



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

Influence-buying tilts the playing field

Corporate dollars are paying for attacks on public employees and the middle class

According to recent national polls more than 70 percent of all voters are against cutting Medicare or Social Security.

AN ALMOST EQUAL NUMBER, 69 PERCENT, FAVOR RAISING TAXES ON HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OVER \$250,000 annually.

Here in Illinois a Peter Hart poll found that 60 percent of voters who heard both sides of the argument opposed cutting public employees' pension benefits.

Despite such clear will of the people, a lot of politicians in both Washington and Springfield still march to the beat of a different drummer.

You can rest assured that the Republicans in Congress who voted in lockstep with their caucus leaders to cut Medicare weren't responding to an outcry from voters to dismantle the program. Nor have House Speaker Mike Madigan and Minority Leader Tom Cross, who are cooking up a bi-partisan plan to slash public pension benefits, been besieged by angry constituents demanding action to undo our retirement security.

To the contrary we know state legislators have been deluged with calls from firefighters, teachers, correctional officers and other public servants demanding that they keep their hands off our pensions.

Politics isn't supposed to work this way. In school we were taught that democracy is a great thing because people have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

Yet despite the overwhelming sentiment against cuts in vital health-care and retirement programs, politicians on both sides of the political aisle persist in going a different direction from the voters they purport to represent.

What explains the divide between the way things are supposed to work and what actually occurs?

The answer is clear and simple – the undue influence of wealthy, powerful business interests, pulling the strings of the politicians whose troughs they fill.

Of course, politicians never admit that they dance to the corporate tune in return for campaign cash. Nor would the high-minded business elite ever concede that they're acting to line their own pockets.

No, the storyline is "We need to improve the 'business climate,'" as though corporations haven't already been shipping jobs to Mississippi, Bangladesh or wherever else there's cheap labor that increases their bottom lines.

The narrative about anything that benefits working families placing terrible obstacles in business's path to profits also conflicts with the reality of the situation. Last year U.S. corporations made record profits in the fourth quarter – an annualized \$1.68 trillion. CEO pay in 2010 was up 24 percent from 2009.

Despite claims to the contrary, things aren't so bad for Illinois corporate moguls either. According to Crain's Chicago Business, the Chicago region ranked No. 1 in corporate expansion last year. Chicago's business climate ranked third nationally and seventh globally. Illinois is outpacing every other Midwestern state when it comes to job creation.

Yet the bigwigs cry poor and the Springfield politicians bend over backward to please their corporate masters. That's why this year's badly needed tax increase raised tax rates on individuals by 66.7 percent, but only raised the corporate rate by 45.8 percent.

And please note that, thanks to a tax code written with busi-

ness in mind, a majority of Illinois corporations pay no state income tax at all!

The more wealth and power become unevenly distributed, the more democracy is undermined.

In Chicago, the new mayor's campaign was largely underwritten by folks with very deep pockets. And both parties in Springfield benefit handsomely from corporate largesse.

The problem only feeds on itself as we get laws that disempower working folks (like the virtual elimination of public-employee collective bargaining in Wisconsin and Ohio), resulting in even more wealth flowing to the top.

It's important not to be deceived into thinking we've got to sacrifice so that business can thrive and create jobs. To the contrary what creates jobs and has driven the American economy is money in the hands of working people, whose purchasing power grows the economy.

If their prescription worked, we wouldn't have such a sick economy. If helping rich people get richer were the answer to our problems, we wouldn't have 9 percent unemployment, record numbers of home foreclosures and the myriad problems that confront every day Americans.

When your representative tells you he wants to improve the business climate, tell him you do, too, not by holding wages down, but by increasing middle-class purchasing power.

Let's send a strong message to every elected official: Their corporate friends may be gluttons for profits, but we are not gluttons for punishment. The heat they will feel if they continue on their current course will not be from global warming but from the justified outrage we feel over their deference to a business class that is ruining America.



BY HENRY BAYER

THE CORPORATE ELITE MAY BE GLUTTONS FOR PROFITS, BUT WE ARE NOT GLUTTONS FOR PUNISHMENT.

General Assembly eyes full-scale assault on pension benefits

Thousands of AFSCME members along with teachers, firefighters, police officers and government workers in other unions are making sure their legislators know where they stand on efforts to cut pension benefits for current employees.

AN ALL-OUT GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION TO BLOCK THESE CUTS HAS RESULTED IN A FLOOD OF E-mails and phone calls from AFSCME members and retirees to legislators, who are also being bombarded by newly minted ads in local and regional media.

To deal with this unprecedented threat, AFSCME helped forge a new coalition — We Are One Illinois — made up of the state's major public employee unions and coordinated by the Illinois State Federation of Labor. We Are One Illinois will build on the massive outpouring in defense of workers' rights that took place across our state during the week of April 4-9.

We Are One Illinois participants include: AFSCME, Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois, the Laborers Union, the Fraternal Order of Police, the Police Benevolent Association, and the Illinois Public Pension Association.

The participating organizations have pledged nearly \$1 million for a major paid and earned media campaign to make sure that the broader public understands the core issues at stake in this battle.

The basic ad message is simple: Public employees work a lifetime to earn a modest pension. They contribute toward that pension from every paycheck, and many don't get Social Security. But now the politicians want to cut pension benefits because they broke their promise and failed to make payments.

As On the Move went to press, rumors were intensifying that House Democratic and Republican leaders were working together to come up with a bill to cut the pensions

of current public employees, despite the constitutional prohibition against any such reduction.

Catering to a corporate elite

THE RELENTLESS CAMPAIGN mounted and financed by Big Business interests and Chicago CEOs is part of a national effort by the corporate elite and right-wing politicians to put everyone on their own when it comes to retirement security.

Witness the near eradication of traditional pensions for private-sector workers, the attacks around the country on public-employee pensions and the drive to cut Social Security or privatize it out of existence.

"As the fiscal crisis has lingered, officials in strapped states from California to Illinois have begun to take a second look, to see whether there might be loopholes allowing them to cut the pension benefits of current employees," said an April 25 New York Times article headlined "Public Pensions, Once Off Limits, Face Budget Cuts."

The constant pressure has pushed Illinois' legislature in that same direction.

Last year the General Assembly succeeded in passing pension cuts for all newly hired public employees. But

the big shots pulling the strings are not satisfied yet, so they're coming after current employees and retirees.

"Far too many politicians in Springfield are listening to them," Council 31 political affairs director John Cameron said. "We have to speak up for retirement security."

Shifting health-care costs onto retirees

STATE SEN. JEFF SCHOENBERG, who is now pushing hard to increase health care costs for state and university retirees, is clearly on board.

The General Assembly's Commission on Government Finance and Accountability, which Schoenberg heads, has hired a consultant whose report regarding restructuring the cost allocation for retiree health insurance is due in early May.

Schoenberg has made it clear that he intends to move legislation at that time.

House Speaker Mike Madigan has weighed in, stating that there will be legislation in his chamber to accomplish the same end. AFSCME lobbyists are making the case that any changes to retiree health-care benefits must be negotiated with the union, and AFSCME retiree activists are lobbying hard to block the legislation.

'Hands off our pensions'

IN THEIR CALLS AND E-MAILS ON pension benefits, AFSCME members have hammered on several key points:

- A pension is a promise to public employees and retirees. It's our life savings

- we earn it, we pay for it and lawmakers should keep their hands off it. A promise made should be a promise kept.

- The state's pension debt was caused by lawmakers who failed for decades to make required payments to the retirement systems. All that

time, public employees paid their share faithfully and in full. It is grossly irresponsible for legislators to contemplate punishing current public employees for politicians' past failures.

- The Illinois Constitution clearly protects public employee pensions. Any lawmaker voting for an unconstitutional scheme to slash the modest pensions earned by

public employees invites a wasteful legal battle.

Looking for loopholes

THAT LEGAL BATTLE WOULD also be costly to unions who represent public employees. And while most legal experts

believe the case against any kind of reduction is strong, there are no guarantees on how the state Supreme Court will eventually rule.

The New York Times article noted that the city of Detroit recently won an arbitration award reducing the multiplier that determines the level of pension benefits for police officers.

But Illinois is nowhere near

Detroit's dire financial straits. By some estimates well over half of the city's residents are out of work.

"Our state has the ability to pay down its pension debt without cutting services that residents want and need," Cameron said. "It only takes the political will to do so. Our members are working to stiffen that will. And they are determined to keep up the fight."

House Democratic and Republican leaders were working together to come up with a bill to cut the pensions of current public employees, despite the constitutional prohibition against any such reduction.

Public employees in Wisconsin, Ohio fighting back

Those who have targeted public employees and their unions in what many see as a battle over the fate of America's middle class are finding stiff resistance around the country.

"WE'RE GOING TO START AT THE GRASSROOTS AND BUILD OUR UNION BACK UP," AFSCME Wisconsin Council 40 Presi-

dent Jim Garrity told those assembled at the April 9 We Are One rally in Chicago. "We're going to use the political process."

