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

CAN PUBLIC PENSIONS BE SAVED?



See pages 8-9

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Tax breaks for the rich; service cuts for the rest

Millions in tax breaks yield deep state budget cuts



BY
HENRY BAYER

IT'S TIME TO INSIST THAT OUR STATE LEGISLATORS STAND UP FOR GOOD JOBS AND FOR VITAL SERVICES.

Gov. Pat Quinn's recently unveiled fiscal year 2013 budget slashes vital public services and wreaks havoc on communities and families in every corner of the state.

THE GOVERNOR'S RATIONALE FOR CLOSING 14 STATE FACILITIES AND ELIMINATING MORE THAN 2,000 JOBS is that the state's broke, we just don't have the money.

Unfortunately too many people have short memories. Only three months ago the General Assembly convened in special session to pass over \$300 million in tax giveaways – the bulk of which will go to big corporations and the super rich.

The Chicago Mercantile Exchange alone got a \$100 million handout. That just happens to equal what the governor says the state would save in the coming fiscal year if the General Assembly approves his plan to close two state homes for the developmentally disabled, two psychiatric hospitals, two juvenile correction centers and two prisons.

The governor apparently believes that it's more important to fill the tin cup when CME's CEO shakes it than to care for vulnerable individuals and to ensure public safety.

Quinn's maneuver echoes that of Wisconsin's Gov. Scott Walker, who slashed public employee benefits, cutting the corporate taxes that could have more than covered the cost.

Playing reverse Robin Hood is not a role confined to governors. Chicago's Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced plans to reduce neighborhood library services and shutter community health clinics after doling out a tax break to businesses.

Chicago may be the City of Big Shoulders but its corporate chieftains regarded the cost of the 2-cents-per-hour payroll tax too heavy a burden to bear. And Mayor 1 Percent was all too will-

ing to lift the weight off their shoulders and put it on the backs of the school children and job seekers who use library services and the physically and mentally ill who rely on city clinics for vital care.

At the national level we've seen similar retrenchment, most recently when the length of time for which unemployed workers are eligible for benefits was reduced at the insistence of Congressional Republicans who refused to support an increased tax on millionaires.

Too often politicians are able to hide behind the truth. Saying they don't have any money is only half the story. The unspoken half is – why they don't.

There's more than a touch of hypocrisy when politicians cry "poor" and slash their budgets, after having taken care of their rich friends.

The reality is that there would be no need for Quinn's huge cuts if the state hadn't been playing Santa Claus to the business moguls.

These business tax breaks are not new. But they're accelerating at the worst possible moment, when revenues are low and demand for services is high.

Nor do they produce jobs as advertised. Twenty years ago Illinois manufacturers insisted on a change in the tax law which generated millions for themselves, and which they promised would produce 250,000 manufacturing jobs in the state. Instead they pocketed the money while the state continued to bleed manufacturing jobs.

It didn't help the economy or make Illinois a better place to live. It may have made things bet-

ter for the bigwigs, but not for anyone seeking a better education, needed health care or a safer community.

While a candidate for re-election Gov. Quinn campaigned as a progressive against an ultra-conservative Republican candidate whose views he diametrically opposed.

Bill Brady, the governor's opponent, said he "chuckled," upon hearing the outlines of the governor's new budget, pointing out that was essentially the kind of cuts Brady himself had advocated during the campaign.

"This is the same program he heavily criticized," Brady said.

The governor's embrace of Brady's approach underscores the uphill fight we face when two elected officials from opposite ends of the political spectrum think it's a good idea to decimate vital state services.

As we engage in the battle to save jobs and the vital services that state employees provide, we cannot be deterred by the argument that there is no money and that these cuts are necessary.

We know differently. Not only are the tax breaks that Quinn applauded unfair, there's also Illinois' grossly unfair tax structure, which regularly provides favorable treatment to big business and the wealthy.

Members of the General Assembly who, after all, approved those business giveaways need to understand that Quinn's proposed cuts are a consequence of their actions, and that they have the power to reverse them.

The December business tax breaks alone would be enough to keep all 14 state facilities open, as well as cover negotiated pay raises that Quinn has been withholding from state employees.

It's time to insist that our state legislators stand up for good jobs and for vital services. They've done enough – actually way more than enough – to look out for big business.

How about looking out for working people for a change?

On the Move

AFSCME Illinois On the Move is published 8 times annually by Illinois Public Employees Council 31 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO. Send correspondence to: lcohen@afscme31.org or: AFSCME, On the Move, 205 N. Michigan Ave., 21st Floor, Chicago, IL 60601

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Quinn budget plan would wreak havoc

Calling his state budget proposal a “rendezvous with reality,” Gov. Pat Quinn set out a blueprint for spending that will make hardship a reality for a large swath of Illinoisans.

FOR THOSE WHO DEPEND ON THE VITAL STATE SERVICES HE PLANS TO CUT, FOR THOUSANDS of workers in and out of state government, and for many of the communities that host state facilities slated for closure, the budget plan would be a disaster.

“Budget cuts have gone too far already, harming priorities like public safety and care for the most vulnerable,” Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said. “Further devastating cuts to public services and thousands of lost jobs are the worst possible approach to what ails our state.”

He noted that Illinois has the nation’s 13th-largest state economy but ranks 42nd in state spending. It has the smallest state workforce per capita.

“The problem is an unfair tax system,” he said, “one filled with giveaways - to rich people, who pay a lower effective tax rate while the middle class gets squeezed, and to corporations, two-thirds of which pay no corporate income tax at all.”

Facility closures, layoffs, service cuts

ALTOGETHER THE BUDGET PROPOSAL targets more than 2,000 state employees for layoffs.

Jacksonville Developmental Center. Tamms Correctional Center. Tinley Park Mental Health Center. Dwight CC. Murray DC. Singer MHC. Illinois Youth Center Joliet. IYC Murphysboro. Adult Transition Centers in Decatur, Peoria, Chicago, Aurora and Carbondale. All of these facilities are on the governor’s chopping block.

Quinn is also calling for consolidations leading to office closures in Department of Human Services Community Operations, the Department of Children and Family Services and State Police forensic and telecommunica-

tions.

Nearly every agency’s operations is cut by more than 9 percent across the board.

Yet the facility closures, despite the huge amount of pain they will inflict, will narrow only a tiny portion, just over 1 percent, of the state’s gigantic deficit, now climbing towards \$10 billion. To go after the big money, Quinn has called for “reforming” Medicaid and state pension systems as his top priorities.

Non-profit agencies could take another hit

THE MEDICAID CUTS, THOUGH not yet spelled out, will undoubtedly include cuts to reimbursement rates for private-sector developmental disability service providers, who have not had a cost-of-doing-business increase in five years. The ongoing lack of state funds makes it ever more difficult for frontline caregivers at those agencies to get the pay raises they need and deserve.

At the same time these non-profit agencies will be asked to take on more difficult challenges to care for severely disabled individuals who are to be pushed out of state centers – just one of the contradictions that has Springfield policy experts wondering if the administration really understands what it is doing.

For another example, the budget plan calls for other state-center residents to be moved back home and get help from the Department of Rehabilitation Services. But, in a classic case of trying to have it two ways, the plan also calls for eliminating DORS services to mentally ill and developmentally disabled individuals.

Pensions: ‘everything ... on the table’

QUINN’S STATEMENT REGARDING the pension funding crisis did not simply echo the big business mantra of ‘cut benefits’, but neither did it make clear what he believes should be done.

“We need to do pension reform in a way that’s meaningful, constitutional and fair to the employees who have faithfully contributed to the system,” he said in his speech. “We can do this in a way that does pass constitutional muster. But everything has to

be on the table. Historical funding practices, employer contributions, employee contributions, the retirement age and the cost of living adjustment.”

Quinn has put a task force to work on putting a “reform” package together. The We Are One Illinois labor coalition, of which AFSCME is a member, has met with the task force to make clear that any solution to the pension crisis must stabilize the system and assure that it will remain sound for future retirees — and that reforms cannot be made on the backs of public employees.

Human Services cuts far reaching

THE PROPOSAL TARGETS 879 DHS positions to be eliminated, including 490 from Developmental Disability operations and 290 from Mental Health.

The budget assumes 350 residents will be moved out of state-operated developmental centers by the end of the fiscal year. The money saved by closing the state facilities theoretically goes to provide services for those individuals, but the budget proposal doesn’t spell out where the money will go.

Of the \$26.9 million projected savings from closing the two mental health centers, only \$14.6 million is proposed for investment in private-sector services in those regions.

No layoffs are anticipated as a result of the planned 24 office closures, though the loss of 100 funded positions in the Family and Community Services Division may make it even harder to fill vacancies at the remaining DHS field offices.

Corrections – overcrowding would be intensified

THE PLANNED CLOSURES, LAYOFFS and program cuts in DOC will make a bad situation in that department a whole lot worse. In addition to the two prisons and six adult transition center closures, the



Local unions at facilities threatened with closure are mobilizing to fight back. This meeting in Centralia drew 300 supporters of Murray DC.

Department of Corrections budget proposal cuts the number of parole officers in half – lopping off 200 positions. The ATC closures would eliminate 137

positions, another 343 from closing Dwight CC, and 292 from the Tamms closure.

Substance abuse and vocational programs would be eliminated or reduced in every facility. Roll call would be eliminated.

In another contradiction, DOC would attempt to put ATC inmates on electronic detention, putting more than 900 offenders out in the streets statewide, with 200 fewer parole agents to oversee them.

The female offenders ousted by the Dwight closure would end up at Logan CC along with Lincoln CC females, with some of the males at Logan being shifted to Lincoln and others moved to facilities around the state.

Most Tamms maximum-security inmates would be sent to Pontiac CC, with some Pontiac inmates being moved elsewhere. The 200 minimum-security inmates at Tamms would be moved into other facilities or into community programs.

The capital costs of these moves were not reflected in the budget proposal, nor were there provisions for already negotiated raises or step increases.

Program cuts would hurt DJJ mission

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE Justice would lose 86 positions from the Murphysboro closure and 227 from Joliet.

The budget plan includes adding 54 positions for after-care, i.e. youth-only parole agents. Seventy-nine positions would be added at other DJJ facilities that would need more staff because they are getting youths from the closed facilities. There has been no accounting for any necessary capital costs related to the movement of these youths.

There are youths at Joliet awaiting adult sentencing for rape, murder and other serious crimes who will end up in

facilities not used to handling them, putting staff and other youth at risk.

The total number of educators would be further cut by the closures, limiting access to GED and other educational programs for youth.

Roll call would be eliminated.

Recreation, educational sites cut

THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL Resources budget would be cut by 13.5 percent, including the loss of 34 positions.

The Historic Preservation Agency budget would go down 3.5 percent, with no positions lost, but the sites will be open fewer hours, with some possibly closing two days per week in non-peak seasons.

Some staff to be added in DCFS

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND Family Services is understaffed with respect to court-ordered caseload requirements. The budget proposal would have a small reduction in staff positions, but the agency would fill vacant positions, adding to the actual number of staff on the job, helping to bring it into compliance.

