



# MOVE

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



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**On the Move**

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**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**You don't get what you don't pay for**

*Government can't meet people's needs without tax dollars.*

**M**ore than 10 percent of the Illinois workforce is currently unemployed.

THESE ARE FOLKS WHO ARE ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR A JOB. AMONG THEM ARE DOZENS OF AFSCME members whose jobs were lost due to the severe budget crisis afflicting every level of government. Our fellow union members in Aurora, Evanston, Madison County, Springfield, Decatur and Peoria are among those already standing in an unemployment line or facing an all-too-real threat of joining one.

But unlike automobile showrooms, shopping malls and restaurants, which have seen a dramatic drop in demand during this deep recession, there is no decline in demand for public services.

Check out the lengthy lines for unemployment checks and food stamps. There's still plenty of snow to be plowed and giant potholes to be filled. The number of abused and neglected children has not diminished, nor are there fewer inmates in our prisons. Kids still are showing up for school ready to be taught and the number of adults clamoring for retraining at our community colleges has skyrocketed.

Yet we have office holders and candidates advocating that state and local governments act like businesses and slash their workforces. Those folks need a lesson in Economics 101. Businesses slash when there's no demand for their product or service. When demand grows, they actually invest more money in their enterprises and they hire more staff to meet the needs of their customers. That's what government should be doing now, not cutting back.

But government can't meet all the demands for its services without adequate revenues. So just as businesses raise capital to

invest, our state government needs to raise taxes to support the services that citizens want and need.

The problem is the nay-sayers who say government is "forcing" people to pay taxes. But who's really forcing whom?

Do they think that the unemployed have voluntarily chosen their fate? The United States may have ended the military draft, but the army of the unemployed is not a voluntary force.

Daycare centers whose state funding has dried up are closing their doors. Are parents scrambling to find care for their kids doing it by choice, or are they being forced to do so? Family members who are perfectly happy with the care their loved ones are getting at the Howe Developmental Center, which employs 700 AFSCME members, haven't chosen to move their children and siblings to other locations. They're compelled to because the state won't put up the money to keep it open.

A collapsing state budget is causing the state's community colleges and universities to raise tuition and cancel classes. Are students choosing to pay more money and delay taking courses, or are they being forced to do so?

When I took American history in high school, I learned that our forefathers dumped tea into Boston Harbor to protest the tyranny of "taxation without representation." Somehow that's been distorted by modern day tea-baggers into simply "taxation is tyranny."

Well, I don't think our veterans who themselves fought tyranny think it's tyrannical to tax citizens so that they, who

fought to preserve our freedom, can receive care in our state's veterans' homes built to shelter them when nobody else is able.

I'd be surprised if senior citizens who can't get out of their own homes regard the people who deliver their meals on wheels as someone invading their space.

An inmate housed in a state prison or a county jail can claim that tax dollars are taking his freedom away. But I suspect people in the communities from which the felons come don't argue with having the bad guys removed from their neighborhoods and don't object to paying taxes for that purpose.

Those lawmakers posing as defenders of freedom by opposing tax increases also argue that raising taxes will hurt the economy, particularly in times of recession. To the contrary, most economists agree that state and local government spending stimulates the economy. Building roads, bridges and schools creates jobs.

Funding a prison or a mental health center not only keeps our streets safer and our care better, and not only provides jobs for those employed there, but allows the businesses of local vendors to flourish when they sell their products to the facility.

Part of the opposition to increased taxes emanates from a flawed belief system. But, truth be told, a big part of it is political cowardice. Knowing that a tax increase is not popular with some vocal segments of voters, many lawmakers who know Illinois needs a tax increase are simply afraid to do it.

Unlike that 10 percent of the workforce that is unemployed and looking for work, legislators have a job but are refusing to do it. Our job is to convince them that if they don't act responsibly and vote for a tax increase, they just might get "drafted" into the army of the unemployed.



BY HENRY BAYER

**LEGISLATORS HAVE A JOB BUT ARE REFUSING TO DO IT.**

# Grievance resolution buys time in battle to prevent layoffs, protect services



A number of local unions that were facing layoffs held informational pickets to alert the public to the state's budget crisis and the potentially dire affects.

**B**acked by a membership determined to preserve jobs and vital state services, and using the union's master contract and the court system, Council 31 secured an agreement that averts nearly all layoffs of state employees and promises no new facility closures for at least 17 months.

BUT THE UNION'S LONG BATTLE TO FIX THE STATE'S STRUCTURAL BUDGET DEFICIT, KEEP AFSCME members working and maintain high-quality state services is a long way from over.

"The State of Illinois still faces a severe fiscal crisis that must be addressed if we are to avoid the renewed threat of massive layoffs after the 17-month term of this resolution," Council 31 Director Henry Bayer cautioned in a letter e-mailed to state employees. "The task before us now is to continue the battle to enact legislation, such as HB 174, that will raise the new revenues needed to address the state's enormous budget shortfall and ensure a brighter future for us all."

In a mediated resolution to three grievances that

underpinned AFSCME's successful court action to temporarily block all layoffs, the state has agreed to back off on 2,000 scheduled layoffs, rescind over 400 of the nearly 600 layoffs it had already initiated, and open additional vacancies to those employees who still face layoff.

Only a handful of AFSCME members will likely hit the street after they exercise their contractual rights to other positions, even if the union is not successful in blocking the previously announced facility closures of the Howe Developmental Center, Thomson Correctional Center, Jessie Ma Houston ATC and the Kankakee Women's Unit.

The union retained its right to continue to fight those closures.

### No mandatory furloughs

THE AGREEMENT WILL PREVENT any other state employee from being laid off or any other facility from being closed through the end of June 2011. In addition there can be no mandated furloughs, shutdowns or temporary layoffs, although most state employees will have the option of participating in a voluntary furlough program that has incentives for employees who do take unpaid days off.

And in a large step forward toward a long-sought union goal, the independent arbitrator who served as a



Last summer, management said there would "only" be 1,000 layoffs if the union would agree to major concessions, including 12 mandatory furlough days and significant wage cuts. Local union and Council 31 leaders rejected the proposals.

mediator will oversee a joint labor-management review of all personal service contracts, vendor contracts and subcontracts, beginning in those agencies impacted by layoffs. Where the parties agree that a violation of the contract exists, the employer will terminate all such personal service or vendor contracts no later than Dec. 31.

To achieve the job security that these provisions will assure and to help address the state's dire fiscal crisis, state employees will defer 1 percent of the July 1, 2010 pay increase and 1 percent of the Jan. 1, 2011 pay increase until June 1, 2011.

But if HB 174 or a similar revenue-raising measure is enacted the Jan. 1 deferral will be cancelled.

### Opens up vacancies

OTHER DETAILS OF THE RESOLUTION include:

- For a period of four years, if a direct care or security position becomes vacant, the posi-

tion must be posted and filled automatically if there are any employees on the recall list for the position in the county in which the vacancy occurs. In addition to RC-6, CU-500 and RC-9 positions, this provision will pertain to other positions that play key roles in direct service at DVA, DHS, DOC or DJJ facilities.

- Any employees impacted by a layoff plan will be red-circled for any salary reduction of three pay grades or less – that is they will retain their current pay grade.

### 'Tribute to unity'

- IF THE LABOR-MANAGEMENT health care committee established under the master agreement can develop a plan

to achieve \$70 million in savings, the employer's right to reopen the contract to negotiate increased health-insurance contributions is waived.

"All over the country, with our nation's economy in a deep recession, state workers are faced with massive numbers of layoffs, mandated furlough days, and wage freezes or

rollbacks," Bayer said. "It is a tribute to the unity and determination of AFSCME here in Illinois that we have been able to achieve this resolution which provides enhanced job security for the great majority of union members and assures the continued provision of vital state services."

**'This resolution provides enhanced job security for the great majority of union members.'**  
—Henry Bayer

# Local leaders: This agreement makes the battle worthwhile

**P**residents of local unions representing state employees voted unanimously to affirm the mediated grievance settlement that cancels hundreds of layoffs, holds back thousands more that were in the works and prevents further facility closures for 17 months. The agreement resolves the three grievances which led a court to grant Council 31's request for an injunction that had temporarily halted looming layoffs.

BELOW ARE THE COMMENTS OF SOME LOCAL UNION PRESIDENTS AFTER THEY HAD RETURNED HOME AND STARTED TALKING TO MEMBERS OF THEIR LOCALS ABOUT THE TERMS OF THE RESOLUTION.

**RUSS STUNKEL, Local 993, Vandalia Correctional Center - Our members were facing layoffs and they are very relieved. In a time of uncertainty, we have a little certainty for 17 months.**

**Nowadays that's a lot.**

I think there was good faith on both sides. Our union leaders had some tough decisions and they made good ones. Now if we can get the legislators to make the tough decisions they need to make, we won't have to come back and do this over and over.

We have to get this tax bill passed and get state services back on their feet. We've put some bubble gum on the leaks, and now we have to repair the pipes.

**PAT OUSLEY, Local 1006, Chicago-area Employment Services - Because of the economy, and the dire condition the state is in, it's**

**unprecedented that we are not losing any of our negotiated raises, only deferring 2 percent.**

The provision on vendor and personal service contracts is really important for us. We have a lot of them in here, and the state is misusing their rights by giving them work our people can and should be doing.

It's a good Band-Aid for 17 months, while we



actively continue to fight for HB 174, so we can get the budget back where it should be.

**CARY QUICK, Local 141, Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center - I'm excited to see brothers and sisters not getting layoff papers. This should do a whole lot for people's morale, and, I'll tell you, anybody who works for the state right now needs a morale boost.**



When the state first proposed furloughs and other cuts, it was not done in good faith. But now management can see that good things can happen when the contract is upheld and you use the grievance procedure to sit down and work things out. We showed that if AFSCME can help, we will. But in return we don't expect to have them try to balance the budget on our backs.

