



ON THE

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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

Pundits drawing wrong conclusions from election results

The Republican wave will not deliver what voters were seeking

The politicians and the pundits are busy analyzing the meaning of the recent election, sifting through the data to pick out facts that reinforce their pre-conceptions.

MOSTLY THEY DON'T LIKE TO CHALLENGE THEIR OWN ASSUMPTIONS SO I THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS I would do it for them.

One article of faith among both liberal and conservative observers is that voters were motivated by intense hostility to taxes. But our experience here in Illinois tells a different story.

Pat Quinn, who was on record in favor of increasing the income tax rate, defeated an opponent who repeatedly vowed to cut taxes. Illinois Senate Democrats voted almost to a person for a 2 percent income tax increase, but only lost two of their colleagues on Nov. 2, and one had voted against the tax hike. On the other hand the House Democratic caucus, which took a hard line against taxes, lost seven of their brethren, six who were opposed to a tax increase.

Then there were the Republican caucuses in both the state House and Senate, which took an even harder line against a tax increase, thinking it would be their ticket to majority status. Yet they failed in a year that Republicans were swept into office across the country.

And finally, consider the four Illinois Democrats who were knocked out of Congress despite voting to cut taxes for 95 percent of Americans as part of an economic recovery program. If voters are about cutting taxes, why weren't these incumbents returned to office?

If you turn on cable TV or pick up a newspaper, you'll hear words of warning about the anti-tax fervor sweeping the elec-

torate. I'm not suggesting that folks are anxious to have their taxes raised, just that one can vote for a tax increase or otherwise defy the conventional wisdom and survive politically. Or you can vote against a tax cut and still get beat.

The pundits are also advising us that voters are concerned about the federal deficit. That's probably the case. Yet virtually every Republican candidate for Congress supports the efforts of John Boehner and Mitch McConnell, their party's congressional leaders, to extend the Bush tax cuts to families making over \$250,000 annually – increasing the national debt by \$700 billion over the next 10 years.

We're also being told that the electorate doesn't like the Obama health plan and that Democrats were punished for their support of the law.

But one post-election survey found that 79 percent of folks who voted for Republican candidates support the health-care law's ban on insurance companies denying coverage based on a pre-existing condition.

I'm pretty sure, based on those same polls, that folks don't want to reverse the part about children being able to stay on their parents' insurance policies until they're 26, or the part that closes the donut hole for Medicare's prescription drug plan. And do they really want to repeal a prohibition against canceling insurance when someone falls sick?

Let me offer my own take on the events of Nov. 2.

Many voters are angry—

including many of us. Whether it's the 10 percent unemployment rate, the high home foreclosure rate, or the banks and Wall Street making out while we're just getting by—we've had enough.

Some folks—including a lot of AFSCME members—went to the polls on Election Day to vote for candidates who'd fight to create jobs, help families and put a check on greedy corporations. We took the time to figure out which candidates were speaking up for us, and we voted for them.

In the Quad Cities, for instance, many union members came out to vote for U.S. Rep Phil Hare, someone who had a 100 percent AFSCME voting record in Congress, had brought thousands of jobs to his district and had fought the banks and insurance companies.

Yet other angry voters simply turned their outrage against incumbents, often voting against their own interests in the process. That's why Phil Hare and many like him ended up getting turned out of office.

The result will all too likely be an attempt to unleash the insurance companies and give tax breaks to the rich, all, of course, in the name of the people, even though that's not what folks told pollsters they wanted.

The Republican leaders will claim they are fulfilling an electoral mandate. Some Democrats will go along because they, too, will have misread what the election meant, and the punditry will affirm it as wisdom.

One can only hope that next time around, when the crowd—brought to you and paid for by the corporate interests who poured tens of millions of undisclosed cash into their campaign coffers—stands for reelection, instead of just getting mad, voters will get even.



BY HENRY BAYER

ONE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT NEXT TIME AROUND, INSTEAD OF JUST GETTING MAD, VOTERS WILL GET EVEN.

AFSCME makes a difference in Election 2010

An election season rife with negativity ended with some positive signs for AFSCME members when Gov. Pat Quinn scored an upset victory over his Republican opponent, Bill Brady.

“AFSCME’S ROLE WAS ESSENTIAL TO THAT OUTCOME,” COUNCIL 31 DIRECTOR HENRY BAYER SAID. “THERE’S JUST NO WAY TO OVERSTATE THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR UNION’S EFFORTS IN HELPING GOV. QUINN EKE OUT HIS NARROW WIN.”

Quinn was counted out by most political observers, while Brady was rumored to have established his transition team weeks ago.

“He was most definitely the underdog in this race,” Bayer said.

“The work our local union leaders did in educating members, recruiting volunteers and spreading the word to friends and family really made a big difference in this critical election.”

National trends were flowing rapidly in the opposite direction. Republicans took control of the governor’s office and both houses of the legislature in virtually every other Midwestern state – Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin.

Those who won immediately began to trumpet their plans to cut public employee pensions, privatize public services, slash public budgets, reduce assistance to local governments and schools and even weaken or abolish public employee bargaining rights.

“That was Brady’s agenda, too,” Bayer said. “That’s the reason AFSCME and the rest of the labor movement worked so hard to defeat him.”

No need to flinch from tax increase

THE PUNDITS CLAIMED THAT hostility to taxes was a big factor in voting patterns, but experiences in Illinois didn’t bear that out. Brady ham-



pered Quinn over his forthright support for a tax increase, to no avail.

And several members of the state Senate who voted for an AFSCME-backed revenue-raising measure that would increase taxes and preserve state services were convincingly reelected, with strong union backing.

Altogether 71 percent of AFSCME-recommended candidates won their races at the federal, state and local level. And Supreme Court Justice Thomas Kilbride, with union backing, won his retention vote despite a multi-million dollar corporate campaign against him.

AFSCME backed 21 candidates for the state House. Seventeen of them won their races, six Republicans and 11 Democrats. Nine of the union’s 11 endorsed state Senate candidates also won.

“We know that it won’t be smooth sailing in Illinois in the days ahead,” Bayer said. “We’ve had our disagreements with Gov. Quinn, Speaker Madigan and other public officials throughout the state — and we’ll undoubtedly have them again. “Illinois still has a \$13 billion deficit, and the battle over how to fix the state’s

budget mess is likely to generate intense conflict that will affect every unit of government and every agency dependent on state funds.”

He predicted that big business interests will continue their push to cut the pensions of current employees.

“We’ve got to be prepared to continue to do battle in the all-important war to defend our standard of living and raise the revenues our state needs,” he said.

Progress in Washington will be hard to come by

AT THE TOP OF THE BALLOT, AFSCME-endorsed candidates for the U.S. House and Senate were inundated by the wave of widespread voter discontent that carried a Republican majority into the U.S. House.

But this wasn’t a spontaneous wave. It was stirred by the tens of millions of corporate dollars poured into candidates who stand in opposition to nearly everything government can and should do to improve the lives of working families. The U.S. Supreme Court’s recent “Citizens United” decision, handed down by five appointees of presidents Reagan, Bush and Bush, unleashed this torrent of cash that threatens to make Congress a wholly owned subsidiary of America’s wealthy elite.

That spells trouble, not only for President Barack Obama, but for those who work for government at all levels. In the past two years Illinois was able to count on a dramatic infusion of federal funding to help tide the state over during tough times.

“You can be certain that Republicans will use their control of the U.S. House to block any further federal assistance to states,” Council 31 Deputy Director Roberta Lynch said. “Instead, they’ll be pushing for steep cuts in federal aid to state and local governments.”

More tough times coming

DOWN THE BALLOT AFSCME locals had some notable success in backing candidates for county offices.

In Kane County Local 3966 helped put County Board candidate Monica Silva over the top. Silva knocked off the board member who provided strong backing for the move to privatize Health Department services, cutting back programs that helped

thousands of children and laying off nearly half of the department’s employees.

All in all, Lynch said, AFSCME members can be proud of the role they played in this election cycle.

In addition to the union’s volunteers that came out on election day in Alton, Aurora, Champaign, Decatur, Chicago, Elgin, Streamwood, Joliet, Kankakee, Marion, Quad Cities, Quincy, Rockford, Dixon, Southern Cook County, Springfield, St. Clair County and Waukegan, hundreds more members, retirees and their friends and family worked evenings and weekends to help make AFSCME endorsements something worth pursuing.

“No doubt about it, we’re in for more tough times,” Lynch said. “But there can also be no doubt that those times would be way, way tougher were it not for the unity, determination and sheer guts that were on full display in coming together to make our endorsements and going all out to back up them up. We forged a good record in very bad times.”



