

ON THE

MOVE

PLOWING AHEAD— WE NEVER QUIT



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Let's keep forging a better future

Power and progress come with collective bargaining



BY ROBERTA LYNCH

WE'RE STILL GROWING AND GETTING STRONGER

As I write this column, word has arrived that the charter school teachers in Chicago who've been on strike against Chicago International Charter School for nine days have reached a tentative agreement that will dramatically improve their standard of living, as well as learning conditions for their students.

Teacher wages will now rise to the level of those in Chicago Public Schools, a 35 percent increase over the term of the contract, and their maximum class size will be reduced to 30 students. There are lots of other improvements as well in this, their first union contract, all the fruit of a willingness to form a union just a few years ago and to walk out when their employer stonewalled them at the bargaining table.

When the charter school "movement" started several decades ago, its proponents touted charters as "union-free" educational settings, claiming students would thrive without rigid "union rules." In fact, students have seldom done better in such privatized settings, while teachers ended up doing a whole lot worse. That's all begun to turn around as teachers at more and more charter schools in Chicago have formed unions and discovered the power and progress that come with collective bargaining.

Their experience is far from unique. Frontline caregivers at community disability agencies across Illinois have found that too often their nonprofit employers don't have the wherewithal or the will to ensure that workers receive a living wage. That's why more than 5,000 employees at some 20 residential programs for individuals with disabilities have become part of AFSCME over the past two decades, with employees of Willowglen Academy joining our ranks just in the past six months. Working together, these caregivers have been able to convince state legislators to provide additional funds to raise their wages by more than 10 percent over the

past two years, and this year they'll be pressing for more.

Or take the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) in Monroe County who just negotiated their second union contract after becoming part of AFSCME (see page 12). They joined with other EMTs in Illinois and across the country to improve their working conditions. Or the 300 employees of the DuPage County nursing home who realized the only way to take on repressive management tactics was to come together in a union and who just a few months ago joined the AFSCME ranks (see page 6).

Looking beyond our own state, we've seen tens of thousands of teachers in states like Oklahoma, Virginia and Arizona go out on strike to demand fair pay. And right now, due in large measure to AFSCME's efforts, legislators in Nevada are finally poised to enact a law that gives public employees the right to collective bargaining. Thousands of state employees there have already signed union cards and are eagerly awaiting the day they can be assured of the protections and benefits of a union contract.

All this growth in membership and activism has continued, even intensified, in the wake of the US Supreme Court ruling in the Janus case last June which was widely predicted to herald the demise of public sector unions.

Far from it. The great majority of employees readily saw the Janus case, which barred fair share fees in the public sector, for what it is: a power grab by the wealthy elite in our country who want to shrink government at all levels and drive down the wages and benefits of government workers.

We saw their strategy all too clearly here in Illinois with the election of Bruce Rauner. He put a big target on the backs of public employees and pushed relentlessly to take away union rights, cut pensions and other benefits, and drive down wages.

And we also saw what happens when workers have unions and the organized strength to fight back against such attacks. Rauner was never able to strip employees of a single hard-won union right. He was never able to cut pension benefits. He was never able to drive down wages. And he was never able to break the spirits of the hundreds of thousands of public employees across the state whom he did his best to bash and belittle.

Now Bruce Rauner is gone, but we're still here! Rauner's buddies won the Janus case at the US Supreme Court, but we're still growing and getting stronger.

These developments have confounded and frustrated the union-haters in our country—the ultra-wealthy crowd that's pumping millions of dollars into trying to get employees to drop out of their unions. Instead, thousands of former feepayers stepped up and became full union members, recognizing that we can't maintain the unity and strength that have carried us so far unless everyone contributes to building the union.

Let's keep that going. Let's keep on making clear that we're AFSCME Strong and we're not backing down. Let's keep on forging a better future for ourselves, our families and our communities.



On the MOVE

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Larry Brown

State bargaining committee reconvenes

Ready to get back to negotiations, the more than 200 members of the AFSCME state of Illinois bargaining committee gathered in Springfield on January 25 for their first meeting in nearly two years.

The committee's work on a new contract had come to a screeching halt when former governor Bruce Rauner walked out on negotiations in January 2016, alleging the parties were at impasse. Based on a subsequent appellate court ruling that no impasse existed and the Pritzker Administration's assurances that it is committed to resuming negotiations, the union committee has begun reviewing outstanding proposals

from both sides that were on the table when Rauner broke off contract talks.

This situation is unprecedented. No governor had ever before declared impasse—and there has never been such an extended break in contract negotiations. While a few other unions in state government settled contracts several years ago more or less on Rauner's terms, others—including the LIUNA, the INA, the SEIU, and the IFT/

ISEA—stood with AFSCME in rejecting his extreme demands and put their negotiations on hold.

Contract terms in effect

A so-called “tolling agreement” in place between the Rauner Administration and AFSCME has essentially functioned like the routine contract extensions that normally keep the terms of the previous contract in place until a new one is negotiated.

This agreement—which will remain in effect while negotiations continue with the Pritzker Administration—has ensured that AFSCME members have maintained all

the rights provided in their union contract throughout the past four years.

extensions or continuances in all legal matters pending before the Labor Board and

All state of Illinois AFSCME bargaining units negotiate together. Unity provides the greatest strength at the table.

All proposals that were on the table when Rauner walked away will be the subject of negotiations, withdrawal or modification as in the normal course of collective bargaining.

the courts from the previous administration.


AFSCME expressed its disagreement with this course of action—especially the decision to request a 90-day extension from the Illinois Supreme Court to determine whether to file an appeal in the dispute over whether an impasse existed in state contract negotiations.

AFSCME filed an objection to the motion to extend the appeal deadline, armed with the knowledge that a three-judge appellate panel had already ruled unambiguously that no impasse existed.

“There's no need for another extension or further review of the appellate court decision, which found that Bruce Rauner wrongly walked out on negotiations, falsely claiming the parties were at impasse,” Council 31 Public Affairs Director Anders Lindall said.

On January 28, the Supreme Court entered an order granting “in part” the State's motion. The Court granted an extension to March 29, a month shorter than the additional time requested by the Pritzker Administration.

Gov. Pritzker said during his campaign and since his election that he wants to resume negotiations with AFSCME as soon as possible and his administration says that's still the case despite this extension request.

“Governor Pritzker's priority is to return to the bargaining table and negotiate a contract with state workers that is fair to both the state's dedicated workforce and fair to taxpayers,” spokeswoman Jordan Abudayyeh said in a statement. She stressed that the extension would not be a barrier to negotiations resuming. 

Interest arbitration on hold

All AFSCME bargaining units negotiate together, as unity provides the greatest strength at the table. However, when Rauner falsely declared impasse and threatened to impose his harsh terms in 2016, the bargaining committee agreed that the union should pursue interest arbitration for those employees (RC-6 and CU-500) who did not have the right to strike.

Rauner's attorneys dragged out the arbitration proceedings for more than a year, so no award has yet been issued by the arbitrator.

“Given the very extreme proposals that the Rauner Administration had submitted to the arbitrator, the union requested that the case be put on hold,” Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman said.

“It is our hope that the Pritzker Administration will agree to continue that hold so that all AFSCME bargaining units can once again unify to reach a fair contract settlement for all employees at the bargaining table.”

As *On the Move* went to press, no date had been set for negotiations.

Legal disputes under review

In late January, the Pritzker administration informed AFSCME Council 31 that it would file requests for



Gov. Pritzker has said his priority is returning to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair contract with state employees.

Illinois faces financial challenges, but solutions are on horizon



Fixing Illinois' finances requires a "collective commitment," newly-elected Gov. Pritzker said.

Bruce Rauner left Illinois' finances in tatters. After two years of a self-imposed budget stalemate driven by his ideological crusade against unions, the former governor left the state with billions of dollars in unpaid bills. On his watch, the state's bill backlog reached a record \$16.7 billion and Illinois' credit ratings were downgraded repeatedly to near-junk status.

"Our fiscal situation right now is challenging," said JB Pritzker in his inauguration speech. "And the solution requires a collective commitment to embracing hard choices."

Challenging may be an understatement.

The state's five-year financial forecast from 2018 projected that the budget deficit would triple by fiscal year 2021 and the bill backlog would rise again to record levels. Meanwhile, Illinois' unfunded pension liability is also growing, reaching \$133.5 billion in fiscal 2018.

A week before releasing its first budget, the new governor's administration projected a \$3.2 billion budget deficit for the next fiscal year. The

budget was released just as *On the Move* went to print.