Everybody wants to do their part to help. The incentive program on furloughs makes it a very fair proposal. It makes you feel good to see the hard work our members have done be rewarded.

**KEN KELLERMAN, Local 632, Decatur CC - This settlement gives the state the cost savings they were seeking and preserves the jobs that were slated for layoffs.**

**There was a big sigh of relief here (where a number of staff had already received lay-off notices).**

When this union fights, this union wins. This agreement shows what we can do as a council when we are united.

The job the membership has done over the last six months - with pickets and rallies and phone calls - has made a difference. The legislators still need a big strong push, though. And they need to remember that voters determine whether or not they are employed.



**CARLENE HAWKINS, Local 2615, Quad Cities area agencies - The question I get most often is, "Where will the layoffs be and how many?" With the state of our economy and the assault**

**on state workers, our union got an agreement that minimizes the impact for state employees who have worked so hard under such difficult conditions. I've never been more proud to be a Council 31 member.**

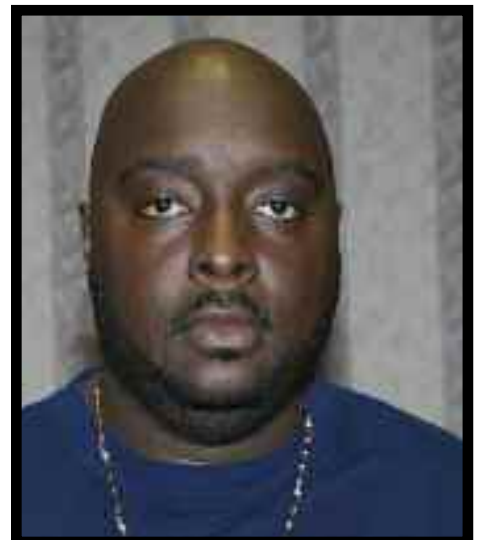
Going through those personal service contracts and getting those contractors and vendors out of our offices will make it hard for state employees at first, because they'll have to do the extra work. In the long run we'll get back work that's ours, and that will get us more staff and make our union stronger.

But this is not a time to rest on our laurels. The agreement just gives us an opportunity to get a solution. These 17 months will go by very fast. We can tell our legislators that we've done our part and now it's up to them to do theirs.

**RALPH PORTWOOD, Local 1866, Stateville CC - Our members are happy to hear that the layoffs have been averted. People can live with the wage deferrals if it can save jobs and stop facility closures. But we're not out of the woods yet.**

Our members knew layoffs were coming to Stateville because of the plan to close the maximum security unit.

That's off the table for now, but we're going to have to continue to build our coalition and get stronger. This is an opportunity to put our building blocks in place, not a time to take a break. We have to keep moving forward.



**RANDY HELLMANN, Local 943, Pinckneyville CC - Our union has a very active membership that is always engaged. It's the essence of teamwork, with the leadership and membership continually working to achieve more. I'm excited for the people who got relief and proud to be involved with an organization like we have.**

Getting this agreement makes the battle worthwhile and I think it will reinvigorate people.

This is just one more stage in the battle, and we can't lose sight of that. The big win is getting more revenues. We have to be fighting every day for a tax increase and revenues to keep state services going.



# Union contract protects workers at facilities slated to close

Howe DC, "Ma" Houston ATC, Kankakee MSU, Thomson CC

Despite the suffering of developmentally disabled individuals and their families, despite the lost opportunities to rehabilitate criminal offenders, despite the dangerous overcrowding in the state's maximum security prisons, despite the hardships placed on the affected staff and their families, despite the loss of economic activity generated in affected communities, despite all these drawbacks and more, the state has announced it will close the Howe Developmental Center, Thomson Correctional Center, Jessie "Ma" Houston Adult Transitional Center and the Kankakee Minimum Security Unit for women, all on April 30.

THANKS TO A STRONG UNION CONTRACT AND THE RESOLUTION AGREEMENT STEMMING FROM three key grievances (see page 3), most, if not all, of the affected workers at these facilities will be able to lock down other jobs in state government, though some will likely have to move or face longer commutes.

Unfortunately, the fallout from the state's desperate attempts to save a few bucks goes well beyond the relocation problems workers and their families may experience.

## DOC facility closures defy reason

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE

Department of Corrections says DOC will: "protect the public from criminal offenders through a system of incarceration and supervision which securely segregates offenders from society, assures offenders of their constitutional rights and maintains programs to enhance the success of offenders' reentry into society."

Yet closing the Kankakee MSU and the "Ma" Houston ATC takes the state in the opposite direction by closing facilities that have proven their effectiveness in reducing inmate recidivism.

"We have a vital function we are fulfilling," said Leonardo Corbett, president of Local

3782 at Kankakee. "We're set up to integrate offenders back into society. That's supposed to be DOC's goal. Our drug treatment and jobs programs are set up so that we won't see them again."

Those programs have proven to be a model for women's correctional institutions around the country, one of the reasons that the General Assembly's Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability had recommended keeping the facility open.

To make matters worse, the department has been unable to find space elsewhere in the state for the inmates housed at Kankakee,

Corbett said. "They were trying to shut us down by attrition, but they're still filling the beds here."

The facility had been pared down to 44 inmates, from 70. Then came the reversal of DOC's "Meritorious Good Time Push" plan. As of mid-February there were upwards of 75 beds filled at Kankakee.

"People who never should have been let out are coming back," he said.

## Thomson sale still up in the air

AT THOMSON CC OFFICIAL notice of the April 30 closure date came on Feb. 10.

"It was tough," Local 2359 President Lori Laidlaw said. "But we'll be able to keep people in their titles and keep them working — in this economy that's really good."

Nevertheless, she said, the closure doesn't make any sense. The pretext was the sale of Thomson to the federal government, but that sale is by no means a sure thing, and may not happen anytime soon.

In the meantime at the two facilities closest to Thomson, "East Moline just got 600 new inmates and it's completely full," she said, "Dixon is packed and they are double celling even in the mental health unit."

Pontiac, a maximum security facility for which Thomson could provide some relief, "now has all of its segregation inmates double celled, which is very dangerous," Laidlaw added.

## Breaking up a good team at Howe

IN ADDITION TO THE PROBLEMS

Continued on page 15

# Howe closure: Distressing for employees, disaster for residents

The warnings of parents and staff have gone unheeded. The mistakes made in past developmental center closures are being repeated.

RESIDENTS MOVED OUT OF HOWE DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER IN THE RUSH TO SHUT IT down are receiving inadequate medical care resulting in serious illness and getting inadequate behavioral plans resulting in incarceration and other problems.

"We know that Howe is likely to close," Council 31 public policy director Anne Irving said. "But that doesn't mean we are done fighting.

Our members and our union care about these individuals and their families, and we are going to sound the alarm whenever we think they are not getting adequate services and supports. We need to emphasize that there are many individuals who need the level of care found only in state centers — some of the services are just not available anywhere else."

Irving has documented an alarming number of cases where former Howe residents have died, been incarcerated, ended up in psychiatric hospitals or nursing homes or are lacking needed medical services.

- A 36-year-old resident with serious medical problems was placed in a group home with no medical staff, far from his 85-year-old aunt, who was his guardian. Despite indications

that his medical problems were not being addressed, the state took little action to intervene. He died less than a year after he left Howe.

- A man in his 40s was discharged from Howe in April 2008, moving to a group home in Peoria. He had medical problems and underwent surgery to relieve pain. He was then sent to a nursing home, where he contracted pneumonia and another infection and passed away.

- A Howe resident who was placed in a Central Illinois group home began having major behavioral episodes soon after he arrived, including verbal and physical aggression against other residents and staff. He was arrested and jailed, then moved to another home operated by the same provider in a near-by town. The same thing hap-

## Many individuals need the level of care found only in state centers.

pened there, with at least another two stints in jail. Howe staff has been unable to find out where he now lives.

- A woman who left Howe in August 2008 was moved to a second group home because her behaviors, well documented by Howe staff before she left, were said to be upsetting her roommates. Before the end of the first week, she was moved a third time.

"Three moves in one week for an individual who has difficulty adjusting to change is heartless," Irving said.

The woman is now reportedly blind, despite hav-

ing no vision problems when she was at Howe.

As the closure proceeds, there are many more stories, too much like those above. And many of the most difficult individuals to find placements for are still at Howe, with the closure date rapidly approaching.

A legislative hearing called at the request of AFSCME and the Howe families revealed a death rate among former Howe residents living in community settings that is 46 percent higher than the death rate at Howe.

"We've notified the Department of Justice of these tragedies," Irving said. "And we continue to push the state to delay the Howe closure to allow families time to find adequate placements for the residents."

# Aid to states essential as Congress turns to jobs bill

**A** FSCME has launched a grassroots lobbying campaign aimed at ensuring that desperately needed aid to state and local governments is included in the latest jobs legislation now before Congress.

IN EARLY FEBRUARY, UNDER PRESSURE FROM REPUBLICAN MEMBERS, THE SENATE FINANCE Committee crafted a jobs bill that does not include any additional funds for cash-strapped state governments. The House had already passed a bill that includes significant aid to states.

As the country continues its slow climb out of recession, the pressure to address unem-

ployment continues as well. February also marked the one year anniversary of the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, President Obama's initial effort to create (or save) jobs and get the economy back on track.

Economists estimate that the ARRA has already created or saved some 2 million jobs—and more are likely to come as the bill's impact continues to ripple through the economy. But with the unemployment rate still hovering around 10 percent, clearly more needs to be done.

So President Obama and congressional Democrats set to work to craft another jobs bill. In order to prevent a Republican filibuster in the Senate that would block any job creation legislation, the bill that emerged in the Senate relies heavily on providing tax breaks for small businesses that create jobs and does not include any new funding for



state governments.

Virtually every Republican in Congress opposed the ARRA last year because it included aid to states—and the Republicans argued that states should be forced to cut their budgets rather than getting a boost from the federal government.