Avik Das



Walking the precincts is empowering. It gives you a sense of ownership in the outcome. If the candidates we're backing don't make it, at least we fought. We aren't just standing on the sidelines. It's good experience to articulate the union's position. We are going to need to be able to talk to people about the value of investing in our work – in public services. What kind of government will we have if government runs out of money? We want smart government that has its priorities straight and actually gives people the kind of services that speak for themselves. Government does things we can't do ourselves. There are certain things it does better than any corporation can do.
 – Avik Das, Local 3477



Rich Wills



Election 2010 — Volunteers make a difference



Hundreds of AFSCME members and retirees made the sacrifices needed to help bring home election victories for union-backed candidates. On the Move got a chance to talk to them about how it went and why it was worth the effort.

I got active during the Obama campaign and went on the buses to Wisconsin and Indiana. I was inspired by Obama, but now I'm in it for the long haul. I enjoy being active in politics and I want to help the union.
 – Gwen Grant, Local 3969

It makes me mad when I hear them saying public-service employees don't work and our unions are destroying America. Our unions make it possible to have a decent living. They are the only stopgap that keeps the wealthy from having it all their way. In my job we go the extra mile to help kids out.
 – Jordanette Mathews, Local 3477

I came out because I wanted to see what is was like. I encourage my daughter to look around and see what's going on in the world, so I have to do it, too. And I was mad. I put money into an individual retirement account, and when it dropped in 2008 I was devastated and very upset with Wall Street.
 – Debra Gasich, Local 3969

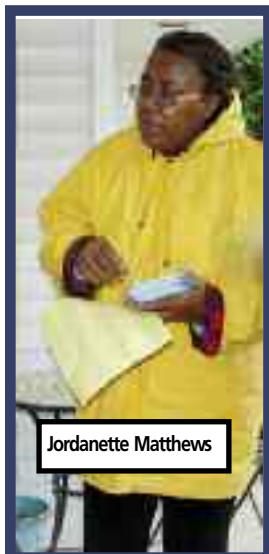
I've always been part of the PEOPLE movement. It's important to me to get the message out there about things that impact people like myself. We were working a good precinct, where the people we talked to were in favor of our candidates. These were middle class people who see the impact of public services. We tried to get them to go vote early. The negative ads are turning them off, so it's important to give people the information they need to get past the negativity.
 – Rich Wills, Local 3477



Debra Gasich



Gwen Grant



Jordanette Mathews



Members have final say on no-layoff, no-closure extension

Pending a ratification vote that is expected to be wrapped up by mid-November, the state has agreed to extend until June 30, 2012, a ban on facility closures and layoffs of any AFSCME-represented state employees.

THE ONE-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE PREVIOUS AGREEMENT WAS DEPENDENT ON AFSCME AND the state working together to identify at least \$50 million in cost savings, in order to help address the state's dire budget shortfall.

The extension will be in force if members in state locals vote "yes" on the agreement which includes deferring for seven months half of the 4-percent wage increase scheduled for July 1, 2011.

Waiting until Feb. 1, 2012, for the added 2 percent would save the state some \$30 million, with another \$20 million in savings coming from efficiencies and cost-saving proposals from the union.

The ban on closures and layoffs has been in effect since early this year. It was part of a settlement reached with the help of a mediator, who oversaw discussions between AFSCME and the state. Those discussions led to the resolution of several outstanding grievances AFSCME had filed in early 2009, when a series of large layoffs were announced.

On Sept. 13 the state and the union reached a tentative agreement to extend this ban. The parties set a target of \$100 million in cost savings. It provided that the ban on closures and layoffs would be extended if at least \$50 million in savings could be identified and mutually agreed to by Oct. 31.

Suggestions worth \$20 million

POTENTIAL COST-SAVING MEASURES included: reductions in overtime; furlough days; additional health plan efficiencies; reductions in vendor contracts; improving efficiency in state-agency operations; and changes to employee compensation.

AFSCME members submitted dozens of suggestions

for how the state could operate more efficiently.

The following efficiencies and other cost-savings proposals suggested by the union achieved some \$20 million in savings:

- Reducing mandated overtime in round-the-clock facilities and hiring staff to ensure appropriate coverage;
- Extending the voluntary furlough program, which will again include a one for two incentive program and will now be expanded to allow more employees to participate;
- Bringing privatized work back in house on three vendor contracts;
- Improving efficiencies in agency operations: Parole agent travel reorganization; statewide document management program to reduce paper utilization; expansion of salvage and recycling programs at correctional facilities; improvements in operation of Corrections Industries; energy efficiency modifications at correctional facilities.

Continuing to work for \$100 million savings target

SOME OF THE PROPOSALS COULD not be counted toward the targeted goal because implementation would necessitate changing state law, would conflict with federal regulations or were already in the process of being implemented. Others were not counted because it was too difficult to reasonably assess potential cost savings by the Oct. 31 deadline or because management did not agree that the proposal was workable or advisable.

In many instances, there was agreement that a particular proposal might be workable, but it wasn't possible to determine how or when it might be implemented. The parties have committed to

'We've seen 1,000 teachers laid off in Kane County. Homes are being lost. Having a secure job is really important right now.'
—Frank Hillman

Strong support from local leaders

Sitting at the table when Council 31 hammered out the final tentative agreement that guarantees no state-employee layoffs and no state-facility closures until at least July 2012, local union presidents voted overwhelmingly to send the proposal to the members and recommend ratification.

Here's what some of those presidents had to say.

RANDY MILLIGAN, LOCAL 779, HARRISBURG YOUTH CENTER –

We are facing the possible merger of the Department of Juvenile Justice with Children and Family Services and that could mean downsizing. With that threat I thought the extension was very important.

We have a lot of senior staff here with retirement coming up, so we were glad to see that they won't face the wage deferral. But they said they would vote for it anyway. Our members want to show their support.

BARB FOSTER, LOCAL 1591, TINLEY PARK MENTAL HEALTH CENTER –

I look next door and see the empty homes and empty parking lots at Howe (Developmental Center, which was recently shut down by the state). It was devastating to see members go through that closure. And we just knew when they closed Howe that we'd be next (because Tinley is on the same grounds, which developers covet). Now we've been saved for at least two years. Without this agreement I'm sure there would be more closures and loss of more jobs.

DAN DUNLAP, LOCAL 1133, DWIGHT CORRECTIONAL CENTER –

It's a positive step, something we should do to protect jobs. A year or so ago, we were looking at 2,000 to 7,000 layoffs, so who knows what it would be like without this agreement. Some of our members do feel like we've given enough, but 2 percent for seven months doesn't seem like a lot.

MARY FARRELL, LOCAL 1928, FOX DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER –

I believe we're doing the best we can to save our jobs. With contract negotiations coming, we don't want to be in the middle of a battle on layoffs or closures.

DOROTHY RIMM, LOCAL 432, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION –

We did a good job identifying ideas where the state could find savings – we did what we promised. I was surprised that management felt like our ideas were good. They've already implemented some of them. Management has to listen to people who are in the trenches. We keep Illinois services and programs going. We're the ones who make it work.

FRANK HILLMAN, LOCAL 26, ELGIN MHC –

AFSCME did a wonderful job protecting our members at a critical time when there is so much uncertainty in state finances and in the economy as a whole. Our facility went through downsizing in 2001, so we understand what can happen. And mental health is always on the chopping block. To get an agreement like this in a recession is astounding. The agreement insulates us from whatever political changes are coming. People in our area are concerned about jobs. We've seen 1,000 teachers laid off in Kane County. Homes are being lost. Having a secure job is really important right now.

continue working on these ideas in order to meet the \$100 million target — and to improve state services.

Wage increases preserved

THE REVISED WAGE SCHEDULE, IF the deferral is ratified, will be as follows: 1 percent on Jan. 1; 2 percent on June 1, 2011; 2 percent on July 1; 1.25 percent on Jan. 1, 2012; and 2 percent on Feb. 1, 2012.

To keep employees who are about to retire from losing money on their pensions, those giving irrevocable notice by May 1, 2011, of intent to retire by Dec. 31, 2011, will not be subject to the 2 percent deferral on July 1.

Even with the deferral,

'Providing job security to AFSCME members who provide vital public services is of great importance to all AFSCME members.'
—Henry Bayer

state employees will still receive all wage increases negotiated in the current Master Agreement, which expires on June 30, 2012.