There is a simple explanation for Illinois' dire financial

"we've had a structural deficit in Illinois for generations and we've been paying for it by underfunding our state pension systems."

Solutions include refinancing the pension debt and implementing a fair tax system.

Pension debt is costly, but benefits aren't

Intentional borrowing from state pension contributions has created the pension crisis, CTBA says. The crisis is worsened by a repayment plan that

attempts to solve the problem through benefit cuts have failed."

The CTBA proposes refinancing the pension debt, also called reamortization: putting in more money up front to save money in the long run, using bond proceeds to cover the higher contributions in the first years of the repayment plan. The end result is "a sustainable, level-dollar plan that saves the state \$67 billion and gets the pensions systems to [a healthy] 70 percent funded by 2045."

"Real solutions are achievable," the Illinois AFL-CIO

"I won't hollow out the functions of government to achieve an ideological agenda. I won't make government the enemy and government employees the scapegoats."

—JB Pritzker

straits, Center for Tax and Budget Accountability (CTBA) Executive Director Ralph Martire said at AFSCME's PEOPLE conference in January, and relatively simple solutions, too.

The problem, he said, is

delays higher payments until future years.

What's more, a CTBA report states, "because the crisis is about debt, rather than benefits being earned by current and future employees,

and Chicago Federation of Labor said in a joint statement on pension debt, "and we remain committed to working together with anyone of good faith to identify and implement them."

Reducing debt possible through fair taxation

One such solution is creating a fair tax system in Illinois that imposes higher taxes on those who can most afford to pay.

Illinois is one of only four states with a constitutionally mandated flat, regressive income tax structure. A flat tax unfairly burdens middle-income and working families while allowing the wealthy to avoid paying their fair share.


In Illinois, those with incomes in the lowest 20 percent pay an average of 14 percent of their income in state and local taxes while those in the top 1 percent of incomes only pay 7 percent in taxes.

That's why AFSCME has consistently advocated for fair tax reform, including a constitutional amendment to allow for graduated tax rates that require the wealthy to pay their fair share.

There is widespread public support for a fairer tax structure to fully fund vital public services, but voters can't have a say until a super-majority of the state Senate and House approve a resolution putting the question on the ballot. The ballot measure then needs support from 60 percent of voters at the next statewide election.

In the 2018 legislative session, Republican lawmakers blocked passage of the needed resolution. But with big changes in the composition of both legislative bodies—and a new governor who campaigned on a fair tax—advocates are optimistic that Illinois might move forward on this vital issue.

What's very clear is that Gov. Pritzker won't put the burden on working people or public services. And he's not going to place blame on state employees, teachers, fire fighters, nurses, caregivers and other public service workers for the state's problems.

"I won't hollow out the functions of government to achieve an ideological agenda," Pritzker said in his inaugural address. "I won't make government the enemy and government employees the scapegoats." 

AFSCME members rush to help after tornado hits Taylorville

After a devastating tornado touched down in Taylorville on December 1, city employees leapt into action to help not only with disaster response and cleanup, but to assist co-workers whose homes were hardest hit by the damage.

"This is our community, so everybody pulled together," said Dustin McClure, a heavy equipment operator for the city of Taylorville and the vice president of AFSCME Local 3349, which represents the city's public works employees. He says the tornado warning came about 40 minutes ahead of the storm—time he used not only to move his family to safety, but to put on his work clothes so he'd be ready to help as soon as the storm had passed.

"I was dressed to go in and making my way to the shop by the time they called," McClure said. "Everyone was, because we knew it'd be bad and we'd be called in. Even members whose houses were affected, they boarded them up and came in."

In all, three tornadoes hit Christian County, the State Journal-Register reported, the strongest with winds of up to 155 miles per hour. More than 20 people were injured and 200-plus structures damaged.

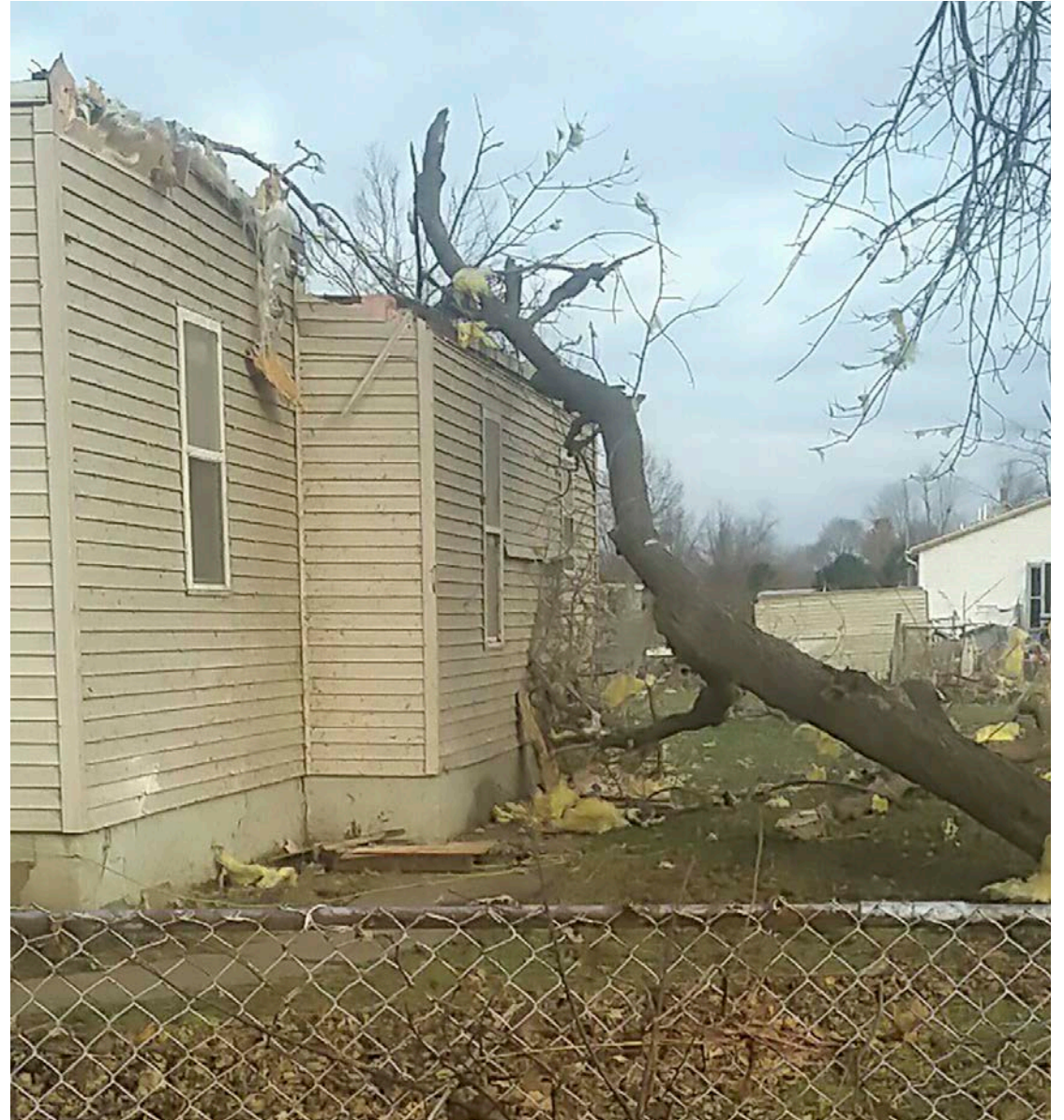
"We lost everything"

One such structure was the home of AFSCME Local 2600 member Tammy Bowers. Her home was "totaled" by the storm—the roof was ripped off, the foundation completely shifted—and her car too. But she still counts herself lucky.

When the storm hit, she and her husband hid in their basement with their eight- and nine-year-old children, Bowers' sister-in-law, nephew and several family pets. The children had been playing outside in the unseasonably warm and sunny weather when tornado sirens went off.

The sky darkened, it began hailing and the wind picked up. "Then everything stopped," Bowers said, "and my husband yelled, 'It's coming, go!' So we all ran down the stairs.

"The train tracks are right in front of our house, so we hear



AFSCME Local 2600 member Tammy Bowers' home was destroyed, but AFSCME and the broader community rallied to help.

trains all the time," Bowers said. "It was the same sound when the tornado came. A giant roar. The pressure is so bad it makes your ears pop. It was very scary and something I never want to experience again."

