



# MOVE

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



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## Defending public services

**Resisting Rauner's bare-bones budget**

**See pages 8-9**

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

# The twisted logic of arm-twisting

*Gov. Rauner's trying to compel elected officials to ignore the will of their constituents and the needs of their communities.*



BY  
ROBERTA LYNCH

WITH A LITTLE  
HELP FROM  
UNION  
MEMBERS,  
MANY LOCAL  
OFFICIALS ARE  
REFUSING TO  
BOW TO THE  
GOVERNOR'S  
TACTICS.

**B**ruce Rauner recently boasted that Illinois' fiscal crisis provides him with "leverage" to force the changes he wants to make.

BUT, TRUTH IS, THERE'S A MIGHTY FINE LINE BETWEEN "LEVERAGE" AND POLITICAL BLACKMAIL – AND the evidence suggests the governor has galloped right across it.

Look at what's happening in villages, cities and counties statewide. The "change" the governor says he wants is the end of all union membership. Most state legislators are reluctant to back such a brazen assault on workers' rights. So the governor is focused on twisting the arms of local governments – many of them very small and virtually defenseless – to compel them to back his union demolition schemes.

It's a clever scheme. First, Gov. Rauner put forth a FY 16 budget plan that cuts state funding for local governments by 50 percent. That's a lot of dollars gone from governmental bodies that have few revenue alternatives outside the politically-fraught path of raising property taxes. A 50 percent cut in state funding would cost Aurora more than \$9 million, Belleville more than \$2 million, Bloomington some \$3.7 million, Galesburg \$1.5 million – and the list goes on.

After sowing panic, he began travelling the state to promote his so-called "turn-around" agenda. The message to local government officials was clear – to have any hope of getting their funding restored, they would have to pass a resolution backing the governor's agenda. To help them along, he gave them a copy of the resolution and insisted they couldn't change a word.

Despite Illinois' budget challenges, Rauner has devoted much of his time to bopping around the state on his disinformation mission, pushing for support for his 'turnaround agenda' – "right-to-work" zones, cutting benefits to injured

workers, eliminating the prevailing wage for construction workers and taking away bargaining rights from public employees.

The governor claims his program to eliminate unions and drive down workers' wages would improve the economic prospects of local communities, but there's little evidence to back him up. In fact, states with similar policies on average have significantly lower household income, higher rates of workplace fatalities, less access to health care and higher levels of poverty. And even the Chamber of Commerce has said that Illinois doesn't need "right-to-work" to compete with neighboring states.

The good news – *very* good news – is that, with a little help from union members, many local officials are refusing to bow to the governor's tactics. In more than two dozen cities and counties, union members have packed board and council meetings, presenting powerful testimony about the damage "right-to-work" zones would do to their jobs and communities.

In some areas, local officials are flat-out refusing to even consider the resolution, insisting on the right to set their own agenda. The Dixon City Council adopted an alternative resolution that explicitly rejects Rauner's program. And Joliet's newly elected mayor, Bob O'Dekirk, strongly criticized the governor's scheme, saying "Union wages support every business in Joliet while corporate profits of non-union companies may never find their way back into our economy."

While some local governments, usually very small ones, have passed Rauner's resolution, growing numbers of local elected officials are demonstrating that their commitment is to

their constituents, not to the big poobah in Springfield. Political blackmail isn't going to fly with them.

Hopefully, it will be rejected just as decisively by members of the state legislature, where Rauner's also trying his hand at strong-arming. His budget plan makes massive cuts to essential services for vulnerable individuals, including autism treatment programs, indigent burials, breast cancer screening, smoking cessation, and assistance for children with complex medical needs. Next on the chopping block would be treatment for the mentally ill, community disability services, programs for homeless youth, health care assistance and more.

But here's where that blackmail dressed up as "leverage" comes in. Rauner has strongly hinted that if lawmakers will back state legislation to drive down workers' wages and weaken unions, he'll support new revenue to mitigate the draconian service cuts. That's a devil's bargain if ever there was one.

It's playing poker with human lives as the chips: Individuals with autism, desperately ill children on feeding tubes, families who can't afford to bury a loved one, all these and more will be made to suffer unless the General Assembly caves in to the governor's demands for legislation that chops away at the rights, benefits and income of Illinois workers.

