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Kids libraries in City Hall protest

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On the Move

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**Exposing the lies:
 Time to stand up**

*We have to talk about the economic and social value
 of the services we provide*



BY
HENRY BAYER

**AS PROVIDERS
 OF PUBLIC
 SERVICES, WE
 HAVE A
 STRONG CASE
 TO MAKE
 FOR THE
 IMPORTANCE
 OF THOSE
 SERVICES TO
 THE FABRIC OF
 OUR SOCIETY
 AND THE
 HEALTH
 OF OUR
 ECONOMY**

A lot of politicians and pundits would like us to believe that the greed of Wall St. moguls has nothing to do with our economic woes.

THEY CLAIM EXCESSIVE GOVERNMENT SPENDING BURDENS TAXPAYERS AND SLOWS GROWTH.

They're dead wrong.

We hear politicians of both parties talk about the need to create "private sector" jobs, as if the work performed by public employees were a drag on the economy rather than an asset to the community.

I wish people of that mindset had been traveling with me in October as I went from one corner of the state to the other to testify at legislative hearings in opposition to Gov. Pat Quinn's attempt to close seven state facilities. In each community hundreds of townspeople packed large meeting halls to demonstrate support for keeping their facility open.

Families of residents at the threatened developmental and mental health centers described the exceptional care those facilities provide and their fears of what might happen to their loved ones if the closures go forward.

Sheriffs and state's attorneys expressed their strong objections to the closure of Human Services facilities, pointing out that whatever cost saving might be realized from shuttering the state psychiatric hospitals would be offset by increased costs for courts and jails, where many of the patients would end up.

At virtually every site, be it a developmental or mental health center, a correctional center for youth or a prison, when I stood before the press to denounce the threatened closure, standing by my side was a local mayor along with Chambers of Commerce and economic development agencies.

Clearly few, if any, of these towns-folk think that these government-funded, government-operated facilities are burdening their hometowns.

Indeed, the tax dollars being spent are economic engines for these communities. The state's own figures demonstrate the adverse impact the closures would have: a loss of nearly \$300 million to the Illinois economy.

And rather than, say, polluting our air, despoiling our environment, or producing a product that might be unhealthy for us, as many private corporations do, each of these state facilities provides a vital public service. By treating the mentally ill, providing a home for a developmentally disabled individual, rehabilitating a youth or removing a felon from our midst, they provide a better quality of life for us all.

That's why it was so disappointing to see some legislators point to other centers and suggest closing them rather than defending their home facility on its own merits.

As providers of public services, all AFSCME members have a huge stake in the debate about the role of government and government spending. We have a strong case to make for the importance of public services to the fabric of our society and the health of our economy.

Seeking to cut someone else's facility is no answer. Eventually they'll get us all if we don't stand up firmly and forcefully for the important role public services play.

We have to tell our story. And we need to tell it to the politicians who, while claiming they are on our side, continual-

ly refuse to support the revenue measures, yes, let me say it, taxes, needed to maintain vital services and vibrant communities.

Indeed, with some exceptions, many legislators speaking on behalf of the facilities in their districts voted against the recent state income tax increase, which has generated \$6 billion in revenue for the state. Imagine what the state budget would be like without this needed revenue.

Worse yet, many of these same legislators are advocating for further tax breaks for businesses. According to their calculus, it's these private businesses that create jobs, and it's taxes that kill them.

How then would they explain the fact that Motorola Mobility's response to a \$100 million tax cut was to lay off 850 employees, one quarter of its Illinois workforce?

They can't have it both ways. They can't pretend to be for us and against the revenues that fund the services we provide.

And we can't have it both ways, either. We can't say the service we provide is important, but those provided by our counterparts in other towns, or the services provided by a county hospital, a city health clinic, a local library or a public works department are unimportant.

If there's waste, let's cut it out. But let's make sure we never play the politicians' game by looking around for some other public service to cut when ours is in jeopardy.

The message is clear: Public services are essential to the common good, contributing both to the health of our economy and the well-being of our communities.

Who will deliver that message, if not us? And when will we deliver it, with the imminent threat to the work we do, if not now?

Emanuel budget cuts services vital to communities and those in need

With a budget proposal for next year that cuts deeply into services for the city's least fortunate residents, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has opened a new front in the nationwide battle between the corporate elite and everyone else.

THE MAYOR'S BUDGET, TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR A FINAL VOTE IN MID-NOVEMBER, WOULD result in more than 1,000 city jobs lost through layoffs and elimination of vacant positions.

- It would:
- Shutter six of the city's 12 mental health clinics, with funding cuts for four of the remaining six, causing at least 34 layoffs and decimating access to quality care for individuals with mental illness. This would eliminate many clients' only option and would increase 911 calls and jail stays in the city in addition to expensive hospital visits.
 - Close Chicago Department of Public Health primary care clinics that provide essential primary and preventive health care to thousands of individuals in Chicago's most medically underserved communities. The services would be privatized, resulting in 120 layoffs.
 - Further reduce library hours in many city neighborhoods, just two years after Mayor Daley slashed library jobs and sharply reduced operating hours. The proposed budget also cuts 552 positions in the library system, with a loss of 60 librarians, including 24 layoffs. More than 100 library clerks and every remaining library page face layoffs.

STOP leads the charge on mental health clinics

STOP, a community group that is fighting against the decimation of the city's mental health services, has taken an active role in opposing the Emanuel budget.

The group held an Oct. 12 rally at City Hall, supported by members of Local 505, who staff the clinics.

They argue that the clinic closings will hurt low-income

residents and eventually be more costly in tax dollars and human suffering. People who need the clinics will end up in emergency rooms, police stations and jails.

The closures will force patients to travel across the city to get mental health services, in many cases with a new therapist, and even make it more difficult for new patients to get any services at all. The number of private providers is dwindling, especially those that will accept uninsured individuals, and the city isn't planning to spend any money to bolster them.

No money saved from cuts to social services

NEARLY 200 GRANT-FUNDED positions would be cut from the Department of Family and Support Services, which provides critical services to vulnerable populations such as the elderly, homeless, domestic violence victims and at-risk kids.

These cuts make little sense, because, coming from grant-funded operations, they do not help the city balance its major shortfall, which is in the corporate fund.

The proposed cuts will only add to the pain inflicted just three months ago, when

Six Chicago Department of Public Health mental health clinics and all seven of the primary care clinics would be shuttered.



Emanuel laid off more than 20 emergency shelter outreach workers, eliminating overnight aid to individuals forced to the streets by domestic violence, fires, floods, mental illness or other crises.

Aldermen rebel against library cuts

WITH AFSCME MEMBERS WHO work in city libraries and other concerned citizens raising the alarm, many key aldermen have stepped up to resist cutting library hours and services.

"It's wrong. It's unacceptable. We have to do something else to spread the pain," Ald. Walter Burnett said at a City Council budget hearing.

The effects of the cuts could go well beyond the additional Monday and Friday mornings that branches will be closed. The staff cuts will force a sharp decline in library programs and assistance to library visitors, especially youth.

"Ald. John Pope said he was even willing to consider a small property tax increase if that's what it takes to avoid cuts," reported the Sun-Times. It said aldermen "argued that libraries that serve as 'safe-havens,' computer and homework centers in many crime-ridden, inner-city communities would be unable to function with 363 fewer ... employees."

Compounding the "unacceptable" nature of Emanuel's library cuts is the fact that the library's budget is actually increased by \$1.2 million, with millions budgeted for new facilities that would be even more severely understaffed.

Patrons, library workers push to save libraries

AFSCME MEMBERS ARE LEADING a citywide fight against the closures. The union organized a "Read-In" at City Hall on Oct. 31 to dramatize how important libraries are to the city's neighborhoods and the role they play in educating Chicago's children.

"It's not the books or the buildings that make the libraries so critical," said Council 31's policy and legislative specialist Adrienne Alexander. "It's the people, the library staff that run the programs, coordinate the events, answer questions, conduct the trainings, shelve the books, deal with the computers, read the stories and so much more."

She noted that there are some 1 million visits to a Chicago Public Library each month. This past summer almost 60,000 children read 1.4 million books through the library reading program.

"If Emanuel's cuts go through, at-risk children will be in more jeopardy," she warned. "Students will be shortchanged in their quest for knowledge. Parents will lose an invaluable resource. Seniors will lose educational programs and volunteer opportunities. The unemployed will find it harder to search for work and learn new skills."