When the adults finally led everyone upstairs, the roof was gone and the windows broken; there was insulation everywhere. The children were scared.

"We reassured them that everything could be replaced," Bowers said. "Everybody was safe and that's all that mattered."

All hands on deck

From the moment the tornado hit, Taylorville public works employees were at the ready to help—and there was much to be done. In addition to the structural damage to buildings, countless trees and power lines were down, many blocking streets. City workers immediately focused on clearing the roadways so first responders could get in and out of the affected areas.

"There were trees down everywhere on the west side,"

Dustin McClure said. "Police, fire and ambulances had calls nonstop, so we cleared the way for them all Saturday night. Traffic was brutal, so we were doing traffic control.

"We were trying to tell if the downed power lines were live, because [the electric company] didn't have enough time to get there. When you've got a house fire actively going and the fire department says you've got to get this out of the way for us, you do it. Everyone was putting their lives on the line."

That work continued well into the night and started up again at first light on Sunday. "It was all hands on deck and we didn't stop for lunches or breaks, we just worked through," McClure said. "We're just focused on cleanup and our commitment is to get as much done as we can."

Christian County employees of AFSCME Local 3776 also participated in the response and recovery efforts, and members of locals throughout central Illinois volunteered their time and assistance, including from Springfield, Lincoln and Sangamon County.

AFSCME Local 3776 Vice


President Brian Wilbur and other employees at the highway department worked for weeks to remove debris. He was moved by how residents of many communities came together to help.

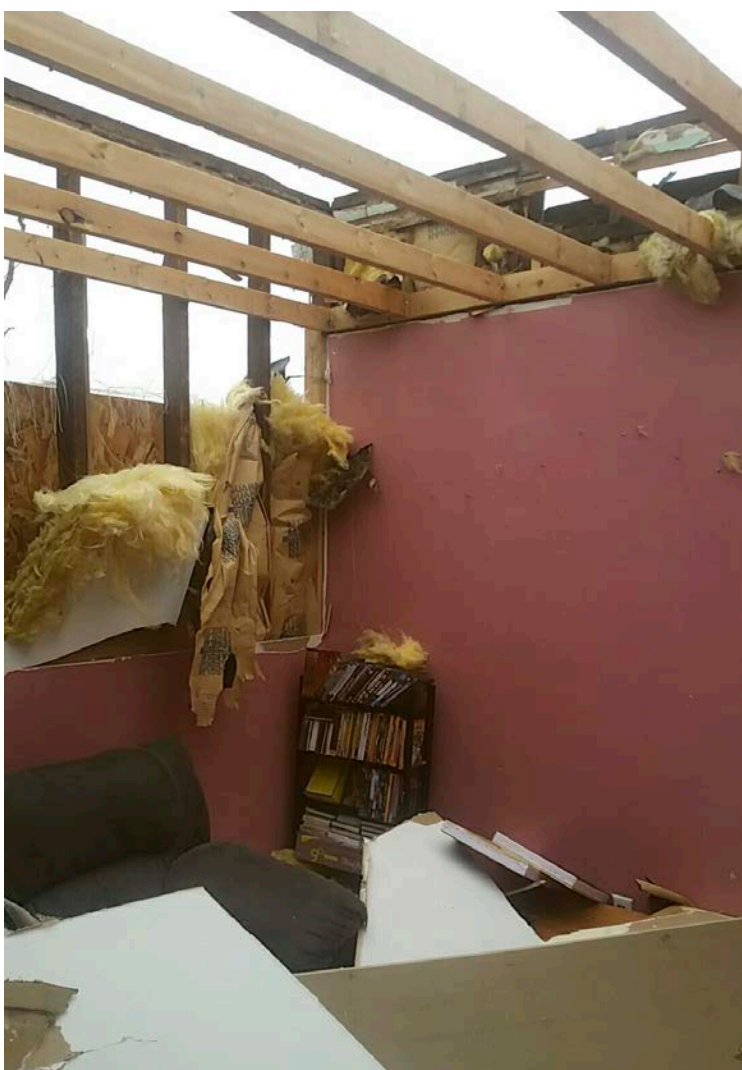
"I couldn't believe how far people travelled to help out," Wilbur said, "and not just for a day. This took weeks."

He said it was quite an experience being on the ground to witness the destruction firsthand, and to see everyone work together to help put things right.

McClure agreed. "It's still a mess here and it's gonna be for a long time," he said, "but the way the community has come together is awesome to see."

AFSCME members like Bowers who suffered losses were aided by their co-workers and the union.

"I have such awesome co-workers," Bowers effused. "The local union granted funds to us for food, clothing and living expenses until our insurance kicked in. They even got my kids Christmas presents. It's been really hard, and they make me feel like there's a light at the end of the tunnel." 



"It was very scary and something I never want to experience again."

DuPage County Care Center employees join AFSCME

Workers organized quickly and began pushing for improvements

More than 370 nursing, dining services, laundry and housekeeping staff at the DuPage County Care Center (DPCC) officially joined AFSCME as union members in November.

The victory was swift thanks to the highly motivated workers who collected authorization cards at a rapid pace.

Part of what made the employees so eager to sign a card was that they were at their wits' end with an abusive and discriminatory manager. Employees didn't have any power over their own working conditions or the quality of care received by the residents they serve every day.

"The director of nursing would discipline workers for no good reason, discriminate against employees because of their race, unfairly mandate overtime, take away vacation time and make employees jump through hoops and find their own replacement in order to take a sick day,"

to do something about it. So they called AFSCME."

Making it happen

The decision to form a union was made over a meal.

"One night we were eating dinner and talking about the problems we were having, especially with our director of nursing," Jean Gartzke, a CNA at the care center, said. "We joked, if we had a union we could go out on strike. We were laughing, but the problems were serious, and we realized the only way to make our conversation realistic was to actually have a union."

After they started working with AFSCME, Gartzke,

This situation makes it impossible to give residents the care they deserve.

AFSCME organizer Dave Bloede explained.

"The patients were suffering from severe staff shortages, but nothing was being done despite the staffers' urgent pleas for intervention. The workers needed a drastic change, and they were ready

Arlene Lamb (a CNA and rehab assistant) and others took up the task of collecting cards. Despite working three jobs, Gartzke stayed late to get signatures.

"I worked a shift until 11 at night and stayed until after three in the morning to get



New AFSCME member and nurse Gilbert Mendoza testified to the DuPage County Board about the staff shortage at the care center.

signatures from other employees I didn't even know," Gartzke said. "My goal was to get the union sooner rather than later. I was willing to sacrifice to make it happen. Not only me, but a lot of people."

Once the workers were ready, the process happened quickly. Since DPCC is a public nursing home, employees can vote for a union simply by signing an authorization card. There is no election held later; their card is their vote.

By the time management found out about the organizing, workers already had enough cards to file for union

recognition with the Illinois Labor Relations Board. After management kicked off an anti-union effort, even more people signed up.

Advocating for residents as a union

After forming their union, the employees didn't take a break. They wanted to address the serious issue of short-staffing. Residents were suffering yet management wasn't responding to workers' requests to remedy the situation. The new AFSCME members took their concerns directly to the county board's public meeting, packing the room with staff and residents' families.

"While we look forward to addressing concerns in collective bargaining, there are acute staffing problems that require your attention," RN Gilbert Mendoza told the board. "This situation makes it impossible to give residents the care they deserve. We can only work so much. We are at that burnout point. Will you work with us to address these problems?"

"I've gotten to know the staff quite well, from cafeteria workers to security guards, CNAs, nurses, social workers and dietitians. They are amazing people," said a woman

whose elderly mother lives at DPCC. "I'm concerned about changing conditions. I see a lot of these people *running* to take care of the residents. I also see they are overwhelmed and burning out. It's affecting my mom as it is so many other residents. You need to be concerned about the concerns of the people that work there who try so hard."

Standing for fairness

DPCC employees' voices were finally being heard. The chairman of the board was visibly affected by the testimony. He said that "the care center is a source of pride for us in DuPage County" and that the board would "fight" for it.

Just days before that public meeting, employees watched as the abusive director of nursing was walked out of the building. She had been fired.

The newly formed union has already held bargaining team elections and completed bargaining surveys to establish priorities for the negotiating table. As *On the Move* went to press, the team was setting bargaining dates with management.

The workers are ready to move forward and make a change for the better instead of sitting back, voiceless.



DuPage County Care Center employees overwhelmingly voted YES for AFSCME.