Fortunately Democrats prevailed in that battle, but this one is a lot tougher, as Republican resistance has stiffened.

To add to the problems, Democrats have lost their filibuster-proof majority in the

Senate, so Republicans are calling a lot more of the shots. And their guns are aimed squarely at public employees.

Republicans only want to create new, private-sector jobs, alleging that this is the best way to revitalize the economy. But even the business-oriented Wall Street Journal recently quoted an economic analyst from Goldman Sachs, the big financial firm, admitting that "Spending by state and local governments has about the same effect as spending in the private sector, and not cutting a job has a

similar economic impact to creating a new one."

There's ample evidence that aid to state and local governments has prevented layoffs. Illinois received more than \$8 billion in ARRA money, helping to plug the big hole in this year's budget and staving off even bigger budget cuts than those that were made.

That kind of value added to state government efforts is the reason that AFSCME lobbyists in Washington are pushing so hard to get additional aid to states in the current jobs bill. They point out that every federal dollar invested in state services yields \$1.41 in economic growth.

And without that new infusion of funds, which includes an extension of the Federal Medicaid Assistance Program, more than 3 million Americans in both the public and private sectors could lose their jobs by 2012.

"We all want to get our economy back on track, get Americans back to work, and dig ourselves out of these hard times," AFSCME International President Gerald McEntee said. "Investing in our communities creates jobs and jump-starts economic growth. It needs to be a critical piece of any true jobs plan, and we're making sure our leaders in the Senate understand that."

# Attacks on pensions intensify

**T**wo big business-backed groups with lots of sway in the media are stepping up their attacks on public employee pensions.

BOTH THE CIVIC COMMITTEE OF THE COMMERCIAL CLUB AND THE CIVIC FEDERATION ARE POUNDING the press and key legislators with an unrelenting call for cutting public employee pensions. While there has long been a consensus in Illinois that the state constitution would not permit cuts to the benefits of current employees (only to those of new hires), the Civic Committee recently released a new report arguing that there is no constitutional protection for current employees going forward.

In other words, they

argue that while benefits already earned could not be taken away, the pension code could be changed to affect the benefits earned by current employees in the years ahead.

AFSCME is continuing to work in coalition with other public employee unions through the Illinois Retirement Security Initiative to make sure legislators and the public know the real facts about the pensions of frontline public employees.

Despite those efforts there are at least two bills aimed at cutting pensions.

Sponsored by likely Republican gubernatorial candidate, Sen. Bill Brady, **SB 3408** would bar any new employee from participating in the SERS or SURS pension plan, requiring them instead to enroll in a 401(k)-type plan with no guaranteed benefit.

**SB 2984** directs the IMRF Board, which governs pensions for most local government and

non-teaching school board employees, to institute a second-tier pension benefit for new hires within six months of any other Illinois public retirement system adopting such a second tier.

"We have a real fight on our hands to protect the pension benefits that AFSCME members have fought so hard to gain," Council 31 legislative director Joanna Webb-Gauvin said. "The powers that be in the General Assembly have those benefits in their sights."

Although the General Assembly's session formally convened in early January, there was very little legislative activity until mid-February, as most legislators devoted their efforts to the primary election on Feb. 2. Only a few bills have had any action so far. Of those, bills that AFSCME supports include measures to:

- Prohibit inmates from receiving "good time" before serving at least 60 days and require that

## Legislative



## Update

the State's Attorney in the county where they were convicted be notified of their pending release—a measure quickly enacted and signed into law;

- Give Southern Illinois University borrowing authority so it can remain fully operational until state funding comes through (SB 642);
- Prohibit the disclosure of the performance evaluation of any public employee in any jurisdiction (HB 5154);

- Require General Assembly approval before the state can sell or transfer surplus real property that has a fair market value of \$1 million or more, thus making it harder to sell Thomson Correctional Center (HB 4795);
- Limit the ability of employers, when workers are trying to form a union in their workplace, to hold required meetings at which employees must listen to anti-union propaganda (HB 5155); and
- Change the Illinois constitution's prohibition of a progressive income tax. Currently the constitution mandates that the state impose a flat income tax rate on everyone regardless of income. This harms lower and middle-income families, who spend a higher percentage of their income on the necessities of life. If **SJRCA 101** gets a three-fifths vote in both houses of the General Assembly and is then approved by voters, the legislature could create a more progressive and fair tax system.

# Local government units battle layoffs, concessions

Springfield unions rebuff takeaways, Evanston job cuts on the table

**F**aced with a take-it-or-leave-it choice of layoffs or concessions, three AFSCME locals, along with the IBEW, the police and the firefighters have rejected the city of Springfield's demands for wage cuts and furlough days.

THE CITY WANTED A 3.5 PERCENT WAGE CUT AND 12 FURLOUGH DAYS FROM EVERY EMPLOYEE, BUT every local union said, "No," especially because the city refused to give a no-layoff guarantee even if the concessions were accepted.

Cities, school districts, counties and other local government districts are all feeling the squeeze of reduced funds from the state and from their own local revenue sources.

The most immediate examples of AFSCME locals dealing with layoff threats are in Springfield and Evanston, both cities that have prided themselves on a wide range of high-quality public services.

"We gave \$100,000 in volunteer furlough days already," Council 31 staff representative Roger Griffith said of members in the Springfield locals. "Now the city's back for more."

The locals also offered to work with the city to avoid the layoffs, but "it was all or nothing," Local 337 President Doug Cycholl said. "We would have taken the furlough days if they would have guaranteed no layoffs. But nothing we proposed was even looked at."

The Water Department, where Cycholl works, will lose seven positions, in addition to four that are already vacant. That will include two field investigators who help citizens troubleshoot when utility bills jump for no apparent reason, and four maintenance workers who take care of the grounds.

"They just wouldn't work with us," Cycholl said.

*Editor's note: The city had put a new proposal on the table as On the Move went to press.*

## Evanston local fights back as layoffs loom

THE CLOCK WAS TICKING DOWN on Local 1891 members with a contractual no-layoff provision expiring on March 1 and the city facing a multi-million dollar budget deficit.

Evanston's city manager had proposed a budget that would:

- Close the library's two branches and lay off 16 employees;
- Contract out to private, for-profit corporations for garbage collection, library materials acquisition and cataloging, and other core city functions;
- Close the city dental clinic;
- Reduce Parks and Recreation custodial services, facilities management and other operations;
- Lay off members who work on graffiti cleanup, tree trimming, street repairs and other public works functions; and

• Lay off employees who repair city snowplows, fire trucks, police cars and other city vehicles.

Union members have attended City Council budget hearings to make clear the consequences of service cutbacks on such a broad scale. They have also worked to mobilize public opposition to the cuts, and proposed a long list of money-saving suggestions as alternatives to service and job cuts.

## Local offers help; management refuses to respond

LOCAL 1891 HAS PUSHED FOR management to meet with frontline employees to develop ideas on how to generate savings by getting work done more efficiently. The local has also proposed modest increases in fees, fines and service charges to raise additional revenues.

A good example of how shortsighted the cuts would be came in a paper prepared by the local union that explained the potential damage of laying

off forestry employees.

Evanston is a "Tree City USA," with an urban forest that counts 30,000 parkway trees and 12,000 in city parks. That means the 18 tree-care professionals each have 2,330 trees to care for. The beauty and environmental value of these trees is inestimable.

The forestry workers plant approximately 700 new trees per year, monitor the urban forest for disease, trim dangerous deadwood and other tasks.

The plan to lay off three workers will cost the city much more in the long run than it can ever hope to save, as the number and quality of the city's trees decline.

"The union recognizes the serious budget deficit faced by the city and the difficult challenges faced by the City Council in closing the gap," Council 31 staff representative Flo Estes said. "We want to work cooperatively with the city to minimize the cuts, but so far management has refused to respond to our suggestions or to sit down and discuss our ideas."

# Rockford school workers build seven-union coalition

Local 692 President Betty Christensen said the new school superintendent wants everyone to think the unions are against the school, "but we do the work and we're proud of what we do." PHOTO BY EDDY MONTVILLE/ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR/COPYRIGHTED/USED WITH PERMISSION

**B**us drivers, para-professionals, food-service workers, teachers, secretaries and other unionized school employees in Rockford have come together in an effort to get more respect from the administration, gain a voice in improving the quality of education and win fairer contracts.

UNITY 205 BEGAN AS A RESPONSE TO A NEW SUPERINTENDENT, WHO "MADE A LOT OF changes in the district that weren't positive," said Betty Christensen, president of AFSCME Local 692. "It was like

talking to a brick wall."

The coalition's first public action was a rally at the district administration building in November, with 200 members in attendance from the seven participating unions. Then on Feb. 9 the group delivered some 250 letters from district employees to a school board meeting.

"It made the superintendent very unhappy," Christensen said. "She wants everyone to think the unions are against the school, but we do the work and we're proud of what we do."

The letters were about getting fair contracts, safety on school buses, dress code changes for students and staff, changes in the disciplinary policy and other issues.

"She's been like a dicta-



tor," Christensen said. "Even the students have picketed for her to resign. When we had a big snow earlier this year, bus drivers, like everyone else, couldn't get to work on time.

She blamed the school closing on the drivers."

Cathy Ainley is president of Local 1275, which represents the drivers. With the new superintendent, she said, "It's important that all the unions are on the same page. It will help us navigate through our problems. It's not just about contracts. It's about lending support."

She said drivers are having major problems stemming from changes in the disciplinary procedures. "She weakened the code and the kids got the message, 'I can do what I want.' Drivers have been assaulted, kids

are jumping in and out of the windows.

"The superintendent does not get it at all. I had high hopes for her, but she wants complete control of everything, all the time."

Ainley has tried to meet the superintendent, but three meetings were cancelled.

"I go out of my way to get to a meeting, and she doesn't

come," Ainley said. "I haven't even shaken her hand yet."

