

RETIREE NOTES



AFSCME Chapter 31 Retirees gathered in Springfield on Jan. 27 to vote on the union's legislative agenda and electoral endorsements.

Rauner vetoes bill protecting senior services

GOV. BRUCE RAUNER vetoed a bill over the recent holiday season that would protect the integrity of the Community Care Program, a program that gives financial assistance to seniors and disabled persons wishing to stay in their homes.

Before senior service and disability advocates won the battle to fund the Community Care Program in the fiscal year 2017-18 budget, Rauner tried to cut \$120 million from the program.

The measure Rauner

vetoed, House Bill 1424, protected 80,000 seniors in the Community Care Program from massive cuts and scaled back care. Rauner vetoed it.

Rauner said in his veto message that the Department of Aging's Community Program Task Service is currently working on solutions to reduce costs. In other words, his real concern is not meeting the needs of senior citizens, but cutting budgets.

AFSCME fights for back pay

AFSCME'S LEGISLATIVE TEAM is building support for bills that would fund the remaining back pay still owed to

many state retirees. Senate Bill 2269 is sponsored by Sen. Andy Manar (D) and Sen. Sam McCann (R); Rep. Jerry Costello sponsors House Bill 4290.

In 2011, the state failed to pay a negotiated wage increase, citing lack of appropriated funds. AFSCME took the matter to arbitration and an independent arbitrator ruled that the union contract was binding and the increase must be paid. But the state appealed the arbitrator's decision to state court.

After a very lengthy legal battle, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the wages were indeed owed, but a legislative appropriation is needed. AFSCME won inclusion of \$50 million in the FY 2015 budget

to pay a portion of what was owed state employees in back wages. In April 2016, AFSCME successfully lobbied inclusion of back pay in SB 2046, one of the budget bills that were sent to the governor's desk that year. Rauner vetoed SB 2046 in July 2016.

"I am a former state employee that has been retired for more than three years," said Sub-chapter 76 member Jeffery Stahl. "It's hard not to think about what is still owed me after all this time."

Two peas in a pod?

REPUBLICANS HAVE A GUBERNATORIAL primary race this year, but it's not one that offers a real choice. Jeanne Ives, a state representative from the 42nd District, is running for governor in the GOP primary against Gov. Bruce Rauner.

Rauner has already proven himself a sworn enemy of labor unions. His one overriding goal is to wipe out unions in our state. And he's made clear his intent to carry that crusade forward into a second term.

If elected governor, Ives plans to push a constitutional amendment removing the pension protection clause and destroying pension protections for retirees. The Illinois Constitution currently states that "membership in any pension or retirement system of the State, any unit of local government or school district, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, shall be an enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired."

By removing this clause, state legislators would be free to make changes to already existing pensions, which could include a reduction or elimination of cost of living adjustments and changes to retiree health care benefits.

Ives supports a move to 401(k)-style retirement plans for all current retirees receiving a public pension, which would take away their risk-averse defined benefit plan.

Rauner has been pushing the same kind of pension reduction schemes, demonstrating that there's little difference between these two candidates on key issues of importance to senior citizens.

"These attacks, on a mutually agreed upon benefit that I also paid into, make me feel like a pawn," Sub-chapter 86 President Kim Johnson said. "I did what I was supposed to do while at work and I expected to be treated fairly. The state needs to stand up to their contractual obligations and find other areas of revenue."

AFSCME retirees gear up for 2018

SUB-CHAPTER MEETINGS ARE being held across Illinois in 2018! Stay informed, meet like-minded retirees and voice your opinions about issues affecting you and your community. With 35 sub-chapters across the state, you'll be sure to find one close to your hometown.

Find a meeting near you. Visit afscme31.org/retirees or call Kate Morthland, AFSCME's Retiree Program Coordinator at 217-788-2800. 🐦



ARE YOU A RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEE OWED BACK PAY?

Support SB 2269 and HB 4290 to pay all wages owed.

Call 888-912-5959 and urge your legislators to vote YES!