A win for all

"ACROSS THE COUNTRY, STATE workers are struggling with massive layoffs, mandated furlough days, wage freezes and

pay cuts," Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said. "Here in Illinois, where the size of the deficit and the need for increased revenues is even greater than in any other state, we have been able to find a way to provide job security and assure continuation of vital services through this agreement."

Tapping the collective knowledge of frontline workers to streamline operations is a principal AFSCME has long advocated, he said. It pays dividends for elected officials, taxpayers and workers.

"Providing job security to AFSCME members who provide vital public services is of great importance to all AFSCME members and to the citizens whom we serve," Bayer said.

Agreement to end forced overtime spurs steady decline

The crushing burden of overtime that had been a fact of life for state employees at round-the-clock facilities is starting to ease as an agreement forged by AFSCME and the state begins to provide relief.

THE "MANDATORY OVERTIME MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING," SIGNED MAY 28, 2009, committed the state to add staff in veterans homes, correctional, mental health, developmental and youth centers, thereby reducing the expensive use of overtime as a substitute for proper staffing levels.

The agreement also gives employees in those facilities the right, as of July 1, to refuse most "mandates" – supervisors' orders to remain at work for another shift.

Nearly a year and one-half after reaching agreement, and several months after the right to refuse kicked in, the amount of total overtime and the number of mandates have gone down substantially in most facilities.

The agreement specifies that agencies must hire enough additional staff to "increase the net number of staff working in each agency."

Staff has been added in many facilities. In some places those additions have barely kept pace with attrition, meaning the total staffing level has remained close to the same, while in others there have been significant increases.

"If the Department of Corrections continues on the path it's on now of moving new hires through training and into facilities, we'll improve staffing," Council 31 regional director Eddie Caumiant said. "The MOU is helping to facilitate discussions on how we should staff. In places where they listen to the union, there has been progress."

The right to refuse

THE LANGUAGE THAT BECAME effective July 1 states:

"...employees shall not be disciplined for refusing a mandate to work overtime

hours unless such mandation occurs in unforeseen or unusual circumstances beyond the control of the Employer, including unexpected absences discovered at the commencement of a shift."

A key area of contention in the interpretation of this language is same-day calloffs. Management claims that any same-day calloff qualifies as "unforeseen." The union's position is that a certain number of calloffs are expected, and that the exception to an employee's right to refuse only kicks in when there are a greater than the normal number or when an emergency exists, such as the unexpected need for a lockdown or a resident needing more-than-anticipated care.

Interpretation of that refusal language will most likely end up in the hands of arbitrators, who make final decisions on grievances. Currently there are scores of grievances pending on whether or not a discipline was warranted when an employee refused an order to work overtime.

Below are reports from a variety of facilities on the progress being made in adding staff, reducing overtime and the willingness of management to honor the right to refuse overtime.

Net addition of staff at Robinson CC

"WE'VE HIRED QUITE A FEW since last year," Local 3649 President Floyd Clark said. "We are doing well at cutting back on overtime. With a few

exceptions, they've cut down quite a bit on mandates."

Most of the mandates come when there are large numbers of staff absent on a shift, he said. "We've had only two people refuse since July 1."

Both were issued warnings that further refusals could lead to disciplinary days off, with management arguing that there were an above-average number of employees calling off.

The union has taken the position that when there are an average number of absences, that is not "unforeseen" because every facility has an average for any given shift and that the state should staff for that eventuality.

Keeping up with attrition at Choate

THE AMOUNT OF OVERTIME HASN'T changed at Choate DC, a place where for 10 years

chronic shortstaffing has been the norm, forcing long hours on an exhausted staff.

"We had 40 new hires, but we've lost almost that many," Local 141 President Cary Quick said. "We still have 30 to 40 shifts of overtime every day. Management sees what 10 years of this is doing to people, but they are faced with keeping the facility going. We are public servants and we take seriously our responsibilities to keep the facility staffed."

That said, management is, in most cases, honoring refusals when employees have plans for after work, Quick explained.

"The right to refuse gave people a little bit of power to plan their schedule," he said. For example, "My wife and I both work at Choate and we have four kids. Now we are able to make sure that one of us is home with the kids."

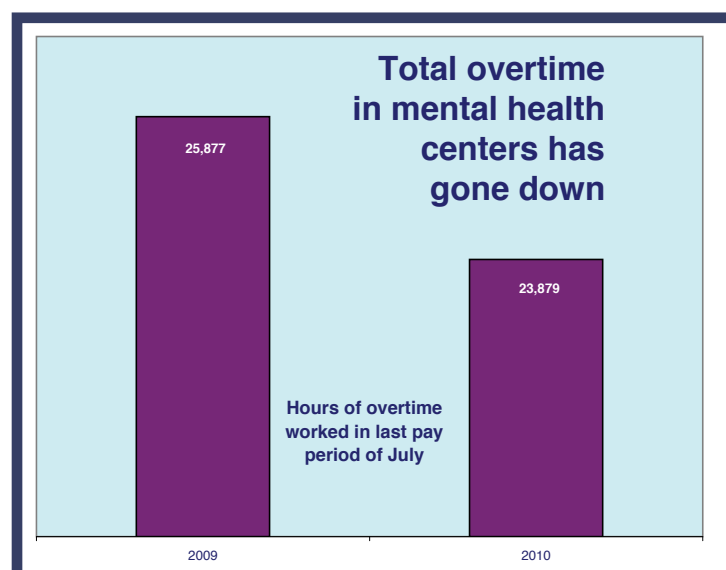
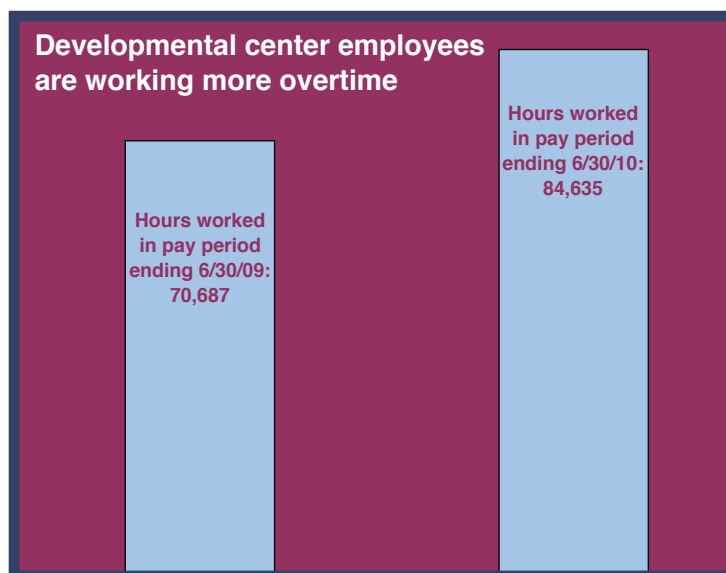
The local and management are working together to give employees some relief, but still keep operations going.

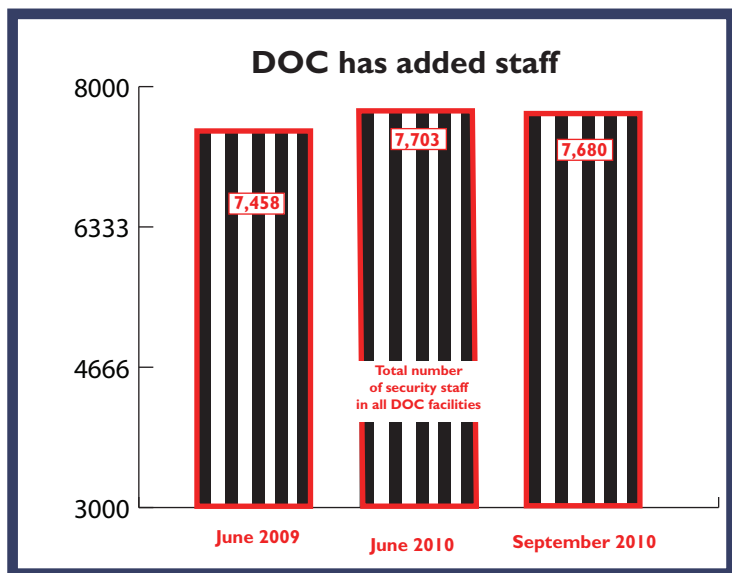
"Staff are not in fear of discipline now," he said. "We're all working well together to keep the operation afloat."

Small additions a big help at Pere Marquette

THE ADDITION OF FOUR SECURITY staff at Pere Marquette Youth Center has "made a tremendous difference," in the amount of overtime needed to keep the facility running, Local 1805 President Duane Montgomery said.

There are still vacancies in certain positions that lead to





mandated overtime, but management is honoring refusals.