‘It’s up to us’ to fight the cuts

“ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY, PUBLIC employees are under attack by elites with big bucks who want to weaken the public sector and destroy public sector unions,” Council 31 Deputy Director Roberta Lynch said.

In Illinois the attack is being led by the Civic Federation and the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club, bands of rich corporate elites who are out to slash government spending and undermine public employee unions.

“As Quinn made clear in his budget message, they’re the ones issuing his marching orders — to hand out tax breaks to big business and to eliminate solid middle-class jobs,” she said. “It’s up to us to build the public pressure that will convince the General Assembly to declare Quinn’s budget dead on arrival, and to get to work on shaping a budget that preserves vital services and good jobs — a budget that serves the interests of all Illinoisans, not just the privileged few.”

Tensions rising in Illinois correctional facilities

With a growing number of inmates, a shrinking number of security officers to oversee them and a dwindling lineup of programs to occupy their time or provide rehabilitation opportunities, the environment in state prisons is becoming increasingly volatile.

UNDOUBTEDLY THE BIGGEST FACTOR IS THE STATE'S ONGOING FISCAL CRISIS. BUT A BAD SITUATION IS MADE WORSE AS THE ADMINISTRATION OF Gov. Pat Quinn avoids crucial policy decisions in a desperate search for political advantage.

Meanwhile inept operational decisions by Department of Corrections management allow longstanding problems to fester.

Contributing to the escalating volatility:

- The suspension of DOC's good-time credit program and Quinn's unwillingness to move toward an alternative policy that provides inmates with any incentive for good behavior;
- A lack of programs and educational opportunities that could foster inmate rehabilitation;
- Operational decisions that undermine security; and
- A lack of needed repairs and maintenance, leading to poor and deteriorating physical conditions in the prisons.

Overcrowding problems dangerously aggravated without 'good time'

THE FALLOUT CONTINUES FROM the political morass the

Quinn administration created in 2010 by abusing the Meritorious Good Time program with the MGT-Push debacle.

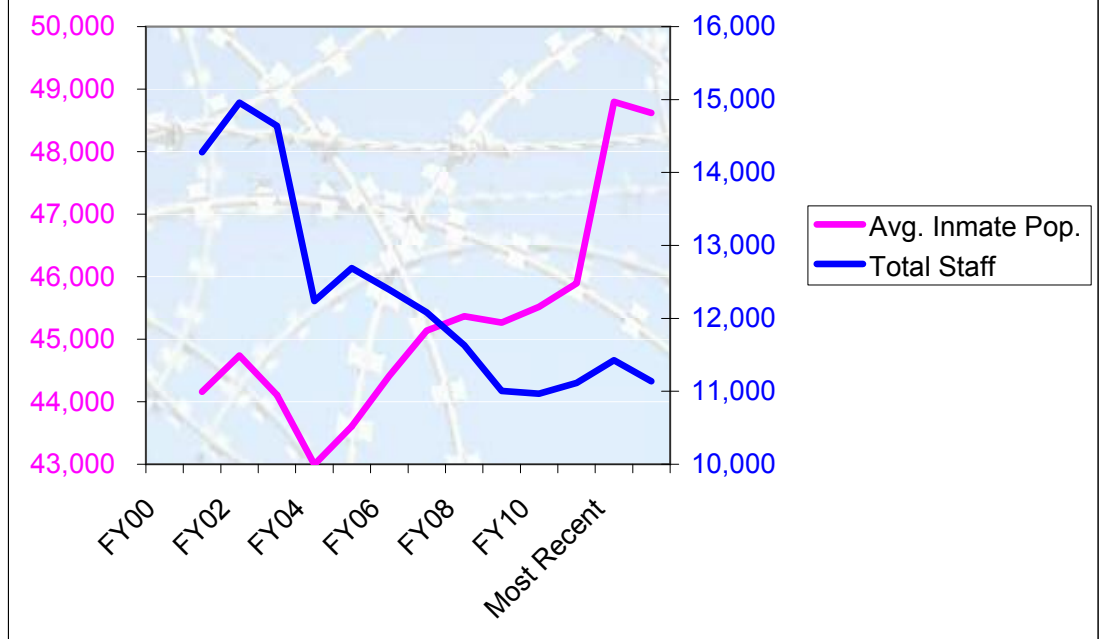
Under pressure from the administration to save money and alleviate short-staffing, DOC began MGT-Push, turning hundreds of inmates loose with virtually no attention paid to whether or not they were ready for life on the streets.

When the press exposed the Push program and reported that a number of the newly freed convicts had committed new crimes, the governor suspended not only MGT-Push but the entire "good-time" program.

The consequences have been disastrous. The prison population has ballooned. Having less to lose, with no good time incentive and jammed on top of one another, inmates are fighting more. And assaults on staff are increasing.

"Tensions are definitely up," said Rob Fanti, president of Local 472 at Sheridan Correctional Center. "Good time gives them something to shoot for. Without it they have nothing to strive for. With it we'd also have less crowding."

Staffing has dropped in state prisons while the inmate population has risen sharply



He said a majority of inmates at Sheridan would be eligible for the six-month good-time credit under the suspended program, but they aren't getting it.

He noted that inmates can still earn good time for attending school, but the opportunity to do so has become a scarce commodity.

Sending inmates down a dead-end road

"I CAN'T REMEMBER WHEN Sheridan last posted a teacher position," Fanti said. "Maybe 10 years ago. We have three teachers for 1,600 inmates. They are coming in without a GED (the equivalent of a high school diploma) and leaving without one. We're a drug rehabilitation center, but even if we work on drug issues

with someone, what's a guy going to do when he gets out without a GED."

That's common at other DOC facilities, which typically have 10 classrooms but only two classes going on at any one time. Other rehabilitative programs are suffering the same fate.

"The more you need staff to deal with overcrowding, the less time you have for programs," said Council 31 regional director Ed Caumiant, who serves as the union's chief liaison with DOC.

Wasted time, wasted resources

"WHEN I STARTED THERE WERE 13 or 14 teachers," said A.J. Schmid, a teacher at Shawnee CC since 1998. "Now there are six. The waiting list to get into classes is longer. And they have gone from two, three-hour classes a day to three, two-hour classes, so they can report more inmates in a program."

But it takes nearly twice as long for an inmate to get a GED, she said.

She noted that the educational programs pay for themselves. Inmates can earn good time by improving their grades and gaining proficiencies. Shortening the time they serve saves the state enough money to pay for the teachers, she said.

For those who have reached the limit of their educational achievement, the prison used to have vocational programs, but those have also gone by the wayside.

Shawnee used to have HVAC training that prepared

inmates for real jobs when they left the system, but no longer. And a lab used for teaching computer technology sits empty, computers at the ready if only there were a teacher, Schmid said.

With fewer opportunities, more inmates spend days locked in their cells.

"No school means more downtime," Fanti said. "That leads to bad things."

'At the mercy of the inmates'

TOO MANY INMATES AND TOO few staff, makes the bad things that much harder to stop. And management decisions often compound the problems.

Failing to hire clerical staff leaves correctional officers sorting mail, for example, instead of shoring up security.

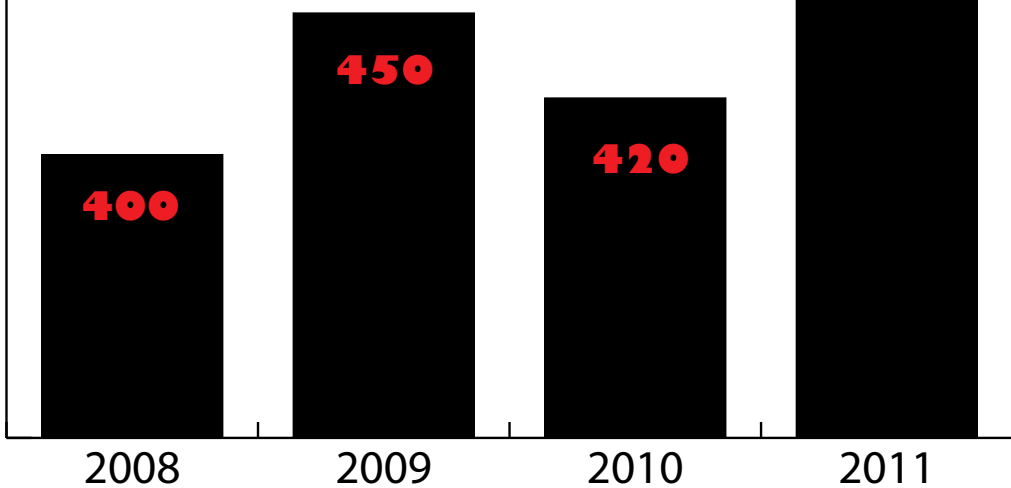
A recent push to close towers is a good example of cutting corners in a way that undermines security and could lead to tragic results.

Management at Robinson, Lincoln, Taylorville (where some towers have already been closed), and other facilities are contemplating such a move.

"We had a labor-management meeting about it and I gave them a list of 150 reasons why closing towers at Lincoln is a bad idea," said Dale Ridgway, president of Local 501. The list included all of the things each tower is responsible for monitoring.

That seems to have put a damper on the idea at Lin-

Assaults on DOC staff have escalated since the 'good-time' program was suspended in 2010 and the prisons filled with inmates



DOC systemwide totals for each fiscal year

STATE BARGAINING

Negotiating committee delivers 'Collection Notice' to governor

The 250 members of the state bargaining committee banged on the governor's office door, delivering a message on behalf of the 30,000 state employees whose contract entitles them to pay raises the governor has decided to withhold.

THE 3-FOOT BY 6-FOOT "COLLECTION NOTICE" THEY HAD IN HAND WAS SIGNED BY THE ENTIRE committee, whose chants rattled the Capitol, as television cameras rolled and flash attachments popped.

"We were at the Capitol because of the governor's arrogance and hypocrisy," said Kevin Hirsch, president of Local 1175 at Menard Correctional Center. "He's criticizing Indiana and then he doesn't honor our contract."

He was referring to Indiana's recent passage of a right-to-work-for-less law, which lowers wages and undermines union power (see page 10).

"They wouldn't come out and talk to the whole group," said Bruce Dubre, vice president of Local 805, which represents Springfield-area state workers. "But they heard us loud and clear. It was a very effective demonstration. I don't think they were expecting us."

The notice said, in part: "This is an attempt to collect a debt. On behalf of 30,000 Illinois state employees

who care for the most vulnerable, keep prisons safe and much more, we are seeking to uphold and enforce our legally binding collective bargaining agreement with the state of Illinois and you, Gov. Quinn."

'Our contract's not broken'

MANAGEMENT CONTINUES TO push for sweeping changes to language in the AFSCME master contract that would erase many of the gains made over the past three decades.