That is clearly the union strategy in both states.

Ohio unions are pursuing a campaign to get 231,149 signatures on a petition to allow for a ballot initiative to repeal a recently passed bill that decimates



Jim Garrity, president of AFSCME Council 40 in Wisconsin.

public-employee collective bargaining rights.

Some 10,000 activists volunteered to

collect signatures, and AFSCME is holding training sessions to make sure those people turn in petitions that will withstand legal challenges.

If they get enough signatures, it will trigger a statewide ballot referendum.

Law eviscerates rights, lowers wages

OHIO'S REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR, John Kasich, pushed through the bill, which, among other provisions:

- Restricts collective bargaining to wage issues, removing the right to negotiate benefits such as health care and pensions and specific workplace conditions, including staffing levels at fire stations or building assignments for teachers;

- Requires public workers to pay at least 15 percent of their health-care coverage;

- Ties decisions about teacher layoffs, dismissals and pay to an evaluation process that includes their students' scores on standardized tests;

- Eliminates binding arbitration and creates a complicated alternative that would often lead to forcing employees to accept management's "last, best offer";

- Prohibits any public employer from providing

Disability service workers campaign for care and dignity

Disabled individuals and their caregivers face deep cuts

Community disability agencies are facing a sharp cut in funding that would cause severe hardship, undermining the quality of care for the individuals they serve and devastating the lives of direct-care workers who deliver those services.

AFSCME MEMBERS FROM STATE-FUNDED COMMUNITY AGENCIES SERVING PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES made the trek to Springfield in late April and early May. In waves of Statehouse lobby days, they delivered thousands of letters spelling out their plight directly to legislators.

Five Local 1827 members from St. Coletta's of Illinois Inc. were there on May 2, delivering more than 300 letters to their senators and representatives.

"We talked to Sen. Toi Hutchinson," said Valerie Ratcliffe-Brooks, the local union president. "We worked on her campaign. She said she had introduced a bill for us to get an increase. We were told that the Senate would vote for us to get an increase in pay, but the House will vote for the cuts."

The cuts will come in the form of a 6 percent reduction in the Medicaid reimbursement rates the agencies get for providing services.

AFSCME members provide the hands-on care. These workers generally earn wages that fall well below the poverty line for a family. Health insurance and retirement benefits are meager.

Though wages are already inadequate, direct-care work-



ers have been falling even further behind in their ability to support their own families.

"We haven't had a raise in three years," Ratcliffe-Brooks said. "A lot of our members make \$9 an hour and gas will soon be up to \$5 a gallon. We'll have to work two hours just to get back and forth to work. If these cuts go through, we'll be destroyed. And our CEO believes they are a done deal."

Since fiscal 2004 the state minimum wage went up 55 percent, while rates for state-funded community providers went up just 9.5 percent.

Providing direct support is physically and emotionally demanding, while pay is often lower than

encountered legislators who try to dodge rather than say where they stand.

For those who say the money isn't there, the AFSCME members had an answer:

- Adopt the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability revenue projection, which is \$1 billion higher than the one used by the House;

- Stop a special tax break for business worth \$600 million (decoupling); and
- Pass SB 3 to restructure state debt, thus significantly reducing the amount of interest paid.

"We're praying for no layoffs and nothing to be closed up," Ratcliffe-Brooks said. "Our workshop program would be the first to go. We've done the letters. We've lobbied. There's not much left except prayer."



much easier jobs. This results in a turnover rate of 43 percent. Such high turnover, along with difficulty filling job positions, has a negative impact on the quality of care.

As usual, some of the grassroots lobbyists have

Cook County: Tax cuts leading to lost services

A new Cook County administration that promised reform is increasingly looking like more of the same.

FAILING TO NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH FOR A CONTRACT THAT EXPIRED MORE THAN TWO YEARS ago is but one indication of the direction the county is going under Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

The attempt to close the county's Oak Forest Hospital; the plan to shut down the WIC program, abandoning young mothers and their infants; the failure to issue back-pay checks that are seven months overdue to the sheriff's employees who have settled their contract; the layoffs, furloughs and planned shutdown days that will curtail services; all show where Preckwinkle's determination to roll

back sales taxes is leaving county residents.

AFSCME members have not been sitting on the sidelines as Preckwinkle and the County Board go about dismantling services.

They fought back against a budget proposal that would have resulted in hundreds of layoffs, eventually succeeded in reducing the size of budget cuts and allowing union members to vote on sharing the pain by taking furlough days instead of layoffs.

They turned out for hearings on the proposal to close Oak Forest Hospital.

They have circulated flyers alerting participants in the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program to the impending closure and urging them to call Preckwinkle and the County Board in protest.

Meanwhile Council 31 is pursuing legal action to get the back wages owed to sheriff's employees, and the labor board has already issued two

complaints against the county for bargaining in bad faith.

As On the Move went to press, county locals were preparing to give Preckwinkle some feedback on how her employees rate the job she is doing.

Making the grade

AT THE BEGINNING OF HER TERM late last year, Preckwinkle issued a transition report setting out objectives for the first 100 days of her new term. At the end of the first 100 days, she took a "100 Day Report Card" to the media that reviewed the administration's progress in carrying out the transition goals. But Preckwinkle refused to give herself a grade, saying it was up to others to provide the grades.

County employees on the frontlines delivering services are the group most familiar with the workings of the county and with its problems, and most invested in seeing the county work and the new

administration improve the quality of services. So leaders from their local unions have been circulating "Report Cards," giving those employees the chance to grade the president on the job she has been doing so far.

No progress in contract talks

THE BOARD PRESIDENT ISN'T likely to get high marks from union members. They have been without a wage increase for three years, waiting for management to get serious about contract negotiations.

In the transition plan's goals for her administration's first 100 days, Preckwinkle pledged that she "would take a leadership role in successfully concluding negotiations with organized labor groups to achieve equitable labor contracts that are consistent with the county's fiscal realities."

At the end of the 100 days, the president curiously

reported this initiative as "completed."

Yet no discernible progress had been made in that bargaining. And there's little evidence that she's living up to the pledge she made when meeting with AFSCME local union presidents. In that meeting she said the budget deficit would be resolved by targeting management positions, not frontline staff.

Oak Forest closure on hold

NOR IS THE PRESIDENT LIKELY to get high marks from employees at Oak Forest Hospital or the south suburban communities that depend on the hospital to meet critical health care needs.

These communities currently have the highest rates of unmet health-care needs in the Chicago metropolitan region, Council 31 policy and legislative specialist Adrienne Alexander said in testimony

Head Start workers cap drive for respect with first contract



Head Start workers in the Springfield area have fought for and won the respect they were looking for, ratifying their first contract in April, a year after voting for AFSCME representation.

“I HAVE REALLY SEEN A DIFFERENCE IN THE RESPECT – IN HOW THEY TALK TO YOU AND HOW they make decisions,” said Cristol Tiller, who was on the original organizing committee and served on the union bargaining committee. “And our members are learning that it’s OK to speak up. They’re starting to see what it takes to change things.”

Employees will get at least 6.5 percent in wage increases through the contract term,

which ends in July 2013. There is also a step plan that raises wages for educational attainment.

But, Tiller said, “It wasn’t about the money. We want to have a say on things that directly affect us, our students and their families.”

The contract establishes a strong grievance procedure, limits contracting out, and provides pay for closure days due to weather, as well as seniority and 12-month health-insurance coverage for nine-month employees.

“The non-economic issues were harder to negotiate than the economic ones,” said Jacqlin Fair, another negotiating committee member.

“That surprised me. They fought us harder on that. They didn’t take us seriously at first, because they thought we were just here to annoy them and



Head Start workers took their contract battle to community events like this NAACP fundraiser.

that if they annoyed us enough, we’d go away. They found out we wouldn’t.”

Run by the local Urban League, Springfield’s Head Start program has five sites, covering eligible children in Sangamon and Morgan counties.

The Urban League ran an

intense anti-union campaign when the workers were organizing. It didn’t hesitate to fire staff and try other intimidation tactics, but the workers overcame that and voted for AFSCME.

“I was sick of seeing everyone treated like they weren’t important,” Fair said.

Then came the long battle to get a fair contract. The union bargaining committee led a campaign that included wearing green on Fridays, with union buttons and stickers.

“When they fired a union supporter and we all wore stickers supporting her, that bothered them,” Fair said. “They could see our numbers and that we’d support one another. It made a difference in getting them to take us seriously.”

There were fund-raising events by the local NAACP and the Urban League itself, where Head Start employees set up tables to let community folks know what was going on.

Staff also met with parents to get their support.

Springfield’s mayor,

the chief of police and the NAACP president signed supportive statements.

Then mold was found in one of the Head Start classroom buildings.

“Exposing the mold at that site made a difference,” bargaining committee member Alberta Daniels said. “We earned respect from management and got the parents on our side. Our co-workers saw they can stand up for themselves now. I was nervous at first, but then I remembered I had the union behind me.”