If elected officials in the tiny town of Pecatonica, or in the Republican stronghold of Naperville, or in far downstate Vandalia, or in numerous other local governments across the state can find the courage to stand up to Rauner, we can certainly insist that our state legislators do the same. With everyone, including the governor, all too aware that new revenues are urgently needed to restore Illinois to economic health, let's make sure those revenues are found without offering up our state's working families as this season's sacrificial lambs.



### On the Move

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Mike Newman, Deputy Director  
David Miller, Editor  
Dolores Wilber, Designer

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# AFSCME members turn down "turnaround agenda"

The trial run for Gov. Bruce Rauner's extreme, anti-worker agenda is showing that the labor movement is ready to stand up and oppose attempts to weaken the middle class in Illinois.

IN FRONT OF COUNTY BOARDS, CITY COUNCILS AND VILLAGE BOARDS, MEMBERS OF AFSCME and other unions have turned out on short notice to let elected officials know the governor's ideas aren't welcome in their communities.

Rauner is pushing local government bodies to pass resolutions expressing support for his so-called "turnaround agenda" that reads like a wish list for the corporate elite: barring public employees from participating in politics; eliminating prevailing wage agreements on public works projects; cutting benefits for injured workers; and prohibiting public sector bargaining on key issues such as health care benefits and subcontracting.

Most notably, it calls for allowing local governments to establish "empowerment zones" that would impose "right-to-work" – allowing employees represented by a union to opt out of paying any dues or fees toward the cost of that representation.

"We all know that Illinois



AFSCME was well-represented among more than 300 union members who turned out to oppose Rauner's resolution in Livingston County.

has real problems, but the governor's agenda wouldn't do anything except make life more difficult for working families," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "It's an extreme agenda – and in the case of 'right-to-work' zones, blatantly illegal."

### Strong turnout on short notice

EVEN IF ADOPTED BY A VILLAGE, city or county, the resolutions don't carry the force of law – but they are a way to make extreme policies seem legitimate and to pressure state legislators to enact the key elements of Rauner's anti-worker agenda.

The labor movement in Illinois quickly saw through this sneaky, cynical maneuver. Whenever word about local

government meetings to consider the governor's resolution got out, union members were quick to turn out, often on very short notice.

"I knew I needed to speak to the board so they knew how we felt," said Local 3312 President Susan Vegovich, who spoke before the Iroquois County Board. "I thought we were there by ourselves, but we filled the room with different people from different walks of life, some union, some not."

Vegovich said that while the Iroquois County Board may not be very friendly toward labor, the people who turned out at the meeting were decisively on the side of working people.

"There wasn't one negative thing said about unions at that meeting," she said. "They

got a strong message. I was really thrilled and humbled by the whole thing."

Iroquois County was one of several locations where, despite the governor's resolution being on the agenda, no action was taken after citizens voiced their strong opposition. Other government bodies, particularly in union-friendly areas, have taken up the resolution only to strike it down.

That doesn't mean Rauner's plan doesn't have supporters, though. In McHenry County, for example, the resolution was passed despite a strong, vocal turnout from union members.

### "Right-to-work" – wrong for Illinois

ONE ELEMENT OF RAUNER'S

agenda, his scheme to bring "right-to-work" to Illinois through "empowerment zones," has drawn especially strong criticism from working people.

"I kind of think the governor's trying to put the onus on the local governments to do the dirty work for him and get a feel for how the municipalities in the state want to pursue this," said Tony Miller, President of Local 1514, which represents Aurora city employees. Miller lives in Oswego, which was the first government body to take up Rauner's resolution.

Miller said "right-to-work" was nothing more than an attempt to divert more wealth and power into the hands of the elite.

"I think 'right-to-work' takes away a lot of your bargaining power," he said. "When you don't have the ability to bargain for wages and benefits, you start seeing a bigger disparity between the haves and the have-nots."

Rauner's "right-to-work" push has drawn a strong response from AFSCME Retirees, who have turned out at several meetings to defend the rights they fought for decades to preserve.

"We all stand together and we'll continue to stand together until we know we can retain our rights," said Louis Brick, President of Retiree Sub-Chapter 73. "This governor has so far only demonstrated that he wants to undercut, underfund and destroy our union. We have to stand together to fight."



Union members packed the room when the Village of Oswego considered a "turnaround agenda" resolution.

# “Fair share” confiscation backfiring on Rauner



**G**ov. Bruce Rauner’s scheme to hamstring AFSCME and other public employee unions has been blocked, at least until the courts have their say.