"I wasn't too impressed with the representatives from the state," said Hirsch, who is on the union committee for the first time. "They've got people in high places that don't know what's going on. But that's typical of what we see in Corrections. It epitomizes what's wrong with the entire state — a top-heavy bureaucracy that thinks they know best, even when they are clueless. We are the solution to most of the state's problems, but they haven't figured that out."

The state's lead negotiator described the bargaining as "concessionary," claiming that "the union contract is broken." But Council 31 Director Henry Bayer took strong exception.

"It's not the union contract that's broken," he said. "It's the Quinn Administration that's broken."

Bayer promised that concessions were a "road we aren't going to travel."

'Gutting our fundamental contract rights'

MANY OF THE MOST VITAL GAINS the union has made over the years — like promotion standards, layoff protections, restrictions on management's control and authority, fairer hours and scheduling, workplace safety measures, binding arbitration of grievances and much more — have all been achieved by bargaining on these "non-economic" issues, which are traditionally taken up in the first phase of negotiations.

"They are using the current budget crisis as a pretext for gutting our fundamental contract rights," Dubre said. "The employer thinks they can come in and make all



these outrageous demands and we'll roll over. We're sticking together and we're not budging."

"So far they aren't backing down," Local 2081 Vice President Joann Murry said. "They want to take away things we fought for for years so they can do whatever they want, whenever they want. At this rate, we're going to be here a long time."

Getting ready for a fight

"MAKING THE KIND OF PROGRESS we've achieved over the years has always required the active involvement of AFSCME members at the grassroots level," Bayer said. "We've had green days, sticker days, solidarity days and just plain in-your-face days. We've had

pickets, marches and rallies — from our local worksites all the way to the state Capitol."

Even though it's early in the negotiating process, he said, "From what we've seen across the table so far, there's one thing we can say for sure: As hard as we've had

to fight before, we're going to have to fight even harder this time."

The local leaders believe their members are up to the challenge.

"We're having green days every Wednesday during the negotiations," Murry said. "I'm seeing more people in green than ever. People are asking good questions. And they are telling me they're ready to go: 'Just tell us what to do.'"

In Springfield, "Our members are getting it," Dubre said. "They know we are under tremendous pressure from the budget and they know we are under attack. It's going to be an active spring."

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coln, he said.

One DOC official asked Ridgway, "Wouldn't you like to have two more officers on the yard to help out when you have big lines going to the yard?"

His reply: "I know that you will not leave the officers there to help on the yard. You will pull them and use them elsewhere. And then I am at the mercy of the inmates, because I will not have the towers to watch my back."

Officers in the towers have weapons. Those on the ground do not, so closing the towers removes that deterrent, Ridgway said. "There would be more fights, more assaults. These towers make a difference to the inmates."

Leaky roofs, crumbling sidewalks

THE FUNDING CRUNCH HAS LEFT many correctional centers

with poorly maintained buildings and grounds and a wide range of equipment in need of repair.

Roofs are leaking, floors are flooded, old asbestos is uncovered.

"We've got leaking ceilings everywhere," said Rick Ruthart, president of Local 817 at Dixon CC. "There's buckets all over the education building. The drywall gets soaked from roofs leaking and mold is growing everywhere. Sidewalks are crumbling and when lights go out on the grounds they don't get fixed right away and people stumble."

Officers have gone home sick from exposure to mold in closed up control rooms.

Control panels don't lock or unlock doors, putting officers at risk when they have to do it by hand.

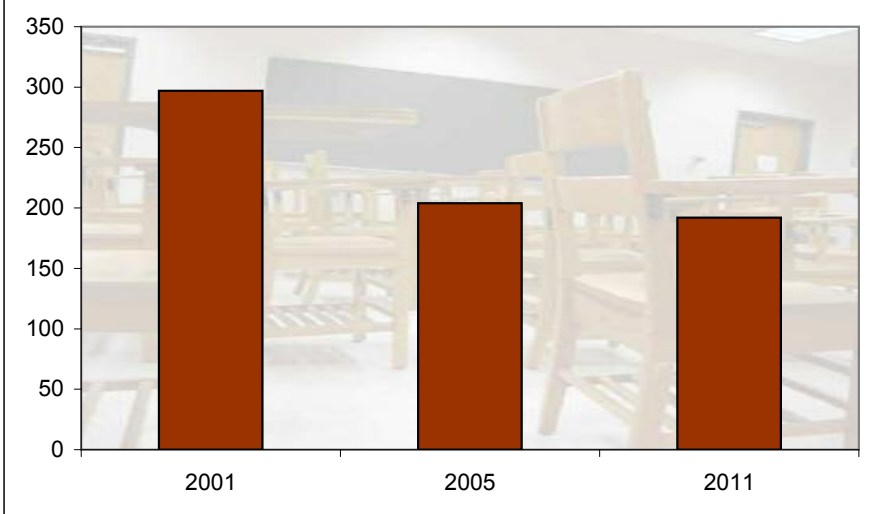
Kitchen equipment is broken so meal preparation takes longer.

Serious problems ahead

"IT'S LIKE A TICKING TIME bomb," Caumiant said. "Last year there were some 800 retirements, and that doesn't count people who left state service for other reasons. But only 720 cadets came through classes."

DOC compounds the problems by violating agreements they have signed. "In just one example of willful violations of the contract, they've wasted \$3.5 million sending people all over the state to do what in some cases are essentially frivolous or elective things. These have been tasks well outside any appropriate job classification. If

The number of educators is shrinking



they need to be done at all, they could and should be done by the highly trained personnel at each facility.

"This kind of inefficiency has a direct impact on safety and security when every dollar is scarce and every person precious."

And there's no end in

sight.

"Our Corrections staff fear that changes will only come after there's been a tragedy," Caumiant said. "We hope it doesn't take someone dying to get the message across that DOC needs to address these critical problems before it's too late."



Conference makes primary election recommendations

The relatively short list of endorsements for the 2012 primary election includes a group of six incumbent U.S. representatives with 100 percent voting records on issues of importance to AFSCME members.

DELEGATES TO ILLINOIS AFSCME'S JAN. 21 PEOPLE CONFERENCE BACKED CANDIDATES IN SEVERAL OTHER CONGRESSIONAL RACES, AS WELL AS IN KEY STATEWIDE JUDICIAL RACES. THE EVENING BEFORE, THE PEOPLE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, WITH A REPRESENTATIVE FROM EACH OF THE UNION'S 11 REGIONS, A RETIREE REPRESENTATIVE AND COUNCIL 31 DIRECTOR HENRY

Bayer in the chair, affirmed recommendations for state legislative offices from the regional bodies.

The decisions are more important than ever, Bayer said, given the all-out assault on unions across the country and the specific assaults AFSCME members in Illinois are facing.

"We have a huge fiscal



hole in state government," he said. "Every AFSCME member in this state is affected by that. The tax increase enacted in 2010 did not get us out of this

fiscal hole."

That ballooning deficit is priming the call for cutting the pensions of current public employees, despite what

seems to be a constitutional bar against such cuts (see page 8-9).

The attack on pensions is just one reason for AFSCME

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Local 2600 sets sights on building power

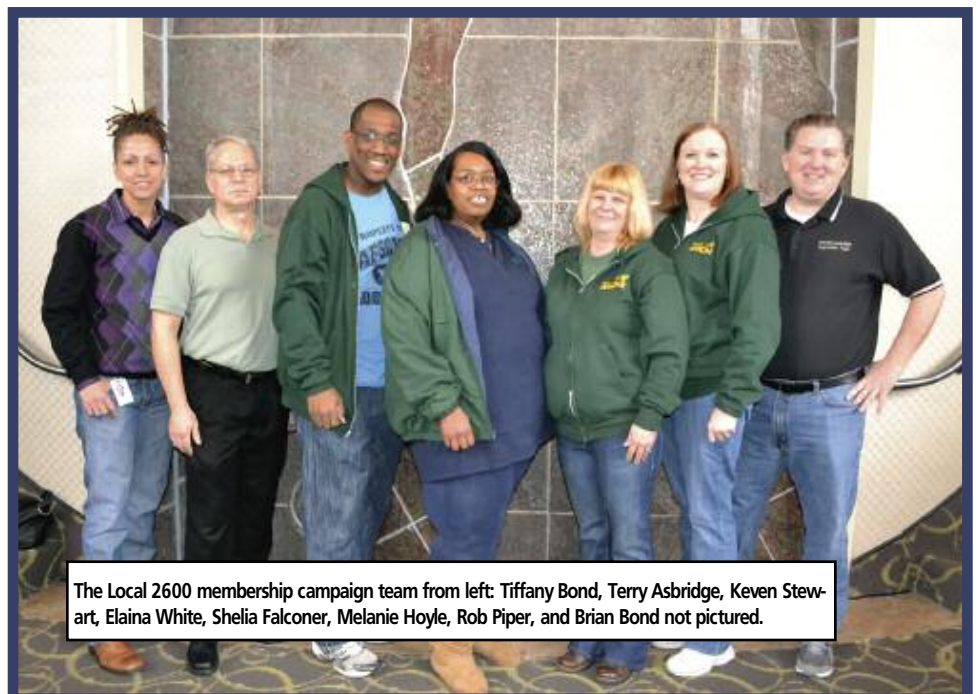
The difference between being a member of Local 2600 rather than paying the "fair share" fees charged to non-members is a mere \$1.75 a week. But the difference for AFSCME strength is incalculable.

"THE ONLY THING WE HAVE AS STATE WORKERS IS EACH OTHER," SAID TIFFANY BOND, ONE OF THE LOCAL TEAM WHO ARE WORKING TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL UNION-REPRESENTED EMPLOYEES ARE UNION MEMBERS.

"Together we can make a big impact," said Elaina White, another team member. "I want to be heard."

With a battle brewing between the state and the union over negotiations for a new master contract, "It's an

important time to do it," said Rob Piper, another team member. "We are facing an unprecedented time in this state. When people get together and join forces, they can make a difference."



The Local 2600 membership campaign team from left: Tiffany Bond, Terry Asbridge, Keven Stewart, Elaina White, Shelia Falconer, Melanie Hoyle, Rob Piper, and Brian Bond not pictured.

Local 2600 represents nearly 2,800 state employees, making it the biggest AFSCME local in Illinois.

Realizing that their strength would be bolstered by having more members, the

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PRIMARY 2012 PEOPLE Recommendations

The attack on pensions is just one reason for AFSCME members to get involved in the upcoming elections, even though they are deeply frustrated with the performance of some of the politicians.

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members to get involved in the upcoming elections, even though they are deeply frustrated with the performance of some of the politicians who got union backing in the past few years.

"Walking away from politics is exactly what the corporate elite wants us to do," Council 31 Deputy Director Roberta Lynch told the delegates. "Instead we have to keep pushing against their attempts to dismantle the middle class."

A democratic process

THOUGH MEDIA PUNDITS OFTEN assume that a few union leaders call the shots on union endorsements, the actual process involves rank-and-file union members from all across the state. It's democratic, thorough and non-partisan.