Though the school board says Unity 205 isn't having an effect, local unions may conclude otherwise.

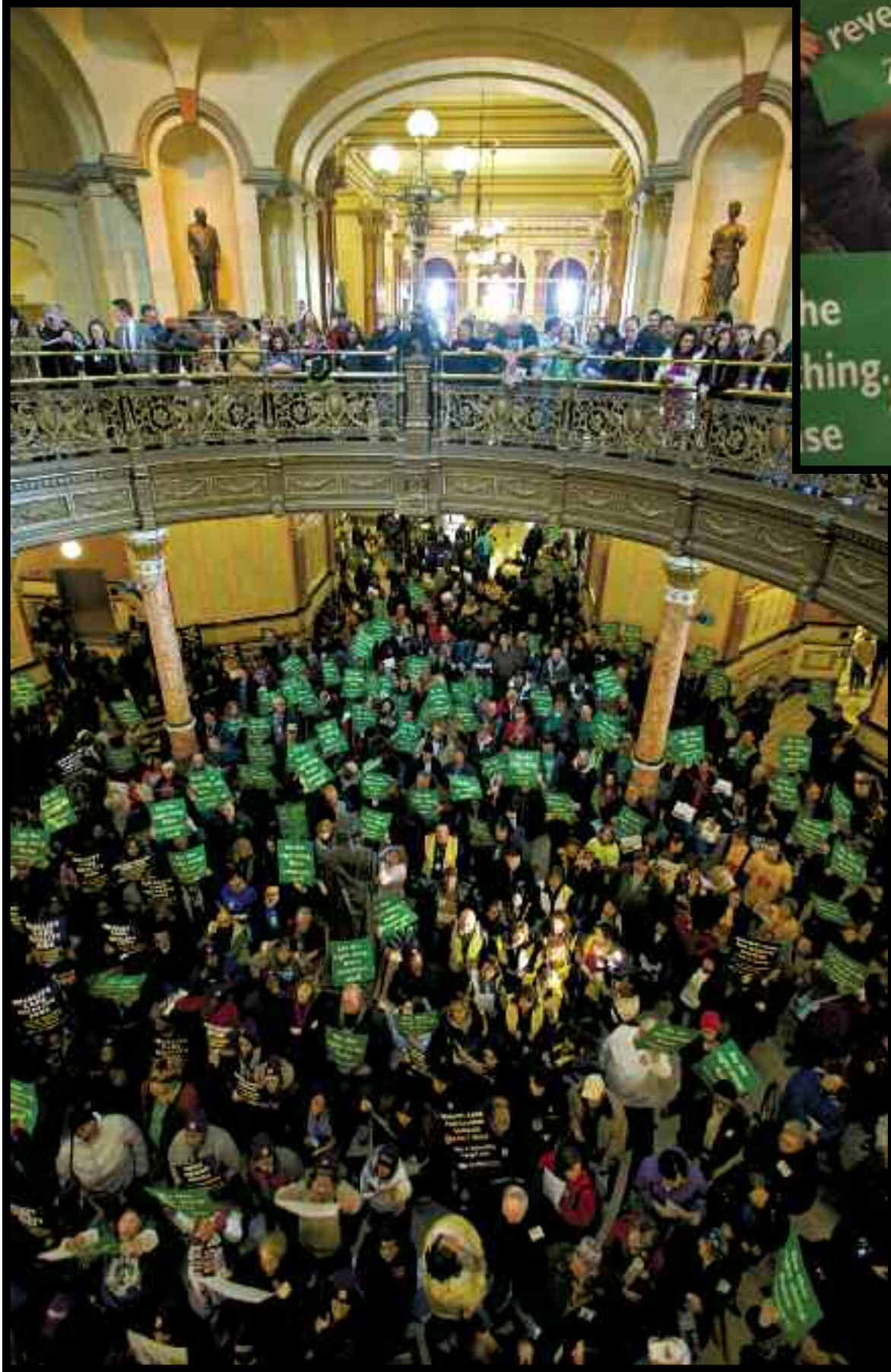
After going months without a contract, Local 692 members ratified contracts in February that settle wages for one year. Paraprofessionals took a wage freeze in the first year, but the district agreed to also freeze health-care costs for the entire term of the three-year contract. And food-service workers were guaranteed the same percentage wage increases that teachers negotiate.

"We just went through some battles," Council 31 staff representative Jay Ferraro said. "But this summer is the war — all seven unions will be bargaining for wages for the coming year."



Council 31 staff representative Jay Ferraro speaks at a meeting of Unity 205, a coalition of seven unions that represent Rockford school employees. PHOTO BY SCOTT MORGAN/ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR/COPYRIGHTED/USED WITH PERMISSION

THOUSANDS OF RESPONSIBLE BUDGET COALITION SUPPORTERS RALLIED AND LOBBIED FEB. 17 AT THE STATE CAPITOL.



# AFSCME fight for tax

**T**HE LONG DRIVE TO REFORM ILLINOIS' OUTDATED, REGRESSIVE TAX SYSTEM AND BRING STATE REVENUES UP TO A LEVEL THAT SUPPORTS THE SERVICES CITIZENS WANT AND NEED IS BUILDING MOMENTUM AS THE STATE'S BUDGET CRISIS DEEPENS.

Nearly 300 organizations have banded together in the Responsible Budget Coalition, a group in which AFSCME is playing a key role. The RBC is pushing for HB 174 (see a summary on facing page), a measure with the best chance of meeting the goals of reform and revenue-raising.

Hundreds of AFSCME members joined a throng of thousands at the state Capitol on February 17 as the coalition mobilized its forces to press for immediate action on revenue-raising legislation. It was the second mass demonstration to push for new revenues in less than six months, with an Oct. 15 rally bringing 2,000 to the Capitol.

"We can't wait," was the slogan for the latest rally. Can't wait until November when the politicians are finished protecting their own jobs. Can't wait while universities struggle without appropriated state funds. Can't wait until layoffs and facility closures hit hard. Can't wait while community disability-service agencies are struggling to keep their heads above water. Can't wait while medical providers quit seeing state employees and retirees because they aren't getting paid. Can't wait while layoffs spread in cities and towns around the state. Can't wait while state facilities run on overtime and exhausted state employees try to do two or three jobs at once. Can't wait to provide the kind of education Illinois kids deserve.

Unable to pay its \$5 billion in overdue bills; tens of billions behind on payments it owes to state pension systems; unable to maintain adequate staffing for critical functions like public safety, health care for the uninsured, child welfare, services for veterans, the blind and deaf, the mentally ill and the disabled: the state is teetering on the verge of bankruptcy.

AFSCME has pushed and pulled for years to get revenue-raising measures, but legislators weren't listening. Now, with the crisis becoming even more acute, maybe they will.



# allies reform

Members began this year's push on Jan. 13 when thousands of phone calls went to state representatives from every part of Illinois.

"We had members from Natural Resources, the crime lab, the state police telecommunications center, Children and Family Services, Human Services field offices and Environmental Protection making calls," said Lori Gladson, president of Local 51, which represents state employees in the Peoria area. "We've done a lot of work explaining the bill to our members. Once they understand it, they are willing to make calls. The more ammunition you give them, the more effective they are."

The union began the latest campaign for a tax-reform bill last fall, when activists circulated pledge sheets, asking members to sign up for activities they would participate in.

"We got email addresses from those sheets and used them to build the rally and the call-in day," Gladson said.

In the process of organizing, the local recruited eight new stewards, she added.

In Peoria, a Council 31 stewards' training class put aside the normal curriculum for awhile and made phone calls. Local 3464, which represents the city of Peoria, had a contingent there, including Joanne Jordan, the local union president.

"Eventually what affects the state trickles down to the city level," she said. "Local governments

depend on the state for a significant portion of their revenues."

She said her local was planning to send members to the Feb. 17 rally in Springfield.

At the Thomson Center in downtown Chicago, Local 2467 made cell phones available in the 7th floor break room.

"Our members were willing participants," said Al Taylor, the local's chief steward. "We put in a lot of calls to the speaker's office, and one member actually talked to Speaker Madigan."

He said they generated around 100 phone calls from Revenue, the Liquor Commission, Lottery and the Racing Board.

"We started organizing a week before," he said. "Our members know we're in a tough fight and the state is trying to get concessions out of us. But we know they can't cut their way out of this. Without increased revenues, the borrowing, the layoffs and the threats to our union will continue."



AFSCME MEMBERS FROM ALL OVER THE STATE PARTICIPATED IN THE JAN. 13 CALL-IN DAY TO URGE HOUSE PASSAGE OF HB 174.

## Responsible budget starts with tax reform

The drive for a state budget that adequately funds vital services, keeps frontline staff on the job, begins to repay what's owed to state pension systems, and keeps desperately needed funding flowing for education, local governments and state-funded community disability-service agencies will sputter to a dead stop without passage of HB 174, or something very much like it.

That measure, already passed by the state Senate, would:

- Raise \$6.4 billion in new revenue;
- Increase the individual income tax rate to 5 percent from 3 percent, while reforming the Illinois tax code for middle-class and low-income families, many of who would not see an increase in their total tax bill;
- Increase the corporate income tax rate to 5 percent from 4.8 percent;
- Expand the sales tax to include 39 different consumer services that previously were untaxed, such as travel agent services and scenic and sightseeing transportation. All of these services are commonly taxed in many states and already taxed by one or more neighboring states;
- Double the property tax credit homeowners now claim on their Illinois tax return, from the current 5 percent of property taxes, to 10 percent, and make it refundable;
- Increase the current \$2,000 personal exemption for Illinois income taxes to \$3,000;
- Triple the amount of the earned-income tax credit for low-income earners, from 5 percent to 15 percent of the federal EITC they claim;
- Provide dedicated revenue to local school districts; and
- Sharply increase the amount distributed to cities, towns, and counties through the Local Government Distributive Fund.