IN THE MEANTIME, AFSCME MEMBERS ARE BECOMING MORE UNIFIED – AND THEIR RANKS ARE GROWING.

Since February, Rauner had been trying to implement an executive order prohibiting state agencies from collecting “fair share” fees from bargaining unit members who choose not to join a union.

These fees, which the state remits to the union, are

explicitly allowed under state law and required by the state master contract – though the governor has asked federal courts to declare them unconstitutional.

Since Comptroller Leslie Munger refused to implement Rauner’s order or set up an escrow account in which the fees could be held, the governor’s office had to impose a complex scheme that resulted in “fair share” fee-payers having their salaries reduced, with the money remaining in agency budgets.

But that plan came to an end soon after it went into effect – on April 10, a St. Clair County Circuit Court judge issued an Agreed Order requiring state agencies to immediately reinstate the transmission of “fair-share” fees deducted from employee

paychecks. Fees already withheld will also be transmitted to the appropriate unions.

The court order is based on an agreement reached between the Rauner administration and all affected labor unions – AFSCME, the Illinois AFL-CIO, and 26 others that have sued to have the executive order invalidated.

“We continue to believe that the governor’s executive order is meant to weaken the right of state employees to have effective union representation,” said Illinois AFL-CIO President Michael T. Carrigan. “We’re pleased that all fair share agreements will now be honored while our legal challenge is proceeding.”

### “100% Union!”

RAUNER’S ORDER AND THE

related federal lawsuit are intended to effectively bring “right-to-work” to the public sector by allowing public employees covered under collective bargaining agreements to pay nothing toward the cost of union representation.

But instead, many public service workers are exercising a right of their own – their right to join a union.

“Even before the court halted the confiscation of fees, more than 1,000 state employees acted on their own to sign up to be full dues-paying members of AFSCME,” Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. “The number continues to grow with each passing day.”

Lynch said that Rauner’s extreme agenda, much of it geared toward weakening unions in Illinois, has resulted

in a groundswell of support for keeping unions strong.

“The governor’s non-stop attacks on the labor movement have reminded people why unions are so important,” Lynch said. “By signing up for the union, people are taking a stand against an agenda that would weaken the middle class.”

Efforts to sign up remaining fee-payers are now underway in AFSCME locals throughout the state as part of Council 31’s “100% Union” campaign.

### Two court cases

WITH RAUNER’S CONFISCATION plan on hold for now, the union can turn its attention toward the two cases that will decide whether “fair-share” fees can continue – or if unions will see their resources stretched thin by having to represent employees who contribute nothing toward costs.

The first case, the lawsuit filed by AFSCME and dozens of other unions, is still pending before the St. Clair County Circuit Court. It seeks to have Rauner’s executive order invalidated. The second case, filed by Rauner in U.S. District Court, seeks a declaratory judgment that “fair-share” fees are unconstitutional.

“The governor doesn’t want us to have the resources needed to stand up to him in court or at the bargaining table,” Lynch said. “That’s why overturning his executive order now is so critical.”

## AFSCME honors library workers



**O**n April 14, AFSCME celebrated National Library Workers Day, which recognizes the valuable contributions library workers make to their communities.

This year, the union distributed “I Love Library Workers” bookmarks that allow patrons to show their support for employees who help them find books, consult reference material, look for

jobs and more.

Chicago Public Library employees represented by Local 1215 are among the 20,000 library workers represented by AFSCME nationwide. The three pictured here – Andrew Hamilton, Ray Orellana and Tony Powers (left to right)– work at the Austin-Irving branch and joined two young avid readers to show off their bookmarks.

# Illinois schools for deaf, visually impaired make a big difference in young lives

Two schools in Jacksonville, Illinois, serve as powerful examples of the quality public services provided by skilled state employees.

THE TOWN IS HOME TO BOTH THE ILLINOIS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE ILLINOIS SCHOOL for the Visually Impaired (ISVI). Both state schools give children access to a standard education as well as specialized programs, all provided by state employees trained to work with students with unique needs.

Both schools offer their programs at no charge to families, drawing individuals from all across the state who can't afford private schools and who value the dedicated staff at the schools that serve people with visual and hearing impairments.

"I feel like we're a family," said Jeff Haak, president of Local 38, which represents employees at both schools. "We have long-standing employees and don't have the turnover you'd see in a private institution."