The process begins with local union presidents and PEOPLE chairs. By attending first their own regional and then a statewide meeting, they give each local union in the state a voice in deciding which candidates the union will support.

They review candidate questionnaires and the records of incumbents and

even conduct candidate interviews.

The regional committees decide on endorsements for county and other local government positions as well. They also make recommendations on General Assembly races in their regions. They elect a chair from their ranks who serves on the statewide PEOPLE Executive Committee.

That committee makes the final decision on state legislative races and makes recommendations on the U.S. Senate, U.S. House, statewide office holders and judicial elections. The statewide PEOPLE conference, composed of delegates from locals across the state, then makes the final decisions on those races.

"We endorse candidates because we want to provide union members with the information they need to be able to make the best choices," Council 31 political action director Jason Kay said. "When we pool our knowledge and make decisions as a group, we all do better. And if we vote together, we build our unity and we build strength for working families in our state."

teer member organizer" training and helping out on a drive there to sign up unrepresented workers at the University of Illinois.

They decided to use the same approach back in Springfield.

"I was skeptical that making house visits would work for us," Piper said. "But once we started going door-to-door, we discovered the fair-share people were very receptive to our message. People welcomed us with open arms."

White agreed.

"They are starting to see that we're for real and we're all a family," she said. "They see we are actually there to listen."

And listen they do.

"Some don't like the conditions in their building,"

Congressional Candidates, by District

Democrats

1st, Bobby Rush*
2nd, Jesse Jackson Jr.*
3rd, Dan Lipinski*
4th, Luis Gutierrez*
7th, Danny Davis*
9th, Jan Schakowsky*
10th, Ilya Sheyman
11th, Bill Foster
17th, Cheri Bustos

Judicial Candidates

Supreme Court, Fitzgerald Vacancy,
Mary Jane Theis, D

Appellate Court, First District, O'Brien Vacancy,
Rudolfo Garcia (D)

State Legislative Candidates, by District

Democrats

Senate

1st, Tony Munoz*
12th, Steve Landek*
29th, Julie Morrison
34th, Dan Lewandowski
36th, Mike Jacobs*
38th, Kevin Kunkel
46th, Dave Koehler*
57th, James Clayborne*
59th, Gary Forby*

House

5th, Ken Dunkin*
14th, Kelly Cassidy*

19th, Robert Martwick
21st, Rudy Lozano
22nd, Michael Madigan*
26th, Kenny Johnson
32nd, Andre Thapedi*
34th, Elgie Sims
35th, Tony Martin
38th, Al Riley*
39th, Toni Berrios*
67th, Chuck Jefferson*
68th, Carl Wasco
71st, Mike Smiddy
72nd, Pat Verschoore*
78th, Camille Lilly*

Republicans

Senate

50th, Sam McCann*

House

102nd, Adam Brown*

* Denotes Incumbents

County Government

Kane County

Circuit Clerk, Karin Herwick, R

County Board

District 1, Myrna Molina, D
District 2, Art Velasquez, D
District 3, Juan Reyna, D
District 4, Bonnie Kunkel, D
District 20, Cristina Castro, D

Lake County

County Board

District 2, Diane Hewitt, D
District 6, Pat Carey, D
District 9, Mary Ross

Cunningham, D

Macon County

State's Attorney, Steve Langhoff, D

Madison County

Circuit Clerk, Mark Von Nida, D

State's Attorney,

Tom Gibbons, D

Recorder, Amy Meyer, D

Auditor, Rick Faccin, D

Coroner, Steve Nonn, D

County Board

District 5, Dan Collman, D

District 8, John Robinson, D

District 21, Arthur Asadorian, D

Rock Island County

Auditor, April Palmer, D

Recorder, Tracy Nessler, D

State's Attorney,

John McGehee, D

County Board

District 8, Brian Vyncke, D

District 18, Mark Parr, D

District 21, Scott Terry and Bill McKinley, D

District 22, Milton DeShane and Lee Beardsley, D

District 24, Kathy Parrish, D

Winnebago County Board

Chairman, Scott Christiansen, R

District 3, Gary Jury, R

District 12, L.C. Wilson, D

District 15, Burt Gerl, D

Continued from page 6

local has embarked on an all-out campaign to sign up fair-share payers and to build the number of members who contribute to PEOPLE, the union's political-action fund.

They started by putting up information tables in the 40 or so sites where the local's members work. Folks can come by on their breaks or lunch times to learn more about union activities and sign up for full membership or to make regular PEOPLE contributions.

But they weren't reaching everyone.

"The work sites are not a good environment to sit down and really talk to people about the union," Piper said.

Then the eight activists spent a weekend in Champaign, going through "volun-

Bond said. "We let them know they can do something about it. The union will fight and stay on management. We don't give up. That's what makes us strong."

Piper said many of those on fair share have misinformation about the union: They think the union only supports Democrats, when the truth is that any candidate with a pro-working-family record gets support. But in Springfield, for example, retiring Republican Senator Larry Bomke has long enjoyed AFSCME support because he has stood with AFSCME members on everything from pensions to pay raises.

They think the union protects people who do



wrong, when its true role is to guarantee due process and protect the integrity of the contract.

They think decisions are made by top union leaders.

"We explain the democratic processes for contract proposals and endorsements," Piper said. "It makes a differ-

ence to them."

"I see the union as a check and balance in the workplace," he said. "When one side has carte blanche power, I lose. I don't want to be in a situation where if the boss doesn't like me, I have no chance of succeeding, no matter how much work I put in. That's why we need a union."

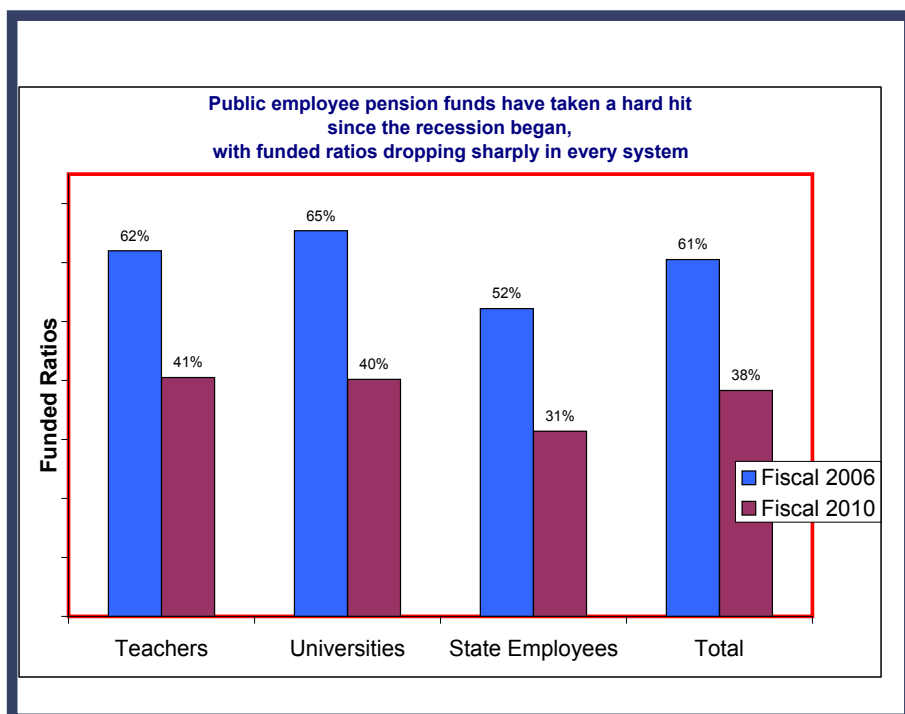
The campaign is working. In the past three months, the local has converted 128 co-workers from fair share to full membership.

"Going to people's homes is the key," Bond said. "That's where their real priorities are. It becomes an intimate experience that allows us to really talk to people, to let them know, 'You deserve better.'"



PENSIONS COULD MOVE TO FRONT PAGE AS LEGISLATIVE SESSION HEATS UP

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSIONS IN ILLINOIS, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, ARE IN TROUBLE. THERE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT THEY COULD GO BELLY UP IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE.



Public employee pension systems in Illinois, with one notable exception, are in trouble, with a real possibility that they could go belly up in the not-too-distant future.

“Nothing is more important to our members than preserving their pensions and providing for retirement security,” Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said in his remarks at the recent PEOPLE conference. “It’s an issue we can’t walk away from. We have to engage.”

Illinois has some of the worst-funded public pension plans in the country. State pension systems, covering state and university employees, SERS and SURS, and teachers, TRS, have more than \$85 billion in unfunded liabilities, not counting pension obligation bonds that add another \$17 billion to the state’s debt.

The city of Chicago pension funds have more than \$14 billion in unfunded liabilities and separate Cook County funds are also underfunded by more than \$5 billion.

Of the public pensions covering AFSCME members in this state, only the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund is in solid shape. That’s because state law requires local government employers, other than Chicago and Cook County, to put their full annual share into the fund, as certified by IMRF actuaries. The law also gives IMRF the ability to sequester these funds, if an employer fails to remit them.

“We need a similar funding requirement for the SERS, SURS, city of Chicago and Cook County pension systems,” Council 31 pension expert Hank Scheff said. “There must be guaranteed funding mechanisms for making sure the required funding goes into those systems.”

But that won’t come easily, he cautioned. “The conventional wisdom in Springfield today is that public employees are going to have to contribute to a solution.”

The alternatives are chilling

“Multimillionaires and their front groups, like the Civic Federation, did the math and they are coming after you,” Scheff said.

In a recent report, the Civic Federation recommends an immediate cut in the cost-of-living provision for retirees on state pensions.

They want to move current Illinois retirees and employees hired before January 1, 2011, to the second-tier formula for annual increases. That would set them at one-half of the increase in CPI, the widely used government inflation index, with a maximum of 3



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EE PENSION SYSTEMS IN ONE NOTABLE EXCEPTION, E, WITH A REAL AT THEY COULD GO BELLY TOO-DISTANT FUTURE.

percent. They would also remove compounding of those annual increases. The Federation is also calling for an increase in employee contributions.

And big business is also pushing a bill that would give state and university employees three choices. SB 512, which was passed out of a House committee but has not yet come to the floor for a vote, would give three options to current employees not already on tier two:

- Keep their current pension plan but pay much more each pay period; SERS regular participants' contributions would go to 9.29 percent, from 4 percent; SERS alternative plan would go to 16.67 percent, from 8.5 percent; SURS would go to 14.5 percent, from 8 percent;
- Make the same contribution they make now, but go into the reduced-benefit plan passed last year for new hires; or
- Join a risky 401(k)-style individual plan with some matching contributions from the state.

Worst-case scenario: bankruptcy

If a bill like this passes the General Assembly, and is signed by the governor, it will face an immediate legal challenge.

But court action is slow, uncertain and should be seen only as a last resort, Bayer said.

The We Are One Illinois coalition, which AFSCME and other public-employee unions formed to defend retirement security, has succeeded thus far in heading off a vote on SB 512. But pressure is intensifying as the state's huge pension funding obligations threaten to squeeze out spending for all other needs.