# Council 31 links fights to raise taxes, stop layoffs

**A** lot more than filling out grievance forms went into carving out a 17-month reprieve for thousands of state employees who were facing layoffs and a new round of facility closures.

WHEN THOUSANDS OF LAYOFFS WERE ANNOUNCED LAST SPRING, AFSCME MEMBERS ALL OVER the state took action, while Council 31 carefully built the cases for three key grievances. Once they were filed, and the state gave no indication that it would engage in serious discussions about them, the union sought court action, winning the injunction that temporarily blocked the layoffs.

As a result the state was forced to sit down and discuss a resolution. But those discussions were still leading nowhere, and preparations began for bringing the grievances before an arbitrator.

Both parties knew there was a risk of an adverse arbitration decision. So they agreed to allow the arbitrator to serve as a mediator, seeking a mutually agreeable resolution. That effort succeeded with an agreement that was unanimously affirmed by presidents of state locals.

While state employees breathed a sigh of relief to have layoffs temporarily off the table, they are now moving into an even more difficult phase in the battle to preserve vital state services and protect the good jobs of people who provide them. The story of how the union got this far may offer guidance in the difficult campaign for desperately needed new revenues that is now underway.

## Deficit didn't happen overnight

THE DECISION TO CUT BACK state services, close facilities and lay off workers didn't come out of the blue when, in July, Gov. Pat Quinn threatened to lay off 2,600 state employees unless the union would agree to wage and step freezes and 12 mandatory furlough days.

The seeds of crisis began to sprout many years ago. The state's structural budget deficit was growing, but year

after year legislators and governors put off making the needed reforms to an antiquated tax system.

Instead they balanced the budget with smoke and mirrors: They borrowed to produce operating funds; they held off payments on bills the state owed, shifting the expenditures into the following fiscal year; they skipped required employer contributions to state pension systems; they gambled that the stock market would keep rising.

Now the IOUs are coming due, resulting in a series of ever-deepening service cuts, facility closures, lengthening lines for people needing help, holes in the armor of public safety and not nearly enough staff to get the vital work of state government done on time.

And with the economic crisis that closed out George Bush's second term as president, state revenues withered, making the long-sought new revenues all the more crucial but even harder to get, as politicians of nearly every stripe ran frantically away from any hint of a tax increase.

## Quinn seeks concessions from state employees

In January 2009 Gov. Pat



Quinn took over a state government in crisis.

In March Quinn rolled out a budget proposal that Council 31 characterized as "unfairly balanced through the sacrifice of public service workers" because it attempted to pile on furlough days, higher health care costs, larger pension contributions and smaller benefits." The proposal also included another year of not making a full pension contribution, while pushing for Corrections employees to work 12-hour days with no overtime pay.

At the end of May, "The General Assembly's failure to respond to the state's dire fiscal crisis by raising needed revenues led to enactment of a bare-bones budget in the

final hours of the legislative session," the Council 31 Web site reported. "Then legislators headed home, leaving disaster in their wake."

Quinn vetoed that budget, but the one he finally signed

wasn't much better. It did nothing to raise revenues or decrease the deficit, using the same old method of hidden borrowing.

In July, with no budget in place, Quinn threatened layoffs for some 2,600 state employees and demanded that all state workers take a wage freeze and 12 furlough days. If they refused, he threatened to lay off thousands more.

## Lawsuit blocks layoffs

FROM THERE, DEVELOPMENTS came rapid fire:

July 10 — The union got notice of approximately 600 layoffs, scheduled for Sept. 30.

July 13 — Nearly 2,000 AFSCME members joined in demonstrations at the offices of 35 state representatives, part of a coordinated effort to raise public awareness about the cuts to state services and jobs that would come if the



## Last year's state budget did nothing to raise revenues or decrease the deficit.

General Assembly failed to support House Bill 174.

July 29 — Members of Local 2073 at Logan Correctional Center and Local 632 at Decatur CC staged informational pickets warning of the potential damage from scheduled layoffs at their facilities.

Aug. 7 — The governor imposed furlough days on merit-compensation employees, and requested a meeting with Council 31 to discuss a similar program for union members.

Aug. 12 — Local 415 at Vienna CC, also scheduled for layoffs, held a demonstration with more than 250 AFSCME members, their families and community supporters.

Aug. 21 — AFSCME

Continued on the facing page

# Medicaid managed care scheme targets community agencies serving the disabled

Continued from the facing page

sought an injunction in Johnson County Circuit Court to block layoffs. The basis for the union's legal action were the outstanding grievances that alleged: (1) the state was going forward with the layoffs before it completed bargaining with the union over their impact; (2) the layoffs posed a health and safety risk to members who work in prisons already short of staff; and (3) the state was employing private contractors to do bargaining-unit work in violation of the union contract, thereby depriving laid-off employees of potential employment.

Aug. 25 — AFSCME launched a campaign to educate local communities about cuts and layoffs, with members reaching out to city councils and county boards to seek their support. Union members began petition drives against the cuts.

Sept. 3 — Leaders from Council 31 and every AFSCME state local said no when management proposed: Rolling back the most recent wage increase, canceling the next two scheduled increases and step increases for 12 months, imposing 12 furlough days and increasing employee health-care costs.

The union was outraged when the state said in exchange it would "only" lay off 1,000 state employees, with more possible after June 30, 2010. Any layoffs because of facility closures or reorganizations would be in addition to the 1,000 total.

Oct. 15 — AFSCME members participated in a rally and lobby day in Springfield that brought some 2,000 supporters of the Responsible Budget Coalition to the Capitol in a push for HB 174.

Jan. 13 — Thousands of AFSCME members called legislators, urging them to pass HB 174 — making the state's tax system fairer while raising new revenues.

Jan. 27 — AFSCME and the state reached a mediated resolution of the layoff grievances, which halted most planned layoffs through the coming fiscal year.

Feb. 17 — Thousands of AFSCME members and other activists jammed the Capitol to push for HB 174, saying "We can't wait!"

**T**he Chicago Tribune, Republican legislative leaders, and business bigwigs who oppose a state tax increase continue to perpetuate the myth that there is big money to be saved by shoving people covered by Medicaid into managed-care plans.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, THOSE WHO HAVE THE MOST TO LOSE IN SUCH SCHEMES ARE THE STATE'S most vulnerable citizens and the people who provide them with services — many of them AFSCME members.

Though the elderly and adults with disabilities make up only 18 percent of the state's Medicaid enrollees, their care accounts for 54 percent of the costs. In part that's because these groups need more medical care, but also because Medicaid covers residential long-term care for many of these individuals.

That makes them an easy target for those who are using opposition to a tax increase for political gain. Under pressure from these forces, the Quinn administration has a "pilot" program on the drawing board to put 40,000 of the infirm aged and the disabled into a managed-care plan.

## An attempt to drive down already-low wages

THIS MANAGED-CARE PILOT PROGRAM could further destabilize the already-strained network of nonprofit community-based agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities. Those agencies are almost entirely dependent on state funding, which includes Medicaid matching funds from the federal government. They've been starved for funds in recent years as successive state budgets have failed to provide the cost-of-living increases essential to paying employees fair wages.

"We are very skeptical about how this proposed restructuring of Medicaid ... would impact the individuals our members serve and the services they provide," Coun-



cil 31 political action director Jason Kay told a state legislative committee. "We are concerned that such a major undertaking is moving forward rapidly without sufficient information and planning behind the effort. When it comes to medical care we should all be guided by the Hippocratic Oath: 'First, do no harm.'"

The harm could be far-reaching.

## Insurance company giants making policy

"MANY OF THE INDIVIDUALS IN the population addressed by the pilot have very involved medical histories and require very specialized care," Kay noted. He asked the committee to imagine the problems confronting someone who has difficulty speaking or who has an intellectual challenge in trying to explain what they are feeling to a new medical-care provider.

For them, "changes in who provides treatment and how it is delivered is a very threatening prospect," Kay said. "This plan could place further limits on access to care."

He said that "The most disturbing aspect of the proposed managed care pilot is the eventual inclusion of all Medicaid-covered services, even residential programs supporting individuals with disabilities. Unlike a hospital or a health-care provider for whom Medicaid is just a part of their revenue stream, these programs are entirely reimbursed by Medicaid. So a community disability

service agency's entire program will now rest in the hands of whatever giant insurance company wins the bid."

That could mean downward pressure on the compensation of those who work in these agencies — many of them AFSCME members — who are already getting meager wages and benefits.

## HMOs can weaken quality of care

"IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE HOW A managed-care entity could wring savings out of these programs without further driving down wages," Kay said. "And if a community agency is unwilling to negotiate a lower rate with a managed-care entity, does that mean the individuals will lose their home and services, and the employees lose their jobs?"

Consequences could also be felt by AFSCME members who work in state developmental centers.

"There has been some talk that Medicaid managed care will spur deinstitutionalization, and specifically the closure of state facilities," Kay said. "Managed care should not be allowed to drive down the wages and benefits of the state workforce that is now fairly compensated for the important work that they perform."

The potential harm that managed care could cause for the aged and disabled populations is clear. But what about the supposed benefits — better health care and lower costs?

With Illinois already ninth

## Will individuals lose their home and services, and the employees lose their jobs?

lowest among states in Medicaid cost per patient, managed care can probably only squeeze out significant savings by limiting access to care. But that means higher potential long-range costs.

And every dollar the state doesn't spend means at least \$1.20 less in federal funding under the current formula. This money goes to public-service workers, doctors, nurses, social workers and other providers. And they spend it on groceries, mortgage and car payments and other things that help the state's economy.

Nor is it a sure thing that better care will result.

"Experience with managed-care plans in the form of HMOs has too often produced contrary results, weakening rather than improving quality of care and access to treatment," Kay said. "While it may well be that there are innovative ways to help individuals in the aged and disabled population and those who provide their long-term care do a better job of integrated medical service delivery, much more ground-work would need to be done before any steps are taken."