AFSCME members at both schools include educators, support staff and, since many students reside on campus, residential care workers. Most staff members have specialized training that enables them to expand the horizons of the students and help them meet even the most difficult challenges. Employees at the School for the Deaf, for example, are all fluent in American Sign Language (ASL).

Tara Northrop, a residential care worker, said the main benefit for students attending the School for the Deaf is that they don't have to be paired with an interpreter and are surrounded by people who speak the same language.

"They can talk to the other kids instead of just being ignored all day," she said. "They can play sports here whereas too often they are shut out of those opportunities at the public schools in their communities."

Athletics are important at the School for the Visually Impaired as well. Students there can participate in a variety of sports, including track and field, swimming and wrestling. While most meets



Local 38 President Jeff Haak is the laundry supervisor at the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired. (Photos by Randy Squires.)



Tara Northrop is a residential care worker at the Illinois School for the Deaf.

and games are against similar schools in other states, some wrestlers compete against students from traditional public schools in the area.

"I get a kick out of watching kids grow and develop and trying to make a difference in their lives," said Jim Raabe, a physical education teacher at the School for the Visually Impaired. "It's a visual world so the kids here don't know how to play naturally. They have to be taught how to play. But they do a great job and work extremely hard. Some of them who were very limited will end up swimming 500

yards."

Raabe said the experience for ISVI students is far different from what they'd have in a traditional school.

don't provide things like braille readers. They don't provide the adaptive physical education or living skills."

## Teaching independence

ALONG WITH A TRADITIONAL education in math, science and English, students also learn how to navigate a world they cannot see or cannot hear. Employees teach skills that are used in both daily living as well as in potential jobs.

Haak, who works as the laundry supervisor at ISVI, receives help from several student workers.

"I'm teaching them housekeeping skills. It's a great experience for me," he said. "I know they have challenges in their life but I've seen them overcome them greatly."

The teaching and guidance provided by employees is vital, especially for those students who come from troubled families or have parents unwilling or unable to learn what it takes to communicate with their child effectively.

"I've had cases where kids were seniors and the parents came up to me and asked them to tell their child congratulations on graduating," Northrop said. "A lot of parents can't communicate with their children, but we can. I just feel like I'm helping to make them a better person, giving them something that they need."

**"I get a kick out of watching kids grow and develop and trying to make a difference in their lives."**

— Jim Raabe

"They'd be in a special classroom or they'd be isolated. They don't learn how to interact," he said. "A lot of times traditional schools

# Cook County contract fight part of a larger battle

Despite a bargaining process that has stretched over two years, Cook County employees continue to insist their next contract include a fair wage increase with retroactive pay after two years without a raise.

COUNTY PRESIDENT TONI PRECKWINKLE'S ADMINISTRATION HAS YET TO PUT AN ACCEPTABLE economic proposal on the table. County negotiators want employees to give up almost all retroactive pay while accepting increased health insurance costs.

At the same time, Preckwinkle is still pressing the General Assembly to cut employee pensions.

"Even though her plan was defeated last year, President Preckwinkle still wants to make us pay for the mistakes of politicians," Local 3486 President Jim Dunaway said at a recent gathering of county employees. "We cannot allow this attack on our retirement security to succeed."

With Gov. Bruce Rauner trying to weaken — even eliminate — unions in Illinois, Cook County employees have an opportunity to serve as an example to public service workers throughout the state by showing that unions can make gains even in the most difficult of climates.

"The governor is going around to different communities saying that public employees are making too much money. He's going after all working people in Illinois," Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman said. "We need to be ready not just for this

contract fight, but for all the other fights."

Local 1767 President Steve Ramsey told county employees at a "town hall" meeting in March that their fight for a fair contract was about a fair balance of power.

"Something has to stop when politicians are getting bailed out and public employees are getting sold out," he said.

With so much at stake, the 15 AFSCME locals representing county employees are focusing on building the lines of communication and reminding members of the importance of being active and involved in their union.

"We've sent a strong message to the Preckwinkle administration by attending

pickets, making phone calls or filling the room at county board meetings," Local 3315 President Presita West said. "We know that message is getting through.

But we need to do more. We need to send that message in every way we can."

County employees have been urged to wear AFSCME green on designated days to demonstrate their solidarity and determination. Locals are

also working on building up Member Action Teams to improve engagement and involvement.

At the March town hall, Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch told

county employees that they were on the frontlines in a fight against an elite that believes public employees don't deserve decent wages, retirement security, or even basic benefits like vacations.

"The best way to fight back is to keep up the fight for a fair contract," she said.

