battle ALEC initiatives in the Illinois General Assembly for more than a decade," said AFSCME Council 31 Legislative Director Joanna Webb-Gauvin. "Now we will have to be on the watch for its anti-union measures in city councils and county boards too." 

Worried? Overwhelmed? PSP can help!

AFSCME's Personal Support Program (PSP) offers free, professional, confidential assistance to represented members and their covered dependents.

For help, call
1-800-647-8776



PSP services are available to all state of Illinois, city of Chicago and Cook County AFSCME members. Other members may be eligible depending on their union contract. Check with your local union for more information.

Billionaires could end poverty—seven times over

OXFAM INTERNATIONAL released a shocking report on global income inequality on January 22. In 2017, the world's billionaires made a stunning \$462 billion: enough money to end extreme poverty globally seven times over.

The report also found that just 42 super-rich individuals hold as much wealth as 3.7 billion poor people, and that 82 percent of new global wealth went to the top one percent.

This growing gap between the rich and poor is a global and local trend. In the United States it's aided by unfair tax policies at the state and national levels.

The new GOP tax package pushed by the Trump Administration gives a big, permanent tax cut to corporations, and tips the scales toward the country's wealthiest people

RETIREE NOTES



AFSCME Chapter 31 Retirees gathered in Springfield on Jan. 27 to vote on the union's legislative agenda and electoral endorsements.

Rauner vetoes bill protecting senior services

GOV. BRUCE RAUNER vetoed a bill over the recent holiday season that would protect the integrity of the Community Care Program, a program that gives financial assistance to seniors and disabled persons wishing to stay in their homes.

Before senior service and disability advocates won the battle to fund the Community Care Program in the fiscal year 2017-18 budget, Rauner tried to cut \$120 million from the program.

The measure Rauner

vetoed, House Bill 1424, protected 80,000 seniors in the Community Care Program from massive cuts and scaled back care. Rauner vetoed it.

Rauner said in his veto message that the Department of Aging's Community Program Task Service is currently working on solutions to reduce costs. In other words, his real concern is not meeting the needs of senior citizens, but cutting budgets.

AFSCME fights for back pay

AFSCME'S LEGISLATIVE TEAM is building support for bills that would fund the remaining back pay still owed to

many state retirees. Senate Bill 2269 is sponsored by Sen. Andy Manar (D) and Sen. Sam McCann (R); Rep. Jerry Costello sponsors House Bill 4290.

In 2011, the state failed to pay a 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 a legislative appropriation is needed. AFSCME won inclusion of \$50 million in the FY 2015 budget

to pay a portion of what was owed state employees in back wages. In April 2016, AFSCME successfully lobbied inclusion of back pay in SB 2046, one of the budget bills that were sent to the governor's desk that year. Rauner vetoed SB 2046 in July 2016.

"I am a former state employee that has been retired for more than three years," said Sub-chapter 76 member Jeffery Stahl. "It's hard not to think about what is still owed me after all this time."

Two peas in a pod?

REPUBLICANS HAVE A GUBERNATORIAL primary race this year, but it's not one that offers a real choice. Jeanne Ives, a state representative from the 42nd District, is running for governor in the GOP primary against Gov. Bruce Rauner.

Rauner has already proven himself a sworn enemy of labor unions. His one overriding goal is to wipe out unions in our state. And he's made clear his intent to carry that crusade forward into a second term.

If elected governor, Ives plans to push a constitutional amendment removing the pension protection clause and destroying pension protections for retirees. The Illinois Constitution currently states that "membership in any pension or retirement system of the State, any unit of local government or school district, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, shall be an enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired."

By removing this clause, state legislators would be free to make changes to already existing pensions, which could include a reduction or elimination of cost of living adjustments and changes to retiree health care benefits.

Ives supports a move to 401(k)-style retirement plans for all current retirees receiving a public pension, which would take away their risk-adverse defined benefit plan.

Rauner has been pushing the same kind of pension reduction schemes, demonstrating that there's little difference between these two candidates on key issues of importance to senior citizens.

"These attacks, on a mutually agreed upon benefit that I also paid into, make me feel like a pawn," Sub-chapter 86 President Kim Johnson said. "I did what I was supposed to do while at work and I expected to be treated fairly. The state needs to stand up to their contractual obligations and find other areas of revenue."

AFSCME retirees gear up for 2018

SUB-CHAPTER MEETINGS ARE being held across Illinois in 2018! Stay informed, meet like-minded retirees and voice your opinions about issues affecting you and your community. With 35 sub-chapters across the state, you'll be sure to find one close to your hometown.

Find a meeting near you. Visit afscme31.org/retirees or call Kate Morthland, AFSCME's Retiree Program Coordinator at 217-788-2800. 🐦



ARE YOU A RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEE OWED BACK PAY?

Support SB 2269 and HB 4290 to pay all wages owed.

Call 888-912-5959 and urge your legislators to vote YES!



Heidi Schwarz

AFSCME Local 698

LAB ANIMAL CARETAKER, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE & VETERINARY TEACHING HOSPITAL

Tell us about your job.

I work at the large animal clinic at University of Illinois' College of Veterinary Medicine. I'm classified as a lab animal caretaker, but actually work with farm animals, including horses, cows, sheep, pigs, goats, llamas and alpacas. Due to the fact that we have a large facility and large surgeries, we also work with exotic animals from circuses and zoos, like camels, tigers and zebras.

Day to day, I clean the animals' housing, groom them, feed them and help restrain them when necessary. We have our own herd of horses and cows, so I also bring them in for classes and teaching labs. Students learn how to handle and care for the animals, administer medications and perform procedures.

How does your job serve the community?

We're a working veterinary clinic so we have a lot of clients from the community bring their animals to us for care. We conduct open houses and workshops that are open to the public with lectures, demonstrations and networking.

"I know the union is fighting for us."

How did you become an animal caretaker?

I'm originally from the Chicago south suburbs and I came here when I went to Parkland College. I went through their equine management program and got my certificate.

I've been around horses since I was 12 years old. I'd go and volunteer at different stables to get free riding. My mom would



"We have a lot of clients from the community bring their animals to us for care."

drop me off at eight in the morning and have to call me at eight at night to see if I was ready to come home yet. It was so fun as a kid to do something like that. I really enjoyed spending my time with the animals and it kept me out of trouble.

What's your inspiration to work hard every day?

I love horses. I always say if you want to relieve stress, grab a brush and groom a horse. Some people might not like the dirty work, but I find it relaxing.

Patients' families get upset that their animal is so far away from home and sick or injured. It's a huge comfort to them to know that we are taking care of it just as well as they would at home. They send thank you letters because

they're so pleased with the care their animals get from us.

How does the union improve your job and the services you provide?

The union has helped me since I started here 14 years ago. I've been a member and an officer. Of course, there are problems with our governor and not getting raises, and that's hurting, but I know the union is fighting for us.

It's great having the backing of the union. Right now I'm going through the process of getting a job audit to show that the work I do goes beyond my title's description. And the union is my advocate, helping me through a very stressful process. 