State employees to be restored to proper step

Target date is April 1

Of all Bruce Rauner's mean-spirited and irresponsible assaults on workers, the refusal to pay scheduled step and longevity increases was the one that hit state employees the hardest.

But Gov. Pritzker announced on his first full day in office that he would end Rauner's illegal four-year freeze on step progression by placing employees on the appropriate step going forward, and on January 28 the governor's office said the process would be completed for all employees effective April 1.

"AFSCME stopped Bruce Rauner's illegal step freeze in the courts and voters rejected him at the ballot box," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "Now Illinois can begin cleaning up the mess Rauner left behind. For more than 20,000 state workers, that means ensuring everyone is placed on their proper step and paid what they are owed. Knowing that employees will be back where they belong as of April 1 is a welcome step in the right direction."

A hard toll on workers and their families

"It's been very hard," said AFSCME Local 2858 member Brittany Adams. "I had to move in with my family because I couldn't afford all my bills. I had to put my student loan on deferment. I couldn't even help out my mom like I used to; instead she's helping me out."

Adams started as a human services caseworker at the North Chicago DHS office in 2013. Her income has been frozen since receiving her first step increase in 2014.

Despite the hardship, Adams has no intention of leaving state government. She helps low-income families access public benefits like food assistance and Medicaid. She said it feels good to make an impact in a community that needs help, and now she has a better appreciation for the struggles of the families she assists.

"I love my job and helping the community," Adams said, "but I'm one paycheck

away from being on the other side of the table, asking for assistance."

"Prices go up every year and I was told I'd be getting steps every year, so I depended on them," said Local 51 member Heather Whited, an office associate in the state's

employees she reads the political blog Capitol Fax by Rich Miller. When she read there that Pritzker planned to restore step increases, she said tears came to her eyes.

She had been trying to figure out how to pay for her daughter's graduation costs. A cap, tassel and gown were expenses that are hard to reconcile when you're already living paycheck to paycheck, Whited said. Sometimes she must decide between food and paying for monthly medications.

Encouraged by Miller,

on time for the first time in a year. She's used to people having her back as a member of a union, Whited said.

"Being in this union gave me hope all these years," Whited said. "It's good to know that somebody is fighting for you out there instead of fighting all on your own."

Push for back pay continues

Gov. Pritzker has also committed to paying back wages owed since July 1, 2015, when Rauner implemented his illegal step freeze. The new administration is aware of the legally-mandated seven percent interest rate accruing on monies owed; this additional liability provides a strong incentive to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. However, no date has been set for payment of all the monies owed.

The union's battle for steps was a long one. First, the Fifth District Appellate Court affirmed AFSCME's contention that the steps had been illegally frozen and mandated

the case back to the Illinois Labor Relations Board to shape a remedy. The Board subsequently directed that employees be placed on their proper step and paid the back wages owed with legally-mandated interest.

But Rauner refused to comply. Labor board procedures provide for lengthy time frames for objections and a hearing process that could drag on up to a year.

With the same labor board in place that originally upheld Rauner's step freeze and defended his actions at every turn, AFSCME focused on resolving the outstanding issues directly with the Pritzker Administration.

Brittany Adams said she's hopeful about getting her back pay because she knows she and her fellow AFSCME members won't quit fighting for what's right.

"We will get what's owed to us," she said confidently. And now that she knows when her income will be restored, Adams is very much looking forward to getting her own place to live—"finally!"

"Being in this union gave me hope all these years."

Environmental Protection Agency. "I was waiting for my next step to get a new car, but it never came. When my car got wrecked I had to get a car loan that I couldn't afford, but should have been able to."

Whited is a single mom with a daughter with special needs. Like many state

Whited started a GoFundMe site asking for \$100 to cover graduation expenses. When she checked her site, she realized "just how many wonderful people are out there": She had raised more than \$5,000.

Whited said she used the funds to catch up on bills and her mortgage, paying it



AFSCME Local 2858 member Brittany Adams spoke to a cheering crowd at a Capitol rally to restore steps.

DELEGATES FROM AFSCME local unions across Illinois unanimously approved the union's 2019 legislative agenda on January 26, pledging to keep working for progress and fairness for all.

Strengthen union rights in response to unprecedented assault

Lisa Eden

AFSCME Local 2600,
Department of Human
Services (former local of
Mark Janus)



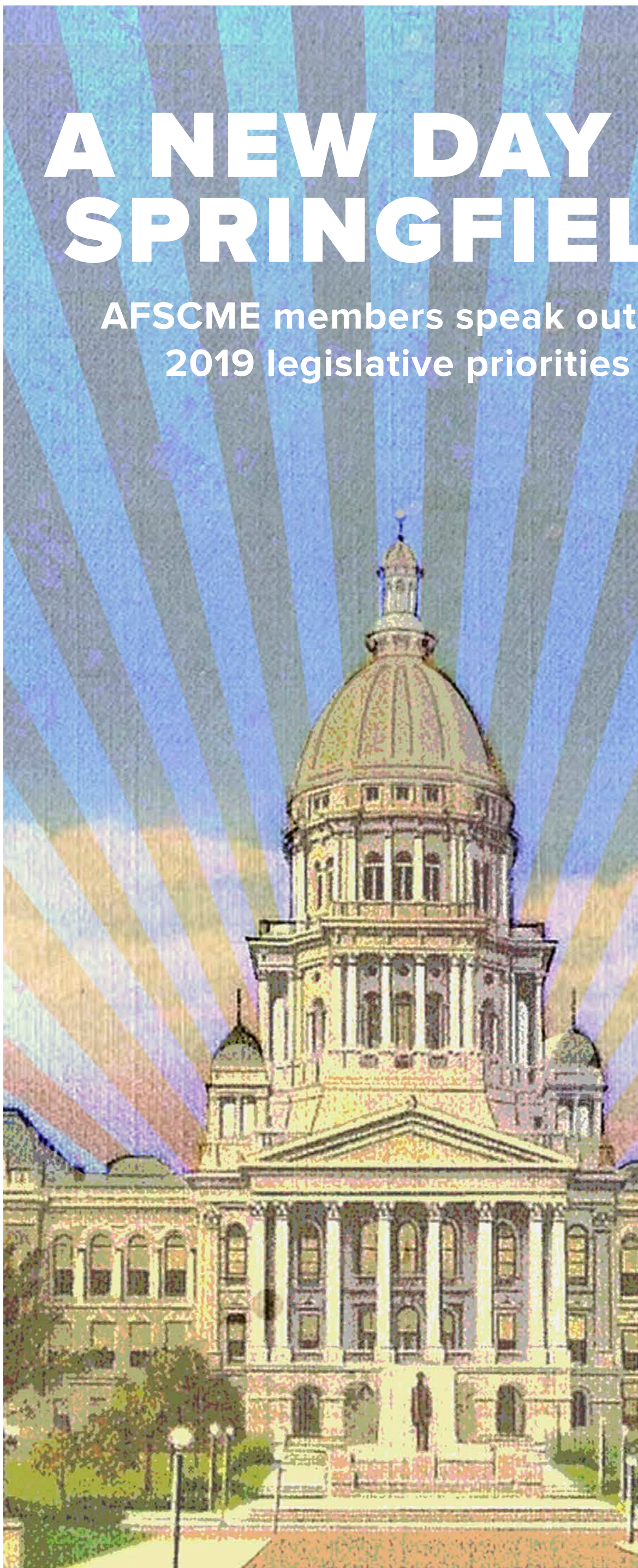
“Every public employee should know their rights and AFSCME will be working to protect those rights in this legislative session. I conduct new employee orientations, and it’s an awesome tool. We need to be able to teach new employees what a union is, what it does for you, why you should pay dues, why you need protection. Because of our union, we have the right to grievances, the right to training, the right to be free from discrimination and so much more. If it weren’t for our union, we’d all be paying double for our health insurance just like Bruce Rauner wanted us to. Last year, Rauner gave the Illinois Policy Institute public employees’ personal information. That should never have been released. We need to be able to do whatever we can to protect the rights and privacy of all represented employees.”

Fight to improve wage levels in community disability agencies and other AFSCME-represented nonprofit agencies



Roosevelt Journigan, Jr. AFSCME Local 2690, Trinity Services

“Since the state downsized its services, more people are coming to facilities like ours. By working together in the legislature, we’ve been able to get raises for DSPs like me but we’re still far behind. As a result of our successes, we’ve got more people interested in the union. They’re ready to push because they see that when you do something you can get something accomplished. I learned from my father that as long as we’re living and breathing, we’ve got to fight because someone will always try to take something away from us. So we’re going to do that. We’re going to keep fighting.”