The arguments for doing nothing are strong and straightforward: Unlike the state, public employees have always paid their contributions into the pension fund—and their benefits are protected by the constitution.

But, "Doing nothing is really not an alternative," Scheff points out. "The numbers don't lie. If the pension debt isn't paid down, then the pension systems could go belly up in less than 10 years. Unless the state acts to fix this problem, employees may find that the pensions they're counting on just aren't there when they're ready to retire. If the systems go bankrupt, there's no guarantee that a court would order payment. Bankruptcy is something we must work assiduously to avoid."

"A solution that saves our pension plans and re-establishes their stability will require commitment from everyone," he said.



Attacks on public-employee pensions: a nationwide campaign

The friends and allies of the corporate elite, in lawmaking bodies from the U.S. House to nearly every statehouse, are jumping on the anti-public-employee bandwagon, with attacks on pensions moving to the top of their agenda.

In all, 41 states enacted significant revisions to state retirement plans in the last two years, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. And that's by no means the end of this trend. A few examples:

- In the nation's capital, Republicans in the U.S. House are moving a bill to take away the use of vehicle-fuel taxes for mass transit. Instead they would tax just federal employees to fund mass transit, by raising their pension contributions by 1.5 percent of salary and set aside that money as the dedicated funding source.

"Yet another whack at federal employees," Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., said to Politico, a D.C. blog. "At what point does the attack on federal workers go from being relentless to being sadistic?"

- The Maryland legislature increased pension contributions for all state employees and teachers last year to 7 percent from 5 percent.

- San Jose, Calif., Mayor Chuck Reed exaggerated the city's pension costs by one-quarter of a billion dollars in his push to attack pension benefits for hard-working public workers, even commissioning a study designed to inflate his pension cost projections.

- Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown's plan for "pension reform" would put new state workers into a hybrid-type pension that combines elements of a 401(k) savings plan common in the private sector with traditional government benefits. It would also raise the retirement age to 67 from 55 for most state employees.

- In Alabama, one of 24 states that increased contribution rates, teachers and general state employees' contributions were raised to 7.5 percent, from 5 percent, and firefighters, correctional and law enforcement officers to 8.5 percent, from 6 percent.

- In Colorado, state-employee contributions will increase to 10.5 percent, from 8 percent and the matching employer contribution rate will decrease from 10.15 percent to 7.65 percent.

- Rhode Island, Utah and Indiana took steps to move public employees from traditional defined-benefit plans into risky, 401(k)-style defined-contribution plans.

- Fifteen states made cuts to cost-of-living allowances.

- Twenty-four states made changes to defined-benefit plans that reduce benefits, including changes in the retirement age, length of time for calculating final average, increasing the vesting period and cuts in the multiplier.

'Right to work' means majority doesn't rule



As the new year dawned, the corporate elite's attack on unions zeroed in on Indiana.

REPUBLICANS HOLD BOTH CHAMBERS OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE THERE AND THE REPUBLICAN governor had already taken away public employees' right to collective bargaining by executive order.

Following the 1 percent's game plan, which includes passing so-called "right to work" laws, Indiana Republicans railroaded such a bill into law, despite grassroots pressure for a statewide referendum vote to let the people decide.

After the governor signed the bill, Hoosier workers didn't concede defeat. Instead, tens of thousands "came together in solidarity to march from the statehouse to Super Bowl village in Indianapolis," according to the AFL-CIO blog.

One reason right-to-work supporters were in such a hurry to get the bill signed was to prevent opponents from tarnishing the state's image during the Super Bowl, played Feb. 5 in the capital city.

But the governor and state legislators haven't heard the last of this issue.

"Construction workers

and teachers, grocery clerks and truck drivers cheered on the workers and elected officials with chants of 'Remember November,' vowing to take back the state, door by door, neighborhood by neighborhood," according to the AFL-CIO report.

A frontal attack on unions

THE UNFORTUNATE MISLABELING of these anti-union laws as "right to work" gives their supporters a leg up. Who could be against the right to work?

But no such rights flow from this kind of legislation. Instead they take away the basic concept of majority rule, allowing a minority of people in a workplace to undermine a decision arrived at democratically.

"It may be difficult to hear for some of my Republican friends," AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka said, "but this needs to be said plainly, because this is worse than I've ever seen. The national Republican Party — as an institution — is openly and brazenly waging war on workers.

"Indiana's rabidly anti-worker governor, Mitch Daniels, was chosen by GOP leaders to deliver the party's official response to Obama's State of the Union address... He was chosen at the exact moment that he's pushing an attack on workers' rights in Indiana more severe than the one rammed through by Gov.

Scott Walker of Wisconsin. This is no coincidence. In today's Republican Party, attacks like these are celebrated."

Below are some frequently asked questions and answers that help explain why unions call this kind of legislation "right to work for less."

What's in the laws?

RIGHT-TO-WORK LAWS PROHIBIT contracts between employers

and unions that require every worker to pay either dues or their fair share. A fair share is defined as the amount of dues dollars that go for negotiating, administering and enforcing contracts.

In a free-bargaining state, unions have the right to negotiate a contract which ensures that every employee covered by the contract pay dues or, at least, their fair share.

But in right-to-work states, unions are not allowed to include such provisions in their contracts. An employee can be a free rider, reaping the benefits of the union contract, without paying dues or the equivalent, even though the union must spend dues money to represent them. Free riders can even sue the union for failure to represent. Of course those who refuse to pay dues never volunteer to reduce their wages to nonunion scale.

Do such laws help a state get more jobs?

BACKERS SAY THAT COMPANIES will be more likely to locate or expand operations in a right-to-work state. There's little evidence to back this up.

As a free-bargaining state, Indiana has seen significant manufacturing growth in recent years. Midwest right-to-work states aren't doing as well. In the past two years, Indiana added more than twice as many manufacturing jobs as all five of

these states combined.

A recent survey of manufacturers found that a state's right-to-work status has fallen (to 16th place) in the list of factors influencing location decisions.

In Oklahoma, a right-to-work law passed in 2001, with the promise that companies would flock to the state, bringing thousands of new jobs with them.

But since the law passed in 2001, the number of new companies coming into Oklahoma actually decreased and the number of manufacturing jobs in the state has fallen by one-third, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

What happens to wages, benefits and working conditions?

WITH UNIONS WEAKENED IN right-to-work states, wages are lower and benefits are harder to come by in union contracts.

- The average full-time, full-year worker in a right-to-work state makes about \$1,500 less annually than a similar worker in a free-bargaining state.

- Fewer workers have employer-sponsored pensions — 4.8 percent fewer, and fewer employees have health-care coverage, according to an Economic Policy Institute study.

- The rate of workplace deaths is 51 percent higher in states with right to work laws, where unions can't speak up on behalf of workers, according to an AFL-CIO analysis of federal Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Why is this happening now?

"THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT politics is also behind the Republicans' push for right-to-work laws," said a New York Times editorial. "They see an opportunity to further weaken unions, which are far more likely to support Democrats — as well as health-care reform and a higher minimum wage — by slashing their funding and their donating power."

It's a politics that's emanating from the 1 percent.

Funded by the notorious Koch brothers and other members of the corporate elite, a group calling itself American Legislative Council, or ALEC, is generating model legislation and cranking out huge amounts of propaganda. The result is right-to-work legislation emerging in 10 free-bargaining states.

What the Chamber wants for unions, it doesn't want for itself

"WHEN NON-DUES-PAYING EMPLOYEES HAVE A COMPLAINT AT work, the union is required to provide them with full legal representation at no charge," noted Gordon Lafer in *The Nation*.

But, he said, the Chamber of Commerce, an ardent promoter of right-to-work laws, "restricts many of its services to dues-paying members. Indeed, when one union employer — perhaps unhappy with the Chamber's political agenda — asked if it could remain a member of the local Chamber without paying dues, it was rebuffed in no uncertain terms.

"It would be against Chamber by-laws and policy to consider any organization or business a member without dues being paid," explained the Owensboro, Kentucky, Chamber. "The vast majority of the Chamber's annual revenues come from member dues, and it would be unfair to other members to allow an organization not paying dues to be included in member benefits."

"The Chamber's dues requirement makes sense. Without it, the organization would quickly go out of existence. That, of course, is exactly the Chamber's agenda for unions."

State facility 'rebalancing' plan: Savings questionable, suffering inevitable

The battle lines are drawn.

THE QUINN ADMINISTRATION HAS TARGETED TINLEY PARK MENTAL HEALTH AND JACKSONVILLE DEVELOPMENTAL CENTERS AS THE FIRST TWO FACILITIES SET FOR CLOSURE IN ITS SO-CALLED REBALANCING PLAN.

More closures are slated as the governor aims to pull back on the state's commitment to the mentally ill and developmentally disabled.

"By making such harmful cuts, Pat Quinn puts politics and budget considerations ahead of people who need disability services and mental health care," Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said in a statement. "We will work again to keep Tinley Park and Jacksonville open and providing needed services."

AFSCME is strongly opposing the entire plan, which, by the end of fiscal year 2014, would shutter a total of four developmental and two mental health centers.