Stay current with the budget fight at www.KeepChicagoWorking.org



Library hours would be cut and one-third of the staff would face layoffs.

Rotunda rally defends pensions, bargaining rights

Thousands of members from a wide swath of public-employee unions attended an Oct. 26 Springfield rally to urge an end to the assault on pensions and back up AFSCME's demand that the state honor its collective bargaining agreements.

“TEACHERS, FIREFIGHTERS, POLICE OFFICERS HAVE JOINED CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS AND caregivers in this battle,” Council 31 Director Henry Bayer told the crowd packing the Capitol rotunda. “We’re tired of being demonized. We didn’t cause the state’s problems and we shouldn’t have to pay to bail it out.

“We’re angry, angry, angry. It’s time for state legislators to stand up for collective bargaining rights.”

By taking away negotiated raises, trying to close seven state facilities and laying off thousands of employees, Quinn is violating the contract, Bayer said. “The legislators have to decide whether they are on our side or his.”

That decision will revolve around legislation for a supplemental appropriation, where legislators would vote to change the current state budget, adding sufficient funds to pay for current state operations.

Pensions also on the line

AT THE SAME TIME, BAYER SAID at the rally, “Chicago’s corporate elite are trying to take away our pensions. They talk about ‘shared sacrifice.’ What they mean is, ‘Cut taxes for big corporations and cut pensions for the middle class.’”

“We say no! Those pensions are ours. We’ve earned them and we aren’t going to give them up. The legislators have to decide whether they’re on the side of working people or whether they stand with the CEOs.”

The rally roared in approval and turned up the volume on its rotunda-rattling chants.

Local unions fight closures

Each of the communities where the facilities threatened with closures are located have played a key role in mobilizing support against the closures, with elected officials stepping forward and average citizens helping pack public hearings.

AFSCME members who live in the area but don’t work at the threatened facilities have also done their part and more, helping to pack public hearings, making phone calls to legislators and turning out in huge numbers for the Springfield rally.

THE BRUNT OF THE FIGHT has been fought by the leaders and members of the local unions at the threatened facilities.

They have made signs, buttons and stickers, spreading them around the communities and into the workplaces. They have gathered petition signatures and talked to friends and neighbors. They have enlisted the help of elected officials and other community leaders. They have marched and picketed, rallied and paraded. They have spent long hours preparing testimony for public hearings. They have lobbied legislators by phone and in person.

Council 31 moving forward with court cases

MEANWHILE COUNCIL 31 HAS been pursuing legal avenues to fight the closures. The legal case has been bolstered by two arbitration awards, where an independent arbitrator said the closures and layoffs and withholding wage increases are violations of AFSCME’s master contract with the state.

A Randolph County judge agreed to hear a case brought by Council 31, which is seeking a ruling that the state must live up to its union con-

tract on wages, layoffs and facility closures.

In an Oct. 26 hearing on that action, the state agreed to hold off on layoffs until at least Dec. 1, by which time the judge is expected to rule on the union’s request for a preliminary injunction.

A contract binds the parties who signed it

THE MAIN ISSUE BEFORE THE Randolph County court is AFSCME’s contention that the state constitution forbids any

action to impair or diminish the strength of a contract. The union is asserting that the governor’s decision to cancel a state-employee wage increase, close facilities and lay off 2,000 workers is, indeed, an impairment of AFSCME’s contract with the state. On Dec. 1 the judge will hear arguments on the state’s motion to dismiss the case. If he denies that motion, AFSCME will have an opportunity to argue for a temporary restraining order to halt the layoffs and facility closures.

The parties will then proceed at a later date on the merits of the case.

In a separate court action, a Cook County judge refused to grant the Quinn administration’s motion to stay the arbitration award on closures and layoffs. This allows the union to proceed with its motion before the court, seeking an order to compel compliance with the arbitrator’s decision.

“Eventually this battle must be won in the state legislature, and thus in the court of public opinion,” Bayer said. “But every positive step we take with our legal actions gives us more time to build pressure on the politicians.”





Local 38 members assemble to walk in the Illinois College homecoming parade in Jacksonville.

COGFA rebuffs governor on closing facilities

Public hearings show broad opposition to closures

As On the Move went to press, union members at threatened state facilities were seeing some evidence that their efforts to oppose closures were showing results.

ON OCT. 27 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENT FORECASTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY made its recommendations on four of the seven closures:

- Against closing Mabley Developmental Center;
- Against closing Murphysboro Youth Center;
- Against closing Singer Mental Health Center; and
- Against closing Chester MHC.

Decisions on the three remaining facilities – Logan Correctional Center, Tinley Park MHC and Jacksonville DC – were set for Nov. 10.

COGFA votes only advisory

THE BAD NEWS IS THAT COGFA has only an advisory role under the State Facilities Closure Act, a law initiated by AFSCME but watered down before it was passed in 2004.

The good news is that the votes came from state senators and representatives who will be faced with voting on supplemental budget appropriations needed to keep the facilities open.

Over the past month, COGFA has held those hearings on all the closures, and in nearly every case, the hearings were packed to the brim with closure opponents. In all, more than 5,000 people came out to show support for their local facilities.

The legislators' votes, though not binding on the



Local 2073 members and families marched to downtown Lincoln for a rally at City Hall.

administration, were "a sign that perhaps the legislature does not have the appetite for shutting down facilities," said Council 31 public policy director Anne Irving, who has aided local unions in preparing testimony for the public hearings COGFA is required to hold on any facility closure.

That testimony, from AFSCME members and community leaders, has been compelling.

Below are excerpts from some of the testimony given before COGFA.

Closing Chester would be 'devastating'

"THIS IS A UNIQUE FACILITY," Chester Mayor Joe Eggmeyer said. "It handles the most difficult patients, who are at Chester only because they are violent." But "I am here to speak to the impact this closure will have on the economic life of our community. ... University of Illinois economists ... found the impact would be more than \$55 million dollars. ... Homes would be empty, which would send our real estate market into a tailspin. ... Property taxes would be impacted. So would our school budget. ... Put simply, closing Chester would be devastating. ... These 465 jobs are life or death for Chester."

JDC: 'It's on Main Street'

JACKSONVILLE DC IS "AT THE heart of our community," said Teresa Stice, president of Local 38. "I don't work at the center but that is where I started my career. My mother and sister both worked there. My father retired from the center after 35 years there. Almost everyone in town has some connection to Jacksonville Developmental Center.

"I see the residents I supported at the center out at McDonalds, and at the movie theater. ... Some have transitioned to community living, because that's what Jacksonville Developmental Center does – work to build skills to make that happen. ... Pushing residents out the door will lead to setbacks. I'm afraid some will draw into themselves and never recover from the loss of their home."

Logan closure 'a death penalty' for Lincoln

"THE DIRECTOR ADMITS to 'operational challenges' from the Logan closure that 'make it more difficult to provide day to day mandated services,' Local 2073 President Shannon Kelly noted

in his testimony.

He warned that the closure would leave hundreds more inmates housed in prison gyms, without proper security or sanitation.

"They are placing the offenders in gymnasiums because they have run out of cells," he said. "I question whether the gymnasiums have proper shower and restroom facilities."

He said that "This closure will hurt our families and communities. ... The closure of Logan is essentially like giving Lincoln, Illinois and Logan County the death penalty."

With Tinley closed 'patients won't get treatment'

"TINLEY PARK MHC SERVES more than 1,900 individuals in severe mental health crisis each year," said Michelle Hubbard, a social worker and trustee of Local 1591. "Admissions are up 9 percent over the past five years. ... Hospitals in our area oppose the closure, saying they cannot serve Tinley Park's patients. ... Just Thursday there were



Local 3362 members Linda Fleming and Bob Izral testify against the Singer closure.



Every one of the seven COGFA hearings was packed, like this one in Dixon, as communities came out in force to oppose facility closures.

20 male patients waiting in hospital emergency rooms to be admitted to Tinley. ... If we let them close state hospitals, how many more will be waiting?"

She noted that "The state's own closure plan admits that shuttering Tinley Park, Singer and Chester Mental Health centers will lead to 'limited options' for those needing civil acute care. In other words, patients won't get treatment."

'No plan' for consequences of Singer closure

"THERE IS NO PLAN FOR THOSE in crisis who need short-term care, or those charged with or convicted of crimes," said Bob Izral, a psychologist at Singer MHS and vice president of Local 3362. "There is no plan ... for the emergency rooms and psychiatric units" at local hospitals. "There is no plan for the shelter, the jail, the police or sheriffs' departments or the justice system. There is no plan for 272 more unemployed, no plan for \$28 million in economic losses, no plan for next year's 854 admissions. There is a plan, however, to start the closure in 87 days."