"I've turned down a mandate myself," Montgomery said. "I had stuff planned with my family and I went home."

LaSalle Veterans Home still needs staff

ALTHOUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF Veterans Affairs has hired some staff for the veterans homes, they are not keeping ahead of attrition by much. The agreement commits DVA to have added 40 staff by Sept. 30, but it had only managed an increase of .5 fulltime equivalent employees.

At the LaSalle home, there were 84 direct-care workers for 159 veterans at the end of September, compared to 79 workers caring for 118 veterans at the end of June 2009.

"Staffing is still down," Local 3693 President Kathy Reno concluded. "They are still mandating, but mostly new people." Employees don't like to refuse mandates, Reno said, because "they hate to hurt their co-workers," who have to absorb the unwanted overtime themselves or work shorthanded.

Overtime way down at Murray MHC

STAFFING IS UP AND OVERTIME is down at Murray MHC.

"They've hired 60 people and there's another class of 18 coming by January," Local 401 President Luberta Lytle said. "Three months ago we were running 2,000 hours of overtime in two weeks. Now we are down to 600."

Now nearly all of the overtime is being taken up by volunteers, and people who refuse overtime are not being disciplined, she said.

The local's member action team put its communication network into action to make sure staff knew what their rights were and how to assert them.

"We made sure people knew what the criteria for

refusing were and they exercised their rights," Lytle explained.

Thomson CC closure beefs up Dixon staff

STAFF WHO REFUSE OVERTIME AT Dixon CC still face disciplinary action in some instances, Local 817 President Ricky Ruthart said. But most of the overtime is going to volunteers now.

A lot of the staff came to Dixon when Thomson was closed, he said. "Our overtime has dropped drastically. But they are still mandating."

Some staff who have refused orders to work over have been disciplined, while others haven't.

He said he expects more people will exercise their rights "once we get definite decisions on what they can mandate for and what they can't."

Management resistance at Sheridan CC

WITH MORE STAFF BUT ALSO more inmates, the amount of overtime has gone down somewhat at Sheridan CC. For the Sept. 16-30 pay period there were 2,132 hours of overtime this year, down from 3,500 hours a year earlier.

But management is still issuing mandates for staff, many of them in violation of the agreement, Local 472 President Rob Fanti said.

"They are not honoring the agreement," he said. "We don't have as much overtime as we used to have, but they are still mandating. And it's not unforeseen. We average 4.5 calloffs per day. They should staff for that."

Every time someone refuses a mandate in accordance with the agreement, management issues discipline.

"We have 70 grievances pending," Fanti said. "We've probably served 100 discipline days over mandation. That created more overtime and another 100 mandates."

Arbitrator sets contract terms for Cook County public-safety locals



Barred by law from going on strike, AFSCME members who work for the Cook County Sheriff exercised their option to put unresolved contract issues before an independent arbitrator after long, fruitless months of trying to bargain with management representatives who showed little inclination to move forward in negotiations.

THE ARBITRATOR'S DECISION PUT IN PLACE A FOUR-YEAR CONTRACT RETROACTIVE TO DEC. 1, 2008. The arbitrator noted that management has readily conceded the settlement would "in all likelihood set the pattern for all or most of Cook County's bargained-for work-force of more than 18,000 employees."

Ratified in late October by the County Board, the arbitrator's award raises wages by 8.5 percent over the four years, with 2 percent retroactive to Dec. 1, 2008, and 1.5 percent retroactive to Dec. 1, 2009.

The union had strongly resisted the county's efforts to increase employee health-care costs. The arbitrator agreed and there will be no changes in the health-care plan or the amount employees pay in premiums, deductibles or co-payments. Union members also strongly opposed the county's proposal to change work schedules, and the arbitrator rejected those changes.

Decision sticks to basic economic issues

BARGAINING BEGAN IN THE FALL of 2008 for all 15 AFSCME

'I thought the process was fair... A majority of our members were very pleased.'

locals that represent Cook County employees. But the county consistently has not come to the table ready to negotiate. That leaves AFSCME members working without raises for two years.

Under state labor law, the 11 locals whose members aren't in public safety do have the right to strike, but the four locals whose members work for the sheriff – representing correctional sergeants and lieutenants, sheriff's police and police sergeants – can't strike. Instead they have the right to take unresolved bargaining issues to "interest arbitration."

In that process the arbitrator cannot fashion his own decision, but must choose between the proposals put forward by each side. Cook County is considered a "co-employer" with the sheriff.

In this case the arbitrator ended up choosing the union's proposals on wages, health care and the work schedule.

"The employer refused to negotiate in good faith," said Bob Mazur, president of Local 2264, which represents sheriff's police officers. "The arbitrator didn't deal with many issues outside of salary and health care. So we have a lot of things left for the next time."

But those big-ticket economic items were the main issues, and most members were more than satisfied, Mazur said.

Back to the table

THE PROVISION AWARDING BACK pay was a departure from the last few rounds of bargaining and could help spur the county to break out of the cycle of dragging negotiations out months and even years beyond the contract's expiration.

"It was the first time we got full retroactive pay," Local 3692 President Roberto Rodriguez said. "I thought the process was fair and led to a fair agreement. A majority of our members were very pleased."

Local union leaders from other county locals will now try to hammer out a contract based on the pattern set by the arbitrator, who reached his decision based on the premise that the union members' contract should not cause them to fall behind. That led him to use cost-of-living data and projections to arrive at the wage-increase percentages.

Unfortunately the county is refusing to schedule bargaining dates and the union has filed unfair labor practice charges against the county to get them to the table.

"They have a legal responsibility to bargain in good faith, and it's time to get this contract done," Council 31 Associate Director Mike Newman said.

Newman led the AFSCME negotiating team, with staff representative John DiNicola, Mazur, Rodriguez, Tim Gorniak, Regina Biocic, Kevin Williams, Dan Strong, Ron Sachtleben, Pat Donovan, Lonnie Small, Art Jackson, Vernon Brandon, Lubertha Harris, Thomas Conley, Jaime Hernandez, David Rosario



Telecommunicator Hope Guest was working with Bill Lee that Friday night, with Jennifer Long there as a trainee.

"We were watching the weather reports and warnings," Guest said. "We got an alert from the National Weather Service that the tornado was headed towards Streator. We were focused on getting alerts out and didn't think about leaving the command center."

The telecommunicators called area hospitals, theaters and other places where people might be gathered.

At 28 minutes before the storm hit, they sounded the alarm for the first time and advised the emergency

alert system to tell people to head for their basements or other shelter.

'Nobody lost their life'

Guest was in communication with her supervisor, who was outside. Ten minutes after the first alarm, the alarm was sounded again.

"My supervisor saw it coming and we sounded the alarm again," she said. "It hit down west of town and did not go up till it went all the way across town. It went through and immediately the phones lit up and we were swamped. There were over 500 calls in a couple of hours. We had to prioritize

answering the calls. Some people were trapped in basements. The electrical wires were down and hot. There were natural gas leaks."

It didn't take long before the entire crew of dispatchers and all the police and firefighters were out and ready to go.

Guest believes that sounding the alarm three times was crucial.

"A lot of people lost a lot that day," she said. "But nobody lost their life."

The three telecommunicators, members of Local 1592, were among a group of eight public employees who will be receiving the American Red Cross "Saluting Our Heroes" awards for

their services before and immediately following the tornado.

Public Works employees Larry Overocker and Phil Conner were the other two AFSCME members in the group.

'Nothing was where it should be'

Conner, assistant director of Public Works and an AFSCME member, was on his way back from an evening out.

"I saw the tornado hit," he said. "I called the Public Works director and told him I was calling the entire crew out and going into the disaster response plan. When I

first saw the damage, I didn't believe no one was dead, because it was so incredible." Overocker, union president, was watching the weather on TV.

"When I saw the damage, I didn't believe no one was dead, because it was so incredible," Overocker, union president, was watching the weather on TV. "When I saw people to take care of and put my uniform on, I got ready to go. I got a call and went out and started to go. It was dark. Really, the destruction was absolutely unbelievable. There were a lot of things that needed to be done. The tangle of wires and utility poles and debris made it nearly impossible to move in and



amage, I didn't know what was street and what wasn't," he said. "There were some spots where nothing was where it should be. We had to find the perimeter of where the tornado hit and assess the damage. It took several hours because there were so many trees down. We had to close the area with barricades and find out what needed to be done, then get started opening things up."

destruction zone. "We didn't know what was street and what wasn't," he said. "There were some spots where nothing was where it should be. We had to find the perimeter of where the tornado hit and assess the damage. It took several hours because there were so many trees down. We had to close the area with barricades and find out what needed to be done, then get started opening things up."