The Head Start bargaining committee was led by Council 31 staff representative Erik Hostetter with Fair, Tiller, Daniels, Rita Glover, Andrea Golden, Kim Lawrence, Marla Robson, James Black, Adrienne Fultz-Smith, Goddess Birmingham, Debra Buckins, Jerome Washington, DeAnn Horton, Carmella Murdock-Price, Barbette Coleman, Jacqueline Davis, Anita Strong, Rosella Wise and Amy Wubker.

Continued from page 4

before the state Health Facilities and Services Review Board. “Closure of Oak Forest can only serve to worsen that situation.”

The review board has held up the county’s plan to close inpatient services at the hospital. Alexander said, “CCHHS still has not provided any definitive evidence that other hospitals in this area are prepared to handle the increased patient load that would result if the closure goes forward.”

She said the county’s claims that it will have a new urgent-care clinic in a few years would seem empty to those who need care now. “What are people that currently come to Oak Forest to do during the transition period?” she asked. “The Health System cannot continue to claim it will provide the same level of services to the South Suburban communities while implementing a plan that in fact curtails services.”

AFSCME: Health services shutdown days violate signed agreement

COUNCIL 31 HAS ALSO FILED AN unfair labor practice charge with the State Labor Relations Board over the county’s unilateral imposition of shut-

down days in the Health and Hospitals System. The union is seeking a remedy that would require Cook County to reimburse AFSCME-represented employees in the Hospital and Health System for all lost wages resulting from an announced series of five unpaid “shutdown days.”

The county had agreed with AFSCME and other unions that the question of taking 10 unpaid furlough or shutdown days would be put to a vote of union members, and that it would abide by the outcome. And AFSCME members in the Health System voted to reject the unpaid days, a decision made easier by management refusing to agree that furloughs would prevent any layoffs.

Yet without any discussion with the union — or even prior notification — the county imposed shutdown days on Health Systems employees.

One of the shutdown days has already occurred, with little or no notice to the thousands of patients who had appointments scheduled. Some of those patients had already waited for weeks, even months, for necessary tests or treatment.

“Unfortunately, the administration is demonstrating all too clearly that it has little concern for patients in need of health care or the

employees who provide it,” Council 31 regional director Nefertiti Smith said.

WIC program threatened

DESPITE THE ESSENTIAL ROLE IT plays in the county’s public health efforts, the county Department of Public Health suddenly announced that it is eliminating the WIC program, which operates at 11 community-based locations.

“There is no rationale for this move,” Smith said. “WIC has been a cornerstone of Cook County’s community health and prevention services for more than two decades.”

The WIC centers serve over 23,000 women and children annually. The program provides nutrition education and counseling, breast-feeding training and support, immunizations and vaccinations, and vouchers or coupons for nutritious foods. WIC programs are able to provide swift and appropriate health care referrals that have greatly improved infant mortality and fostered healthy infants and children.

“It appears that CCDPH is simply trying to evade its responsibility to serve low-income women, without regard for the consequences for infant mortality rates or early childhood development and wellness,” Smith said.



Champaign city workers: Enough is enough

Like many AFSCME locals that represent municipal employees, city of Champaign Local 1960 had always stayed on the sidelines when their bosses came up for election.

“WE NEVER HAD A REASON TO BE INVOLVED IN POLITICS,” SAID ANGELA LAWRENCE, THE LOCAL’S recording secretary.

But then there was the budget crunch.

“We ran up against a city administration and City Council that turned a deaf ear to us,” said Broc Summers, the local union president. “They were unwilling to talk to us about cutting staffing and services.”

But they were more than willing to balance the budget on AFSCME members’ backs. There were layoffs announced, a job eliminated, services cut and furlough days threatened.

“The city came to us to

give back our scheduled 3.25 percent wage increase,” Andrews said. “They told us they would use it to fund raises for other city employees. We said we would not give it up. Then, as a punitive measure, they enacted an ordinance for six furlough days, for AFSCME employees only.”

Local union activists started going to council meetings, where they met Don Gerard. He was running for mayor and had presented a budget proposal as a citizen that cut salaries of the city’s top 10 management positions as an alternative to service cuts.

The local decided to meet with candidates and entertain the idea of an endorsement.

“When I invited the mayor, he ignored me and walked away,” Anderson said.

The other candidate was more receptive, Summers said. And there was an AFSCME member, Paul Faracci, running for a vacant City Council seat who was also opposed to service cuts.

“We decided it was time to get involved,” Summers said.

The local endorsed Gerard for mayor, and Faracci for



the council.

Local union members planted yard signs, made phone calls, and walked precincts with door hangars. Council 31 pitched in with a mailing to other AFSCME members who live in Champaign and work for the university, state or county.

“There are more than 500 AFSCME members who live in Champaign,” Summers noted. “Out of 15,000 total voters, that’s a big voting base.”

Big enough, as it turned out. Gerard won by around 400 votes.

“After the election the mayor who lost said the union

turned the tide against him,” Summers said. “He was bad-mouthing us – which was very gratifying.”

Lawrence said that the local’s involvement gave members a sense of what they could and couldn’t do in the political arena.

“It wasn’t hard to get people involved,” she said. “We put together an e-mail list of members. It felt good that the election went the way it did. Now our members aren’t asking ‘What’s the union doing for me’ anymore. It is protecting your job.”

“Cutting public services is something I feel strongly about. I’m seeing that this is a big fight and not just in my little corner of the world. We are going to have to let people in the area know what they are losing and what are the alternatives.”

The local will be pushing for increases in user fees instead of cuts to make up the deficit.

“All the mayor had to do was listen to our concerns and talk to us,” Summers said. “All he had to do was pick up the phone.”

Now there will be a new mayor using that phone.

PEOPLE amplifies AFSCME members’ political voice

Whether it’s the mayor of Champaign, a School Board member in Burbank, a state senator or the president of the United States, AFSCME members have a voice that elected officials hear loud and clear.

“THE PEOPLE PROGRAM HAS MANY DIFFERENT FACETS,” SAID JOHN CAMERON, COUNCIL 31 director of political and community affairs. “Yes, members

making monthly contributions is critical. But so is volunteering to work for our endorsed candidates. And so is joining in on grassroots lobbying campaigns to hold elected officials accountable.”

Right now the emphasis is on lobbying, with many crucial and dangerous bills affecting AFSCME members moving their way through the state legislature (see page 7).

The biennial drive to sign up members as MVP contributors on payroll deduction is shifting into high gear. Those not already MVPs will get the popular AFSCME jackets and begin accumulating points to receive other AFSCME bonus items.

Contributions to PEOPLE help give AFSCME a seat at the table at every level of gov-

ernment and a voice in many of the decisions that affect the lives of members and their families.

But the heart and soul of the PEOPLE program is on-the-ground participation in election campaigns to endorse candidates and back up those endorsements with the hard work it takes to win.

Local 1960 found out how important that work is in the recent municipal elections in Champaign (see above article). So did Local 3324, when it decided to make endorsements in this year’s School Board elections in Burbank.

“The School Board was giving teachers a hard time with their contract,” said John Kuba, the local’s president. “And they wanted us to open

Contributions to PEOPLE help give AFSCME a seat at the table.

our contract and take cuts. It’s not right for them to play games with our jobs. They were trying to make the school more of a business and I don’t think it is. Kids are not collateral, they are human beings.”

The local decided to back up the teachers, who were supporting three board candidates. The custodians and maintenance workers met and decided to endorse those three candidates – one incumbent and two challengers.

“In 1995 they tried to privatize our jobs,” Kuba re-

called. “We canvassed the town and packed a board meeting. The teachers backed us up. Unions should always back each other up.” Since then no privatization initiatives for maintenance have emerged.

He said Council 31 reinforced this year’s endorsement with campaign contributions and the local made sure every member got the word and spread it to friends and family.

All three endorsed candidates were successful.

Now it’s time for members to sign up for PEOPLE, he said.

“The way they’ve been fighting us and the way Council 31 has backed us up, we should step it up. We’re trying to do what we can to

Budget battles loom as legislative session draws to a close

The state budget remains a focal point for AFSCME members in the closing days of this year's General Assembly spring session.

HUGE CUTS WILL BE ON THE TABLE UNLESS LEGISLATORS CAN COME TO AN AGREEMENT ON restructuring the state's debt and using an accurate estimate of the upcoming year's revenues.

Debt restructuring would free up significant funds that will otherwise go to pay high interest rates on the borrowing that has been done over the years to keep state government running.

Republicans in the Senate appear to have succeeded in blocking the debt restructuring, and House Democrats have joined with the Republicans to insist on working with lower revenue estimates than the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability has produced.

The General Assembly is now working on cutting an additional \$1.6 billion from the already bare-bones budget that the governor submitted. Cuts of that magnitude would be disastrous.

In response Gov. Pat Quinn is recommending funding deferrals to already cash-strapped local governments — and House Speaker Mike Madigan appears prepared to go along with this idea.