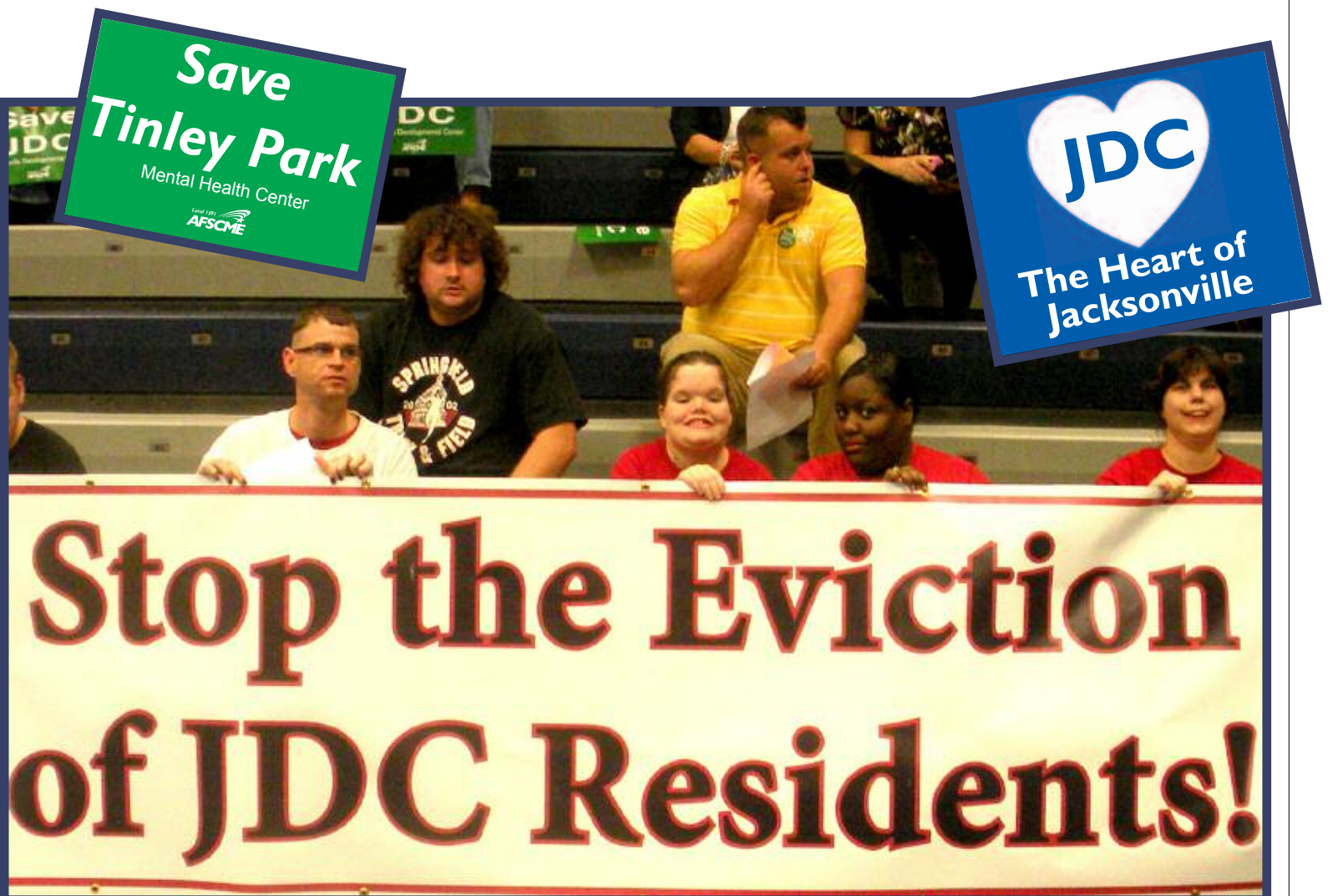
"The plan's vague and ill-conceived 'rebalancing' does little more than impose abstract and arbitrary mandates with little regard for the real and very vulnerable human beings whose health, well-being and even lives are at stake," Council 31 public policy director Anne Irving said.

With a close look at the administration's blueprint, the union has identified a number of serious flaws.

Necessary services unavailable

MANY OF THE CRITICAL SERVICES provided to the high-needs individuals now living in developmental centers simply don't exist in other centers.

"The Department of Human Services has not yet determined what services each individual requires to move into the community, much less identified where they will get those services or what they would cost," Irving said. "Yet they have a clear responsibility to do so before they declare how many individuals can be moved. In the absence of such a process, those individuals could easily end up being warehoused in private, nursing-home type facilities, tossed into county jails or worse."



Housing capacity doesn't exist

THE PLAN DOESN'T RECOGNIZE or prepare for building the necessary extra capacity in the community.

This would include allocating upfront funding to purchase or lease, rehab and certify housing; paying providers on time; increasing reimbursement rates to allow for better employee compensation; funding add-on services for a higher-need population including behavioral and nursing services.

"There is great apprehension in the community, based on their confidence in the state to hold up its end of the bargain," the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities said to legislators in last year's closure hearings.

A lack of knowledge on mental health centers' role

THE QUINN PLAN INDICATES A shocking lack of knowledge of operations of state psychiatric hospitals, referring to moving "residents" from Tinley Park MHC to community agencies.

The administration is apparently unaware that Tinley is a short-stay acute care hospital, with an average length of stay of just 12 days. It has patients, not permanent "residents." Community agencies cannot provide alternative services because they do not provide the kind of intensive inpa-

tient treatment required by those in acute crisis.

'Trying to get out of the business'

THE PLAN PROMISES AN EXPANSION of community-based mental health services and seems to admit, without actually saying so, that it will have to offer higher rates to private hospitals. But the numbers provided by such hospitals, indicate it would very expensive to pay for private care.

"I think this plan is ludicrous," said Barb Foster, an Activity Therapist and member of Local 1591 at Tinley Park. "Where are these people going to go?" She answers her own question: "The private hospitals don't want them, because they don't have insurance. They'll end up in prisons and jails."

Foster feels the state is simply abdicating its long-term commitments.

"We were always told it's the responsibility of the state to take care of the mentally ill," she said. "I think they are trying to get out of the business."

Targeted facilities not alone

BATTLE-TESTED LOCAL UNIONS AT Tinley Park (1591) and Jacksonville (38) have already started gearing up again to save their facilities. They won the same fight late last year, mobilizing strong support among

elected officials in their areas, community and advocacy groups and families of developmental center residents.

But the governor and his operatives are pushing harder this time around. They tried to block a new round of public hearings, and are ignoring the recommendations from the first round, which concluded with the General Assembly's Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability recommending against the closures.

The local unions and their allies won't be alone. Those at other state facilities know their members could be up next, and the plan to move 600 residents to community services will impact all centers and their residents.

"We're making sure our members know what's going on," said Cheryl Graham, president of Local 785 at Kiley DC. "If we're not named, we're still going to do battle."

She said frontline workers' first allegiance is to the individuals they serve.

"We have a sense of responsibility for their safety and well being. And we don't see how this plan can work without harming these individuals. Some won't be able to survive."

Small centers vulnerable

AT CHOATE, WHICH IS A COMBINED mental health and developmental center, "We've already started reaching out to

local politicians," said Cary Quick, president of Local 141. "Everyone's fight is our fight. We'll lend moral and financial support. We're not afraid to travel."

"These facilities provide not just a good life for us and for our communities, but the people we care for. The work we do is dangerous and not particularly rewarding, except for the rewards you get by serving."

Singer Mental Health Center in Rockford is a relatively small facility that fought off a closure threat last year and could be the next target.

"It makes us too easy to close," said Bob Izral, president of Local 3362. "We're vulnerable. We're visiting legislators. Closures affect everybody. We all need to stick together."

By the numbers

\$84,000 — The amount the Quinn administration is allowing for each individual moved from a state center to the community.

\$144,000 — The average cost of caring for an individual in a state developmental center.

\$278,000 — One parent's estimate of what it could cost the state to provide comparable support for her disabled loved one in a community integrated living arrangement, including medical and other services.

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

ISU clericals focus on wage disparities

A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT between Illinois State University and Local 3236, which represents clerical employees, raises wages 3 percent across the board in the first year, with future negotiations to determine raises in the next two years.

The two sides agreed to address a longstanding problem that leaves those clericals who hired in after the first AFSCME contract went into effect getting the same, or even less than new hires.

Because the starting wage has continued to go up with each AFSCME-negotiated wage increase, length of service is not being recognized

in the pay scale. Those who were working at the time of that first contract got a bump in pay related to the union's goal of parity with University of Illinois clericals. But the starting wage didn't reflect that parity increase.

Now, with retirements and turnover, about 65 percent of the workforce is bunched or "compressed" into a similar pay range, below those who got parity raises. And that percentage is growing as senior employees retire and new ones are hired.

"We got a memorandum of understanding to meet with management every two weeks until wage negotiations start or until we come up with a solution," said Nancy Kerns, the local union president.

"Our main thing was compression has been getting worse."

Management agreed that it was a problem, she said, but they didn't agree on how to solve it.

"They didn't like what we were coming up with and we didn't like what they were coming up with," she said.

"But we are determined not to use the money from the campus-wide general-wage increase to solve the problem."

The union negotiating committee was led by staff representative Renee Nestler, with Kerns, Cheryl Cleeton, Anji Zuckerman, Ernie Chambers, Diana Marrs and Kelly Woith.

Anti-union law firm mucks up bargaining in Silvis

WAGES GO UP 2 PERCENT IN each year of a three-year contract between Local 1234 and the city of Silvis. Employee payments for health-insurance coverage will remain unchanged.

"The negotiations were very long," said Preston Smith, a member of the negotiating committee. "The city brought in an outside, union-busting attorney for the first time. He dragged it out."

And no wonder. The law firm made an estimated \$50,000, at a cool \$300 an hour.

"He tried to come in and rewrite the whole contract," staff representative Dino Leone said. "The city is in fine shape, but he still tried to extract things from us. But he didn't succeed and we made gains."

The gains were spurred by the local's direct action tactics, that included an informational picket action at a City Council meeting with nearly every member turning out.

"The members stuck together and changed the tide," Smith said. "Our unity made the city back off and finish the negotiating process. We reached a fair deal that protected our insurance. In tough times like these, you have to stay strong and stick together. Then good things happen to you."

Leone led the bargaining committee with Smith, Patricia Ruhl and Lori Medina.

Little City workers gain on wages

DESPITE GETTING NO HELP FROM

the state legislature on cost-of-living allowances for workers at the non-profit agencies that provide developmental disability services, Local 4008 and Little City Foundation reached agreement on a three-year contract that raises wages 2.75 percent in the first year.

Wages for the following two years will be negotiated later. One group of workers that the local deemed inequitably underpaid got a \$500 bonus.

"Health insurance stayed the same for the first year," said Rosalind Wakefield, the local union president. "So we'll be able to actually see the raises."

The contract opens a new lead-worker position that will provide promotional opportunities to direct-care workers in the children's residential section.

"Negotiations were very smooth this time around," Wakefield said. "We all went in trying to focus on what everybody wanted and we were able to compromise."

She and staff representative Flo Estes did the bargaining for the union.

Waterloo local beats back concessions, wins pay hike

LOCAL 39 MEMBERS WILL GET wage increases of 3 percent in each year of a three-year contract with the city of Waterloo.

"We reached a fair deal that was comparable with what other bargaining units in the city were getting," said Jason Goff, the local union president. "But it took way too long to get where we needed to be. There's a lack of communication between the city and the bargaining unit. With an open line of communication, things could have been expedited."

The city opened up negotiations "trying to shove concessions at us," staff representative Steve Joiner said. "But we fought and fought and they came up with something reasonable."

Joiner and Goff did the union's bargaining.

Kane County group gets raises

WAGES FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE chief judge in the Kane County Circuit Court will go up 8 percent over the term of a three-year contract.

"With everything that's going on in the economy we did better than I expected," said Donna Kunstman, a member of the Local 3966 bargaining committee. "We have a good relationship with the employer."

The union's committee was led by staff representative Carla Williams, with Kunstman, Yvonne Dominguez, Janet Lusk and Maria Chapa.

Bargaining with Wexford, frustrating, disappointing

A CONTRACT WITH WEXFORD Health Sources, which runs health units in 26 Department of Corrections facilities, freezes wages for the first two years of a five-year contract. Wages go up 2 percent in 2014, 2 percent in 2015 and 3 percent in 2015.

"They wanted us to take a 3 percent pay cut," said Kathy Kissiar, who works at Dwight CC and was a member of the negotiating committee. "They were talking about the state being behind on its payments. That was kind of hard to swallow. It was frustrating and disappointing."