Farah Pathan is a psychiatrist at Singer.

"We treat patients who are declined by the community hospitals and private-sector hospitals due to lack of beds, lack of funding, or lack of expertise," he said. "We are the carotid artery of the community and not the appendix. You cannot cut us out!"

State better served by keeping Murphysboro for youths

"THE INTENSIVE REHABILITATIVE staffing level at Murphysboro will be watered down, and so will the ability to really impact on the lives of troubled youth," Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said at the COGFA hearing in that small Southern Illinois town.

"Our union recognizes the need for a comprehensive system of services for adjudicated youth," he said. "One element of that system must continue to be secure

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Long time coming: Cook County members ratify contract

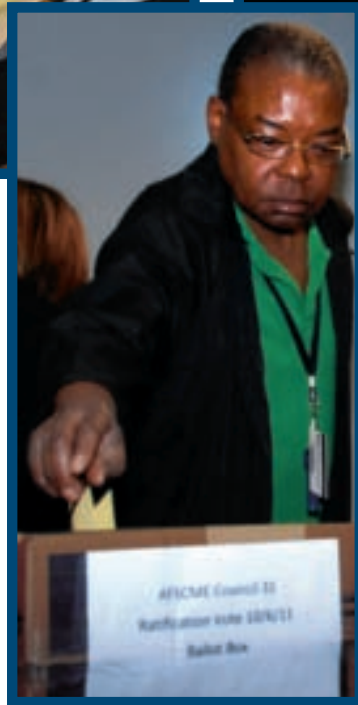
Cook County management finally stopped dragging its feet and union members in 12 of the AFSCME locals representing county employees overwhelmingly ratified a contract to replace the one that expired three years ago.

PAY WILL GO UP 2.25 PERCENT RETROACTIVE TO JAN. 1 AND ANOTHER 3.75 PERCENT ON JUNE 1, 2012, SIX MONTHS BEFORE THIS NEW CONTRACT EXPIRES. All employees on pay grade 9 will be moved up to pay grade 10 on Aug. 1, 2012.

There will be no changes in health insurance. That was on many members' minds, according to local union leaders.

"Health care was everybody's major concern," said Kim Doss-Patterson, president of Local 1276, which represents professional and technical workers in the county's health system. "They wanted us to give back on health benefits."

Negotiations for a new



Health care was everybody's major concern.

contract started in September 2008, just as the current recession sent public budgets into a tailspin. Then in 2009 the County Board voted to roll back a one-cent sales-tax increase that had brought a measure of stability to county finances.

Management came to the table proposing to freeze wages and step increases and

cut health-care benefits, which would have been, in effect, a significant pay cut.

"The bargaining committee was determined to resist these takeaways, and to continue to build on the progress made in past union contracts," Council 31 Associate Director Mike Newman said. "The committee made clear we would stay at the

table until the county agreed to a fair contract. And we held firm when it seemed that management would never

budge an inch."

Eventually, there were no givebacks.

The new contract will also extend recall rights for laid-off employees to two years, from the previous one year.

Given the threat of layoffs, "Our members are happy about the recall rights provision," said Laura Norris, president of Local 2060, which represents support staff in the state's attorney's office. "I know it's a recession, so getting some raise was good."

Three AFSCME Cook County law enforcement locals had previously settled contracts through binding arbitration.

COOK COUNTY

Preckwinkle seeks employee concessions to balance budget

The ink was barely dry on the contract between AFSCME and Cook County when Board President Toni Preckwinkle demanded that employees do more.

WITH THE STING STILL FRESH FROM THE FURLOUGH DAYS MANY OF THEM ALREADY TOOK, employees were being threatened again with layoffs if they didn't relent on new givebacks.

In a letter to county unions, the administration demanded an immediate response to her insistence that employees take two more furlough days, six unpaid holidays and more in the next year. It said county employees could avoid 500 layoffs by taking the unpaid days, but that another 500 layoffs would happen in any event.

"The more you give, the more she wants," said Laura Norris, president of Local 2060, which represents support staff in the state's attorney's office. "This is not 'shared sacrifice.' If we give in, she'll just come back and ask for more."

Norris said even members

who were slated for layoff before AFSCME members voted to take the last round of furloughs, and who could face layoff again, were opposed to new concessions. "They said, 'Don't give in!'"

And that's just what the local union presidents from Cook County AFSCME locals unanimously decided. Their response to Preckwinkle's demands:

- The county's budget woes are the direct result of a failure to tell the public the simple truth: Cook County doesn't have enough money to maintain the vital services on which citizens depend. The quarter-percent sales-tax increase should never have

been repealed without an alternative source of revenue.

- AFSCME members and those in other unions have already made substantial sacrifices to address the county's budget shortfall. Employees who took 10 furlough and shutdown days conceded nearly 4 percent of their pay.
- County employees shouldn't have to pay more for the critically important services they provide. Those services include jail security, policing, social services, monitoring of criminals on probation, health-care support services, indigent criminal defense and criminal prosecution support. That burden should instead be shared equally by all citizens.

- AFSCME just completed contract negotiations with Cook County and throughout those lengthy negotiations, none of the new demands in the county's letter were ever proposed.

- The timeframe provided for responding to the issues raised in the letter is an insult to the democratic process by which decisions are made in our union.

For all of these reasons, AFSCME will not agree to President Preckwinkle's ultimatum demanding that union members bear the burden of solving the problems her administration faces in developing the fiscal year 2012 budget.

Pension cuts still a threat; and more shots at collective bargaining rights

After rocking the Capitol rotunda on Oct. 26, AFSCME members continued to press for a supplemental budget appropriation to negate the Quinn administration's effort to close seven state facilities, lay off 2,000 mostly frontline employees and withhold a negotiated state-employee wage increase that was due on July 1.

AS ON THE MOVE WENT TO PRESS, COUNCIL 31 WAS WORKING WITH COMMUNITY ALLIES TO hold a Nov. 8 lobby day to press for the funds needed to keep all facilities open.

At the same time, the union is mounting legal challenges to Gov. Pat Quinn's assertion that a public employer in Illinois can nullify a legally negotiated collective bargaining agreement, simply by saying a legislative body's appropriation is insufficient to meet contractual obligations (see page 6).

Layoffs would weaken Human Rights enforcement

QUINN'S ATTEMPT TO LAY OFF employees despite a contractual agreement he signed not to do so would hit 15 percent of the staff in the only state agency charged with ensuring that the human rights of Illinois citizens are not violated. With an existing backlog of complaints, the Department of Human Rights would have its ability to process complaints further compromised by these layoffs. This is another example of the dire need for a budget supplement.

Pension cut measure won't go away

SB 512, LEGISLATION DRAFTED and vigorously promoted by the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, would drastically increase pension contributions for current public employees, effectively forcing them out of the

pension system and into risky 401k-type accounts.

SB 512 would force current public employees to choose among three very bad options:

- Pay twice as much out of every paycheck for their already modest pensions;
- Receive a sharply reduced pension benefit at the current contribution rate; or
- Earn no pension credits going forward, just a privatized personal investment account dependent on the vagaries of Wall Street.

Though many public-pension systems in Illinois face funding shortfalls, none of those shortfalls were caused by the participating public employees, who faithfully make their contributions year after year.

The shortfalls resulted from the failure of employers to contribute their share. Those employers have effectively been borrowing from their employees' pension funds for years. Now the bill has become due.

But the corporate elite is trying to make caregivers, correctional officers, teachers, firefighters and other public employees bear the burden of fixing this problem. AFSCME opposes **SB 512** or any similar measure that would reduce employee pension benefits in contravention of the state constitution.

Resolution would blame state employees for budget mess

HJR 45 IS A DISTURBING attempt to scapegoat frontline state employees, laying the blame for the state's fiscal problems at the feet of AFSCME members. The resolution would inject legislators into the state-contract negotiating process, by establishing a maximum wage increase.

The resolution singles out only union contracts even though the state enters into contractual agreements with hundreds of other parties. Yet the payroll for AFSCME frontline employees represents approximately 5 percent of the state's total expenditures — making it absurd to single them out as the source of the state's fiscal problems.