Quinn's proposed budget would cut 6 percent from funding for county nursing homes and community-based disability service agencies where many AFSCME members work. The disability agencies are entirely dependent on state funding and haven't had a cost-of-living increase to fund employee wage increases in four years now.

The Responsible Budget Coalition — of which AFSCME is a member — has issued a "menu" of revenue measures that could be used to avert such cuts.

Quinn pushing restrictions on who can choose union representation

THE QUINN ADMINISTRATION IS continuing its push to enact leg-

islation that would bar any more state merit-compensation employees from joining the union. It would also strip thousands of current members of union representation they already have. The administration wants to redefine "managerial and supervisory" under state labor law. Given the strong bipartisan backing for such legislation in the General Assembly, organized labor has been meeting with the Department of Central Management Services to see if a compromise can be reached that would preserve bargaining rights.

Business targets Workers' Compensation

BUSINESS INTERESTS ARE CONTINUING to press for cuts in the benefits provided to workers who are injured on the job. When the Senate voted on SB 1349, which would make significant cuts to workers' compensation benefits, it was defeated on a party-line vote, with all Republicans voting in favor, and all but one Democrat standing in opposition. But the pressure for a "compromise" continues, with leading Democrats joining Republicans in pushing for changes to the law.

Some bills presumed dead

A NUMBER OF BILLS HAVE BEEN introduced in this legislative session that are contrary to the interests of AFSCME members. The Council 31 lobbying team has been successful in sidelining many of these bills. Presumably this means they are dead for this session, although in Springfield bills can and are occasionally resurrected.

Tuition waiver repeal — HB 2959 would repeal the 50 percent tuition waiver that is available to children of employees of state universities. It did not emerge from committee in either chamber.

School district privatization — HB 2859 would effectively repeal the strong protections against privatization in school districts that the labor movement has enacted in recent years. It would exempt contracts for transportation services from those provisions. It did not get out of committee.

Sale of Thomson Correctional Center — SB 2167 would make it easier to sell Thomson CC to the federal government. It was bottled up in a Senate committee.

General assembly working on budget with huge cuts

WITH THE STATE BUDGET STILL IN FREEFALL AS On the Move went to press, legislators appeared to be preparing a budget that would undercut AFSCME's cost-saving/no-layoff agreement. They're bashing state workers, saying AFSCME members haven't sacrificed enough and proposing budget cuts that could lead to layoffs.

On May 3 Senate Democrats began to move budget bills that cut all state agency personnel lines by a minimum of 5 percent. State developmental centers would take an even heavier hit, with a 25 percent cut. Murphysboro Youth Center would be cut by 50 percent.

Senate Republicans have already called for wage and step freezes, higher health insurance premiums and closure of state facilities.

These budgets would not fund AFSCME's negotiated pay raises and would actually reduce staffing levels.

Unfortunately, it's likely that the House will do even worse.

The Responsible Budget Coalition, of which AFSCME is a leading member, has proposed a number of revenue measures that can fix the state's budget shortfall and avert cuts to state agencies, to education and to human services.

"We've deferred raises, taken voluntary furlough days and offered up millions in cost-saving recommendations," Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said. "In return, the Quinn Administration agreed not to lay off any bargaining unit members in this fiscal year."

Bayer said AFSCME will go to court if necessary to enforce the agreement. But it would be best not to have to depend on the legal system. AFSCME locals in state government are contacting their legislators to urge them to vote against budgets that cut funding for state agencies.

Bills amended to eliminate negative provisions

THERE ARE SEVERAL BILLS THAT AFSCME originally opposed because they would harm the interests of AFSCME members, but that Council 31 lobbyists were successful in amending to neutralize their impact.

Mandatory direct deposit — HB 3449, as introduced, would have required that all payroll, pension and expense reimbursements of state employees or retirees be direct deposited, or that employees and retirees pay a fee of \$2.50 for each check issued.

AFSCME was able to amend this legislation to exempt all employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement and all retirees. The House has passed the measure.

Privatization of eligibility determination — HB 1656 originally would have allowed the departments of Health and Family Services and Human Services to contract out determination of Medicaid eligibility. As a result of AFSCME's lobbying efforts, it was amended to only provide for a study to be conducted of the impact of contracting out. The House had passed the bill.

Some bills AFSCME opposes still moving

THERE ARE SEVERAL BILLS THAT AFSCME is opposing that were still alive at press time and moving through the legislature.

Local government employee salaries — HB 222 has passed the House. It would require all units of local government (county, township and municipality) to develop a "searchable database" that would list all employees, their position titles and their salaries. This requirement is both unduly burdensome for many financially strapped local governments and an invasion of employee privacy.

Remove titles from personnel code — SB 1918 would remove certain information technology and engineering staff in DCMS from the requirements of the state personnel code.

Some bills AFSCME supports still advancing

MANY OF THE BILLS THAT AFSCME is supporting never made it out of the House Rules or Senate Assignment committees. However, some bills did get out of these committees and a few of those

Legislative



Update

that did were still moving forward at press time.

Parole funding — The House has passed HB 176. It would increase fees charged to parolees — both as a disincentive for parole violations and to provide additional funding for the cost of parole services.

Bar privatization of county jails — HB 2590 amends the Private Correctional Facility Moratorium Act to include units of local government and county sheriffs in the prohibition against contracting out the operation of a correctional facility. It has been passed by the House.

Correctional officer weapons — HA #1 to HB 915 would allow off-duty state and county correctional officers to carry a weapon. These officers often have concerns about their personal safety when encountering ex-inmates. The bill was still in House committee at press time.

Safe staffing in hospitals — SB 1342 would require hospitals to release a copy of their nurse staffing plans upon request. This would better enable consumers to determine if hospitals have adequate staffing levels to ensure quality care. It had reached 3rd Reading in the Senate at press time.



IN DARK TIMES FOR UNIONS bright spots began



An energized crowd of thousands packed into Chicago's Daley Center Plaza, warmed on the chilly spring afternoon by their enthusiasm for being there and the electricity being generated from the speakers' podium.

"We Are One" proclaimed the backdrop banner. Chicago unions—AFSCME, Teachers, Firefighters, Food and Commercial Workers, Laborers, Teamsters, Steelworkers, Sheet Metal Workers, Auto Workers and many more—were responding to the call for a nationwide show of solidarity with those who are fighting a coordinated nationwide assault by Republican governors on public employees, their union rights and ultimately the rights of all workers to have a voice on the job, a voice in the political arena and a chance to achieve the quality of life imagined in the American Dream.

"The middle class is being attacked," said Bruce Murray, president of Local 124 at Alton Mental Health Center, who rode for five hours on a bus with 40 other union members, family and 11 retirees. "We've seen that what we bargain for can be taken away by legislators. Everybody on our bus got pretty fired up. We'll use that to build our political program."

A THOUSAND POINTS OF LIGHT

That realization informed some 2,000 AFSCME members who were in Chicago to be part of the April 9 rally.



ONS, in to glow



Many of them had participated in local events that week, beginning April 4. That date was chosen because it was the anniversary of the day Martin Luther King Jr. was shot in Memphis.

King had come to support AFSCME sanitation workers who had been striking for the very thing that Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker has decided to take away from public employees in his state: the right to bargain collectively.

Across the nation more than 1,000 We Are One events were held, as union members everywhere felt the urgency of responding to the widespread attacks on public employees and unions in Wisconsin, Ohio and too many other places.

"It's the first rally I'd ever been to," said Becky Cox, a member of Local 698 at the University of Illinois in Urbana, talking about her trip to Chicago. "I was amazed by the number of people and all the different unions coming together. I was inspired."

A CALL TO BATTLE

The speakers from Wisconsin provided some of that inspiration. Besieged but not defeated, they seemed to see the big picture quite clearly and laid it out for those assembled.

"This is about union busting," said Mahlon Mitchell, Wisconsin Fire Fighters Union president, and as he spoke a bright sun broke through the cloudy April sky. "This is about our children. This is something bigger than us. It's time to reclaim our moral outrage. We can't wait for a hero to save us. We are the heroes."

USAction President William McNary called out "these greedy corporate CEOs," and the "bully governors" who serve them. "The problem is that corporations and their corporate CEOs have too much power, make too much money and wield too much political influence."

He said of the fight started by Gov. Scott Walker in Wisconsin, "This is a battle for the soul of our nation. Well, we are sending a message to these bully governors in Wisconsin and Ohio and Indiana and New Jersey: We didn't ask for this fight, but if it's a fight you want, it's a fight you'll get. Knuckle up! We're in it to win it!"

THE SPIRIT OF DR. KING

McNary wasn't alone in promising a fight.

Calling Walker and his legislative allies "politicians without conscience," snow-plow driver Jim Garrity, president of AFSCME Council 40 in Wisconsin, said that "We believe in collective bargaining! We believe in people's rights! And we're going to fight for those rights with everything we've got."

In a day of rousing speeches that moved the crowd to cheers, chants and even tears, Bill Lucy gave what many considered the most stirring.