# SHORT REPORTS

## U. of I. furloughs not on the table - yet

THOUGH NEARLY 5,000 ACADEMIC professionals, faculty and administrators have taken furlough days at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, so far union members and other civil service employees aren't being asked to do so.

"The administration hasn't asked AFSCME to discuss furloughs," Local 3700 President Dorinda Miller said. "The existing civil-service language doesn't allow for furloughs."

The university is owed hundreds of millions by the state, which is too broke to send along the money appropriated for the U. of I. in the current state budget.

Miller said the university is trying to get the civil-service language changed, so that furloughs could be used. But the union has been successful in blocking that change. And even if the language was changed, the union maintains

its contract still bars furloughs. On the other hand, the university can lay off employees - by seniority - according to the union contract.

"So far they've said furlough days would not stop layoffs," Miller said. "There's a lot of fear and misinformation."

Her local joined Local 698, which also represents employees at the university, to hold an informational meeting on Feb. 11 that drew more than 200 concerned union members.

"We are being bombarded with information from the administration," Local 698 Vice President Margaret Lewis said. "But it is skewed toward their point of view. I think as a result of the meeting our members now have a better understanding of why the union is opposing furloughs."

She said furloughs "sound benign, but they don't prevent layoffs and it would set a dangerous precedent. They can be easily abused by the

administration, giving them out unfairly, with no protections. They could give faculty two days, for example, and us 10. There are nasty implications."

On the other hand, she said, "layoff language in our contract protects members' rights."

## Community questions sale of Resurrection hospitals

COUNCIL 31 IS WORKING WITH the Oak Park/Austin Health Alliance to protect the interests of the community and employees if Resurrection Health Care's sale of two hospitals proceeds.

Late last year RHC announced it was selling Westlake Hospital in Melrose Park and West Suburban in Oak Park to Vanguard Health Systems, a for-profit company. That company's record raises serious concerns. In Phoenix, Vanguard closed a community hospital that was struggling financially and in Chicago

Vanguard cut the obstetrics-gynecology department at Weiss Memorial.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan must review the sale. The community alliance has gathered more than 10,000 signatures on a petition urging her office to place conditions on the sale that protect patients and employees. These include:

- Ensure that Vanguard does not close or sell the hospitals for a minimum of 10 years and that it maintains all current services with those hospitals, including the ER and maternity services for 10 years.
- Improve

patient care by requiring investment in better staffing at the bedside and new patient-care equipment.

- Retain all current employees at equivalent positions and respect workers' rights by agreeing to a fair organizing process.
- Ensure provision of charity care at or above the Cook County average.
- Create an independent foundation with the profits from the sale to support needed community health projects.

## Wall Street Journal: Bust public-employee unions

THE VOICE OF THE CORPORATE elite is calling for an end to public-employee unions. A recent Wall Street Journal diatribe begins by noting that the unionized workforce now has more public employees than private-sector workers.

It goes on to argue that public-service employees should have their political voices muzzled: "The problem for democracy is that this creates a self-reinforcing cycle of higher spending and taxes. The unions help elect politicians, who repay the unions with more pay and benefits and dues-paying members, who in turn help to re-elect those politicians."

It concludes with this vicious attack: "As we can see from the desperate economic and fiscal woes of California, New Jersey, New York and other states with dominant public unions, this has become a major problem for the U.S. economy and small-d democratic governance. It may be the single biggest problem. The agenda for American political reform needs to include the breaking of public unionism's power to capture an ever-larger share of private income."

This only days after the U.S. Supreme Court gave corporations virtually unbridled political power to buy elections. Apparently the big-money folks won't be satisfied with having the loudest voice. They want the only voice.

## Privatized municipality doesn't work

MILTON, GEORGIA, WAS INCORPORATED in 2006, embracing privatization as the way forward. A private company was hired to collect garbage, draw up zoning maps and handle

the day-to-day duties of a municipal government.

"But the relationship soured when the city needed to cut the budget," reported the Atlanta Journal Constitution. As 2010 dawned Milton ended its contract with CH2M Hill, a Colorado-based firm.

"City Manager Chris Lagerbloom said the change should translate into at least \$1 million in yearly savings - a significant sum for a city with a \$22.9 million budget," the paper explained. "We just elected to eliminate the middle man," Lagerbloom said."

## Obama promises end to Bush tax cuts for the rich

IN 2010, 37.8 PERCENT OF THE tax cuts enacted in the Bush years will go to the richest 1 percent of U.S. households. Fortunately these undeserved breaks are on the way out, as they expire this year.

President Obama said in his State of the Union message that "at a time of record deficits, we will not continue tax cuts for oil companies, for investment fund managers, and for those making over \$250,000 a year. We just can't afford it."

## Canadian public employees fight for basic rights

WHEN WAGE PARITY AND THEIR right to strike were challenged, workers in the Canadian Union of Public Employees fought a successful battle to defend these hard-won gains.

Health-care workers in rural Nova Scotia had come to loggerheads with the provincial government over the issue of parity with non-rural areas. The government claimed parity was not possible due to budget deficits in the climate created by the current economic crisis. But the union said the province's premier "is not going to balance his budget on the backs of Nova Scotia health-care workers."

The union decided to go on strike, but politicians in the Conservative party questioned their right to take such action, despite a recent failure to pass legislation that would have denied health workers that right.

The strike ended after just two hours, and parity was maintained.

Local 2600 Membership Chair Dena McGill gets a food donation ready to deliver.



## Local 2600 donates to food bank

LOCAL 2600, WHICH REPRESENTS state employees in the Springfield area, got into the Christmas spirit with a donation of over 800 pounds of food and \$100 to the Central Illinois Foodbank. The community involvement effort was spearheaded by the local's Community Action Committee.

"The 'Feeding the Communities We Serve' program is important to this local because we know the dire economic circumstances of so many people," said Mary Hodgson, the local's president. "We wanted to ensure there was food on the table for people who have lost their jobs and are suffering this holiday season. Our desire to help our neighbors does not end when we clock out from DHS and HFS."



Members of Local 3348 at Pinnacle are fighting for past-due bonuses that still haven't come. They protested with an informational picket just before Christmas.

A union official said, "I think the whole thing just reminded people that you can't take these things for granted, (wage parity was) something you've had for 10 years and we had to fight to keep it."

### Obama pushing feds to end sub-contracting

PRESIDENT OBAMA HAS ASKED the federal Office of Management and Budget to define "inherently governmental functions," part of an effort to deprivatize U.S. government work that shouldn't be contracted out.

Last year Obama directed agencies to cut \$40 billion from contracting budgets over the next two fiscal years, by trimming non-competitive contracts and ending the use of contractors for some government functions. Source: Washington Post.

### Pundit: Private-sector corruption gets free pass

THE FOLLOWING IS EXCERPTED from a column written by John McCarron, once a columnist for the Chicago Tribune, and now an instructor at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism.

There is, indeed, a "culture of corruption" in Illinois, and investigative journalists are right to expose it.

What isn't right is their too-narrow focus on the public sector, especially on Democrat-led governments whose offices are in easy walking distance of our major newsrooms.

Turns out there was — and maybe still is — an elaborate network of GOP fixers working our state's dark corners for the big special interests such as the Illinois State Medical Society. This goes on while the Chicago media

entertain us daily with the nickel-and-dime exploits of Chicago Democrats whose names have become household words.

But the problem runs deeper than which political party most often gets lit up. For reasons both practical and ideological, our journalism generally gives the private sector a free pass. It is far easier to investigate the public sector than the private. Governments are required to conduct their business in a public forum.

So pols and government have become the whipping boys of investigative journalism. Which wouldn't be so bad, except that the main ideological battle of our time — the one that bombards us when we tune into talk radio or read any opinion page — concerns the proper role of the public and the private. It's awfully hard to make a case for government intervention, whether into health care or investment banking, when the media are constantly banging away at government screw-ups or political venality. So we worry endlessly about "socialized medicine" even as the private sector fills our air with toxic coal smoke and our bellies with fattening corn syrup. We agonize over deficit "stimulus" spending and the possibility of pay curbs on bankers, even as the financiers whose follies cost us our jobs and homes reward themselves with six- and seven-figure bonuses for a job well-done.

What I do not understand is why my investigative friends — as smart and as idealistic as I know them to be — have not connected these same dots. Why do they allow their good work to become a weapon of the conservative right? Do they not understand how badly they are being played?

## ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

### SIU med school local fights off furloughs

IN WHAT LOCAL 370 PRESIDENT Dee Ann Scott called "long and sometimes painful" negotiations, AFSCME members at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield agreed to a four-year contract that freezes wages for the first year, leaves longevity pay intact and, in the final three years, provides for wage increases equal to any campus-wide raises.

Management was demanding major takeaways, including the right to impose 12 furlough days in each of the four years. Other concession demands included taking away longevity raises, having fewer labor-management meetings and weakening seniority rights.

The union fought back with solidarity actions, including stickers and coffee mugs that said, "We say NO to furloughs."

"This was a difficult year," Scott said. "We went in there not expecting to get a lot, but we thought we could make some progress on non-economic items, and we didn't want furloughs. When it came to the end, furlough days weren't part of the package."

The local was able to make significant gains in limiting use of sub-contracting and temporary employees, improving family leave options and other contractual rights.

"There were a lot of little things that add up to being important over time," Scott said.

The union's negotiating committee was led by staff representative Erik Hostetter, with Scott, Tina Ashenfelder, Jeannie Donelan, Melinda Orum, Deb Brown, Ed Dye, Steve Sandstrom, Jo Davidsmeier, Jean Lebel, Eileen DiBartolomeo, Linda Mainwaring and Carol Thomas.

### UCP workers gain on pay

A CONTRACT BETWEEN UNITED Cerebral Palsy of Will County and Local 3237 provides for a \$650 signing bonus in the first year of a three-year contract and 2 percent raises in each of the next two years. Employees will pay more for health insurance premiums each year.