Thousands could lose bargaining rights

SB 1556 would take collective bargaining rights away from several thousand employees

Legislative



Update

under the governor and other constitutional officers by redefining "managerial and supervisory" under state labor law.

Without a shred of evidence, Quinn's lobbyists are spreading the lie that employees in certain higher level titles cannot be counted on to perform their jobs with diligence and integrity now that they are part of the union.

The Quinn administration is alleging that these employees are not committed to their jobs, simply because they belong to a union — an

insult to every union member who gets up every day, goes to work and gives their very best to the jobs that they do.

Retiree health insurance still threatened

SB 175 WOULD INCREASE healthcare costs for the typical state or university retiree by some \$3,500 annually, requiring them to pay \$6,000 toward their health insurance each year, up from their current \$2,500. And many pay much more, despite the dis-

ortion that retirees pay nothing for their health insurance.

The truth is that while those with 20 years or more service don't pay premiums for themselves, they do pay spousal premiums and significant co-payments and deductibles.

Retiree health insurance was part of employees' compensation package — a commitment made during their working years that should not be violated now that they are in retirement. Through the collective bargaining process, active employees agreed to pay higher health insurance premiums in return for the promised premium structure when they retired.

Administration seeks to dodge veterans' preference

SB 2188 WOULD REMOVE ALL "technical and engineering" staff in the Department of Central Management Services from the state's Personnel Code. The administration says it needs this exclusion so it can hire information technology staff without being limited by the state's mandated preference for military veterans.

The bill has passed the House and could come up for a Senate vote on "concurrency," meaning no amendments would be allowed. AFSCME favors a bill that gives a limited number of exempted positions for a limited period of time, rather than a bill that would remove hundreds of existing employees from coverage under the Personnel Code and would permanently take away the veterans' preference.

Check out Council 31's website

For all of the latest news from your union.



www.afscme31.org

C O U N C I L 3 1 C O N V

Delegates meet in ti



Titanic battles are facing public service employees across the nation. AFSCME members in Illinois are

THAT WAS THE CENTRAL THEME THAT PLAYED OUT OVER TWO DAYS OF INTENSIVE meetings and workshops at the 17th Council 31 Biennial Convention on Oct. 14-15, where a total of nearly 900 local union activists from AFSCME locals around the state, including 478 elected delegates, gathered to plot the union's course for the next two years.

"We meet at a time of great peril," Council 31 Executive Director Henry Bayer said in his report to the delegates. "The promise has always been if you're willing to work hard, you'll be able to support a family, buy a house if you want, educate your kids if you have them, have access to affordable health care and retire with dignity.

"That promise is quickly slipping away, out of reach for more and more Americans."

Bayer said the relentless attacks on AFSCME members in the past two years – service cuts and layoffs, program cuts and privatization, furlough days, facility closures, attempts to undermine collective bargaining and more – are part of a plan.

"The claim is that we're responsible for the economic calamity that they created," he said. "But the aim is to wipe us out because we are an impediment to their plan to drive down wages; reduce benefits; shift health care costs onto our backs; decimate our pensions, Social Security and Medicare; and generally shrink government."

'Attack on the middle class'

DELEGATES WERE CALLED UPON TO FACE AN UNPLEASANT TRUTH: THE BATTLES UNION members face today are part of a class war being waged by a U.S. corporate elite aiming to preserve and extend the concentration of wealth in their own hands.

"This no longer feels like the United States of America but the United Corporations of America," said Mahlon Mitchell, state president of the Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin. "This is an attack on the middle class, an attack on our way of life."

This corporate elite, the politicians who serve them and the huge media conglomerates they control are calling it class warfare when anyone attempts to dilute their influence over the political process or levy moderate taxes on their vast wealth.

"Last year CEO pay in the large corporations went up 28 percent," noted Council 31 Deputy Director Roberta Lynch in a speech to the convention. "The median family income went down 10 percent."

That's really class warfare, she said. "Who waged a war to wipe out employer-sponsored health care? That was class warfare on us, waged by people at the top. Fewer than one-third of private-sector workers now have pensions. Who waged that war? Who waged the war on unions, with fierce opposition to workers who want to have a voice on the job? It's only called class warfare when we fight back."

She cited the example of GE, a huge corporation that is shipping U.S. jobs and profits overseas. "Yet last year they paid no federal taxes," she said. "None. We're paying them. That's class warfare. They're sucking up our resources and giving nothing back."

Unions: 'The last fortress'

LYNCH EXPLAINED WHY THE WEALTHY WERE WAGING THIS WARFARE.

"Unions harness the strength of workers," she said. "That's threatening to those in power. We're the last fortress of power for ordinary people."

Reversing the corporate elite's dominance, reestablishing the voice of working families and reclaiming the American Dream were the challenges put before the convention.

"The last, best defenders of the middle class are unions," said Mitchell, the firefighters leader. "Unions help preserve a balance of power in this country - ensuring that corporate interest and the bottom line don't trump our American values."

That assertion is supported by economic data, political strategist Robert Creamer said in his remarks to the convention.

"The single largest contributor to this stagnation of middle class incomes has been the corporate attack on organized labor," he said. "The percentage of private sector workers in unions has shrunk from 35 percent to 7 percent," from the mid 1960s to today.

During that time real wages have dropped, while the wealthiest 1 percent have become rich beyond imagination, grabbing for themselves every penny of growth in the expanding U.S. economy.

"Collective bargaining is the only way to level the playing field," Creamer argued, "to assure that increases in American productivity are widely shared throughout the economy. American workers – and the American economy – need unions now more than ever. ... Unions are the only way to prevent the collapse of the American middle class."

'We've got to be everywhere'

EMPLOYERS ARE COMING AFTER WORKERS, WITH PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, THE LAST BASTION of union strength, taking the brunt of the most recent, relentless assaults.

Meanwhile a right-wing majority in the U.S. Supreme Court has turned Big Business loose, giving them a green light in the 2008 "Citizens United" case to spend unlimited dollars on elections.

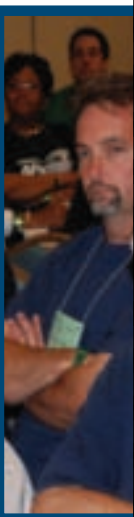
The corporate offensive has been aided by fear and insecurity, brought on by an economic crisis now in its fourth year.

Bayer warned that "the fight won't be easy, and it won't be short, but it can be won."

Creamer said union members will have to be ready to "make a phone call when it's needed, join a noontime picket when asked, jam a City Council chamber when a budget is being considered, fill the Capitol rotunda when the legislature is in town.

"We've got to be everywhere in every corner of the state in council chambers, county boards and school boards fighting for what we believe – fighting for the right to have a union, fighting for fair compensation, fighting for a voice on the job, fighting for basic fairness and dignity.

"For that we need make no apology. It is our enemies who would attempt to demonize us in order to deny us justice in the workplace. They are the ones who will do evil if we don't stop them."



E N T I O N

me of roiling conflicts



and working families
being called upon to fight on the front lines.



Highlighting battles past and present

They organized new members, won hard-fought contracts, battled privatization and fought layoffs and a closure. At the recent Council 31 convention, a group of leaders from local unions that have been on the frontlines of the ongoing war on public services had a chance to tell their stories.

THE STORIES WERE AT ONCE INSPIRATIONAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL AS AFSCME MEMBERS search for a blueprint on how to fight the incessant attacks on public employees, collective bargaining and a middle-class way of life that many feel is slipping away.

Always popular, the "Voices from the Frontlines" feature was especially relevant this year because so many of the local unions represented at the convention are in similar battles.

Below are selections from the six voices heard at this year's convention.



Danielle Majka, secretary of Local 978, LaSalle County, told about their fight to settle the local's five contracts covering 200 active members in various county departments.

The County Board was looking for concessions in the bargaining and offering a pittance in wage increases.

"I'm here to tell you, there was no way this local bargaining committee would accept their proposal," Majka

said.

The local started a newsletter, updated members with flyers, made phone calls and held emergency membership meetings to keep everyone on the same page, all aided by a group of union activists who comprised an AFSCME "member action team."

The local held an informational picket that got support from other AFSCME locals in the area, who, Majka said, "stood by their brothers and sisters in unity."

Eventually the board backed down on its concession demands and agreed to a contract the members considered fair.

She concluded: "To get fair contracts in such hard economic times, we need to keep our brothers and sisters close and stand up for what we believe in."



Kim Doss-Patterson, president of Local 1276, Cook County Department of Public Health, told how her members won their fight against service cuts and layoffs.