Stabilize pension funds and oppose cuts to retirement benefits

David Morris

AFSCME Local 805,
Department of Children
and Family Services



“Our pension benefit is what we’ve worked for and paid into to secure our future, and they could take it away. I don’t want to be 80 years old and working to make extra money after 37 years of service. We must fight for our retirement security. A lot of people are wanting to move to 401(k)s, but there’s a lot more security with a pension and that’s better for employees. We have a lot of politicians that we supported at election time, and now we have to hold them accountable. In order to keep them pushing for what we need done, we have to be at the table in Springfield.”

Fight privatization of public services and assets



Gina Mack

AFSCME Local 654,
City of Chicago Police
Department

“The city of Chicago was going to privatize our non-emergency 311 center. But our union fought vigorously to defend against that effort, and we were successful.

We met with city officials, aldermen and the mayor to keep our members in their jobs and keep 311 a public service. Union jobs allow families to pay their taxes, put food on the table, live in a decent neighborhood and have some of the better opportunities in life. Privatization takes jobs in another direction and diminishes the quality of the workmanship. AFSCME needs to keep fighting privatization in order to keep our communities strong and keep the union strong.”

Support responsible budget and adequate revenues for state and local governments

Adam Deadmond

AFSCME Local 203,
Centralia Correctional
Center



“We need a fair income tax so the wealthy finally start paying their fair share and working people aren’t continually squeezed to the breaking point for the improvements we need. Working people have paid more taxes than people with a higher net worth, and our communities have suffered as a result. People say if we raise the income tax on the wealthy they’ll get up and leave our state. But they don’t. Minnesota raised their top income tax rate to 9.75 percent, and they have people flocking to the state because services are no longer neglected—like ours have been under Bruce Rauner.”

Support adequate funding for state universities

Renee Kerz

AFSCME Local 981, Eastern
Illinois University



“We had a lot of layoffs at Eastern Illinois University. I’ve been in Charleston more than 50 years and I’ve never seen the university so low. It was awful for the employees, and it was hard for management to make that decision. To watch that happen to our campus because of one person—Bruce Rauner—was terrible. It’s going to take ten years for Eastern to pull back to where we were. But he didn’t break us. Everybody is still doing the best we can with what we’ve got, even with two or three jobs piled on top of us. Now we must fight for more. And the only way we can fight for a decent budget is to stand up in the legislature.”

Make employees whole for missed step increases

Adam Riley

AFSCME Local 779, Illinois Youth Center Harrisburg



“Many of us went into debt going to college, and uprooted our families, in order to secure our jobs at the state of Illinois. We did that based on a promise when we were hired. But shortly after I was hired Rauner froze our steps. We’re getting our steps April first, but we also need to be made whole. We’re not trying to be greedy.

We showed up every day and did the job they asked us to do and for them not to hold up their end of the deal, that’s bad business. I don’t want to live paycheck to paycheck anymore. I don’t want to keep putting my student loans and car payment aside. And the step freeze doesn’t just hurt us. Our jobs support local communities and that’s what keeps most people going around here. Holding us back has been keeping everybody down.”

Press for improved safety in the workplace

William Lee

AFSCME Local 494, Pontiac
Correctional Center



“The threat to staff safety is obvious every day and violent incidents happen every day. DOC is changing policies because of recent lawsuits and it’s tying everyone’s hands, from frontline staff to wardens. Increased inmate violence without real consequences make frontline staff feel like we don’t have backing from DOC. Our legislators can change the rules to help reduce assaults on staff.”

Illinois State Museum makes comeback

Named "Leader Institution of the Year" after fight to stay open

As part of holding Illinois hostage to his anti-union demands, Bruce Rauner made shutting down the Illinois State Museum one of his first priorities as governor. Starting in 2015, his administration embarked on a plan to dismantle the prized 138-year-old museum in Springfield.

Also closed were its network of branches, including Lockport Gallery, Dickson Mounds, Rend Lake Arts Center, the Thompson Center Gallery and the Springfield Research and Collections Center.

AFSCME fought back in the courts to prevent layoffs and in the legislature to prevent closure, then later to reopen the shuttered museum. In the end, the staff, their union and the community were able to save the museum, which reopened in 2016 with a new five-dollar admission fee for adults and a greatly reduced staff due to natural attrition during the temporary closure.

In the wake of this near-death experience, it's particularly remarkable that the Illinois State Museum has now won recognition from the Illinois Association of Museums as "Leader Institution of the Year" for its "tradition of research, conservation, exhibits and programming."

The staff of the Illinois State Museum are a "hardy group," said longtime curator

and AFSCME Local 1019 member Meredith Mahoney.

"The staff that remained when we reopened are amazing and we just kept doing what we were doing before," Mahoney said. "It was a negative experience that changed the museum, but we bonded over it and we've used it as motivation to show what we can do."

A state treasure

The leadership award was granted in recognition of the extraordinary programs and exhibits offered in celebration of the Illinois bicentennial, including a comprehensive exhibit, a lecture series and a radio vignette series honoring the occasion.

Museum staffers represented by AFSCME curate exhibits, design educational programs and maintain the collection of more than 12.5 million artifacts. They log hundreds of thousands of visitors each year including teachers and schoolchildren.



Local 1019 members at the Illinois State Museum celebrate their accomplishments.

"We've proven that the value of this institution is immeasurable in terms of education and dollars."

The museum also provides researchers with access to important collections in areas like botany, geology, paleontology, anthropology and zoology, which are used to study critical issues such as human impacts on the environment. And it preserves Illinois' unique archive of Native American artifacts, including skeletal remains and other sacred objects that are governed by written agreements with several tribes.

Outpouring of support wins the day

During the battle to keep the museum open, the General Assembly's bipartisan Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability rejected Rauner's order to close the museum. AFSCME members testified at the hearing and


community groups came out in force, generating pages of supportive testimony.

"It was so heartening," Mahoney said. "All that support was a big plus in a very negative time. To know that what we do and what the museum stands for is valued by many, many people enabled us to reimagine our future, develop new partnerships and really strengthen our role in the community."

Mahoney said the museum's coalition work also provided staff with the framework to fight back against any future efforts to reduce museum offerings. The museum brings in more than \$30 million in tourism revenue and \$2 million in federal grants, but only costs \$6.29 million to operate.

"We've proven that the value of this institution is immeasurable in terms of education and dollars," Mahoney said. "We are an economic generator in the community. The money that goes into the museum is returned in so many tangible and intangible ways."

The Illinois State Museum is open seven days a week. Admission is free for youth, seniors and veterans.

"We're really proud of what we were able to accomplish," Mahoney said, "and we're proud of what we're doing today. We were given the spotlight and we've risen to the occasion." 

AFSCME Strong: Reaching for 100%

In the wake of the US Supreme Court ruling in the Janus case, which banned fair share fees, AFSCME locals across the state are going all-out to make sure that every employee understands the forces behind the case and why it's so important to be a member of the union.

AFSCME Local 2615 is working hard to become 100% Union through the AFSCME Strong program. As a conglomerate local of state employees with dozens of job titles and multiple worksites across west-central Illinois, it can be hard to reach every member and create

a sense of unity. But that's exactly what the local union is doing.

Whenever a worksite reaches 100% Union, the local celebrates that success with AFSCME-themed cakes, potlucks and parties. Local president Carlene Erno credits the

leaders in each site for making these success stories happen.

"It's a group effort, but it's our stewards and our Member Action Teams within the worksites that can really reach people," Erno said. "They're talking to non-members and members, educating them about the union, keeping them informed, making sure they know the history of all that our union has accomplished."


The local has worked to get as many member email addresses as possible and started a Facebook page so it can share information quickly and stay connected.



Local 2615 members at the Warren County DHS office celebrate reaching 100% Union.

Creating new leaders is critical for the union's strength and success, Erno said, and she's proud of the people who have stepped up during the last four years of Bruce Rauner's attacks.

"In my opinion, his tactics

backfired," Erno said. "Instead of people getting scared and not wanting to be in the union, we saw the opposite. A lot of great leaders were created in our union because of Bruce Rauner." 

Working for a Chicago City Council that stands with workers

For too long the city of Chicago has put the interests of the wealthy—of developers, banks and other powerful forces—ahead of those of working people and families. AFSCME members are taking the opportunity provided by the 2019 municipal election to change that.