"This is a continuation of the fight between the greedy and the needy," said the longtime AFSCME International Secretary-Treasurer, now retired, but still ready for battle. "We will not live on our knees begging for their mercy. We will fight back... against the meanness and special brand of evil being visited on working people, this assault on workers."

He was there with King in Memphis in 1968 as the striking AFSCME members demanded recognition for their union (see page 16).

"The extreme right wing Republicans and the crazy Tea Party wants to take us back to those days when American workers and their unions had no status, no voice, no rights," Lucy said.

But Walker's brash attacks will backfire, he predicted. "I don't know what ship you may have come over on, but we are all in the same boat now," Lucy said. "This movement will grow and grow and grow. And at the core of it will be the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.!"





Thousands packed Chicago's Daley Plaza on April 9

to show support for public employees under attack around the country and to stand up against the assault on America's middle class.

On these two pages we recap some of the inspirational words from speakers at the rally and listen to what a number of AFSCME members had to say about the experience as they looked back on it a few days later.

Also included are photos from April 9 and on the next page photos from several of the rallies that began April 4 around the state to build for the Chicago event.



Jen Johnson, teacher, Lincoln Park High School in Chicago –

“There is a massive attack led by ‘Stand for Children’ in our state on the rights of teachers to bargain. The rank and file need to be heard about the value of public education for all children.”



Wisconsin state Sen. Chris Larson was among those senators who left the state to delay consideration of Gov. Walker's budget.

“We thought we'd be gone for two days, to make sure people could be heard,” he said. “But people stood up and they kept coming. It kept getting louder and louder and the rest of the country woke up. It was the beginning of a movement. We're going to take back our state and take back our country.”



Betsy Kippers, vice president, Wisconsin Education Association Council –

“The battle in Wisconsin is about taking away our collective voice, about taking political power away from you and me and the middle class of our nation. The governor said things would go back to normal after a month. It will never go back to normal until we get our rights back. We have to stop this attack on the everyday heroes of our state. We have too much at stake for future generations.”



Wisconsin Fire Fighters President Mahlon Mitchell said it well: “We can't wait for a hero to save us — we are the heroes!”

He urged the crowd to “reclaim our moral outrage” at politicians who are doing the bidding of the corporate elite in attacking unions and public employees. And he displayed his own moral outrage at a governor who advocated tax breaks for the top 1 percent of income earners and then said “the state is broke.”

“This is about union busting,” he said. “This is something bigger than us. This is about our children, our way of life.”



William McNary is the president of USAction.

He said the current struggle is for: “The right to a decent standard of living. The right to have a voice in the workplace. The right to dignity. The right to self-respect. The right to justice. The right for a chance to achieve the American Dream.” He defined the problem: “Corporations and their corporate CEOs have too much power, make too much money and wield too much political influence.”



Nadia Valentine, a sophomore at LaSalle-Peru High School, has a rich family history of labor.

She said generations past “selflessly gave their blood, sweat, and tears, and often times their lives in the struggle that sought to give a voice to the working class.” She urged today's generation to “join together in solidarity and stand up to those individuals who want to take away what little representation and dignity that we have left.” And she promised that her generation “is ready, willing, and able” to take up the fight.



Ottawa



Gurnee



Rockford



Kankakee



Decatur



Springfield

Chicago



Ed Anderson, president, Local 1274, Hill Correctional Center –

If we don't fight back, we could lose everything we fought for in the last 30 years. It's not an AFSCME battle, it's all unions. We took a group of 25 to Wisconsin. Some of our members have been working for 25 years, and we've given up raises for our retirement. Now they want to take that away. It's worth fighting for and most of my members are willing to fight.

Becky Cox, steward, Local 698, University of Illinois –

It was the first rally I'd ever been to. I was amazed by the number of people and the different unions all coming together. I was inspired. I'm going to speak up with other members, get more involved and try to get other people motivated. This is just the beginning of what's going to be a long fight. It's happening in states around us, and it's coming here. I'm ready to stand alongside others and speak out in unison.

Kathy McNamara, president, Local 3328, DuPage County Courts –

It was an amazing experience to come together like that. People are feeling more empowered. They are seeing that we're all in this together. The media is doing a great job of villainizing us, so the more attention we can bring to ourselves, the more likely that the community will understand what we really do. We all have a role to play. If you can't march, call your legislator. We have to make sure people understand what public service is all about.

Al Luna, member, Local 2794, Northeastern Illinois State Employees –

I've never been involved in a demonstration of any kind, but I wanted to be part of history. I gave up a chance for overtime to go. It was well worth it. I felt it was my duty to go there. I took my 12-year-old daughter. My family's well being is at stake. You can't sit idly by and watch things happen. You can't just sit there and say, "My neighbor's house is burning and I hope the wind isn't blowing this way."

Josie Morris, member, Local 2887, Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville –

I'm an activist at heart. I lived in the Philippines and was part of changing the course of history there by attending rallies. Our freedom was suppressed. It took us years, but we toppled the dictatorship. Chicago reminded me of what happened then. We need to support the people in Wisconsin, because it might spread. If we aren't vigilant, they will take our rights away. I want to encourage other members to take part.

Cheryl Graham, president, Local 785, Kiley Developmental Center –

We had 25 members attend from our local. Most of the people had never been to a rally before, so they saw AFSCME outside of Local 785 for the first time, and they were impressed. Of course the hot-button issue was what our brothers and sisters in Wisconsin and all around the Midwest are going through. We wanted to show our solidarity and let Illinois legislators know that we are ready here. It will also help us in getting more members involved and informed. With our state contract coming up, we have a tough fight ahead of us right here.

Kelly McDonald, recording secretary, Local 3057, Valley View Schools –

It was an historic moment. It seems like we are going backwards, the government taking away things people fought and died for. We need to get the younger generation involved – this is what the older generation did for you. What are your kids going to walk into if we don't draw the line now?

Matt Pederson, president, Local 981, Eastern Illinois University –

As soon as I got off the bus, you could feel the energy from the crowd. We were there standing up for union rights. The message to the state was that we won't be alone if we come to the same battles. Everybody is affected by this and we are standing as one. Our members who went were excited to be a part of it. They came back talking about what a good time we had. I'm looking forward to the next one.

Phillip Cisneros, secretary-treasurer, Local 3969, Cook County Public Guardian –

It was a good feeling with all the unions getting together, being out there with all the banners and different locals standing side-by-side. I wasn't able to go to Wisconsin, but it would be bad to have a rally here in Chicago and not go. This is about taking away your freedom, about not having to worry that any little thing you do could cost you your job.

Tammy Parnly, PEOPLE chair, Local 141, Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center –

A lot of new members who hadn't been that active came along. You can see what people are losing and we know how hard you have to fight to have your rights, to bargain and have a contract. You don't appreciate what you have unless you realize you could lose it. My kids came along. They do everything with me – rallies, phone banks. But sometimes when they mean rally, they say 'riot.'

John Robinson, member, Local 2833, Collar Counties State Employees –

I think our point was made – we're aware of the nationwide threat of union busting and we're not going away quietly. If no one says anything, it will spread. People fought so long to get everything we have and for someone to come along with a swipe of a pen and take it all away – I don't think we should stand for it. I'm brought up to be part of the struggle. Any part I can play to help with the movement, I'm ready and willing.

Suzanne Hallihan, trustee, Local 3700, University of Illinois –

The rally was absolutely amazing. My son went with me and it was a really good experience. I've been sort of ambivalent about politics in the past, but the budget crisis has made me more aware. For me, to be there with thousands of people from all walks of life, solidified that I'm not just one person. I'm fired up about talking to people where I work. And I will continue to be more involved.

Learning from the past— Haymarket story told anew

The Labor Movement: The folks who brought you the weekend,” goes a bumper sticker popular among union supporters.

ONE OF THE KEY BATTLES IN THE LONG, BLOODY WAR THIS STICKER CELEBRATES WAS FOUGHT IN Chicago. May 1 was the 125th anniversary of the “Haymarket Riot.”

This is one of the many key labor battles the Illinois Labor History Society keeps alive. Its mission is to bring yesterday’s lessons to the forefront so that today’s activists can learn from and build on them. ILHS also functions as keeper of the Haymarket Martyrs’ Monument in the Forest Home Cemetery, Forest Park.

That monument, the statue of liberty for workers around the world, has been restored and was rededicated this year on May 1 in a ceremony sponsored by ILHS, the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Illinois AFL-CIO.

ILHS also laid a plaque at the site of the tragic event, which will be installed at the base of the Haymarket Memo-

rial sculpture, in Haymarket Square, DesPlaines and Lake streets, just west of Chicago’s Loop.

A peaceful protest turns violent

IN CONNECTION WITH THE nationwide strike for the eight-hour workday, which began May 1, 1886, a mass meeting was held on the night of May 4 in Haymarket Square. Its purpose was to protest a police attack on union pickets at McCormick Harvesting Machine Company in which workers were injured and killed.