'When the sun came up, it didn't look any better'

The public works guys were charged with direct-

ing emergency vehicles to where they needed to go and clearing the debris to make sure they could get through. They coordinated with gas and electric company workers who were there to kill the downed live wires and stop the gas leaks.

Firefighters were out doing house-to-house searches.

People who had lived in the town for years were looking at a level of destruction that was hard to fathom.

"When the sun came up, it didn't look any better," Overocker said.

But by that time help was pouring in. Emergency vehicles began arriving shortly after the storm

ended. The town was declared a state disaster area. The state sent in trucks and even a crew of inmates from a nearby prison.

"Everybody worked together pretty well," Overocker said. "We were lucky because the hospital was on the edge of the destruction zone, and was not damaged."

He said there were 19 serious injuries.

Still rebuilding

The first 24 hours were exhausting. Overocker left home at 9:30 Saturday night, came home for an hour at 5:30 a.m., then was back in the streets until Sun-

day evening.

"The cleanup took a month," Conner said. Hundreds of volunteers pitched in. "We did a lot of cleaning roads and we went into people's yards. We normally wouldn't do that, but what are you going to do with a huge tree down in your front yard?"

Some of the rebuilding is still going on, of course. Entire houses were destroyed. Ninety-year-old oak trees were ripped out of a park. A new athletic complex was destroyed.

The city employees were nominated for the Red Cross award by Mayor Jimmie Lansford, for acting above and beyond the call of duty.

"These are individuals that were either on duty just before the tornado hit or responded right after the tornado hit," he told a local newspaper. "These are the ones that contributed outstanding leadership and are the reason we had so few casualties."

But the employees don't feel like heroes.

"It's like, we were just doing our job," Conner said. "Something we'd been trained to do. But you never really know until it happens."

Overocker has a similar attitude.

"If something happens, you go fix it," he said. "That's what we do."

STREATOR EMPLOYEES SAVE LIVES: 'Just doing our jobs'



Will County workers fight service cuts

A misguided effort to cut taxes is threatening services in Will County.

THE WILL COUNTY BOARD IS CONSIDERING A TAX-LEVY MEASURE THAT WOULD LOWER PROPERTY-TAX REVENUES AND FORCE CUTTING VITAL SERVICES OR DIPPING DEEPLY INTO THE COUNTY'S RAINY-DAY FUND. THE FINANCE COMMITTEE TURNED DOWN THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S PLAN TO RAISE THE LEVY A SMALL AMOUNT AND USE A SMALL AMOUNT FROM THE RESERVES.

"You can't keep vital services without taxes," Council 31 staff representative Joe Pluger told the board. He reminded them that the county's tax-cap law will make it that much harder to raise adequate revenues if they lower the levy now.

The board was slated to make a decision on the levy on Nov. 8.

Local 1028 members turned out in force for the board's public hearing, to oppose the tax cuts and give a comprehensive accounting of the services they provide.

Clerk's office 'all about public service'

BECKY GILLIAM, WHO WORKS FOR THE COUNTY CLERK, SAID HER OFFICE "IS ALL ABOUT PUBLIC SERVICE AND KEEPING COUNTY GOVERNMENT WORKING." SHE ENUMERATED A LONG LIST OF SERVICES, INCLUDING: RECORDING BIRTHS AND DEATH AND ISSUING OFFICIAL COPIES OF CERTIFICATES AND MARRIAGE LICENSES; RUNNING ELECTIONS – PREPARING BALLOTS, MAINTAINING THE EQUIPMENT, LINING UP POLLING PLACES, RECRUITING ELECTION JUDGES, MAINTAINING VOTER REGISTRATION AND RUNNING THE ABSENTEE BALLOT DISTRIBUTION AND EARLY VOTING; SENDING OUT NOTICES FOR REAL ESTATE AND DELINQUENT TAXES.

"Layoffs will mean some services we provide now won't get done," she warned.

County nursing home 'a safety net'

JOANNE CROWDER IS A REGISTERED NURSE AT SUNNY HILL, THE WILL COUNTY NURSING HOME, WHICH CARES FOR 215 ELDERLY RESIDENTS.

"Sunny Hill is a safety net for families when their loved



one has no savings left, and the private nursing home where they spent it all says they have to leave," Crowder said. "They can transfer to Sunny Hill without any loss in quality of care.

"It is too easy for people to forget about the geriatric population, to forget about our past," she concluded. "But Sunny Hill is also our future. Who here can say what the future holds? One day one of us here may need to be cared for at Sunny Hill."

Highway Department gets residents to work on time

JOE CAIRNS WORKS FOR THE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT. ON A REGULAR BASIS, HE SAID, WORKERS "PLOW SNOW, FILL POTHOLES, MOW, MAINTAIN BRIDGE DECKS, REPLACE SIGNAGE, TRIM TREES, KEEP UP THE ROAD PAINTING AND MARKINGS, DO BLACKTOPPING, REPLACE CULVERTS AND MAINTAIN DRAINAGE DITCHES."

In emergencies they might have to clear the roads of trees and debris and clear plugged storm drains.

"If you lay people off at the Highway Department, you'll get more tree limbs in the road because the trees aren't regularly trimmed," Cairns said. "You'll get flooded roads in a rain storm because the drains haven't been maintained. You'll have snow on the road a lot longer, and all the delays and accidents that come with it."

Devil is in the details for Records Management

BARB GUERRERO WORKS IN THE COUNTY'S RECORDS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT. THEY MAINTAIN RECORDS FOR CIVIL AND TRAFFIC COURTS, PROCESS CRIMINAL HOLDS AND SCAN COURT-RELATED DOCUMENTS. THEY HANDLE HISTORICAL RECORDS AND FAMILY RECORDS USED BY THE PUBLIC FOR GENEALOGY RESEARCH AND NATURALIZATION CASES, DO TITLE SEARCHES AND HANDLE COURT CALLS FOR TRAFFIC, CRIMINAL, CIVIL,

ADOPTION AND JUVENILE COURTS.

"We constantly check case numbers, check signatures, and ensure documents are legitimate," she said. "Think about what is at stake in criminal cases if the records are in error."

County cuts to Health Department would start downward spiral

BECAUSE THE COUNTY'S FUNDING LEVERAGES STATE AND FEDERAL DOLLARS FOR PUBLIC-HEALTH SERVICES, A CUT WOULD HAVE A CASCADING EFFECT ON THE TOTAL REVENUES AVAILABLE FOR THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

"Everybody in our county benefits from our work: from business establishments seeking permits to people eating out without contracting food-borne illnesses because of our restaurant inspections," said Dave Delrose who works for the department.

Jail already operating bare bones

MATT MANTIA IS A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER IN THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT.

He told the board that they "can't cut vital services like the jail without risking the safety of our members,

the inmates we guard and the public."

They are already short-staffed, with only 28 to 35 COs to guard 750 inmates on any given shift. That has led to an increase in violence. If some employees are absent, he said, the jail must be locked down, even though the inmates don't deserve to lose privileges.

"Straight out, we don't have enough staff in the jail," Mantia said. "I think you should walk a day in my shoes."

No substitute available for coroner's work

WITH ONLY SEVEN DEPUTY CORONERS HOLDING DOWN A 24-HOUR OPERATION, THE CORONER'S OFFICE CAN'T AFFORD CUTS, SAID MIKE VANOVER, ONE OF THE DEPUTIES.

"When someone is found dead in Will County we respond to the scene," he told the board. "We notify the next-of-kin when necessary, coordinate transport of the body, determine whether an autopsy is necessary, conduct death investigations and inquests when necessary, and issue death certificates and cremation certificates, among other duties. Our office inves-

tigated over 2,600 deaths in 2009. This work is the work of law enforcement. It can't be outsourced."

County workers 'impact lives of residents every day'

SHERRY WILLIAMS IS A CLASSIFICATION SPECIALIST AT THE JAIL, AND PRESIDENT OF LOCAL 1028.

"I think most county residents don't even realize how the vital services our members deliver affect them and their families," she told the board. But these services "impact the lives of county residents every day.

"In a certain way, I am OK with the idea that Will County residents take these public services that we deliver for granted. If you don't have to think about the jail or the nursing home or the snow plows or 911 or any of these services, that means we are doing our jobs well."

But the board is talking about rolling back taxes without talking about those services, she noted. "If taxes are rolled back, how will we pay for those services? That is the question the County Board needs to answer before it votes."