The race getting all the hype is, of course, the mayoral contest. A number of candidates threw their hats in the ring when Mayor Rahm Emanuel said he wouldn't run. The AFSCME Region 1 PEOPLE Committee decided to remain neutral in the first phase of that contest.

But AFSCME is encouraging members *not* to vote for two problematic candidates: Bill Daley and Willie Wilson, both of whom have been allied with

intergovernmental affairs. "It's most important that we elect aldermen who will stand with AFSCME members to protect pensions and invest in public services."

Two examples powerfully highlight how AFSCME has proven the wisdom of this approach over the last several years: advocating for adequate mental health services and blocking privatization of the city's 311 call center.

"Our work building relationships and educating candidates directly helps the people of Chicago."

former governor Bruce Rauner.

The union is strongly focused on changing the character of the 50-member Chicago City Council by endorsing and working to elect more than 25 aldermanic candidates for a more independent and progressive council.

"No matter who becomes the mayor, the relationship of the mayor's office to the city council is going to change because none of the potential winners will wield the same type of power as previous mayors," said Adrienne Alexander, AFSCME's director of

Revisiting mental health clinic closures

When Rahm Emanuel came into office and closed six mental health clinics operated by the Chicago Department of Public Health, he did so with a budget plan that won unanimous city council approval, despite an intensive effort by AFSCME and community allies to highlight the damage the closures would do.

Eight years later, it's a different story. On January 23



Chicago Ald. Debra Silverstein (left) speaks with AFSCME Local 1669 member Kamaria Powell at a union forum.

the City Council voted 48-0 to pass a resolution creating a task force to study the state of mental health services available in the city and make recommendations to improve the city's mental health safety net. The resolution provides for AFSCME to have a seat on the task force.

"Because of the relationships we've been able to build over the last eight years, we finally got to a point where the majority of the council would look at the impact of the closures in a data-driven way, with a commitment to ensuring that the needs of city residents are met," Alexander said.

Saving Chicago's 311

AFSCME's anti-privatization efforts halted the city from outsourcing the non-emergency 311 call center in Chicago,

paving the way for new and improved services. Now the city-run operation is being hailed as a national model.

In December, Mayor Emanuel introduced the revamped call center, which handles all non-emergency calls from citizens seeking help or information, along with a new website and the city's first-ever mobile app.

But back in 2015, Mayor Emanuel attempted to privatize the center.

Led by members of Local 654, AFSCME's intensive lobbying effort propelled aldermen to speak out against the mayor's plan. When 36 of them signed a letter to Emanuel saying that privatization of 311 would wipe out jobs and make city government less responsive, the mayor finally dropped it.

Getting to know you

Leading up to the Feb. 26 municipal election, AFSCME held three community forums where the union's endorsed candidates mingled with AFSCME members who are or would be their constituents.

The candidates were endorsed by Region 1 of the AFSCME PEOPLE committee, comprised of AFSCME local union leaders in Chicago and the surrounding area. (The committee may reconvene depending on the outcome of the Feb. 26 election. Up-to-date information can be found at AFSCME31.org/Chi2019.)

"At these events, members met our endorsed candidates


and could get to know them better," Alexander said. "Aldermen relished the opportunity to meet individuals who are impacted by the issues they hear about from Council 31 staff."

"AFSCME members, including everyone in this room, are great people doing important work for the public. I'm proud to have your support," Ald. Walter Burnett said at the West Side forum. His sentiments were echoed by the other candidates.

Runoff election on April 2

"This election is critically important not just for city of Chicago employees, but for the more than 10,000 union members and their families who reside in the city," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said.

The first round of voting was held on February 26, just after *On the Move* went to print. To win, candidates must get more than 50 percent of the vote. In races where no candidate achieves that level of support, the top two vote-getters will advance to a runoff election on April 2.

"AFSCME members can make the difference in this Chicago election," Lynch said. "We've proven that our community outreach in elections and on key issues can make a real difference for so many of our fellow city residents." 

To do volunteer election work, visit AFSCME31.org/Volunteer.



Alds. Sophia King and George Cardenas speak to the importance of public mental health services in the city of Chicago.

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



Local 2817, Chapter 3, members won gains for emergency service workers at Monroe County EMS.

Monroe County EMS sets wage progression for a better future

MEMBERS OF AFSCME LOCAL 2817, Chapter 3—emergency service workers at Monroe County EMS—made big gains in their second union contract.

Starting wages had been so low that it was difficult to attract and retain qualified paramedics. Employees were being forced to work overtime to cover open shifts. They weren't paid according to their education and experience levels, and made much less than their counterparts in neighboring communities.

The union took on these challenges. By making a well-researched argument to the county, the bargaining committee substantially raised the wage floor of underpaid positions by four to nine percent and set a new wage progression that advances employee pay commensurate with experience.

The AFSCME members in Monroe County recently joined forces with AFSCME Local 2817 members in O'Fallon and City of Columbia to become a

three-chapter EMS local. Many members work for more than one of these service locations, so the boost in wages has ripple effects throughout the local.

"We didn't have a wage scale in our first contract," bargaining team member and paramedic Jessica Cutright said. "You can't bring in experienced paramedics by paying them \$12 an hour when new paramedics are making \$16 an hour somewhere else."

"We also had a subcommittee to address the overtime and shift-coverage policies," Cutright said. "My goal was to eliminate frustration among the membership, give everyone fair treatment and make sure our shifts run smoothly without any gaps in coverage."

It was a big project—"an awesome jigsaw puzzle"—but Cutright and the committee successfully alleviated the amount of overtime mandates by ensuring everyone has a fair chance at the shifts they want and providing volunteer overtime opportunities in advance.

The bargaining team led by AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Patricia Rensing included Cutright, Jason Nonn and Geoff Vogel.

Rensing said the group

"What this contract does for the future is tremendous."

was also able to achieve other language and economic improvements, including an increased clothing allowance, a mattress replacement program for employees to sleep during their 48-hour shifts, an expanded residency requirement and a list of

paid holidays included in the contract.

"What this contract does for the future is tremendous," Rensing said. "It lays the groundwork for more improvements in the next contract."

That's music to Cutright's ears. She plans to spend her

career at Monroe County EMS.

"I truly love my job," Cutright said. "I love being that first person there to take care of patients and comfort them. It's so gratifying. We are a united family here at Monroe County and I'm bound and determined to make this a place everyone wants to work."

Tollway employees stand united for fair wages

MEMBERS OF AFSCME LOCAL 3883 at the Illinois Tollway won a five-year agreement that brought the entire workforce to a minimum wage of \$15 an hour on the first day of the contract.

About 30 percent of the membership benefited from the wage boost, local president and bargaining team member Asha Tate said.

"Nobody should be making less than \$15 an hour, worrying about what bills to pay," Tate said. "Now our co-workers don't have to work 10 years to get to \$15, they get it right now. To help my brothers and sisters like that felt really good."

Tate is a general accountant clerk who has worked at the tollway for 11 years. This is her first time bargaining as an officer and she's very proud of the gains her team was able to make.

In addition to the minimum-wage victory, the bargaining team won increases in each year of the agreement, increased longevity compensation, better sick time benefits



Local 3883 bargaining team members at the Illinois Tollway brought the entire local to a \$15 minimum wage.

and improved health insurance language.

"We also improved union activity and orientation language," Tate said. "We'll have one-on-one time with new people coming in so they understand what it means to be part of a union in a public service environment."

Negotiating as the Janus Supreme Court case was decided against workers made the bargaining process even more powerful and important, Tate said.

"We never allowed any room for the employer to divide us," she said. "Regardless of what happened with Janus, we're still here and we're united together as a union. We reached a good agreement, and no one was left out in the cold."

AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Chris Hooser led negotiations with new Staff Representative Frank Pucci. They were joined by Tate, Diana McCarthy, Diane Daniels, Mike Orłowski, Paul Pecoraro and Maria Olivares.

The contract covers about 200 members of Local 3883 who work at the Tollway's central administration building in customer service, finance, engineering, IT and procurement.

Little City members make gains

MEMBERS OF AFSCME LOCAL 4008 at Little City Foundation care for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Chicago area. They won a new three-year contract with

keep the previous contract's language. That was a big win for us."

The bargaining team also successfully increased the starting wage rate for direct service personnel (DSPs) by one dollar, adding to recent wage increases secured in the legislature through AFSCME's grassroots lobbying effort. Additional increases were won to recognize education and longevity.

"For the first time Little City began to recognize our education and experience in our pay," Sitati said proudly. "We're looking to expand on that in future negotiations."