When police ordered the peaceful protest meeting to disperse, a bomb was thrown toward the police by an unknown person. The police responded by firing at the crowd. Four workers and six police officers died in the gunfire. One officer was killed by the bomb.

This became known as the “Haymarket Riot,” now more properly named the Haymarket Tragedy.

Eight labor leaders, some who weren’t even at the Haymarket meeting, were convicted on virtually no evidence. The Chicago Tribune even offered to pay money to the jury if it found the eight men guilty.



The Eight-Hour Day Movement was derailed by the nationwide hysteria that followed. It was not until passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1935, that the eight-hour workday became the

national standard.

Eventually four of the men were hanged, one died in prison and three were pardoned by Gov. John P. Altgeld, who condemned the entire judicial system for

allowing this injustice.

Shots heard round the world

“THE HAYMARKET AFFAIR TOOK on worldwide dimension in July 1889, when a delegate from the American Federation of Labor recommended at a labor conference in Paris that May 1 be set aside as International Labor Day in memory of Haymarket martyrs and the injustice of the Haymarket Affair,” says the story by the late Bill Adelman, which appears on the Illinois Labor History Society website, and is the source for the above historical account. “Today in almost every major industrial nation, May Day is Labor Day.

“The real issues of the Haymarket Affair were freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to free assembly, the right to a fair trial by a jury of peers and the right of workers to organize and fight for things like the eight-hour day.”

Many of those issues are still in dispute today, as clearly shown by the events in Wisconsin, Ohio and other states, where the right to collective bargaining for public employees is under attack (see page 3).

“This restoration project will embody the theme of the monument itself,” said ILHS President Larry Spivack. “Marching into the future as the figure does, will continue to inspire countless ‘pilgrims’ of the labor struggle to carry on!”

ILHS still needs funds to complete the restoration. You can go to illinoislaborhistory.org to make a contribution.

SHORT REPORTS

New attacks on public employees in Wisconsin, Indiana

IT’S HARD TO KEEP UP WITH THE mischief being created by Republican governors and legislators in neighboring states because they just keep making more.

A bill in Wisconsin voids an ordinance in Milwaukee that grants sick leave to employees. The sick-leave ordinance was approved by 69 percent of Milwaukee voters.

Even so, the Republican-controlled state legislature has chosen to usurp local control and strike the Milwaukee law down by passing a law that

prevents any municipality from passing sick-leave legislation.

The Milwaukee ordinance required large businesses to provide nine sick days and small businesses to provide five sick days. According to the Economic Policy Institute only 19 percent of low-wage workers in the country have paid sick days. On the flip-side, 84 percent of the top 25 percent of high-wage earners have paid sick days. A 2010 survey by the Public Welfare Foundation revealed that nearly three-fourths of Americans believe paid sick days should be a basic right.

Meanwhile Indiana Gov.

Mitch Daniels, a potential candidate for president in 2012, signed into law a teacher contract bill on Wednesday, April 28.

The bill will limit collective bargaining between school boards and teachers unions to salary- and wage-related benefits. Most of the law goes into effect July 1, but two key provisions are effective immediately.

First, current teacher contracts may not extend beyond the two years covered by the state budget. Second, districts may not collectively bargain teacher-evaluation procedures or criteria.

Corrections Week: AFSCME president hails COs

AFSCME PRES. GERALD W. McEntee issued the following statement on National Correctional Employees Week:

“The first week of May is National Correctional Employees Week. Every year since 1984, we take time during this week to recognize the extraordinary service provided by corrections officers and corrections personnel across the United States. More than 85,000 corrections officers and workers are AFSCME members. We are proud of the difficult work they do in both maximum- and min-

imum-security facilities, state prisons and county jails. These men and women are doing an important job, often under dangerous conditions, in our criminal justice system. They safeguard the public from those who would do us harm.

“Too often, those in government ignore the voice and experience of these workers, but our members refuse to be silent. We see that in states such as Wisconsin, where corrections officers like Chet Millard, a decorated hero of both wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, stood with other public employees to support the fundamental American right of collective bar-

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ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Good contract gets better in Williamson County

WILLIAMSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S Department workers will see raises that average almost 6 percent each year during the term of a five-year contract.

The clothing allowance was also increased by \$100. The county will continue to pay 100 percent of health insurance premiums for the employee. The ability to accumulate compensatory time remained the same, with more frequent opportunities to cash in the accumulated time. Courtroom security employees will get bullet-proof vests provided by the county. Limits on forced overtime were improved.

"The contract we had was already pretty good," Local 3369 President Darren Ferrell said. "We just built on it and gave nothing up to get what was negotiated. It went pretty smoothly. We started six to eight months early by getting member input. We went into the meetings with a mindset of what's right for the county and for employees."

The union bargaining team was led by staff representative Kevan Plumlee, with Ferrell, Dennis Pinkerton, Jeff Hutchinson and Travis Ladd.

Wages, insurance up for Rockford schools employees

THREE LOCALS THAT REPRESENT school employees in Rockford have agreed on wages and health insurance terms for the last two years of their

three-year contracts.

Wage increases will be implemented through longevity pay provisions, hiking pay for employees with five or more years' service.

Educational aides, represented by Local 692, and food service workers, represented by Local 3210 will have their five-year step go to 5 percent, from 2 percent. The 10-year step will go to 4 percent, from 2 percent and the 15-year to 3 percent, from 2 percent. Educational aides who don't have five years got a \$300 bonus.

"Wow! We actually got a raise!" Local 692 President Betty Christensen said. "It's the biggest raise we've had in a long time, though it's only once every five years."

Bus drivers, represented by Local 1275, added a longevity plan to their contract, which adds 2 percent at 12 years' service, another 2 percent at 17 years and another 3 percent at 27 years.

"We were finally able to get longevity," said Peggy Moseley, president of the bus drivers' local. "We were the only group that didn't have it. The last two contracts we helped the lower-seniority people. This one helped the long-term employees. It was a big step for us to get our foot in the door on longevity."

Given the economic situation, we were pleased with the outcome. Going into these negotiations all we were hearing was 'There is no money.'"

Changes in health-insurance provisions for all three groups included increases in deductibles and the out-of-pocket maximum; co-payments go to 20 percent, from

10 percent; office visits for specialists include a \$25 co-payment; and prescription co-payments go up for non-generic drugs. Premiums stay the same.

"We have great health coverage and low premiums," Christensen said. "Regular office visits are not increased. And I like how the health-care plan is now written into our contract, so they can't change the terms on us. I watched that happen to the UAW plant here."

Staff representative Jay Ferarro, now retired, led the three bargaining committees. Local 692's included Christensen, Vermett Guerin, Donna Henderson, Laura O'Brien, Gloria Sturgis, Colleen Pete, Mary Stewart and DeVonna Foat.

Local 1275's included Moseley, Candi Ward, Tracy Goodwin, Cathy Ainley, Cheryl Davis, Sandy Steele, Debra Rogers, Kathy Ingram and Linda Gray.

Local 3210's included President Madeleine Sherod, Ernestine McCoy, Lynn Deanna Eddy and Donna J. Claeysen.

Raises for Egyptian Health Department employees

A ONE-YEAR CONTRACT BETWEEN Local 3780 and the Egyptian Health Department raises wages 3 percent or \$1,000, whichever is greater. Health insurance premiums for employee coverage will go down by \$18 a month with no change in plan benefits.

"We got a better rate for our insurance and the mem-

bers get 50 percent of the savings, per our contract," said Troy Milligan, the local union president. "It ended up being a very good contract. The union has a good relationship with management. The CEO cooperates with us to make sure employees get decent raises and the board knows how important the employees are in making our programs work."

The negotiating committee was led by staff representative Ty Petersen with Milligan, Mickey Evans, Randy Stiles, Elaina Cullers, Randall Robinson, Sherry Chrisman and Karen Holland.

Carmi agreement easy to work out

NEGOTIATIONS WERE CONCLUDED with a tentative agreement between Local 3775 and the city of Carmi reached in one day.

Wages go up 2 percent in each of the contract's three years. Longevity pay was raised 20 cents an hour. Two half days were added to paid-holiday time. Seasonal employees cannot be kept year around.

For several years the local has simply rolled over the existing contract for one year, with a modest raise, so no bargaining had taken place for awhile.

"We had a new mayor coming into office and he kind of wanted to get his feet wet," said Keith Large, the local union president. "I didn't think the economy would be getting better anytime soon, so we wanted a three-year guarantee. It was a pretty

fair raise given the times. We've always had a decent contract and a mayor and City Council that wouldn't step outside the lines of our contract."

The local had endorsed the new mayor, so that positive relationship can be expected to continue.

Staff representative Ty Petersen led the local's negotiating team, with Large, Stacy Starks, Scott Howard, Jim Renshaw, Curt Hale and Jack Baker.

Sycamore city workers 'satisfied' with raises, no layoffs

A one-year contract between Local 3957 and the city of Sycamore raises wages 2 percent and guarantees no layoffs for the term of the agreement. Health insurance cost sharing remains unchanged.