But they didn't accept a pay cut, though increased health insurance payments will reduce the increase in take-home pay.

The bargaining committee was led by staff representative Joe Plugger, with Kissiar, Nancy Puckett, Terri Dean, Alice (Kym) VanVickle, Diana Brumleve, Karyll Edwards, Amy Miles, Stacey Howarter, Chris Brooks, Mary Chris Dawson, Stephanie Winter, Belinda Ruppert, Mary Rogers, Debbie Dowdy, Charleen Roy, Nanna O'Donnell, Jan Anderson, Trent Lapp, Amy Cantorna, Shaliza Odom, Connie Ashworth, Cindy Hendricks, Susan Bauerle, Brandi Beasley and Susie Flesner.

Bargaining harder with new Shelby County board members

WAGES INCREASE \$1,000 IN each year of a four-year contract between Local 3323 and Shelby County. Terms for health-insurance coverage remain unchanged. The base salary for new hires was increased, and new hires will start at 100 percent of the base, instead of 80 percent. There was a \$300 signing bonus.

"What was different in these negotiations from the past was new County Board members," said Jessica Fox, the local union president. "They'd never been involved, so it took them awhile to realize we weren't out to take advantage of the county and that we do a good job and deserve to be rewarded for that."

They finally did. "We did our homework and we know what shape the county is in," Fox said. "We decided, based on the economy, this was as good as it was going to get. We didn't lose anything, and that was important."

The bargaining committee was led by staff representative Chris Hooser, with Fox, Debbie Dunaway, Marlene Waggoner, Chris Hewing, Kari Kingston and Charlie Evans.

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Workers at Trinity battle for bonus

WITH ITS STATE FUNDING MONTHS IN ARREARS, WILL COUNTY-BASED Trinity Services, a non-profit agency that provides service for the developmentally disabled, was making the case that it couldn't raise wages for direct-care and other frontline workers.

But Local 2690 said workers insisted they couldn't make do without a pay increase.

The union pointed out that Trinity workers earn less than other similar agencies in the area.

"You have to work six hours just to fill your car with gas," Roosevelt Journigan, the local union president, said.

The local started mobilizing its members, started a newsletter and began holding rallies in front of the main agency headquarters.

"We held a rally just about every day for a month," he said. "People were afraid of retaliation at first, but once they saw we were out there and nothing happened to us, more people started coming."

Back at the bargaining table, management was getting the message. An offer for a \$100-contract-signing bonus ended up at \$500 to \$800. The three year contract froze wages for the first year, but the parties will negotiate for second- and third-year raises.

"We've got negotiations starting this summer," Journigan said. "We'll have more people coming out. We told management they need to budget a raise next time. We got their attention and they are taking us seriously now."

The union bargaining team was led by staff representative Osvaldo Valenzuela, with Journigan, Linda Gilbert, David Manning, Michelle Atkinson and Sue Kiper.

RETIREE NOTES



Protecting pensions and health care at top of legislative agenda

RETIREES AND ACTIVE AFSCME members zeroed in on protecting public-employee pensions, retiree health-care benefits and addressing revenue shortfalls, issues that are among the most important goals for the union in this year's legislative session.

Dozens of Chapter 31 members traveled to Spring-

field for the annual Council 31 PEOPLE Conference on Jan. 21, despite a threatening winter storm, with



sub-chapter delegates joining representatives of working members to approve that agenda.

"So many retirees turned out from across Illinois for the conference because they want to fight the ever-increasing number of attacks on their benefits," Chapter 31 President Virginia Yates said. "Retirees have been listening to lawmakers and business leaders threatening to cut their cost-of-living adjust-

ments, increase their health insurance costs and reduce their pension security and they wanted to do something about it."

"Lawmakers should understand that we worked many years to gain our retirement benefits and we will turn out in force to protect them," Yates said.

Decatur and Hillsboro honor dedicated retirees



DECATUR SUB-CHAPTER 87 AND its satellite group in Hillsboro held award presentations at their December meetings, honoring Dale Sloan and Joseph Cerny for their volunteer services to AFSCME Retirees. They are the first recipients of the new volunteer-program award the sub-chapter initiated to recognize those whose volunteer services carry out the chapter's mission.

Sub-chapter President David Spinner called Sloan his "go to" member when he needs a volunteer in Decatur.

"Dale is truly a worthy retiree leader for Sub-chapter 87," Spinner said.

After retiring from teaching as an educational instructor at Graham Correction Center in Hillsboro, Sloan jumped into the retiree group with both feet, becoming a volunteer phone caller for a list of 50 Decatur members. He is serving on the legislative

committee, which met with Rep. Bill Mitchell at his Decatur office last October. And he is a member of the 2012 sub-chapter nominating committee.

Joseph Cerny retired as a correctional officer from Graham in January of 1992 and immediately joined Chapter 31.

"Though he has been retired for 20 years," Spinner said, "Joseph Cerny still participates fully by attending rallies and has never missed a meeting of the Hillsboro group since it was created in 2008. Members like Joseph Cerny and Dale Sloan give our organization its strength and we appreciate their dedication."

National Council on Aging: Insecurity for seniors growing

THE CHANCE OF HAVING A SECURE retirement continues to recede for senior citizens. The percentage of senior households considered "insecure" rose to 36 percent by 2008 from 27 percent in 2004, according to a National Council on Aging report on the financial stability of American seniors over the past decade. And this disturbing trend has continued to grow.

The NCOA also noted that insecurity continues to plague ethnic and racial minorities at a

disproportionately higher rate, with 52 percent of African-American, 56 percent of Hispanic, and 32 percent of white senior households falling firmly in the "insecure" camp. In fact, only a mere 8 percent of African-American seniors and 4 percent of Hispanic seniors can safely claim to be "secure," compared to 27 percent of whites.

In an attempt to better explain these trends, the NCOA described three main factors that contribute to insecurity in senior households: assets, budgets and housing.

The Council found that retirement assets are often a key indicator of stability for seniors, with a senior household considered secure if its assets total \$50,000 for singles, and \$75,000 for couples.

The lack of adequate assets was present in 58 percent of insecure senior households, up from 47 percent in 2004.

Higher costs of living tightened budgets as the economic crisis deepened in 2008, with 37 percent having less than \$10,000 in income, up from 33 percent in 2004.

The high cost of housing also plagued seniors. The council found that renting almost always indicated insecurity for seniors. Those whose home equity is less than \$75,000 were considered lacking in security.

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

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Champaign Co. Nursing Home: small raises, 'tedious process'

A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT between Local 900 and the Champaign County Nursing Home raises wages 1 percent in each year. An every-six-month attendance incentive payment was added for employees who avoid any disciplinary action for absences or tardiness. The distribution will range from \$250 every six months to \$450, depending on length of service. An annual personal day was added. Employees who work on hazardous weather days get time-



An informational picket "got things moving" in Champaign County Nursing Home negotiations.

and-one-half pay. Employee payments for health-insurance premiums went to \$16 a month for employee coverage, from \$11.

"Bargaining was a very tedious process," negotiating team member Evelyn Thomas

said. "They wanted us to give up a lot and give us nothing."

The local fought back, with informational picketing, T-shirt days and button days.

"The informational picket got things moving," Thomas said. "It shook them up a lit-

tle. They didn't believe we were going to do anything."

The negotiating team was led by staff representative Tara McCauley, with Thomas, Tea Jones, Renee Denius, Anthony Beasley, Doug Hendrickson and Debbie Deremiah.

No COLA from state = no raise at SAVE

WAGE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE second year of a three-year contract between Local 1831 and the St. Clair Associated Vocational Enterprises, a non-profit agency that provides developmental disability services, led to a wage freeze with a \$300 bonus for full-time employees and \$150 for part-timers.

"They asked if we would take a bonus and come back in March," for the final year's wage bargaining, said Cindy Rehg, the local union president. "We're going back and demanding a raise. It's been five years and they know it's been too long. We're going to fight for a raise. We have more members coming to union meetings now than ever and they're getting more involved. We can't keep living on what we got five years ago

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Fairer taxes needed to fix state's budget woes

Tax. To some, that's a dirty word. To others, it's the source of their income. To still others, it pays for the things that make their lives better: Roads, parks, education, public safety, public health, child protection, sanitation and on and on.

TO MANY AFSCME MEMBERS, IT'S ALL OF THESE THINGS.

WHILE NO TAX IS POPULAR, the feeling is growing that taxation is unfair — in Illinois and in the nation as a whole. And an unfair tax system in a democratic society is one that is fated for trouble.

Illinois has one of the least fair tax systems in the country, and one of the biggest state-government deficits.

The state's low income families carry the third highest state and local tax burden in the nation. And they aren't even getting their money's worth. The state skimps on

services, with the lowest ratio of state employees to total state population, mostly because the folks with big bucks aren't paying their fair share.

President Barack Obama has been pounding away at the unfairness of a federal tax system in which the tax rates for the very rich are about half of what a middle-income family pays.

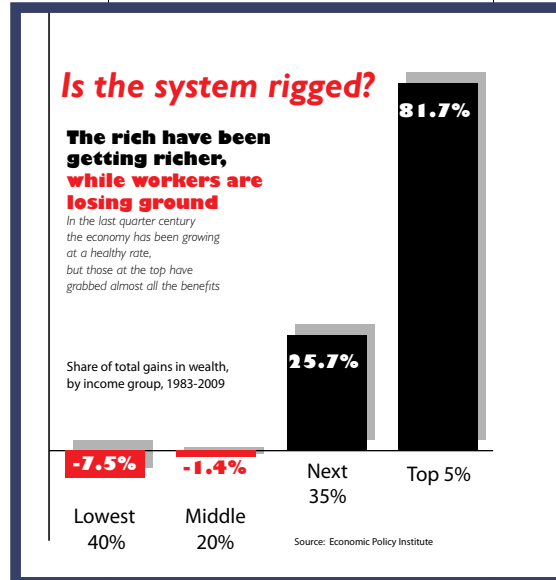
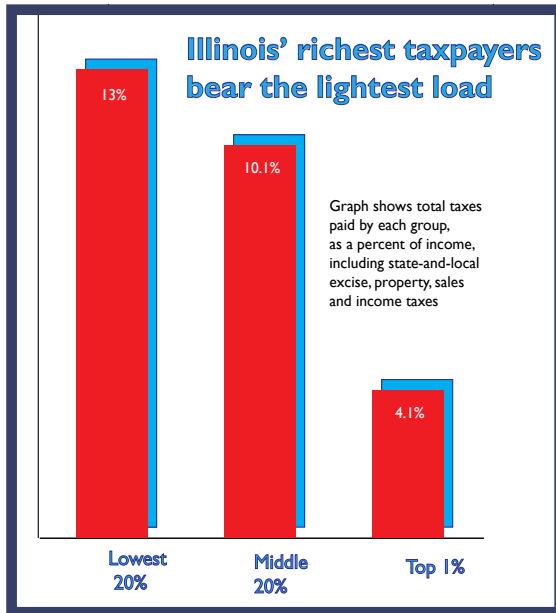
Illinois is even worse, with the poorest 20 percent of income earners taxed at a rate more than triple what the highest 1 percent pay, after adding together sales, excise, property and income taxes.