Negotiations were successful because the Local 4008 team stayed united and didn't budge, Sitati said, but also because of testimony they gave at the table.

"We shared the real-life experiences of our members to illustrate our points and linked those points to particular proposals," he said. "We weren't just asking out of the blue but had a root problem we were trying to solve. That helped us be successful."

Negotiations were also buoyed by the improved relationship between employees and management fostered by joint work in the General Assembly to pass rate increases from the state. That's a subject everyone agrees on and management knows that the union made the difference, Sitati said.

Joining Sitati and AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Edgar Diaz on the bargaining team were Josiah Simpa, Rosalind Wakefield and Kathy Jo Carrillo.

Now DSPs at Little City are ready to return to the General

actually paying attention to the work that we do. We're hoping to make as much progress as we can."

Reaching out to members helps SIU-SOM make progress

AFSCME LOCAL 370 MEMBERS waged a protracted fight for a fair contract with the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine at Springfield. Despite management hostility, the more than 600 registered nurses, certified nursing assistants and clerical staff strengthened their union while standing their ground for fair wage increases and better working conditions.

"It was a long fight, and we're used to that," said President Lisa Hensley. "For the longest time the school didn't want to guarantee any raises, but when non-bargaining-unit employees received a two-percent raise, we negotiated the same and thought we had a fair deal."

That's when things "took a strange turn," Hensley said. Just 24 hours before the membership was set to ratify their contract, non-bargaining-unit employees received an additional two-percent raise—four percent total.

"My phone was blowing up," Hensley recalled. "People were very angry and we voted the contract down. That's never happened before."

Members felt management had purposefully tried to sabotage the union. "They always try to do nasty things around contract time," Hensley said. "During the last contract, for example, they had attempted to remove a couple hundred people from the union. It's unfortunate because I think we could accomplish great things if we worked as partners."

After rejecting the contract, members were fired up. They took their case to the dean, delivering a stack of postcards demanding fair treatment and making him aware of why they rejected the unfair deal. The dean called the union members back for a face-to-face meeting.

Wages were too low, employees were underpaid, and turnover was a huge problem, Hensley told him.

"We told him we're concerned about our members but also about the people we serve,"

"Management wanted to make changes that we did not want... and we were able to hold the line."

wage increases and expanded benefits, but more important might be what the bargaining committee was able to stop at the table, local president James Sitati said.

"Management wanted to make changes that we did not want to happen, including health insurance increases and more control over our members," Sitati said. "We were able to hold the line and

Assembly to win further funding for wage increases in 2019.

Sitati said it's rewarding to see the changes you're able to make in people's lives as a DSP.

"You can teach them a skill, and when they master it you know you've made a difference," Sitati said. "It's not easy, it's not for everyone, but that's why I've stayed."

"It helps that we have a different governor, someone



Rallying together, Local 370 members won a fair deal with the SIU School of Medicine.

"We're concerned about our members but also about the people we serve."

Hensley said. "I asked him, 'Why are we hurting vulnerable workers economically and hurting our patients with high turnover?'"

After that, management came back and renegotiated a contract with a mediator. The local won 4 percent raises in the first year and 2 percent raises for the following two years, plus an equity wage adjustment for the 14 lowest-paid titles.

"Things really came together for us," Hensley said. "We got the word out to the membership, our Facebook page exploded, we signed a lot of

AFSCME Strong cards, and our members are engaged with their union. We have a long way to go, but this contract was a huge step forward for us. It shows that with hard work we can keep building on what we've gained."

The bargaining team was led by AFSCME Council 31 Regional Director Kent Beauchamp and Staff Representative Jessica Derhake. They were joined by President Hensley, Recording Secretary Eileen DiBartolomeo and executive board members Debbie Allgood, Stacy Miller and Mindy Conlee-Stevens. 

RETIREE NOTES

Retirees help set agenda

JUST BEFORE THE ILLINOIS General Assembly convened, well over a hundred retirees from across the state joined working members to set the legislative agenda at the AFSCME Legislative Conference on January 26.

"Legislators ignore retirees at their own peril," said Steve Radliff, president of Sub-Chapter 82 in Jacksonville. "We are one of the largest and most engaged voting blocs in this country and that participation does not stop once elections are over."

Protecting our retirement

Karren Holloway, a retiree from Sub-Chapter 163 in southern Cook County noted that the legislative agenda highlighted the repeated and varied attempts to undermine retirement benefits.

"A priority for both working and retired members continues to be defending and stabilizing our pension funds, especially as efforts ramp up to eliminate the state's pension protection clause," she said. "To successfully address the pension issues, we will all need to support a state budget that is responsible and includes adequate revenue."

Illinois state pension funds are underfunded due to structural deficits in operating

budgets, not benefits, but despite the underfunding they are still an economic driver in the state.

According to the National Institute on Retirement Security, every dollar contributed by taxpayers to public pensions in Illinois yields an economic output of \$4.75.

"Expenditures made by retirees of state and local government provide a steady economic stimulus to Illinois communities and the state economy," the report states.

Join the fight

Retirees will mobilize into action during the legislative session. If you're not receiving emails or texts to be informed on fast-action items, please contact Chapter 31 Retiree Coordinator Maria Britton-Sipe at mbritton-sipe@afscme31.org.

Court rules against charges to Chicago pension fund

IN 2016 THE ILLINOIS Supreme Court ruled for AFSCME and other unions that sued to overturn a law that would have cut the pension benefits of city of Chicago employees.

A lawyer who had filed a separate suit for a small group of employees demanded that



AFSCME Chapter 31 Retirees got ready for a new legislative session at the 2019 PEOPLE Conference in Springfield.

his fees of nearly \$1 million be paid by the Municipal Employees and Annuitants Benefit Fund, the fund in which city of Chicago AFSCME members and retirees participate. AFSCME filed objections to the payment, arguing that city retirees should not be forced to pay for a lawsuit they never agreed to. Earlier last year a trial court denied those fees, and in December 2018, the Appellate Court, agreed.

This is a win for Chicago retirees, who won't have their funds depleted. If the pension systems are raided to pay such fees, it could further undermine its ability to pay benefits, as less money can be invested and produce a return.

While plaintiffs may appeal this decision, AFSCME will continue efforts to protect retiree benefits.

SERS continues to recalculate benefits owed

IN THE 2018 SPRING LEGISLATIVE session, AFSCME successfully lobbied for passage of an appropriation to pay back wages owed to some 24,000 state employees and retirees from 2011 when a negotiated pay increase was withheld. As a result, all back wages were paid as of October 31, 2018.

SERS is in the process of determining the impact on the monthly benefits of those who were paid back wages and will adjust accordingly, including any retroactive benefits.

According to SERS Director Tim Blair, "The review of frozen information and the



AFSCME Chapter 31 retirees Marvin McBride and Betsy Hastings.

benefit recalculations will require a significant amount of staff time." SERS is asking for patience as they go through this labor-intensive process. AFSCME retirees will continue to monitor this process.

Social Security expansion

THIS PAST JANUARY, BOTH THE US House and Senate proposed to expand Social Security benefits while also making gradual changes to keep the system solvent for the rest of the century.

Called the Social Security 2100 Act, the legislation would provide an across-the-board benefit increase equal to about two percent of the average benefit, along with a cost-of-living adjustment, that would better account for the actual costs faced by seniors. The bill, which would be the first major expansion of Social Security since 1972, would also set a

higher minimum benefit, putting it at 25 percent above the poverty line, and cut taxes for an estimated 12 million Social Security recipients by lifting the income thresholds for taxing benefits.

If enacted, this policy shift would permanently fix the funding of the Social Security program by raising the payroll tax rate from 12.4 percent to 14.8 percent over the next 24 years, and the payroll tax would be imposed on earnings over \$400,000 a year. Only one-fourth of the money raised by the bill would be used to increase benefits. The rest would cover projected deficits in the Social Security trust over the next 75 years.

"Expanding Social Security, with no cuts, is wise policy and winning politics," said Nancy J. Altman, the president of Social Security Works, an advocacy group AFSCME supports. "People are worried about a retirement income crisis, and this is a solution."



Nearing Retirement?

If you or someone you know is about to retire, make sure they stay engaged in protecting their benefits by joining AFSCME Retiree Chapter 31.

To join just sign an AFSCME Chapter 31 membership card. Retiree dues are only \$3.00 a month and will be deducted directly from your pension check upon your authorization.

By joining AFSCME Retiree Chapter 31, you'll be taking a stand for retiree rights and improved benefits. You've earned your retirement benefits; now join the fight to protect them.