"The local has a good working relationship with management," said staff representative Jerry Brown, who led the union bargaining team. "They have a well-developed member action team to communicate with

their members. They're a unified group."

"The bonus will cover the increase in the cost of health-insurance premiums for those members who have family coverage," said Yurvette Simmons, the local's president.

"We deserve more, but we understand that the state budget is in trouble," she said. "The most important thing about the negotiations is that there will be no layoffs and no furlough days. So we still have a job and it's somewhat secure."

The contract also raised the starting rate to \$9 an hour, from \$7.76, an important provision in a place like UCP where turnover is high.

"We've already got fewer vacancies because of that," Simmons said. "That helps everybody."

Carla Byes, Tracy Shoemaker and Anna Wilson served on the bargaining team with Simmons and Brown.

### City of Wilmington — wages, insurance go up

A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT RAISES wages 7.5 percent for city of Wilmington workers. The cap on employee contributions for health insurance goes up to \$200 a month over the life of the contract, from \$175.

"We tried to save the police dispatcher jobs," Local 1909 president Pat Nugent said. "But we weren't successful; they were outsourced. Our biggest accomplishment was holding down the increases in insurance payments."

The bargaining committee was led by staff representative Joe Pluger, with Nugent, Mike Nugent, Maureen Mack and Lynda Miner.

### City of Rockford local goes for one-year freeze

LOCAL 1058 MEMBERS AGREED TO extend their contract for one year, freezing wages and employee health-insurance premiums. Those who are eligible for step increases and longevity raises will get them.

"The city proposed this and we felt it was something we really had to listen to," said Garry Cacciapaglia, the local union president. "I think it was fair. We got a 4-percent raise in 2009, so I didn't think we'd have a lot of bargaining power, anyway. Going into next year, our bargaining stance will be better."

The negotiating team was led by staff representative Jay Ferraro, with Cacciapaglia, Tony Garcia, Ned Friel, Christi-

na Loudermilk, Doug Passmore, Chet Lashock, Simon Licon, Ruben Esparza and Ronda Collins.

### 'Extremely difficult' bargaining with Rockford schools

A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT BETWEEN Local 692 and Rockford School District 205 freezes wages for the first year and guarantees no increases in employees' health-insurance premiums for the entire three years. Wages for the second and third years will be set in later bargaining.

"It was extremely difficult bargaining," said Betty Christensen, the local union president. "They weren't offering us anything, anything, anything."

Then the local helped organize Unity 205, a coalition of seven unions in the school districts that aims to gain respect for all school employees (see page 7). After two actions, an informational picket and a letter-writing campaign to the school board, management's position at the bargaining table changed, Christensen said.

"We got a lot of publicity out of it and the superintendent was upset by the letters."

That's when the district offered a health-insurance freeze, she said. "Before that, everything was just, 'no.'"

The negotiating committee was led by staff representative Jay Ferraro, with Christensen, Breedy Wilson, Donna Henderson, Gloria Sturgis, Nancy Elmers, Vermett Guerin, Laurie Freeman and Colleen Pete.

### Corrections counselors catch up

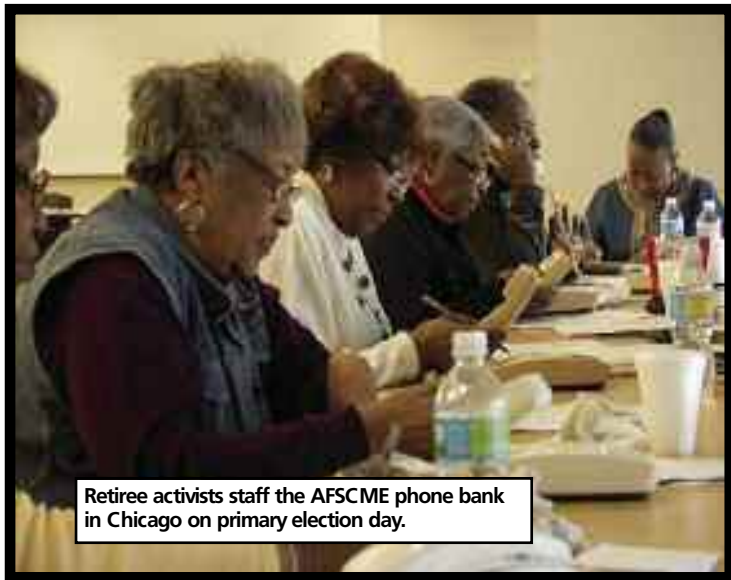
EMPLOYEES OF WELLS CENTER, A private contractor that provides drug and alcohol counseling at 10 state correctional facilities, now have a contract at six sites, with four sites not yet organized.

Those at the Kankakee and Dwight centers already had a contract. Their wages are frozen for this year. At four other sites, the counselors will now be covered by the contract. Their wages went up from 2 percent to 11 percent, bringing them to parity with those already covered by the contract.

"We hope to bring the other four groups in this year," staff representative Joe Pluger said. "That will give us more leverage in bargaining next time."

The current contract is for one year. Misty Eitenmiller and Shauana Hall served on the negotiating committee.

# RETIREE NOTES



Retiree activists staff the AFSCME phone bank in Chicago on primary election day.



Northern Cook County Sub-chapter leaders Charlie Hogan (left) and Ted Loda, with campaign volunteer Judy Witt.

## Northern Cook volunteers energized by youthful candidate

WITH THEIR CHARTER PENDING, THE NEWLY ORGANIZED NORTHERN Cook County Sub-chapter 161 is creating excitement among the area's retirees and making an impact on the political scene.

"We wanted to be a part of the action," said Charlie Hogan, interim president of the new sub-chapter. "We knew many of the sub-chapters and members were involved in campaigns, rallies and regular meetings, so this was our turn."

Attendance at the initial sub-chapter meetings has stayed consistently around 40 to 50 – drawing high marks from chapter leaders.

Then came the February primary election. Many of the group volunteered to work with the campaign of Patrick Keenan-Devlin, a 25-year-old activist who ran for state representative in a district that included most of Evanston, a northeast corner of Chicago and several other suburban North Shore communities.

"Our folks were geared up about participating in the primary," Hogan said. "But I don't think we were prepared for the major impact that it would have on us."

The retirees became part of a campaign organization filled with energy, idealism and a highly competent campaign staff.

"We worked with people from all walks of life," Hogan said. "From trained professionals to green volunteers. Everyone was disciplined and had a variety of talents. It bridged generations, bringing together people of various ages to push for a common cause. I think most of us felt a renewed faith in the system, working for a candidate that was eager to change things for the better and it opened our eyes to the power of retirees."

The campaign fell short of getting the candidate nominated, but it was working against steep odds and far exceeded expectations.

"We retirees have great untapped power in the extensive experience, skills and networks of people," Hogan said. "We have the ability to organize that power through our retiree chapter, which allows us to protect what we have worked for."

"Nothing is required to be a victim, but to change things and protect the things you have, you have to work."

## Stimulus grant comes via tax return for some retirees

BEFORE AFSCME STEPPED IN, the \$250 one-time payment for seniors contained in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was originally targeted for those who receive Social Security.

The International Union's lobbying team pushed to include those public-sector retirees who are not coordinated with Social Security. They were successful, and the legislation, referred to as "the federal stimulus," was changed so that these retirees could receive the money.

Unfortunately there is a hitch. Social Security beneficiaries didn't have to do anything to receive their \$250; it came along with their regular Social Security checks. But retirees who did not pay into Social Security while working will have to file a special form on their federal income tax return to claim the grant.

Cook County, city of Chicago and state university retirees are among those affected.

"I knew that I had read about AFSCME successfully fighting for a tax credit for public sector retirees who don't get Social Security," said Wayne Schaefer, a member of Springfield Sub-chapter 86, "but when I started doing my taxes, I wasn't sure how I could claim it."

He found out that retirees in that situation must file Schedule M—Making Work Pay and Government Retiree Credits—with Form 1040A or 1040.

"Sometimes people forget that not all retirees get Social Security," Schaefer said. "In fact those of us who don't, had to pay at a higher rate into our pensions, so we appreciate AFSCME for helping legislators remember that we are out here."

## Proposal would benefit Cook County retirees

AFFORDABLE HEALTH-CARE COVERAGE FOR ALL COOK COUNTY retirees is on the table in ongoing contract talks.

Under the current retirement plan, the county's retirees can purchase health insurance through the Cook County Retirement Fund, with the fund paying 55 percent of the cost. Even with this subsidy, however, the plan options are very expen-



Sub-chapter 163 is up and running in southern Cook County.

## New Sub-chapter revs up in southern Cook County

WITH THE STATE THREATENING TO shift more health-care costs onto retirees, AFSCME retirees in southern Cook County decided the time was right to form a sub-chapter in their area.

"Since I have retired, I have been receiving so many calls from people asking me when we were going to get a sub-chapter here," said Ida Calloway, president of the newly organized Sub-chapter 163. "Retirees from this area wanted to be involved, but hated the drive into the city and the expense of parking."

Calloway and a group from the area had begun work in the summer of 2009 to organize the sub-chapter and finally saw their efforts pay off when they received their charter from AFSCME International in February.

Their meetings, which now take place in the Bloom Township Center in Chicago Heights, began at a challenging time. The state was trying to close the Howe Developmental Center, a state-operated residential habilitation program serving more than 320 individuals with severe developmental disabilities.

"Howe has been at the heart of this community for a long time," Calloway said. "Not only do many people work there and rely on it to pay for their mortgages, their children's educations and health care, but the closure would displace the people who live there, who have bonded to their caretakers. It would be hard for them to adjust some place else."

She added that "sub-chapter members are also concerned about the increased pressure to shift health-care costs onto retirees and feel that having a monthly meeting to get updates on issues that impact them is definitely welcome."

sive, especially for retirees who are under age 65 and for those age 65 and over who are not eligible for Medicare. Coverage is more affordable for Medicare-eligible retirees, depending on the plan they select.