Public employees nationwide losing ground on pensions

An estimated 2.5 million people came onto the streets in one week this October, to protest the French government's plans to increase the minimum retirement age to 62, from 60.

DESPITE WIDESPREAD STRIKES AND MILITANT DEMONSTRATIONS, FRENCH PRESIDENT NICOLAS Sarkozy's "reform" plan passed. One prominent union leader said the mobilization will force a debate "on the kind of working life people want," according to a BBC report.

That debate is conspicuously absent in this country as a wave of pension take-aways from public employees sweeps across the United States. In the private sector, traditional defined-benefit pensions have almost disappeared. The corporate elite has largely succeeded in shifting the responsibility for a secure retirement onto the backs of individual workers.

Now the same corporate interests are making the best of the current economic climate to finish off the job in the more highly unionized public sector.

Below is a summary of pension cuts enacted just in the first nine months of 2010.

COLO RADO – Increased the employee contribution rates to the Public Employee Retirement Association for state employees, troopers and judges for fiscal year 2011. Reduced COLA to zero for 2010 and limited the COLA to 2 percent in 2011 and future years. A second tier was created with higher age

and service requirements for normal retirement.

MINNESO TA – Increased employee contributions from .25 percent to 2 percent, depending on the system. Reduced COLAs from .5 percent to 1.5 percent until a system reaches 90 percent funding level.

MISSISSIPPI – Increased the employee contribution rate for the Public Employees Retirement System from 7.25 percent of salary to 9 percent.

Increased the service requirement for normal retirement to 33 years, from 30 years, for those who enter the system after July 1, 2011.

NEW JERSEY – Required employees to pay 1.5 percent of salary into a retiree-health-insurance fund.

VIRGINIA – Passed a new requirement for employees to contribute towards their pensions — five percent of creditable compensation.

WYOMING – State employees for the first time must pay part of their pension contribution — 1.43 percent of salary.

MICHIGAN – All newly hired school employees will be enrolled in a hybrid defined-benefit and defined-contribution system. The hybrid plan eliminates cost-of-living adjustments. State employees must now contribute 3 percent of compensation to pay for retirement health-care benefits.

RHODE ISLAND – COLA only applies to the first \$35,000 of retirement benefits and capped at 3 percent. A federal judge ruled that no enforceable contract exists to overturn the state's reduction of health-care benefits for early retirees.

SOUTH DAKOTA – Lowered the annual 3.1 percent COLA unless the system is fully funded.

ARIZONA – Created a second tier with new hires' benefits reduced and retirement age increased.

CALIFORNIA – Members of the California Public Employees Retirement System hired after Nov. 10, 2010, get a benefit of 2 percent of FAS at age 60 and 2.148 percent at age 63 or higher, down from 2 percent at age 55 and 2.5 percent at age 63 or higher. For state safety employees, the new formula multiplier is 2 percent at age 55 or older from 2.5 percent. For state peace officers and firefighters and California State University employees, the new formula is 2.5 percent at age 55 from 3 percent at age 50. Retirement benefits will be based on the highest consecutive three-year average salary instead of the single highest year.

VERMONT – Raised teachers' contribution rate to 5 percent from 3.54 percent and increased the age for retirement. Benefits were moderately increased. Increased the years of service needed to qualify for retiree health coverage.

VIRGINIA – Established a second tier for new hires, with a new 5 percent contribution and raised full retirement age-plus-service formula from rule of 80 to rule of 90.

UTAH – New hires will be given the option of a hybrid defined-benefit, defined-contribution plan.



Millions of workers took to the streets and walked off their jobs to protest modest pension cuts in France.

SHORT REPORTS

Springfield Head Start employees choose AFSCME

LOOKING FOR A VOICE AT WORK, basic fairness and the right to be treated with respect, employees of the Urban League Head Start program in Springfield have voted for AFSCME representation.

"It wasn't about the money," said Cristol Tiller, a teacher in the program and a union supporter. "We want to have a say on things that directly affect us, our students and their families."

Head Start employees provide a range of crucial services to low-income children, their families and the communities where they live, including early learning classes, nutritious meals, and social services. In recent years Head Start workers from several cities and towns in Illinois and many more across the country have chosen AFSCME to improve their working lives.

Employees chose AFSCME representation at

the Springfield Head Start despite being bombarded by anti-union memos, one-on-one meetings with supervisors and required group meetings where employees were pressured to vote against forming a union.

The Urban League had originally said it would let the employees make the decision on their own, but then the agency hired an outside law firm and waged an all-out anti-union campaign. Several union supporters were fired. The union has filed unfair labor practice charges, asserting that the firings were illegal.

"We were very disappointed to see a nonprofit agency utilizing its limited resources trying to intimidate its employees," said AFSCME organizer, Rodney Douglas. "We hope that management's attitude will change now that employees have so clearly made their voices heard. The next step is negotiating a contract that gives them the ability to provide quality services in a supportive environment." "The work we do is valu-

able to our community," Tiller said. "We want management to respect our voice."

Savings doubtful from Chicago furloughs

THOUGH AFSCME MEMBERS took some heat for not knuckling under to Mayor Richard Daley's ill-conceived plan to save the city money with furlough days, the city's inspector general has found that at least some departments where the heavy-handed furloughs were implemented ended up spending more on overtime than they saved.

An audit found that the Department of Aviation spent \$11.4 million on overtime during the year ending June 30, 2008. The auditor said the same money could have paid for 72 full-time positions, excluding truck drivers, while only 46 full-time employees working regular hours would have been necessary to cover the additional work. (Source: AP)

And "Soaring overtime pay to dozens of high-level Chicago Fire Department employees wiped out the savings Mayor Richard Daley sought when he made them take unpaid days off," according to the Chicago Tribune's website, reporting on an inspector general's audit of that department.

The audit found "a direct correlation between the 2009 spike in payment of overtime and the imposition of increased furlough days."

Daley ordered employees who don't fall under union contracts to take six unpaid days off in 2008. In the following year, they had to take up to nine unpaid days and weren't paid for another six holidays.

But the city lost money on the furlough program, the Tribune report said, "because the overtime payments exceeded the savings."

Illinois to get federal aid on retiree health insurance

"ILLINOIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED into a federal program that could reduce state government's health-care expenses for retired state workers by between \$165 million and \$211 million in the current fiscal year," the State Journal-Register reported in late October.

The money would come from the federal Affordable



Downstate lockout gains national attention

AT THE ONLY PLANT IN THE UNITED States that converts uranium into the material used in nuclear power plants, 42 workers have died of cancer over the years, and another 27 have been diagnosed with cancer but are still surviving.

Yet Honeywell, the huge corporation that owns the plant in far Downstate Metropolis, wants to reduce pensions for newly hired workers and health benefits for retirees.

The 220 workers, members of United Steelworkers Local 7-669, refused to go along. The company locked them out on June 28, and they are still on the picket line.

Council 31 has contributed \$10,000 from its Solidarity Fund, and the union that represents Council 31 staff has kicked in another \$5,000 to aid the workers in their struggle.

Unsurprisingly, "Many workers believe that the plant contributed to their fellow employees' illnesses, which is a central reason the union is refusing to accept the plant operator's (offer)," reported the New York Times, in a story headlined: "In Superman's Hometown, a Labor Dispute Over Health."

"This summer everyone is concerned about uranium, not kryptonite," the article said.

The Times quoted one local resident's wry remarks about the strike:

"They're trying to bring in old recruits who have been retired and train them to run the plant," said Jerry Baird, whose restaurant, Diamond Lil's, has been hauling barbecue, lemonade and ice to the picket line. "If they remember everything, it'll probably run. If they don't, they'll probably kill us all."



Stateville local mourns tragic loss

TRACY COOPER, A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER AT STATEVILLE CORRECTIONAL Center, was injured in the line of duty, escorting inmates to court.

A co-worker had asked for his assistance in taking restraints off an inmate. As the co-worker released the inmate, he took off running. A struggle ensued and Cooper and the inmate fell to the floor. Cooper injured his shoulder.

He was off work and doing rehabilitation, but the doctors decided he needed surgery. He didn't survive the surgery.

"Tracy was one of the funniest people you'd ever meet," said Rosa Espinoza, also a CO at Stateville. "There wasn't a person who knew him who wasn't touched by him. People remembered him."

Espinoza said she sometime had occasion to work with Cooper, and saw him frequently. "He always brought a smile to your face - at work, during roll call. And he always had a hug for you. He was good at hugging people."

Cooper is survived by a wife and four children.

"He was one of a kind," Espinoza said. "He's missed dearly."