"We have a good relationship with the city manager and the city, so negotiations are pretty painless," the local's President Brad Dewey said. "He has our best interests in mind. He knows we work hard and do our jobs. They shared the finances with us, so we are confident they did what they could. We felt fortunate to not have furlough days or layoffs. We were pretty satisfied."

The parties agreed on a one-year contract, "because things are uncertain," Dewey said. "We're hoping for the state to get hold of their financial reins and our pensions won't be reduced."

The bargaining committee was led by staff representative Kathy Steichen, with Dewey and Ryan Cardinali.

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gaining. We see that in states such as Ohio and Florida, where our members are battling governors who ignore real solutions and instead focus on failed privatization schemes to reward campaign contributors. We will not let the corporate CEOs behind these efforts succeed in destroying institutions that provide good jobs and help keep our communities secure.

"AFSCME is committed to fighting for safe facilities, proper equipment and procedures, better pay and benefits and high standards of professionalism. We are proud of the work that our corrections employees do, day in and day out throughout our country. We salute their brave and dedicated service. We will continue to fight for them and the valuable work they do

for all of us."

Local 2600 wins accommodations for deaf workers

WITH BACKING FROM THE FEDERAL Americans with Disabilities Act, it still took Local 2600 two years to get the Department of Health and Family Services to institute adequate accommodations to give three deaf workers what they needed to be fully productive.

"Now they can contribute to the agency as much as or more than someone without disabilities," said Steve Nordyke, the local union president. "It was a long, drawn out process."

The problems began when budget cuts left the three administrative support



Stewards Faith Richardson (left) and Kathy Robb react to the event organized by their deaf co-workers.

staff without a sign-language interpreter.

Nordyke said the efforts to get proper accommoda-

tions eventually involved six stewards, two local union presidents, agency management, a state ADA officer and a state

Equal Employment Opportunity officer.

But finally the agency did what it was supposed to do. The three women now have access to a video relay system that involves an online sign-language interpreter. In addition an onsite interpreter will come twice a week and whenever the workers have training sessions.

The three women, Yenetta McClain, Connie Norris and Catherine Friday organized an event where they presented awards expressing their appreciation to four of the stewards who were involved: Faith Richardson, Cathy Robb, Ben Griffin, and Steve Nordyke.

"Faith Richardson was there from the start," Nordyke said.

RETIREE NOTES

Retirees gear up to oppose health insurance cuts

HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS for state and university retirees have been under attack in recent months and Chapter 31 is organizing retirees to fight back. The Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability is considering a proposal to make state and university retirees pay toward their premiums no matter how many years service they had put in.

Chapter 31 leaders are encouraging retirees to call, write or visit their lawmakers and send a clear message: While some in the media and the General Assembly are spreading the false allegation that retirees receive free health insurance, the truth is that retirees already pay significant out-of-pocket costs for health care. Co-pays and deductibles as well as spousal and Medicare premiums can easily add up to \$3,000 a year.

To find out who your legislators are, go to the AFSCME website at www.afscme31.org. Just click on the "AFSCME Retirees Protect your Health Insurance" item and follow the easy steps to send e-mails directly to your lawmakers.

Schakowsky opposes House Republican attacks on Medicare

U.S. REP. JAN SCHAKOWSKY, D-Evanston, stood with members of Retiree Chapter 31 and the Illinois Main Street Alliance in Evanston for a news conference on the impact of U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan's federal 2012 budget proposal.

The Wisconsin Republican's budget plan would fast-track cuts to Social Security, gut Medicaid and turn Medicare over to private insurance companies – all while giving tax breaks to wealthy corporations.

"This is no time to lower taxes on millionaires and billionaires at a cost of over \$1 trillion," Schakowsky said.

The U.S. House voted 235-193 in April to pass Ryan's budget measure. Though it is not expected to pass in the Senate, there is nonetheless a bi-partisan effort underway in that chamber that would include Ryan's provision to increase the Social Security retirement age. The so-called "Gang of

Six," which includes U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., may attempt to lure more Republican support by adding more of Ryan's proposals. That is why such events as the Schakowsky news conference are trying to build opposition to these cuts by informing retirees and seniors how they would be affected.

"Republican leaders have their priorities upside down," said Charlie Hogan, president of North Suburban Sub-chapter 161. "Their plan ends the guaranteed coverage of Medicare that every worker has paid for. It replaces Medicare with limited benefits from a private insurance company. Their plan would substantially increase premiums and out-of-pocket costs for seniors and the disabled. And, it would put us at the mercy of insurance companies."

Making Medicare unaffordable

WHILE MEDICARE CURRENTLY pays for all medically necessary health care without limits, Ryan's plan would change that, turning it over to health insurance companies and drastically increasing costs for seniors.

Anyone under 55 would lose the guarantee of benefits and fixed premiums. Instead, on reaching the age of

Medicare coverage, they would be given coupons for a fixed dollar amount, and then forced to fend for themselves in the private health-insurance market. Imagine seniors having to sort through the complex maze of plans out there trying to find the plan that best suits them, among many bad options.

Because private coverage has much higher administrative costs than Medicare, the voucher will purchase less health care coverage than the same amount would provide under Medicare. Moreover, the dollar amount of this voucher would not be indexed for medical inflation, leaving it unlikely to keep pace with medical costs, or one's changing medical condition.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office projects that Ryan's plan would have seniors paying \$20,000 a year for Medicare in 2030, or 68 percent of the total cost of their coverage. They now pay 25 percent.

The bill would also eliminate current provisions in the recent health-care reform law, that bar insurance companies from charging co-payments and annual visits. The provision that closes the donut hole for prescription drug coverage would also be eliminated.

Attacking Social Security

THOUGH CURRENT LAW BARS cutting Social Security through fast-tracking — an up-or-down vote process that leaves no room for debate or amendments — the Ryan Republican plan would expose Social Security to just such a process. The result

could be devastating cuts to the program and its 53 million beneficiaries without real input from the American public.

"Social Security serves and protects millions of Americans so any changes to Social Security should be given thorough review and full debate," Council 31 retiree coordinator Maria Britton said. "Ryan attempts to go around this safeguard by creating a new 'expedited process' that would trigger potential Social Security cuts in any year that the program is not in 75-year balance."

Further Ryan would cut future Social Security benefits for every worker earning more than \$27,000 a year, while increasing the retirement age. These cuts are aimed at middle-class workers, who are already struggling to save for retirement.

"Consider that the average 30-year-old today makes \$3,000 less a year (inflation-adjusted income) than his parent made in 1973," Britton said. "The Ryan Republican budget and its cuts to Social Security would make retirement security even more difficult to reach for today's middle class workers."

Medicaid also hit

THE RYAN PLAN WOULD ALSO turn Medicaid into a state block grant, which means states will receive a limited amount of money, and will be hard pressed to provide needed benefits. As a result many states would be forced into tightening eligibility requirements or shifting additional costs onto individual recipients.

Seniors, who make up 57 percent of the individuals

receiving nursing home and home care coverage under Medicaid, would surely feel the pain. With a one-third cut in Medicaid's funding, states will find it difficult to adequately fund these benefits. Low-income Medicare beneficiaries who receive help from Medicaid to pay their monthly Medicare Part B premiums would also be in jeopardy.

Long-term-care insurance to be terminated

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2011, MetLife will no longer offer the discounted long-term-care insurance products through SERS.

MetLife has assured their existing SERS customers that their LTC policies will continue to be honored and are guaranteed renewable as long as their premiums are paid on time. Customers will still be able to make changes in coverage as long as the changes adhere to the stipulations cited in their policy. New enrollments kits may still be obtained by May 31, but they must be submitted by June 29 to qualify for the policy.

Long-term-care insurance covers medical expenses for those who are unable to properly care for themselves independently. Expenses associated with nursing homes, assisted living facilities and hospice are all covered.

Many people rely on the security of long-term-care insurance, especially since Medicare only covers short-term stays in such facilities and Medicaid will only pay for government-certified facilities once people have exhausted nearly all of their savings. A sizable percentage of middle-class seniors could potentially be rendered ineligible for Medicaid if the determining body deems that they possess too many assets.

However, LTC insurance may be less lucrative for insurance companies these days, with the rising costs of health care and advancements in medicine that have more people living longer and using more benefits than anticipated.

As a result, many LTC providers have resorted to premiums increases. John Hancock, for example, is asking for a 40 percent hike and Genworth Financial 18 percent. The average annual costs of nursing-home care comes in at around \$70,000 and assisted living facilities at around \$40,000.

Coupled with inflation, costs are being driven up every year, which is why the Patient Protection and Affordability Act of 2010 included the Community Living Assistance Services and Support Act. The CLASS Act will make long-term-care insurance affordable and available to all Americans.

Retirees join in 'We Are One' rallies

EMPLOYEES FIGHTING FOR THEIR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS WERE NOT THE ONLY PEOPLE

whose voices were heard during the April 4-9 "We Are One" rallies that took place throughout Illinois. Retiree activists took part as well, standing in opposition to the attacks against collective bargaining.