The county was threatening to drop the popular and effective Women, Infants and Children program, popularly known as WIC, and turn it over to private agencies.

"This meant that 49 AFSCME people were going to be out of work, but more importantly thousands of moms and babies would not get much-needed services," she said. "I learned quickly how to fight on a different level...talking to County Board commissioners, health board members, the media and the public."

Getting the clients behind them and out to testify on their behalf was key, she said. Members talked to the media,

the commissioners, church groups and others. Sometimes they despaired, but just before the termination date "the program was saved."

The lesson for Doss-Patterson: "We have to fight and keep fighting until all means have been exhausted."



Greg Foreman is president of Local 2335 at the Murphysboro Youth Center, a facility Gov. Pat Quinn has slated for closure.

He talked about his local's "plan of action to fight this despicable proposal."

They started with T-shirts and yard signs. They organized an informational picket.

"AFSCME members from other locals pitched in," he said.

From the picket line they went directly downtown to the annual Murphysboro Apple Festival to gather petition signatures. "I didn't have one person hesitate to sign."

Then they marched in the festival parade, marching at the front, thanks to intervention by the mayor. After the festival they walked the streets, passing out flyers.

They put together a brochure about the facility, "what we do and the people who work there," Foreman explained.

They went to Steeleville for the October Fest parade, walking with members from Chester Mental Health Center, another targeted facility.

Then they mobilized the community for a public hearing on the closure. Area elected officials came to lend support.

"We hit a home run that day," he said about the hearing. "The governor's goons didn't stand a chance."

Hoping that "all of the efforts and support will pay off," he concluded that "the human spirit is alive and well in Southern Illinois."



Jacquelin Fair is the president of Local 2217, Springfield Urban League Head Start. Her story was about how they formed a union with AFSCME and got a first contract.

"Organizing our union...was a tough campaign, forcing Head Start employees and the children we teach to suffer through a vicious anti-union campaign" where "30 good employees were fired."

The workers won, but knew it wouldn't be easy to get a first contract.

"We took the fight directly to the workplace," she said. There were petitions, sticker days and weekly AFSCME T-shirt days, when "parents even helped by dressing their children in green."

There was outreach to the community and to the parents, who have a role in governing the program.

"The most amazing thing I have seen is how all of us have developed and grown to take on leadership roles to build our union," she said. "Because of arrogance and ignorance, management still has some lessons to learn that we will teach them, but they are slowly starting to realize that working together makes for a better Head Start. ... Without a union, you sit there hoping things will change. Now, we can make a positive change and fight to make Head Start better!"



Ellen Larrimore,

president of Local 1989 at Northeastern Illinois University talked about how she and an expanding core of activists established a higher profile for the union on campus and parlayed that into a series of union-building landmarks.

"As you all know, a good contract is not won at the bargaining table, but in the workplace," she said. "We had our work cut out for us."

That work included organizing a rally with the teachers union, mobilizing a lobbying campaign, starting a newsletter, sponsoring educational events on campus and group social events, building their member action team by recruiting MAT leaders, organizing solidarity actions, setting up tables in the school's common area, and recruiting and training stewards.

"As a result of all this activity, by the time we sat down at the bargaining table, the ... administration ... was treating us with much more respect," Larrimore said.

It led to a groundbreaking new contract and the ability to organize more than 100 new members, sign up scores of fair-share payers for full membership and boost participation in the local and the PEOPLE program.

It all came because they took on the work to "build power in the workplace," she concluded. "Organize for power!"



Kevin Johnson, president of Local 1891, city of Evanston, recounted his union's ongoing battle against privatization.

Last spring, "the city told us 'everything is on the table for privatizing,'" Johnson said. "Streets and Sanitation, Parks and Forestry, Community Health and much more..."

"We realized we needed the help of the community."

The local started by exposing the results of the city's recent venture into privatization. Four months after

A solemn tone and a call to action

Celebrating past victories wasn't enough at this year's Council 31 convention. The many assaults AFSCME members have endured in the past two years called for a solemn assessment of what must be done and how to do it.

IN ADDITION TO GETTING PLENTY OF ADVICE AND SUPPORT in a wide range of educational workshops, delegates, alternates and observers were treated to high-energy speeches from five dynamic speakers. On this page are selections from their remarks.



"They want to dictate the terms of our employment," COUNCIL 31 DIRECTOR HENRY BAYER warned in his biennial report to delegates. **"This is the corporate agenda, aided and abetted by politicians of both parties: Drive down wages and benefits and if the unions get in the way, get rid of the unions, too. That's what they did in Wisconsin, that's what they're trying to do in Ohio. And that's what they want to do here as well."**

In urging greater unity, he asked, "If we won't fight to protect ourselves, who do we think will protect us? ... There are no purely local fights. No service is immune to privatization, no facility is exempt from potential closure; every benefit is open to attack; and even basic bargaining rights are not sacrosanct."

He reminded the convention about "the thousands of members former Gov. George Ryan tried to lay off. They'd be gone, but for this union."

"Remember the thousands Blagojevich wanted gone? They would be gone without the union. Vienna, Vandalia, Pontiac - would they still be open without the union?"

"Do you think that university employees would have avoided involuntary furloughs without the union? Whatever you're paying for health insurance premiums, you'd be paying more without the union."

He warned that "A loss on any front emboldens our enemies on every front. That's why every member has skin in the game in every battle. Every fight we win makes it less likely that we'll have to fight again."

"Republicans say we can't tax the rich because they are the 'job creators,'" scoffed COUNCIL 31 DEPUTY DIRECTOR ROBERTA LYNCH. **"But from the time the recession bottomed out through the present, there's**



been a \$465 billion increase in corporate profits and no job growth. Working people with money in their pockets to buy consumer goods and get our economy moving again are the real job creators. Public services create jobs."

She warned delegates not to take their union for granted. "Many of us inherited a union. We showed up and it was there. We showed up and we could earn a decent salary. We showed up and there was health insurance and a pension plan. Workers will no longer be able to keep what we inherited just by showing up."

The attacks on unions "won't stop and we have to be willing not to stop. They want to destroy collective bargaining, cut pensions, close facilities and lay off public employees. Don't let them do it on our watch!"



"Corporations run this country," said JIM GARITY, PRESIDENT OF AFSCME COUNCIL 40 in Wisconsin. **"As trade unionists we have to stand up. In Wisconsin we're going to recall (Gov.) Scott Walker and reclaim our state."**

He urged Illinois members to "Stand up for yourselves. You're all heroes. Tell people what you do. You take care of your families. You take care of the people you serve. You serve your communities. Every one of you does something good every day. Tell people who you are."

"The central problem facing the American economy - and our society - is the collapse of the American middle class," POLITICAL STRATEGIST ROBERT CREAMER said. **"People who work for a living—that's most of us—are getting a smaller and smaller share of the nation's economic pie."**

Organized labor "is the only institution in the country that prevents Wall Street and the largest international corporations from having their way with America," he said. "Organized labor is the only organization that can simultaneously stand up for the middle class at the bargaining table and the ballot box."

"That's why the fights in Wisconsin and Ohio and right here in Illinois are so fundamental. Undermining the right to choose a union - the right to negotiate a binding contract - paves the road to a low-wage economy, to the demise of the American middle class."



MAHLON MITCHELL, PRESIDENT OF THE WISCONSIN FIREFIGHTERS UNION, called the dominance of corporate money in politics "the pornography of power." In the last election, "we were asleep at the wheel. Bad politicians are put in office by good people who don't vote! They are trying to eliminate our voice. Discredit us. Desensitize us. And defund us!"

He noted that the loss of revenue to Wisconsin state government over the next 10 years totals \$2.3 billion, "from the massive tax cuts for corporations and wealthy investors. Shared sacrifice? We sacrifice, and they share the wealth!"

And he said, "It is time to stop believing the senseless rhetoric about 'shared sacrifice' and 'the state is broke.'"

"It is time for us to continue the Wisconsin Uprising, because we have arisen but we should

have never been asleep, we need to continue to stay standing and fighting, and never giving up or giving in. ... This is about justice and this is about history!

"And I guarantee you we are on the right side of justice and we will make history."



CONVENTION

Resolutions outline Council 31 priorities

The biennial Council 31 convention is the union's highest decision-making body, charged with setting overall union policies.