Council 31 continues to press management for a retiree health-insurance program that would utilize the county's high-quality system of clinics and hospitals, anchored by the John Stroger Hospital and the Fantus Clinic.

"This would result in a substantial increase in benefits while decreasing health-insurance costs for retirees who use the plan," Council 31 benefits director Hank Scheff said. "Such a health plan would, in effect, be a county-operated HMO, using the health system's own staff of

highly qualified primary-care and specialty physicians."

"The county should be able to put such a plan together at a cost well below what is currently charged by the current health plans offered through the pension fund," Scheff said. "It would be a win for retirees and a plus for the County's health system by providing a source of insured patients."

Under the AFSCME proposal, retirees with 10 or more years of Cook County service could join this plan. They would pay premiums and co-payments at the same rate that current county employees now pay for the county HMO.

"It's going to be tough to get the county to agree to expand retiree benefits in this

Continued on the facing page

# Another merit-comp group wins with AFSCME

**A**nother 1,200 state employees who were formerly in the merit-compensation classification have chosen AFSCME representation.

EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE ADMINISTRATOR OPTION 1 TITLE VOTED IN 2008 ON WHETHER OR NOT they wanted a union and which union they wanted to be part of. Their votes were finally counted

after a long delay, brought on when the state raised technical legal issues about which employees were eligible to join a union. The numbers came out two to one for AFSCME, with an alliance of the SEIU and Laborers coming in a distant second.

"I haven't had a raise since I was promoted to the PSA 1 position in 2001," said Tim Haslett, who hired on with the state as a correctional officer at Centralia Correctional Center, where he was active in the local and served a term as president. "The benefits of getting in will be astronomical. I was going to retire, but I'll stay two more

years now."

Having representation is also important, he said. "It's nice to have the union protection again. Our benefits as retirees could have been cut out with the stroke of a pen. Now at least they have to bargain with AFSCME. That means a lot."

Merit compensation employees have been signing up for AFSCME in large numbers as the state's fiscal woes deepen, seeking job security, rights to vacancies when laid off and basic dignity.

"PSA Option 1s were being asked to take on extra responsibilities and work longer hours

while often getting paid less than the people they supervised," said Council 31 organizer Greg Popek, who worked with the PSA 1s. "They didn't have any job security in the face of pending cutbacks, especially since management wants to keep the people who are politically connected even if they have less seniority."

"The state gives these employees lots of responsibility, but very little authority. As more merit-compensation employees realize they can be part of the union, they are signing up quickly."

Marie Meadows is a PSA I in the Department of Children

and Family Services.

"We're really excited," she said. "The state seemed to think they could solve their woes by stopping our wage increases. We wanted to get what we're entitled to. AFSCME has proven over the years that they will fight for fairness, and they've always produced an excellent contract. Now we have rights under that contract. I feel like I'll be getting a fair wage for a job I do well, and one that I love."

Though they've already had some furlough days imposed, the new AFSCME members won't have to take any more, since the unpaid days off will now be voluntary. But Meadows said she will probably take some and so will others.

"If it helps prevent layoffs, I'm willing to do my part," she said.

Unrepresented state employees who want to join the union can contact AFSCME at 217-788-2800 and ask for Don Todd, or e-mail him at dtodd@afscme31.org.

Continued from the facing page

belt-tightening era," Scheff said. "But we believe this is a viable plan and we're going to keep pushing."

## Budget crisis brings cuts to senior services

THE STATE'S 13 AREA AGENCIES on Aging and Senior Centers are feeling the pinch of Illinois' budget crisis. As a result of cuts and late payments these agencies are struggling to keep programs like Elder Abuse Prevention, home-delivered meals and Community Care going.

These programs rely almost entirely on the state's General Revenue fund, and the agencies that operate them are being hit hard because the state has not kept pace with reimbursement.

"The lack of payment has created extreme hardship for the agencies to deliver services," said Julie Hubbard, President of the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

Most of these community-based provider agencies are not-for-profit organizations. They have taken unprecedented steps to continue services, including: borrowing as much money as their banks will allow, laying off employees, requiring furlough days, reducing employee benefits and cutting services.

Many of these agencies fear that they will be forced to close their doors unless funds are received. Critical services

such as home-delivered meals and transportation to medical appointments may no longer be available in many geographical areas of the state.

Of course, the ultimate victims of this fiscal crisis are older adults and their families. The services being cut help them continue living in their homes. Without them, they may be forced into the homes of relatives or into long-term care arrangements that are much more expensive for taxpayers and much less desirable for many seniors.

For example, the Community Care Program, which serves around 50,000 people

statewide, is designed to keep seniors in their homes and out of nursing homes until they truly need it. It sends a care coordinator to

evaluate the needs of the individual. If program criteria are met, services will be provided, including in-home service, adult day service, emergency home-response service, flexible senior services, and, in some areas of the state, a senior companion.

"We urge the General Assembly to take the action necessary to ensure the continued provision of service to Illinois' most vulnerable populations," Hubbard said.

Retirees who want to help can contact their legislators and ask them to pass a responsible budget, in particular House Bill 174. For more information on this bill go to <http://www.afscme31.org/tools/assets/files/HB174AFSCMEFactSheet.pdf>.

## Union contract protects workers

Continued from page 5

that arise in identifying positions for nearly 700 Howe Developmental Center staff at other facilities, and then relocating those who are consequently displaced by

contractual bumps, the closure of the center is presenting major problems for current and former residents and their families. (See adjoining article.)

Those problems are so acute that some of the residents who are difficult to place may not be out of Howe by April 30.

"This is a great facility," said Council 31 Associate Director Claudia Roberson. "Some of these workers have been here since the '70s. They've put their life's blood into this place."

She said the resolution agreement recently arrived at (see page 3) is helping, by giving employees more options than they would otherwise have. The provision that allows most workers affected by the closures to keep their wage rates, even if they take a job with a lower classification, has been especially helpful.

"We have a good chance to see that when the dust settles there will be a minimum number of layoffs, and those who do get laid off will find positions soon," she said.

**'Urge your legislators to support HB174.'**

**CHECK OUT COUNCIL 31'S NEWLY DESIGNED WEB SITE FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS ON YOUR UNION.**

[www.afscme31.org](http://www.afscme31.org)

The screenshot shows the AFSCME Council 31 website. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "SEARCH" and a "GO" button. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for "Home", "Action Center", "Organize", "Political Action", "Retirees", "Personal Support Program", and "About Us". The main content area features a large image of a crowd of people with the headline "Daily Rocks Capitol". Below this, there is a news article titled "House Passes Bill to Put Brakes on Thomson Sales". To the right, there is a sidebar with a "Sign Up for Email Updates" form and a "JOIN AFSCME" button. The website footer contains the text "We Make Illinois Happen".



KAMARIA POWELL, LOCAL 1669

## PRIMARY ELECTION: Setback for 'cut and run' forces

### AFSCME-backed candidates around the state won their primary election contests in impressive numbers, earning spots on the November ballot in races at every level.

From the nominee for the vacant U.S. Senate seat to a wide range of county offices, 81 percent of candidates endorsed by Council 31 were successful in their races.

And in almost every instance they were candidates who had stood up in support of the revenues needed to preserve public services and prevent job loss, rather than those who advocated cutting services and jobs, running away from any form of tax increase.

In Cook County, where the Chicago Tribune ran a year-long campaign against the county's sales tax increase, three of the four incumbent commissioners who voted for the increase won, despite opponents who campaigned on the incumbents' votes. And the one who lost was defeated by an AFSCME-backed candidate, Chuy Garcia, who never came out against the tax increase or made it an issue in the campaign.

"What we didn't see was a huge outpouring of support for the Tribune's anti-government campaign," Council 31 political action director Jason Kay said. "Joan Murphy and Deborah Sims had been vilified in some quarters for supporting the revenues needed to prevent cutting back County services. So we were really glad to be able to play a role in helping them to retain their seats."

Kay sees the Garcia victory has a game changer in Chicago politics. "Garcia is a longtime community activist whose campaign was powered by a grassroots movement that could have a big impact on Chicago politics in the coming years," he said.

In state legislative races, most incumbents who got AFSCME backing have supported the drive for a tax-reform measure that raises significant new revenues. And those who were challengers or running for vacant seats had pledged support for such a measure.

Thaddeus Jones and Rep. Andre Thapedi, who have been very helpful to the union in the fight against the closure of Howe Developmental Center, won their races in the South Suburban Chicago area with the help of AFSCME members who volunteered to work on their campaigns.

AFSCME volunteers in the Metro East area helped bring in a victory for Rep. Eddie Lee Jackson, an outspoken supporter of HB 174 who faced a challenge by one of the most well-known politicians in the region. Union members also worked for candidates in Evanston, the Quad Cities area and Aurora.

In Evanston AFSCME backed an upstart candidate who almost pulled off a win, despite support for his opponent by the area's popular U.S. Representative.

"It was a long day, but it was fun," said Kamaria Powell, an activist from Local 1669 who spent Election Day working for Patrick Keenan-Devlin, the union's endorsed candidate. "I like being involved in the political process. You learn something different every time you go out. And when our endorsed candidate wins, we can impact change."

Despite the fact that the candidate she worked for didn't win, Powell said she was glad she had spent the day working for him.

"The person who won knows we will be watching them. I like the fact that we come together to support a person that's pro-labor. I have a good job, wages and benefits because of the union, so I feel this political work is something I should do."

Kay said union members "can be proud of the role they played, not just in helping our endorsed candidates win, but in helping promote the idea that you can support raising taxes and still win an election."

DEBRA McCARTER,  
LOCAL 1591



MARY CARTER AND  
CAROLYN TAYLOR,  
LOCAL 1111



PATTIE DAVIS,  
LOCAL 2645