"We were there because collective bargaining rights give employees and retirees a voice in the decision making process on issues that will impact us including decisions on health-care and pension benefits" said Eddie Foster, the interim president of the newly organized Kane County Sub-chapter 67.

Foster pointed out that retirees were the ones who led the fight to establish collective bargaining in Illinois.

"Of course retirees understand the importance of collective bargaining and what the reality would be if workers couldn't come together to negotiate on their own behalf," he said. "Many of them experienced what it was like before and understand that only together can we protect ourselves."

Retiree involvement in the movement to protect public-sector employees' rights is growing along with the nationwide resolve to fight back.

"In this climate, to truly protect the rights of the public sector employees, everyone must be involved," noted Kim Johnson, president of DuPage County Sub-chapter 68, "both current employees as well as retirees. It's very important for all of us to stay strong and stay together."



AFSCME seeks answers on state health plan changes

A proposal to change group health-insurance-plan administrators that would affect thousands of state and university employees and retirees is under close scrutiny by AFSCME, a state ethics commission, the General Assembly's COGFA, a House committee and the media.

"AFSCME WILL OPPOSE ANY ACTION REGARDING A CHANGE IN PLAN ADMINISTRATORS THAT reduces geographic access to care, unduly limits employees' choice of medical providers, causes time delays in getting medical service or significantly increases employees' medical costs," Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said. "Moreover, the union will oppose any attempt to move forward with the plan transition if we have not had the opportunity to fully review all of the relevant information."

And since the May 1-31 Benefit Choice Period has already started for those covered by state health plans, AFSCME is taking steps to get that period extended, so that no one will have to make choices until they have all the facts before them.

If the change goes through as announced, the state would continue to offer the Quality Care Health Plan PPO, HealthLink Open Access Plan, and HMO Illinois as health plan options, as currently provided, in addition to the new plans.

State claims new vendors will yield savings

THE STATE REGULARLY ADMINISTERS a bidding process for vendors vying to administer group managed-care plans for state and university employees, retirees and their dependents. This year it resulted in the state's decision to eliminate the HealthAlliance, PersonalCare and Humana HMOs and replace them with Blue Advantage HMO, and PersonalCare's Open Access Plan, which has the same benefit structure as the HealthLink Open Access Plan.

The state says the contracts were competitively bid according to all legal requirements, and that the new vendors offered comparable services and comparable access to doctors and other medical providers at a significantly lower cost to the state — creating an estimated \$102 million in annu-

al savings.

But the union had absolutely no input into the process that led to the state's decision. In fact, AFSCME was only informed of the intent to change plan administrators after media reporters requested union comments on the proposal.

When the state announced its action, AFSCME immediately sought documentation of the state's claims about the bidding process, supposed savings and continued access to care. The union is awaiting a full response from the departments of Healthcare and Family Services and Central Management Services. CMS is refusing to release any information until the newly established Executive Ethics Commission issues a ruling.

Appeals moving through legal channels

BOTH HEALTH ALLIANCE AND Humana have appealed these tentative managed-contract awards to the new ethics commission. The commission could find legal violations in the bidding process and order that the bidding be redone. Or the commission could rule that the bidding was done properly, in

which case the matter goes back to the General Assembly's Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability for consideration.

COGFA deferred its consideration of the proposed transition in plan administrators at an April 11 meeting. At that time Council 31 director of employee benefits Hank Scheff strongly urged the commission to take no action until the union had the opportunity to review all relevant documentation.

In the meantime Scheff presented testimony on the issue at a subject-matter hearing held on April 26 by the House Higher Education Committee.

Savings can't come at members' expense

ONCE THE UNION RECEIVES ALL relevant materials from the state, Council 31 staff will thoroughly review the specific information regarding the provider networks of the new vendors.

The state has said that the bulk of the care providers who participate in the current networks will be included in the new ones and that every area of the state will have sufficient providers to ensure ready geographic and timely access to care.

"We will check that claim out and hold the state accountable if it isn't true," Scheff said. "We want them to find ways to save money through the efficient purchase of health-care services, but not if it would degrade the quality and availability of those services for employees, retirees and their families."

Public employees fighting back

Continued from page 3

payroll deduction for contributions to a union political action committee without first having written permission every year from the employee.

- Eliminates "fair share" provisions, allowing for non-union free riders (Fair-share dues are based only on the cost of bargaining a contract and are less than full dues.); and

- Prohibits public employees from striking, though workers who strike illegally will not be subjected to jail time because lawmakers dropped proposed contempt-of-court penalties from an earlier version of the bill.

Recalls moving forward in Wisconsin

THE WISCONSIN LAW VIRTUALLY strips public employees of bargaining rights, unilaterally implements steep raises in their contributions for pensions and health care, prevents employers from the long-accepted practice of dues collection through payroll deductions, requires

secret-ballot votes each year at every public-sector union to determine whether a majority of workers still want to be unionized and requires public-employee unions to negotiate new contracts every year.

That law had not taken effect when On the Move went to press as courts weighed opponents' objections to possible illegal procedures the state Senate used to win passage.

In the meantime union activists were leading a 60-day drive to recall eight of the Republican senators who helped perpetrate the assault on middle-class Wisconsin.

Six of the eight targeted senators have recall petitions filed against them.

Union members spread out across the state on weekend road trips to collect signatures. Next will come campaigns to get out the recall votes in November elections.

"We believe in collective bargaining!" Garrity said. "We believe in people's rights! We're going to fight for those rights with everything we've got."

Check out Council 31's website

For all of the latest news from your union.





www.afscme31.org

VETERANS OF MEMPHIS SANITATION STRIKE ENTER LABOR HALL OF FAME



after a visit with President Barack Obama at the White House, eight surviving members of the historic 1968 AFSCME sanitation workers strike in Memphis, Tenn., attended a ceremony inducting them and their 1,300 fellow strikers into the Labor Hall of Fame.

The sanitation workers, as a group, will join 41 individuals and 403 “9-1-1” rescue workers in the Labor Hall of Fame, which is part of the U.S. Department of Labor. The rescue workers (many of whom were AFSCME members) and the Memphis sanitation workers are the only living Labor Hall of Fame honorees. Prominent individuals include United Farm Workers leader Cesar E. Chavez, Mary Harris “Mother” Jones and Helen Keller, an advocate for the deaf and blind.

Bill Lucy, AFSCME’s retired secretary-treasurer helped guide the Memphis strike and was at the White House for the induction ceremony. His reflections on the meaning of the strike for today’s workers are shared here with AFSCME Illinois members.

— by Bill Lucy —

Forty-three years ago this week Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee where he’d gone to stand with a beleaguered band of city sanitation workers who had been out on strike for nearly two months. Those workers were part of my union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—AFSCME. They were a small local made up entirely of African-Americans in a region of the country that had demonstrated scant good will toward labor unions and even less towards black men seeking to better their lives.



I was with Dr. King during that turbulent time. In 1968 I was on AFSCME’s national staff and had been sent to Memphis to aid the strikers. ... Men, weary and worn-down by back-breaking labor, looked down upon as “garbage men,” dark-skinned and old beyond their years. Yet there they were, day after day, walking the picket lines with their heads—and signs—held high. Their message still echoes down the years: “I am a man.”

...They sought better pay and fairer treatment, but most fundamentally, they were striking for recognition of their right to have a union. The politicians attacked them relentlessly, claiming they just didn’t want to do their jobs. The mayor was willing to pay them a little more money, but flat-out refused to recognize their right to form a union that would allow them to bargain from a position of strength, not beg for crumbs from a position of weakness.

I saw in these men something noble in their bearing—at once humble and dignified—and something

ennobling in their steadfast insistence on being treated with respect. I believe Dr. King saw it as well. He came to Memphis without hesitation or question because he knew with utter clarity that the sanitation workers’ struggle for labor rights was an essential aspect of the struggle for human rights to which he had devoted his life.

It was there, finally, that he gave his life to the struggle. After his death, the strike was soon settled and the sanitation workers won their right to have a union. In the ensuing years, that right brought them improved pay and working conditions, but more profoundly it brought them the dignity and respect that are at the core of our democracy.

Dr. King is always in my thoughts on this sad anniversary, but never more so than this year, with its eerie echoes of that long-ago battle for fundamental collective bargaining rights on the streets of Memphis. Today we find ourselves once again facing politicians who are fiercely determined, no matter what the cost to the public good, to deny workers a voice on the job. In 2011, sanitation workers and nearly every other public employee in the states of Wisconsin and Ohio find themselves denied their right to collective bargaining just as their brethren in Tennessee was in 1968.

Today it has once again become acceptable for politicians to belittle public employees and the important, often demanding, jobs they perform. We rely on these men and women when a fire breaks out, when the snow piles up, when disaster strikes. We entrust them with the care of our children, the health of our communities, and the safety of our streets. I believe they deserve our appreciation, not vilification.