DELEGATES TO THE CONVENTION HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DRAW THE BROAD STROKES FOR THE UNION'S AGENDA IN THE UPCOMING TWO YEARS, SETTING OVERALL POLICY BY VOTING ON RESOLUTIONS. COUNCIL 31 STAFF AND THE ELECTED EXECUTIVE BOARD USE THE RESOLUTIONS TO GUIDE THEIR WORK DURING THE TWO YEARS BETWEEN CONVENTIONS.

A total of 478 delegates, representing 179 of the council's 282 locals, attended this

year's meeting, the 17th since Council 31 was founded. They adopted resolutions covering a wide range of issues. Among them are those which commit Council 31 to:

- Defend collective bargaining — by providing assistance to unions in Ohio, Wisconsin and other states in their efforts to overturn the anti-collective bargaining laws and expose the right-wing corporate interests behind these attacks; mobilizing local

unions against Gov. Pat Quinn's actions that undermine collective bargaining rights for Illinois public employees.

- Protect pension benefits — by engaging in the kind of concerted, intensive political activism that will be essential to defeat this threat; opposing efforts to diminish Illinois public employees' pension benefits or establish defined contribution plans for them; and fight for a pension plan that allows public employees

on the second tier, those hired after Jan. 1, 2011, to retire at a reasonable age with benefits that provide retirement security.

- Oppose privatization — by continuing to play a leading role in fighting attempts to privatize vital public services at any level of government through legislative action and member mobilization; working for contract provisions that make privatization more difficult; and working to

strengthen ties with service recipients, striving to improve service quality, and build community support as a deterrent to privatization.

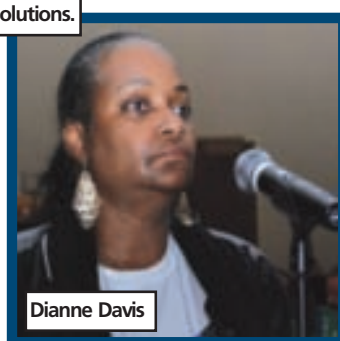
- Fight layoffs — by opposing the reduction in public services as a response to the fiscal challenges facing state and local governments; mobilizing the grassroots campaigns and public outreach needed to stop layoffs in state government, universities, counties, municipalities, school districts and other public service entities; help build coalitions that will fight against cuts in public services.

The full text of all 14 resolutions can be found on the Council 31 website, www.afscme31.org. Click on the news item "Council 31 convention delegates act on resolutions to map out policy."

Delegates debate the resolutions.



Marcia Heitz



Dianne Davis



Randy Milligan



Roosevelt Journigan



Yolanda Sims



Bruce Dubre



Rose Jackson



Carl Sorrell

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Scrappy Rock Island County local wins raises

WAGE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE third and fourth years of a four-year contract weren't smooth or quick, but by putting up a fight Local 2025 got an agreement with the Rock Island County Health Department for a 2-percent raise in each year.

The county was dragging its feet on even meeting with the union. When they finally met, "They were telling us they had no money," said Desi Bond, chief steward in the Health Department who was on the local's bargaining team.

It turned out not to be true, which Council 31 discovered in doing an analysis of the County Board's budget.

"We did informational

pickets to inform the public of what was going on," Bond said. "We weren't asking for more than what other locals got. The cost of living had increased, so it was only fair to give us an increase, too."

The union bargaining committee was led by staff representative Dino Leone, with Bond, Hilary Knott, Helen Cline, Brooke Hendrickx, Elizabeth Torres and Gracie Velazquez.

One-year extension a plus for Christian County workers

LOCAL 3776 MEMBERS WILL GET raises equal to 3 percent of their unit's average wage in a one-year extension to the existing contract. Health insurance

terms remain unchanged.

"Last year we had a long fight for our contract," said Mary Rhodes, the local union president. "We had informational picketing. The day after we signed the contract, eight employees got layoff notices."

So back into action.

"We really came together," she said. "We took petitions all around the county and got over a 1,000 signatures in just a couple of hours. We took them to the County Board and kept rolling them out across their round table. The layoffs didn't happen."

With the current contract about to expire, the County Board chair requested a meeting, attended by Rhodes and staff representative Chris Hooser. He offered them a one-year contract extension with the 3 percent increase.

Once they had the proposal, Rhodes and Hooser took it to the local union's executive board, which enthusiastically sent it to the members for ratification.

"It always takes almost a year to negotiate a contract and it's a battle," Rhodes said. "I don't think they wanted that. They always get an attorney

from St. Louis who ends up getting the money. This time they didn't spend any money on a middle man, so there was something for us. We just had one meeting. We gave up nothing. And no layoffs."

Wage freeze for Moline school employees

LOCAL 672 AGREED TO A WAGE freeze and a one-year contract with Moline School District. A step was added for employees who reach 17 years of service. Custodians will be able to take up to three vacation days when school is in session. Health insurance costs will rise, with employees paying 19 percent of premiums, up from 14 percent, and a further increase in deductibles.

"The step raises will be eaten up by the insurance increase," said Tom Minick, the local union president. "The district had a deficit and wanted to eliminate it over the bargaining table. The state is way behind on payments to the school district. This is the first time we did a one-year contract in 15 years, because there's so much uncertainty. But we have good contract language and a good

rapport with the school board. They see us as professionals who will get down to business and get things resolved."

The negotiating team was led by staff representative Dino Leone, with Minick, Bob Brathall, Dave Duax, Chris Meuser, Greg Shelton, Scott Van Blaricome and Gary Vols.

Granite City local enlists mayor in getting settlement

AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN LOCAL 3405 and Granite City was reached this summer for a three-year contract that should have started in May 2010. The contract froze wages for that first year, with 2.5 percent increases in each of the next two years.

A third personal day and two paid holidays were added. The local agreed to contributing toward health insurance premiums for the first time — \$50 for the employee or \$100 for family coverage — but that amount was rebated for the year wages were frozen.

"The city attorney was a no-to-everything guy," said Brad LaRose, the local union president.

Continued on the facing page

SHORT REPORTS



State bargaining committee prepares to start negotiations

BARGAINING FOR A NEW STATE master contract to replace the one that will expire on June 30 begins in January. But the committee, elected from each local union that represents state employees, has already begun preparations.

The committee met Oct. 26 to sift through scores of proposals, trying to decide which were the most important and achievable issues to place on the table.

Every proposal came up

for a vote by the entire committee. Now those proposals the negotiating team passed will be assembled

into a package and presented to management in December. Negotiations will begin Jan. 18, when the first three days of bargaining will be held in Springfield. Following that, three-day sessions are scheduled twice a month through the end of May.

A statewide labor-management meeting on Dec. 15 will set the stage and lay the groundwork for the negotiations.

“We have a long, hard slog ahead of us,” Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said. “But we have done this before and if we maintain our unity

and our members stay involved, we can do it again.”

Coal baron found guilty in mine-disaster investigation

THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF SECURITY at Massey Energy’s Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia was found guilty in federal court of lying to federal agents and destroying documents sought by investigators looking into a deadly 2010 blast that killed 29 miners.

Hughie Elbert Stover faces up to 25 years in prison after being convicted on two felony counts of making a false statement and trying to cover up records in a federal investigation.

A United Mine Workers report on the blast, “Industrial Homicide,” called Massey “A rogue corporation, acting without real regard for mine safety and health law and regulations.”

Go to www.UMWA.org or blog.afclio.org for more information.



Privatization fight gains momentum in Evanston

WHAT STARTED OUT LAST SPRING WITH MANAGEMENT’S STATEMENT that “everything’s on the table” for outsourcing of Evanston city jobs has turned into a fight for just a handful of AFSCME jobs now targeted for privatization as the City Council prepares for a Nov. 28 vote on a budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Local 1891 began its battle against privatization in June (see page 10), forming a Community Labor Alliance for Public Services, under the banner “Public – not private — Works.”

When it started, “everything” meant departments of Streets and Sanitation, Parks and Forestry, Community Health and much more.

But the coalition’s petition drive, community outreach and lobbying efforts have narrowed the target.

On Oct. 29 the coalition held a rally next to City Hall, then marched into a budget hearing.

“We were encouraged by verbal support from a majority of City Council members who said they opposed the privatization of the six forestry jobs,” Council 31 staff representative Flo Estes said. “We’re on the verge of complete success for this campaign, but it’s not over until the budget passes with no outsourcing.”

Continued from the facing page “Finally we talked to the mayor and had a private meeting with him. We came to an agreement in a little more than an hour. It was a waste of the city’s money to have that attorney meeting with us for a year and a half.”