For more information or to request a membership card, contact Maria Britton-Sipe, AFSCME Council 31 Retiree Coordinator 217.788.2800

IDOC employee recognized for Special Olympics support

A FSCME Local 203 member Chuck Mattmiller, a correctional officer at Centralia Correctional Center, has won the Illinois Law Enforcement Torch Run's Special Olympics Illinois Flame of Hope Award.

The Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and competitions for more than five million athletes, both children and adults, with intellectual disabilities. Mattmiller is part of a decades-long tradition in law enforcement of building awareness and raising funds for the organization, primarily through the Law Enforcement Torch Run.

The Torch Run has raised more than half a billion dollars for the Special Olympics since its inception. Law enforcement officers carry the games' "Flame of Hope" into opening ceremonies at local competitions and state, national and world games.

Mattmiller said his parents "instilled volunteerism in me" and he knew he wanted to give back like they did, but he wasn't sure how. One day he was taking his children to child care and saw a flyer posted for the Polar Plunge, a fundraiser for the Special Olympics in which participants jump in freezing-cold bodies of water in the middle of winter.

Mattmiller not only joined up, but he brought his co-workers with him, getting nearly 30 people to take the plunge and raise funds for the Torch Run.

Jumping in with two feet

Then he really got going. He got in touch with the Special Olympics and the statewide Torch Run groups and, Mattmiller said, "we jumped in with two feet. We set up facility coordinators at each facility to recruit volunteers who really wanted to help and were passionate about the cause. We found staff who had children who are athletes and they got involved too."

Every June, law enforcement agencies across the state and the nation run Special Olympics torches through towns, counties and communities. In 2017, the Illinois Department of Corrections team ran its torch more than 200 miles from Marion to

Bloomington and raised \$148,000, a record for the Illinois torch run. Then in 2018 IDOC was once again the top fundraising agency and broke its own record, raising more than \$165,000.

A representative of the top fundraising agency leads the all the torches onto the field around Hancock Stadium at the state games in Bloomington. Mattmiller was proud to carry the torch for Illinois. He also had the privilege of awarding medals to the winning athletes.

"The athletes are what keep me going," Mattmiller enthused. "They've been given all kinds of adversity and I've never met one without a smile on their face. Even the person getting the third-place trophy, you'd swear they were getting a gold medal."

Spirit, determination and dedication

The Flame of Hope Award is given out to an individual and agency each year. Mattmiller was given the honor. The award reads, "Presented for your spirit, determination and dedication to the Illinois Law Enforcement Torch Run. Thanks for keeping the 'Flame of Hope' alive for the



AFSCME members Chuck Mattmiller, Chadd Mathias, Nicole Watson and Marc Heinzmann presented medals at the Illinois Special Olympics Summer Games.


"The athletes are what keep me going."

athletes of the Special Olympics Illinois."

"I'm not doing this for the recognition," Mattmiller said. "It's hard to accept the hubbub, but I decided to embrace it and use it as a larger stage to get the word out to get more volunteers."

In fact, Mattmiller requested that *On the Move* specifically encourage AFSCME members across the state to get involved.

"There are so many opportunities to get involved in the Special Olympics and Torch Run, and a lot of it takes place in the Chicago area," he said.

And Mattmiller will be there to cheer you on if you do join: "I want to continue to be a part of this for many years to come. It's a great feeling, it gives me a joy and honor to do it." 

AFSCME members set 2019 legislative agenda

More than 500 delegates from AFSCME local unions across the state braved single-digit temperatures, wind and snow to gather in Springfield on January 26 for the biennial AFSCME Legislative Conference.

Together they unanimously approved the union's 2019 legislative agenda and participated in workshops to prepare for the current challenges and opportunities facing working people in Illinois.

Executive Director Roberta Lynch opened the conference with a rousing speech celebrating the downfall of former governor Bruce Rauner after four long years of unrelenting

attacks on public employees and the labor movement.

"Bruce Rauner is the biggest loser in decades and we're still standing strong," Lynch said to the packed crowd. "We're stronger than when he came into office. We did it by sticking up for ourselves and by sticking up for each other!"

Lynch emphasized the need for unity in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling in

the Janus case abolishing fair share fees.

"It's critical that we build

connections and strengthen our union," Lynch said. "Everybody must feel that this is their union."

AFSCME, she said, is ready to fight for legislation that will benefit union members and improving the lives of all in our state, including a \$15 minimum wage and a fair tax system.


"All of us, no matter our

income, need quality public services," Lynch emphasized. "We need to stand for legislative priorities that promote fairness for all people."

Lynch encouraged members to be active in their union and in the legislative process.

"Everything you do today matters for tomorrow," she said. "We've come this far because you showed up, stood up and spoke up. That's how we beat Bruce Rauner and that's how we'll keep on winning."

Deputy Director Mike Newman closed out the conference with a call to continue our tireless efforts to protect workers' rights and advance an agenda that makes gains for everyone. Even after so many years of fighting for justice, he said, AFSCME is ready for more.

"We're a stronger union today than ever before," Newman said. "Our opponents know why: We never quit." 



Delegates voted unanimously to approve the union's 2019 legislative agenda in January.



What are the challenges of working during winter?

This winter has been tough. When that cold hit [the polar vortex that hit Illinois with record-breaking negative 50-degree weather in January], we were just coming off more than 20 days working 14-hour shifts, plus weekends, salting and plowing. I'd finally get in bed at 11 at night only to get a call at 2 a.m. to come back out.

How does your union improve public services?

If you can provide for your family, it makes you a better person when you go to work. If you're miserable and struggling to get by, it's hard to provide excellent services to everyone else. With the union, everyone

has good benefits, makes a decent wage and is able to live comfortably. They have vacation time to get a break from work. These things make my life better so when I go to work, I'm happier. We have better morale and we're ready to focus on helping other people.


How has your union job impacted your family?

My union benefits help provide for my family and also gives me more time with them. I have good health insurance and a decent salary. I've been holding my job steady for 17 years and that's been huge for my family and my kids.

Why is it important for union members to stay united?

The union plays a huge role in fighting for fair wages and good benefits for all workers so we can keep the middle class. Without the union, I'd have to work two or three jobs to get by instead of working one. Without the union, workers like me probably wouldn't provide as good of service, we wouldn't be able to spend as much time with our families and we wouldn't be as happy.

We have a good working relationship with management after years of working with them, not against them. But the village would love to cut our salaries in half and get rid of our insurance. It's not because they hate us, that's just the way the world is: If they could do it cheaper, they would. That's true in the private sector. Companies want to do a lot more with a lot less. They want to cut their spending and increase their profits. If they could wipe out the middle class, they would.

Our membership is always ready to step up and stand together for something important. That unity is critical for our local, and for the middle class in general. 



Tim Lynch

AFSCME Local 368

MAINTENANCE WORKER, VILLAGE OF ORLAND PARK

Tell us about your job as a maintenance worker.

I've worked here for 17 years and I do all kinds of different work. I've been in charge of the stormwater program, maintaining more than 300 ponds and dealing with blockages to ensure that the town doesn't get flooded. I've worked the water main

thing is complex, most of it is underground, and it's all interconnected. The water needs to be treated and tested daily, and we make sure the water towers are filled to the proper level to provide proper pressure to homes. The water mains are crisscrossing under the roads with cable lines and gas lines. We must maintain these safely and with the least amount of disruption to residents. There's a

“The union plays a huge role in fighting for fair wages and good benefits for all workers. Without the union, I'd have to work two or three jobs to get by.”

crew where we dig out and repair water mains. I have my water plant operator's license so I've worked to treat our water and maintain our water towers. Right now, I'm doing all the electrical work for Orland Park, maintaining all the streetlight poles, the Christmas decorations, the Metra train station lighting. And of course, since it's winter, I plow snow as well.

What's your favorite part of the job?

I like learning how everything runs and how everything works, and I've learned so much in my time here. Municipal work looks a lot different to us than to the regular person who just flushes a toilet or turns on a sink. Every-

lot that goes into maintaining a community and none of it is easy, but I like the challenge.

How does your job provide a valuable public service?

We're critical to keeping people safe, especially in the winter with the snow and the ice. And instead of waiting for contractors to be called out, as city employees who live in the community, we're right there as soon as the public needs us. The snow starts falling and I'm there within 15 minutes. Everyone reports right away and within an hour we're cleaning the roads and fixing water main breaks. We're on top of it—even if it's the middle of the night—to make sure complaints get resolved quickly.