Moving forward for fairness

NOW AFSCME IS PART of a coalition that is pressing for a fairer tax system in Illinois.

There are a number of ways to make that system more fair:

- Close loopholes for corporations and other big businesses;



- Make sales taxes more efficient by taxing services, which

are a steadily growing piece of the state's economic pie, and by taxing financial transactions;

- Raise the deductions and exemptions on state income taxes; and
- Change from a flat income tax rate to graduated rates, where higher income households pay a higher rate than those below them on the income scale.

Of the 41 states that have an individual income tax, all but seven have a graduated rate structure.

Because income inequality has grown sharply over the last 30 years, Illinois' failure to implement a graduated individual income tax rate structure is costly.

This failure "has both harmed the state's private-sector job growth and contributed substantially to Illinois' ongoing structural deficits in its General Fund," according to the Center on Tax and Budget Accountability.

Unfortunately, legislators can't make the change on their own. The state constitution bars a grad-

uated income tax. To change that will take a constitutional amendment.

Amending the constitution: What it takes

IT STARTS IN THE LEGISLATURE, where 60 percent of each chamber must vote for an amendment just to put it on the ballot for a statewide referendum vote.

A referendum would have a good chance of passing. In a recent poll, 62 percent said they favored such a change in the state's constitution.

But given the influence of big money in the legislature, and given that the amendment would place an extra burden (though a relatively light one) on big-money taxpayers, getting legislators to take that vote won't be easy.

Yet it's a necessary battle, one that public-service workers' unions must help lead.

The current system, by relying on taxpayers who are losing income over time means the state's revenues will not keep pace with the economy.

Revenues will not grow at rates sufficient to maintain current service levels into the future. Without adding or expanding even one government program, Illinois will nonetheless experience annual deficits because its tax system is not designed to work in a modern economy.

"The time for change is now," Council 31 community affairs director John Cameron said. "The agents for that change are us."

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

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and a bonus is not the answer. It's been long enough."

The negotiating committee was led by staff representative Carla Gillespie, with Rehg and Rita Gain.

'New attitude' at Kreider Services

LOCAL 1268 MEMBERS AT KREIDER Services, a Dixon-based non-profit agency that provides developmental disability services, ratified a three-year contract with \$300-\$500 bonuses in the first year, somewhat smaller bonuses in the second year and a 25-cents-an-hour raise in the

final year.

Unused personal days will now be paid out at the end of the year instead of lost. Part-time workers will now get a full day's pay for their paid holidays.

"The state of affairs with the state government made negotiations more difficult," said Bob Logan, the local union president. "But the new director participated in the bargaining, which the former director didn't do. We had a good give-and-take. There's a new attitude and a new level of respect. We didn't get a lot of money, but there's a better working relationship. That goes a long way

in making this a better place to work."

The union bargaining team was led by staff representative Kathy Steichen, with Logan, Deidre Landwer, Jenny Reiners, Karen Beauchamp and Julie Kessel.

Contracting out limited for Springfield Streets crew

A FOUR-YEAR CONTRACT FOR Springfield Street Department workers raises wages 2.3 percent in the first year, with raises in the next three years tied to the Consumer Price Index.

The agreement requires management to notify the union when it plans to contract out street work. The local's contract already restricts contracting out on work that the union workers are able to get done. But sometimes management sub-contracts their work without them knowing about it.

"Sometimes we don't know they've got somebody doing our work until we see the contractor out in the

streets doing it," said Craig Scroggins, president of Local 3417. "We've lost seven employees through layoffs and more through attrition in the last few years. In today's world, even though you have a contract, they keep trying to contract out things."

He said the new provision will allow the local to assert their rights to the work before the bids go out.

In another provision the city agreed to follow Illinois Department of Transportation standards on safety, which will force them to assign one and sometimes two flaggers to a project.

"I dodge cars for a living," Scroggins said. "They weren't providing us any protection."

Paid lunch goes to 30 minutes, from 20 minutes. Temporary assignment pay kicks in on the first day instead of the third day.

Staff representative Roger Griffith led the negotiating committee, with Scroggins, Kevin Blake, Curtis Yocem, Matt Howse, Greg Furkin and Marty McLaughlin.

Harvey schools workers keep paid-up health insurance

WAGE INCREASES AVERAGE JUST over 2 percent in each year of a three-year contract between Local 93 and the Harvey School District. The district pays the full health-insurance premium for employees.

When the old superintendent retired, the negotiations started moving forward, said Marvin Eaves, the local union president.

"The retired superintendent wanted to take things away, so we just held out until the new one came," he said. "Paraprofessionals got the biggest raise. The custodians and other members agreed, because they were the lowest paid. Keeping our insurance paid was the biggest thing."

The bargaining committee was led by staff representative Lora Harris, with Eaves, Jean Coleman, Bridget Bronkema, Freddie Lockwood, Linda Nelson, Dave Thomas and Kathryn Pennix.

AFSCME BACKS TWO *for* SURS TRUSTEE

University employees will be voting this spring on who will represent them on their pension system's board of trustees.

The 11 State University Retirement System board members are responsible for overseeing fund operations, setting policy, hiring a chief executive and making sure the system lives up to its legal responsibilities.

AFSCME has joined with the Illinois Education Association to back two candidates: Dorinda Miller, president of AFSCME Local 3700 at the University of

Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and Andrew Matthews, Vice President of IEA at Illinois State University.

Voting for both will give frontline union employees a strong voice on the SURS board.

Both agree that the No. 1 priority for trustees is to work for a secure, solid funding plan for SURS.



My top priority as SURS trustee is to ensure a secure, solid funding plan for SURS. SURS participants have worked hard and contributed to SURS from every paycheck. The State of Illinois must make good on its promise to provide the funding required to guarantee that our benefits will be there when we need them!
- Dorinda Miller

Dorinda Miller

has served on the SURS executive board since 2009 and now serves as the board's Treasurer.

She has been employed at the U of I for the past 24 years and is President of AFSCME Local 3700, which represents more than 1,200 university employees. Dorinda also serves as President of the Champaign County Central Labor Council (AFL-CIO) and as the University Executive Vice-President of AFSCME Council 31.

Miller has served on the board of the Champaign County United Way and as the Labor Liaison Supervisor on the Red Cross National Disaster Response Team. In that capacity, she spent several weeks in New Orleans aiding in relief efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina as well as assisting after the floods in the Rockford area.



For years, members have contributed what has been expected of them, but the State has failed to meet its obligations. The short-term impact of such funding shortages has been painful, but the long-term impact may be catastrophic. We must find a way to adequately fund SURS which does not create an undue burden to those who have already met their obligations.
- Andrew Matthews

Andrew Matthews

is an Instructional Assistant Professor in the Department of Politics and Government at ISU and is active as a leader in the Illinois Education Association.

He has worked in politics as an educator, researcher, and campaign professional, giving him the opportunity and responsibility to "build a knowledge and understanding of the pension system in our state."

He served on a variety of boards at the local level (municipal government and non-profits) that have required a working knowledge of budgetary issues. Andrew also served in the U.S. Navy for five years as a nuclear chemist and radiation control technician.



Chicago city workers battling cuts

A partial win restores library hours

The administration of Mayor Rahm Emanuel continues its push to cut back on mental health treatment and primary health care for low-income Chicagoans.

The mayor's assault on public health services comes fast on the heels of his controversial effort to curtail hours at city branch libraries.

AFSCME Local 1215, which represents Chicago Public Library employees, along with a broad group of library patrons and supporters who rose in opposition to Emanuel's cuts, have managed to back the mayor off his original budget proposal, which would have cut deeply into library hours and programs. And those friends of the library are not going to give up until all hours are restored and laid-off workers recalled.

The effort to prevent service cuts and layoffs in the Department of Public Health will be even more of a challenge. The city's 12 mental health clinics play a vital role in the communities where they are located, yet six are targeted for closure. This will force patients to travel considerable distances to access care. As a consequence they may not be able to receive treatment or medication when most needed.

STOP, a grassroots organization that is based in several of the affected communities, is standing up to the mayor while the aldermen in those six communities have failed to do so thus far. AFSCME has been working closely with STOP and others in the Mental Health Movement to build pressure against the closures.

Privatization high on mayor's agenda

Unfortunately the Emanuel administration seems determined to carry on the failed privatization policies of the Daley years. In addition to the mental health clinic closures, CDPH commissioner, Bechara Choucair, has been pushing hard to privatize all of the city's primary-care clinics. Yet he is making no effort to ensure continuation of the vital health-care services for the medically indigent that these clinics provide.

"Commissioner Choucair is so eager to dump CDPH patients that he is offering his buddies in the private sector the city's primary-care clinic sites and equipment for \$1 per year," Council 31 regional director Nefertiti Smith said. "And employees at the private-sector facilities where the city's patients will end up are paid as much as 40 percent less."

Though Emanuel claims to be about job creation, he has already destroyed hundreds of solid, middle class jobs by laying off more than 100 library workers, and hundreds of other city employees. And another 100 public-health employees face layoffs if the clinic privatization scheme goes forward.

"Emanuel's privatization plan for city clinics reflects a calloused indifference to the fate of the dedicated public servants who have spent their careers providing health care to those most in need," Smith said. "The mayor had to reverse his crippling cuts to the Chicago Public Library because the community fought against them. We will need that same kind of outcry against this effort to eliminate health care for the neediest in Chicago's communities."

Emanuel backs down as library supporters' step up

The success in partially restoring the library hours Emanuel tried to cut was a model for this kind of fight. AFSCME was able to work with community supporters of the libraries, who flooded the mayor's office and their aldermen with messages of support for restoring library hours.

The mayor's original budget plan eliminated some 380 library positions, which would have forced severe reductions in hours and services.

But with library supporters loudly dissenting, turning out in force for a demonstration in front of the mayor's office, the resolve of several aldermen stiffened, and they spoke out. The mayor backed off, reducing job cuts in the final budget to 176, which still meant a 16-percent cut in library hours.

That resulted in a plan to close the library every Monday and Thursday morning, which the administration then switched to closures all day on Mondays. Emanuel tried to shift blame onto the union.

Protests erupted again, and after a day of "read-ins" at branch libraries was set, the mayor suddenly "found" more than \$2 million to recall some of the laid-off employees and re-open the libraries on Monday afternoons.

Now 100 pages, the lowest-paid, part-time library workers who shelve books, are the only ones left in the street. Bringing them back to work would cost another \$1 million.

Compare that to the \$3.5 million in TIF funds Emanuel's doling out to a commercial animal testing laboratory to help keep 26 jobs in Chicago.

"We think preserving our libraries and the many services they provide is worth at least another \$1 million," Smith said. "It's time for the administration to realize the value city employees add to this city and start utilizing those resources for the good of all the city's residents."