Daley legacy: Diminished services, gaping holes in city budget

Mayor Richard Daley won't be mayor for much longer, but he leaves behind a Chicago that glitters and swings for tourists and the well off, while in the neighborhoods decay spreads, infrastructure erodes and services spiral downward.

MAJOR SOURCES OF REVENUE, LIKE THE SKYWAY AND THE CITY'S PARKING METERS ARE BRINGING in profits for private companies, while citizens pay more.

Public transportation has been cut back. The gap between the best schools and the worst continues to plague the city's children. Potholes take longer to fix.

Public health services are harder to come by. The city operates 12 mental health clinics. Just three years ago, they served nearly 12,000 individuals with mental illness, with therapy and medication. Staffing cuts have forced that number down by nearly 5,000 individuals, many of who are now in the streets.

Daley failed to ensure that the city's pension systems would be adequately funded and then ignored his own commission's recommendations on how to catch up.

Deep cuts eliminated one-fourth of the staff, and the Department of Public Health attempted to close four centers. Community residents, mental health consumers, advocates, AFSCME members and concerned aldermen stopped the closures, but the staffing was never restored. The mayor's final budget proposal will trigger anew the battle to save and rebuild those services.

"The city centers cannot continue to fulfill their crucial mission without further support," Council 31 Associate Director Claudia Roberson said.

Despite the many problems, Daley is proposing a swan-song budget that puts off any real solutions for the next mayor, reduces some revenue streams and further spends down reserves.

The mayor will leave office with only a pittance remaining



in the reserve funds built from revenues taken in by privatizing the Skyway toll bridge and parking meters.

For AFSCME members the budget has little good news. Twenty AFSCME members remain laid off in the Police Department, despite the fact that sworn officers, who are desperately needed in the streets, are doing desk work.

The city has informed the union that it intends to lay off 17 information technology employees and contract out the work, claiming that this move would save \$600,000. But two inspector generals have noted questionable practices when the city outsources this kind of work.

"We have looked closely at these contracts and found that they will not yield cost savings," Roberson said. "Aldermen should resist the idea that layoffs lead to cost saving, when clearly it costs more."

The budget cuts more than 200 positions city wide in departments of Revenue, Public Health, Law and Transportation. The City Clerk's office, Procurement Services, Water Management, Animal Control and Cultural Affairs and Special Events also are slated for cuts, though many of those positions are already vacant.

"We are digging to find out if there are any layoffs in these numbers," Roberson said. "But right now we can't get good answers. Our members are not going to miss the Daley administration."

Protect your pension!



John Piechocinski



Marvin R. Shoop Jr.

AFSCME Council 31 urges you to vote for John Piechocinski and Marvin Shoop for IMRF Trustee.

Marvin and John are proven leaders who will vigorously oppose any effort by the Illinois General Assembly to lower your retirement benefits or merge the well-funded IMRF into the underfunded state pension systems.

Mail in your IMRF trustee ballot TODAY!

Don't wait!

Ballots must arrive at the IMRF by Dec. 3

If you didn't get a ballot, call 1-800-275-4673



RETIREE NOTES

A resource for family caregivers

FAMILY CAREGIVERS FORM THE foundation of long-term care in the United States.

The value of services provided for “free” by family members who take care of older adults is estimated at \$375 billion a year, almost twice the \$158 billion actually spent by Medicaid and other sources on homecare and nursing home services.

The resources available to help caregivers varies widely, depending on the condition of the relative.

“It’s never easy to see a parent or loved one debilitated, but having assistance from an organization or person who can coordinate the care that is needed is incredibly valuable,” said Ken Curry, member of Marion Sub-chapter 93.

Curry and his wife provided care for both his mother, who suffered from end stage Alzheimer’s, and his father-in-law, who suffered from liver failure. In their case, both were assisted by a hospice, which offers assistance to those who have been given six months or less to live.

Hospice arranged home-care aids for Curry’s mother and instructed him on medications and how to use the required machines. They set-up sitters and arranged visits to adult day care, where his mother had her hair done and proper showers were provided.

The Currys joined the 29 percent of the U.S. population who provide at least some care for a chronically ill, disabled or aged family member or friend. During any given year this group of more than 65 million people spend an



Marilyn Smith, right, Florence and Dale Blimling.



Christine Turner, left, and Doris Byrd.

average of 20 hours per week on such care.

Experienced guides available

FINDING THE SERVICES AND navigating through paper work and the financial obligations of providing care can be overwhelming.

While caregivers often reach out to family and friends, professional help might save them time, money and heartache, even if it involves an initial cost.

“Caregivers often have to take off from work due to issues with those they are caring for, which can lead to additional stress in the work place,” said June Ninnemann, president of Midwest chapter of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers. “If they have children, the lives of their children are directly impacted, so we put together a plan that addresses the needs of the whole family.”

These managers are trained and experienced in, among other things, nursing, gerontology, social work and psychology, with a specialized focus on issues related to aging and elder care. They

Chapter 31 retirees played a major role in putting teeth into AFSCME endorsements. They made phone calls, knocked on doors, stuffed envelopes and did all the things it takes to win elections on the ground. Pictured here are a few of them at work.



Ezell Bemmon

are guides for families of people with chronic needs, including helping those suffering from Alzheimer’s Disease or Parkinson’s or exhibiting symptoms of dementia.

A geriatric care manager can:

- Conduct care-planning assessments to identify problems and to provide solutions;
- Screen, arrange and monitor in-home help or other services, including assistance in hiring a qualified caregiver for home care;
- Provide short- or long-term eldercare assistance for those engaged in local or long-distance care giving;
- Review financial, legal, or medical issues and offer referrals to geriatric specialists;
- Act as a liaison to families at a distance, overseeing care and quickly alerting families to problems – especially important when families are engaged in long-distance care giving for a loved one; and
- Assist with moving an older

person to or from a retirement complex, assisted-care or nursing home.

Costs can be recovered

“THE GOAL OF THE GERIATRIC care manager is to maximize independence of your loved one and enhance quality of life, including the welfare of whole family,” Ninnemann said.

One of the first questions asked about the managers is how much they charge and what assistance is available to help pay those costs. Most managers are paid out of the caregiver’s own pocket, but some long-term care insurance policies do cover the service, and there is limited assistance through the Veterans Administration for those servicemen and women and their spouses who served during a time of war.

If you consult a care manager, ask for the cost in writing at the initial conference, so there will be no surprises. If you don’t understand, ask again. If you need clarification, say so.

Be sure to discuss and make sure you have all questions answered before proceeding with an agreement for services. You should expect a written agreement including fees before the commencement of services.

For more information please check out the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers website at

<http://caremanager.org/>

Retirees all for ‘Chicken in Every Pot’

ON SEPT. 20 CHICAGO’S AFSCME retirees joined their working union brothers and sisters at a rally to demand legislators support job creation measures. The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Painters Union District Council 14 co-sponsored the rally on the city’s Southeast Side with the theme “a chicken in every pot” to remind their local politicians that people need jobs in order to feed their families.

“We need to make sure there IS a chicken in every pot,” said Mary Jones, president of Chicago Sub-Chapter 60, when explaining why her members came out to support the event. “Our retirees are grandparents, parents, friends and community members who see first hand the devastation that the loss of jobs can bring. We want our legislators to challenge corporate America to put their record making profits into job creation instead of into their pockets.” To drive their point home, the event sponsors gave out more than 2,000 frozen chickens.

“Politicians need to understand that we can no longer allow our jobs to be outsourced,” Jones said. “Regular working men and women need good middle class jobs.”

AFSCME Sub-Chapter 79 President receives 2010 Jerry Prete Award

HAL GULLETT, LONGTIME Chapter 31 activist and executive board member, led the transition of the State Council of Senior Citizens to the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans and served as the new organization’s first president from 2001-2009.

In appreciation for his work, Gullett was presented

Continued on the facing page

Retirees—mail in your IMRF trustee ballot TODAY!



AFSCME Retirees: Chapter 31 urges you to vote for Sharon Thompson for IMRF Retiree Trustee.

Your vote is your voice to keep the IMRF strong and well-funded.

Sharon led the fight to make the elected retiree trustee a full voting member of the Board.

Don’t wait! Ballots must arrive at the IMRF by Dec. 3

If you didn’t get a ballot, call 1-800-275-4673



Friends of HEART show lots of heart

When employees of Resurrection Health Care finally win their eight-year battle to form a union, a tenacious bunch of AFSCME activists called the Friends of HEART will get more than a dollop of credit.