He said the city has financial problems, aggravated by the state, which is late on \$1.7 million it owes the city.

“We understand these are hard times,” LaRose said. “We want to work with the city.” The negotiating committee was led by staff representative Ed LaPorte, with LaRose, Tonya Beasley, Bonnie Dickerson, Barb Hawkins, Sheila Nordstrom and Marti Tanthavong.

Raises for Mattoon city workers in three-year contract

THE CITY OF MATTOON WANTED concessions from Local 3821, on longevity pay and other issues, but didn’t get them. The new three-year contract raises wages 2 percent in each of the first two years and 3 percent in the final year.

“It was harder than it should have been, but we ended up with a pretty good contract,” said staff representative Michael Wilmore, who led the bargaining team with Rick Shook, Tom Strong, Brian Butler and Rob LeCrone.

Massive final push for Ohio repeal measure

THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEERS FROM OHIO UNIONS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS around the country were jumping into the fray to defend collective bargaining rights in the runup to Nov. 8 voting on Issue 2.

Defeating this ballot measure would repeal SB 5, the law Gov. John Kasich pushed through this spring that takes away the right of public employees to bargain collectively.

“No” on Issue 2 was seen as a benchmark defense of the right to strive for a middle-class life, and late polling showed it had a comfortable lead. But millions of dollars from corporate heavy hitters continued to be dumped into the state in the last week of the campaign.

As On the Move went to press, AFSCME members in Chicago and Springfield were joining union members across the country, phone banking into Ohio to help counter the expected big-bucks escalation of their assault.

On the ground thousands of volunteers were planting yard signs, knocking on doors and organizing rallies to get out the early vote and build momentum for Election Day.

“I am walking today to support the future of union families here in Toledo and all across Ohio,” said Connie Wood, vice president of AFSCME Local 272, a mechanic in the Toledo Public Schools.



Postal workers battle service cuts, layoffs

IN WHAT HAS BECOME AN ALL-TOO-FAMILIAR STORY FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES at every level of government, workers for the U.S. Postal Service found themselves pushing Congress to take action that would short circuit plans to cut Saturday service and lay off at least 80,000 employees.

The Postal Service is in trouble because of a Bush-era law that requires it to prefund, in just 10 years’ time, the cost of retiree health benefits for the next 75 years. This cost covers not only current employees, but employees who have yet to be hired – and it is on top of the cost for current retirees’ health benefits. The Postal Service could be forced into a disastrous credit default as a consequence.

“No rational company would choose to make pre-funding future retiree health benefits the highest corporate priority in today’s economy – and no company would use all its borrowing capacity to do so,” a National Association of Letter Carriers fact sheet said.

Yet USPS has been forced to do that, and some right-wing members of the U.S. House are pushing against a fix and using the crisis to further their anti-government agenda.

Postal workers’ unions are fighting back, with a nationwide rally on Sept. 27, a lobbying campaign and an information blitz. Get more information on the NALC, NPMHU or APWU websites.

RETIREE NOTES



Convention: Building chapter, sub-chapters remains high priority

RECRUITMENT AND EDUCATION of new members remains a top priority for Chapter 31, a commitment wholeheartedly endorsed by some 120 delegates attending the group's 13th Biennial Convention.

"Since our last convention, we have added five new sub-chapters, making Chapter 31 the second largest AFSCME Retiree Chapter in the country with almost 27,000 members," Chapter 31

President Virginia Yates said in her opening address to delegates.

The convention, held Oct. 12-13 in Springfield, set the agenda for the next two years, elected officers and included inspirational speakers and educational workshops for delegates and other activists on hand.

"Through the continued involvement of union retirees, Chapter 31 continues to win battles that yield significant gains for retirees, as well as forestalling attacks on retirees' standard of living,"

said Maria Britton, director of retiree programs. "Education of members allows the creation of a base of informed and influential voters. Education and expansion of retiree membership is key to improving the lives of Illinois public retirees."

Yates was one of several speakers who addressed the many challenges public sector retirees have faced. Other speakers included Council 31 Executive Director Henry Bayer and Deputy Director Roberta Lynch, Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Ameri-

cans Director Billy Feitlinger, and Karen Gilgoff, deputy director of the AFSCME International Retiree Program.

"There have been attacks on our retirement security on all levels," Yates said. "Big business and the media have targeted public sector retirees for cuts, with the anthem 'why should they have benefits the private sector doesn't have anymore.' Instead of asking why hard-working Americans don't ALL have access to a decent retirement, they have divided us and are now trying to take away what we have left."

The delegates laid out the agenda of the organization for the next two years, passing resolutions on key issues, which included:

- Opposing efforts to cut retirement benefits, advocating for the funding of pensions, and defending reliable defined-benefit pension plans from being replaced with risky defined contribution plans;
- Working for federal legislation to repeal or significantly modify the GPO and WEP in order to protect the Social Security benefits of affected public retirees;
- Opposing all efforts to balance the federal budget on the backs of seniors and people with disabilities by cutting benefits in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid for either current or future beneficiaries.

Many avenues open for prescription-drug assistance

EVEN WITH INSURANCE BENEFITS, prescriptions can cost hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars per year, becoming one of the largest drains on a

senior's budget and leaving many seniors fearing that they may not be able to afford the prescription medication they need.

Too often, that means not taking a medication as prescribed, in a desperate attempt to contain costs.

But there are other ways to combat the high cost of medication.

Illinois has a unique, fully state-funded program for seniors, Illinois Cares Rx. Although this program was cut in the last budget, more than 175,000 seniors are still eligible. Under the new eligibility requirements a senior household of one qualifies if their income is less than \$21,780 per year, \$29,420 for a household of two and \$37,060 for a household of three.

Illinois Cares Rx still covers medication for eligible seniors including those who are not yet on Medicare.

Another way to cut costs is to consult a reliable website, such as benefitscheckup.org, run by the National Council of Aging. This site allows "one-stop shopping" on benefits for seniors, including prescription drugs, health care, meals, utility bills and more. Seniors can fill out applications for services, find senior housing and review Medicare benefits and changes.

Another website, rxassist.org, is a clearing house of discounts available through pharmaceutical companies and non-profit organizations. But be aware that many of the offers do have age and income eligibility requirements. For this easy-to-use sight, just enter the name of the drug or the pharmaceutical company name, and then search the database to come up with offers.

Medicare deadlines change

THE TIME PERIOD FOR MEDICARE beneficiaries to decide whether they want to change their coverage ends Dec. 7, a change from last year when the end date was Dec. 31. The period did run longer this year, starting Oct. 15.

During this period Medicare beneficiaries can change their prescription, Part D, coverage or their Medicare Advantage plans, if they have them. Those who have traditional Medicare and want to keep it need only be con-

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cerned with Part D.

Part D and Medicare Advantage plans are provided through private health insurance companies and must be re-examined every year because they can and often do change from year to year. Medicare says moving the deadline up enables insurance companies to get cards and information to enrollees before the coverage year starts Jan. 1.

Seniors should take stock of their current plan and compare the medication they are taking with those covered as of 2012 by the Part D plans. They should go on the www.medicare.gov website if they have access to the Internet, type in their medications and ZIP code and look at the choices they have.

If you don't have access to the Internet, call SHIP, the Illinois Senior Health Insurance Program, at 1-800 548-9034.

More than 1 million beneficiaries who received benefits from the discount-drug program and fell into the so-called "doughnut hole," have saved \$500 on average in out-of-pocket costs since Jan. 1, 2011, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, the health care reform law that opponents call Obamacare. Medicare is also putting in place a new "quality star rating" system for health plans. Beneficiaries are encouraged to look on the Medicare website to see how plans have performed.

Top-rated plans get five stars, with one star for the lowest rated plans. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid set this up as a quality-control system to assess health plans and hospitals and also to tie Medicare payments and reim-

bursement to those quality ratings.

Five tapped for Hall of Fame induction

FIVE NEW RETIREE ACTIVISTS have been added to the Chapter 31 Hall of Fame, an honor reserved for those who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in their commitment to the organization.

Louise Bates-Spencer, Don Fitch, Geraldine Ogden, Paul Soebbing and Neva Summers will have their names prominently displayed on a plaque in the Springfield Office alongside the 46 current inductees.

Louise Bates-Spencer, Chicago Sub-chapter 60, retired in 1998 and joined AFSCME retirees soon after. She has been dedicated to protecting the benefits that



public sector retirees have earned ever since, and she is known as a fighter, strongly advocating for the sub-chapter to legislators and the community. Louise became an Executive Board member of Chapter 31 in 2009 and now serves as a trustee as well as the vice-president of her sub-chapter. If motivation and determination are needed to

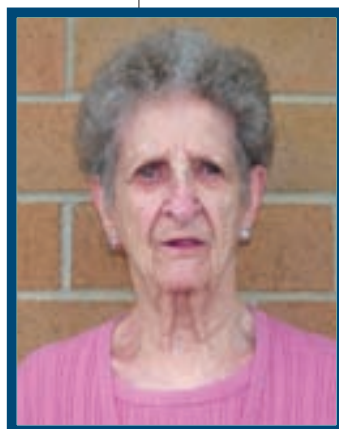
achieve the goals of the organization, Louise is there to provide it.

The late Don Fitch, a lifelong union member who moved seamlessly from activism within his local to activism in Chapter 31, was an Executive Board member of



Chapter 31 and the president of Joliet, Sub-chapter 73. He was instrumental in forming the Joliet sub-chapter, where membership increased to over 700, thanks in large measure to his efforts. Fitch was known for his humor and did not like to boast about his own accomplishments, but members of his sub-chapter and the community at large knew how influential the sub-chapter was because of his leadership. He passed away in May 2010.

Geraldine "Gerry" Ogden is known for her ability to stick to a job until it is done and make sure others do the same. After retiring from Zeller Mental Health Center in Peoria, Ogden joined Peoria



Sub-chapter 78 and soon after became vice-president and then president, a post she held from 1997 until 2011. She helped teach others that building a strong union is important to maintain a middle class. When asked about her long service to the union, she modestly says "I just did the job you are supposed to do."

Paul Soebbing was inducted into the Hall of Fame for consistent dedication to Quincy Sub-chapter 83 and to his



community. He has served in many roles within his sub-chapter depending on the need of the group. Besides currently serving as vice president and organizing and implementing numerous events, he has also volunteered his time with the

American Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, Master Gardeners at the University of Illinois and actions within his church, to name just a few.

The late Neva Summers, Champaign Sub-chapter 88, served her membership as treasurer and as a passionate advocate for seniors. "Whatever you asked of her, she always was willing to go the extra mile," said Barbara Franklin, president of the sub-chapter. Summers represented the union to many other organizations, including the Champaign County Health Care Consumers, who also recognized her work on the Medicare Part D task Force. Her volunteerism also extended to giving rides and delivering meals to seniors in her community. She passed away in June 2010.

Voices

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Groot Industries took over garbage and yard waste collection, the company "held the city hostage, asking for another \$700,000," he explained.

That was enough to get the Community-Labor Alliance for Public Services off the ground.

The local and the alliance "marched in the Fourth of July parade, passing out thousands of green AFSCME frisbees to kids while getting their parents to sign petitions," Johnson said. "We talked to residents at art fairs, farmers markets, street corners and train stops. We set up a website" and got out "Public - Not Private - Works!" yard signs.

"Although the fight continues, our impact has clearly been felt," Johnson said. The city manager now says, "I don't want to get a call in the middle of a blizzard that a private contractor can't plow our streets because they're stuck on I-294."

Johnson's conclusion: "In a day when the crazy folks are trying to blame public workers for everything, now is not the time to remain silent. Go out there, be proud, let the public know what it would be like not to have you."

Closures

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facilities that can also foster rehabilitation."

Bayer pointed out that one plan is to convert Murphysboro to an adult facility. "Perhaps if we developed and funded an effective juvenile justice system that truly focused on rehabilitation, we would not have the large numbers of adult offenders that have caused our state's correctional facilities to be bursting at the seams."

Mabley is unique in Illinois

"MABLEY SERVES THE PEOPLE the community has been unable - or unwilling - to serve," psychologist Elaine Lee testified.

"Mabley Center is specifically designed to serve the needs of people with intellectual disabilities who are deaf or blind," said Linda LeBlanc, an educator and secretary-

treasurer of Local 172. "The walkways have trailing fences designed to allow the blind to find their way independently ... on the campus. All of the homes have trailing rails down the hallways Signs are printed in Braille."

It is the only such facility in the state.

"Therapies and cost of care account for 86 percent of Mabley's budget," said Deb Muhlstadt, a public service

administrator. "Those costs will follow the person wherever they live. The remaining 14 percent - the only costs the governor can expect to save - come out to a savings of less than \$500,000. The Governor proposes to disrupt the lives of disabled people and their families for a savings that amounts to less than one-one hundred thousandth of a percent of the states \$52.7 billion dollar budget."

JIM DIXON



TIM WIELGOPOLAN



KYLE SPENCER



Union Proud: Award winners shine

DEDICATED UNION ACTIVISTS WIN PUBLIC SERVICE, JANE FITZGERALD, STEWARD AWARDS

Local 2819 President Tim Wielgopolan, Local 2600 PEOPLE chair Jim Dixon, Local 1274 Chief Steward Kyle Spencer are three standout union activists and leaders in their locals recognized at this year's Council 31 Convention.

Dixon 'bleeds AFSCME green'

"The Jane Fitzgerald Award is given at each convention to one extraordinary union activist" who shows the "diligence and fervor" that the late Local 2081 leader displayed, Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said. "Jane worked day in and day out to build this union."

Dixon was nominated because "He is, in his heart and his soul, a union organizer," his nominator said.

He's been a volunteer member organizer, helping new local unions get their start, bringing AFSCME's message to workers who desperately need representation.

He's vice president of his local, which represents state employees in Springfield. He chairs the Community Action Committee, which has raised funds for a disabled veterans home and has collected more than a ton of food for the Central Illinois Food Bank.

"He's the guy in his local that fires people up and gets them involved, gathering protesters for rallies, making signs, leading chants and working behind the scenes to make sure it all comes off," said retired Council 31 Associate Director Rose Daylie, who presented the award.

He does the necessary work of building bridges between the union and the community, receiving an award from the state AFL-CIO for outstanding community work. He is a trustee in his home-town village government.

His local union president says Jim "bleeds AFSCME green."

Spencer 'everywhere' for Hill CC members

"Certified stewards are the backbone of our union, the glue that holds this union together," Bayer said.

Kyle Spencer is a dedicated union member who takes the initiative to motivate members into action, the people who put him up for the award wrote in nominating him.

He's at every rally, convention, conference, hearing, parade and event, often with his wife and children at his side, all wearing their green.

He plays a leading role in resolving issues that arise between members and his facility's administration. He's willing and able and constantly involved in educating fellow workers about their contractual rights, always standing beside them in the union's many battles with the administration, remaining level-headed and cool under pressure.

He recruits members for certified-steward training

and gets them active in union committees. He works on the local union newsletter. He goes to lobby days in Springfield. He organized the community's annual Labor Day parade. He was at a school board meeting in his hometown when the teachers needed support.

He was in Wisconsin last winter, backing public employees in their battle for union rights.

He helps foster the local union's presence in the community working on the AFSCME project to get school supplies for children who need them.

"It seems like he's everywhere the members at Hill Correctional Center need their leaders to be," Bayer said.

Wielgopolan raises public-employee visibility in Ottawa

The Public Service Award honors "the tens of thousands of public employees in our state who give their all to serving the public day in and day out," Bayer said. Awardees have gone the extra mile in performing the job they do every day or in the positive role they play in their local communities.

Tim Wielgopolan, whose local represents city of Ottawa employees, "has worked long and hard to put forward the faces of his city's employees as 'friends and neighbors' not faceless bureaucrats," retired AFSCME International Area Director Tish Taylor said in presenting the award.

He has worked on a project sponsored by the United Way that mobilizes people in the building trades and other labor volunteers to repair the homes of elderly or less fortunate people. Wearing their AFSCME green, volunteers who work for the city use city-donated trucks to haul away the debris from these repair projects, often working side-by-side with high school students getting service hours.

He spearheaded a project to create an attractive, permanent setting for a Workers' Memorial plaque commemorating a street-department employee killed on the job in 1968. He still buys flowers every year for the memorial.

He was a leader in raising funds for the Radium Girls Memorial Monument – a sculpture in downtown Ottawa that commemorates a group of brave young women workers who suffered painful deaths as a result of toxic exposures in that town's one-time watch factory.

"He's an all-around good citizen and all-around good guy," Taylor said.