THE GROUP OF SEVERAL HUNDRED, COMPRISING ACTIVE MEMBERS AND A STRONG CONTINGENT of retirees, is but one contribution AFSCME members are making to the union organizing committee at the hospital chain. Friends of Heart has demonstrated a strong commitment to the workers' long battle against a management virulently opposed to their employees' aspirations for respect on the job, a voice in the quality of care, and reasonable compensation for their dedicated service.

The Friends pictured above recently turned out to support the Oak Park/Austin Health Alliance, a group that waged a campaign to protect

West Suburban and Westlake hospitals, which have been acquired by a for-profit hospital system.

In the initial offer to buy the two hospitals from RHC, Vanguard Health Systems made minimal commitment to keep the hospitals open. The community's campaign eventually helped extract a commitment from Vanguard to keep both hospitals open and continue current services for at least three years, as well as investing \$15 million to improve the hospitals.

"These employees are trying to make their lives better and as a result are subject to hostility from their employer," Friends of Heart member Loretta Jackson said. "From

the union's standpoint, I think we should do what we can to help. Just having them feel that someone is on their side is important. With the things we've done so far, we've been able to show we're not giving in and are there for the long haul."

The things they've done include participation at rallies, vigils, demonstrations, legislative hearings and many other events.

"The Friends form an indispensable and powerful link between our union and the hospital employees who are facing such massive obstacles in their desire to be a part of our union," said Council 31's Jo Patton, who co-ordinates FOH activities.



"Solidarity is what unions are all about, and the Friends are defining solidarity for RHC workers."

Jackson said she got the FOH bug when she attended the first of what was to be many rallies.

"It piqued my interest," she said. "They can't do all the things that need to be done themselves, because of the way the employer retaliates. So we do some of it for them."

She said the contribution of the retirees is impressive:

"The retirees put in a lot. They give 120 percent. Every time you look up, there they are. They are still trying to right wrongs and fight for the rights of others. They have a lot of energy and it's contagious. They give me a lot of energy."

If you want to become part of FOH, call Jo Patton at 312-641-6060, or email her: jjpatton@afscme31.org.

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the 2010 Jerry Prete award at the Alliance's Senior Power Lunch.

The Illinois Alliance is an affiliate of the Alliance for Retired Americans, a nationwide nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of retirees who are committed to activism and want to influence the policies of government that affect all older Americans.

"Hal is not only a smart and thoughtful leader, but he knows what it takes to protect retirees' rights and win concrete victories," Alliance Vice President Homer Spaulding said in presenting the award on Oct. 12 in Des Plaines. "As president, Hal recruited new members, led our campaigns and built the presence of the Illinois Alliance across the state."

U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, the first recipient of the award, who also attended the lunch, praised Gullett's years of service to the Illinois Alliance and his work to advocate on behalf of Illinois' seniors.

"Jerry Prete was an outstanding president of the Illinois Alliance's predecessor, the Illinois State Council of Senior Citizens," Gullett said. "Prete built a powerful statewide coalition of community and union retirees, which later became the foundation of the Illinois Alliance."



Pearl Harbor vet recalls the fateful day

IN THE SPIRIT OF BOTH VETERAN'S Day and the anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Centralia Sub-Chapter 85 will listen to one of its own members, who will address them at the November meeting.

"Charles Koehler, a member of AFSCME retirees since January 1991, is a survivor of Pearl Harbor and World War II, and has some important messages to share," said Virginia Yates, president of Chapter 31 and the Centralia sub-chapter. "As many World War II survivors are passing away, it is more important than ever to listen to their stories and show them our gratitude."

Koehler was stationed on the Battleship Tennessee in Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941:

"It was about 8 o'clock in the morning and I was talking to two of the cooks," he recalled. "All of a sudden we heard what

we later realized was a burst of machine gun pellets that began showering us. By the next burst, all three of us dove into cabin. How two 250 to 300 pound men and I made it through the small door way is still unclear to me. The Bugle started blowing, and the announcement blared to man your battle stations, that this was not a drill. Then I went to the anti-aircraft guns. That didn't do much good, as they pretty much had us whipped before we even started.

"Two bombs hit the Tennessee, one forward and the other aft. She was tied to the dock on one side and the West Virginia on the other, and we were therefore protected from the torpedoes that began to sink the West Virginia. At that time, our military didn't think torpedoes could strike Pearl Harbor. Conventional wisdom was that a torpedo would have to travel so many yards in the water before it could arm itself and with the way Pearl Harbor was set up, it was not believed that there was enough distance for the torpedo to do this. We were wrong. The Japanese figured out how to get it armed quickly.

"Our planes were taken out easily because they were organized in a row and since I was about a hundred feet in the air, I could see it as it happened. The Japanese planes flew so close to the ground that I could see the gold in their teeth. Ultimately, the Tennessee, which

had 1,300 people aboard (with 1,000 being 17 and 18 years of age) only lost a couple of men, while the Arizona and the West Virginia, which surrounded us, lost many more.

"The Arizona was right astern of us. Through the smoke of the fires I could see guys running around trying to extinguish the flames. It became so hot, that it melted the weld in the stern of the Tennessee. We tried, after it was over, to get the guys out of the water who were alive. It was a horrific experience. After it was over, so many guys wanted to go into their church. Many were carried in alive but came out dead."

Koehler believes that the legacy of Pearl Harbor, the defense of what is good and decent, is not always remembered.

"Those men and women who served then and now, often do so to protect a way of life, a life in which we took care of one another and did not focus so much on ourselves. Everywhere we look now we see greed, and so many Americans forget those less fortunate. Greed is going to kill us if we don't do anything about it."



Tracy Bielecki, Carol Martin, Darlene Queen, John Yaou, Ellen Larrimore and Craig Althage served on the Local 1989 bargaining committee. Karmen Ortloff, who led the committee, took the photos.



A local union that once had a hard time getting management to take it seriously has become an effective voice for Northeastern Illinois University employees, bringing home a contract with fair wage increases and important gains in employees' rights.

BUILDING THE UNION PAYS OFF AT CONTRACT TIME



The story of how this happened could be used as a template for other local unions as they go into a new round of bargaining in tough times.

For NEIU workers, it means:

- Nearly 10 percent in wage increases over the term of a three-year contract;
- An accelerated schedule for earning vacation time;
- A freeze in the employee parking fees for the life of the contract;
- A 14-cents-an-hour salary addition for those required to wear uniforms on the job;
- Expanded rights to fill vacancies;
- Improved protection if layoffs are implemented;
- A voice for employees on workload issues;
- A newly created sick leave bank to protect employees who suffer a catastrophic illness or injury;
- Improved language on family responsibility leave – the first university to match the provisions in the state master contract;
- A new paid parental leave provision for up to 10 days; and
- beginning steps in an Upward Mobility Program to improve career advancement opportunities.

Hard work and energy win new respect

"We felt the administration was really willing to work with us on this," Local 1989 President Ellen Larrimore said. "They were cooperative and respectful and came to the table willing to negotiate."

But this new respect wasn't a gift. It was earned by a local that adopted the AFSCME plan for the 21st Century and applied it with hard work and energy.

The local's Council 31 staff representative Karmen Ortloff told them that a good contract isn't won at the bargaining table, it's won in the workplace, Larrimore said. "So we spent months working on our MATs, or member action teams are made up of union members who agree to be part of the local's communications network.

Each MAT leader is responsible for keeping seven to 14 members informed about the union. "There's a lot of personal contact," Larrimore said. "Most of the time team leaders communicate face-to-face with their group."

MAT leaders also distribute the local's newsletter to keep members in the loop. And they passed out solidarity stickers for members to wear on days when there were negotiating sessions, as well as bargaining updates after the sessions.

"The newsletter is the best tool for visibility," Larrimore said.

But in building the union, the local didn't just focus on negotiations. They got involved in the battle for a responsible state budget, setting up tables in the cafeteria to get information out and gather signatures on a petition that went to legislators.

They also talked to unrepresented workers at the university, and some 25 of them are now part of the union and covered by the AFSCME contract.

And they talked to non-members who were already in the "bargaining unit" – represented by AFSCME and covered by the contract. Less than a year ago only 40 percent of the bargaining unit were members, paying full dues. The rest were paying "fair share," only enough to cover bargaining and contract administration costs. Now nearly 75 percent are full members.

"Our MAT leaders talked to them and signed them up," Larrimore said. "The same manager who at one time said the union was a joke told us the university noticed how many people were signing up. It made a difference at the table."

As for the members, she said, many were typical of Thelma Blair. "She told us that we had really listened to people's concerns and incorporated those into the contract."

Ortloff led the negotiating team with Larrimore, Darlene Queen, Craig Althage, Carol Martin, Tracy Bielecki and John Yaou.