**"We cannot allow this attack on our retirement security to succeed."**

— Jim Dunaway

**"We need to be ready not just for this contract fight, but for all the other fights."**

— Mike Newman



(From top to bottom) Local 3486 President Jim Dunaway, Local 3315 President Presita West and Local 1767 President Steve Ramsey urged Cook County employees to be active and involved in the fight for a new contract.

# State contract negotiations – everyone's fight

**N**egotiations for a new contract with the state of Illinois, covering some 38,000 state government workers, are shaping up to be of critical importance to every AFSCME member, no matter where they work.

“BRUCE RAUNER HAS LAUNCHED AN ALL-OUT ASSAULT ON THE VERY EXISTENCE OF LABOR

unions in Illinois – and he’s made state workers his No. 1 target,” Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. “As their employer – and party to their collective bargaining agreement – he’s clearly trying to make them the testing ground for his program to eliminate all union members in the state.”

The AFSCME State Bargaining Committee of some 225 elected rank-and-file union members has been meeting regularly with negotiators from the Rauner administration since February – but the two sides have yet to even trade economic proposals.

Instead, the Rauner administration has focused on dozens of changes to contract language all with one overriding goal – to wipe out decades of progress in assuring fairness in state workplaces.

Rauner wants to eliminate any restrictions on subcontracting, allowing for state workers to be fired and replaced with contract employees. He’s pushing to lengthen the work week, reduce overtime pay, weaken rights for laid-off workers, and virtually dismantle the grievance procedure. He also wants to bar deduction of union dues, as well as fair share fees and PEOPLE contributions, from employee paychecks.

At the onset of bargaining, the governor went on the road with a PowerPoint presentation that purported to show that state employees are overpaid and have excessively generous benefits.

AFSCME responded quickly to point out that, in reality, state employee pay rates are in line with others in comparable positions – and benefits are in the mid-range

of all states.

And in the budget plan he presented to the General Assembly, Rauner proposed sweeping changes to state employee pension benefits that he claimed would save \$2 billion in the coming fiscal year, as well as \$700 million in health care “savings” based on drastically reducing employee benefits.

## Ready for action and outreach

AFSCME MEMBERS IN STATE government know they’re in for one very tough fight to defend their contract, their economic security, and their fundamental right to have a voice on the job.

As *On the Move* went to press, state locals were preparing for the first Unity Day of this contract campaign. Members will participate in various displays of solidarity, including wearing buttons and t-shirts or displaying signs.

Equally important, many union members have begun to reach out in their communities to inform friends, families, elected officials, and civic



groups about their battle to defend their right to have a union.

It’s increasingly clear that the governor’s repeated assaults have failed to damage the strong support for state workers and the services they provide in communities all across Illinois. The AFSCME Friends and Families Network will build on that support to establish a network that helps those employees withstand the all-out assault that Governor Rauner has launched on state workers.

“AFSCME members in

state government will be reaching out to their fellow union members who work for local governments, universities, or in the private sector,” Lynch said. “Every union member, especially every AFSCME member, no matter where they work, has a huge stake in the battle that state workers are fighting. If Rauner can succeed in taking away their union rights, you can be sure he will soon be coming after the rights of every other union member.”

Businesses and other groups are already beginning

“Bruce Rauner has launched an all-out assault on the very existence of labor unions in Illinois.”

— Roberta Lynch

to display signs indicating their support for state employees. Similar signs were deployed during the last contract fight and became a common site in storefronts and home windows.

“The governor has millions of his own dollars to put pressure on politicians and a network of wealthy supporters who will echo his attacks,” Lynch said. “That’s why we are working to build up grassroots support now. We need to be able to counter his money with our best resource – people.”

## Bill to pay back wages makes progress in Springfield

**A**fter nearly four years of waiting, thousands of state employees are one step closer to receiving long-overdue back wages.

ON APRIL 16, THE STATE HOUSE PASSED HB 3763, A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION BILL THAT would provide \$63 million to pay the remainder of the wages earned from July 2011 to July 2013 by employees in the departments of Human Services, Corrections, Juvenile Justice, Natural Resources and Public Health.

The wages were called for in the state master contract in place at that time, but were frozen by former Gov. Pat Quinn. Quinn eventually agreed that the wages should be paid, but by then the issue was tangled up in the courts and the legislature.

AFSCME has been waging

the fight for full payment on all fronts. The union has already prevailed at the appellate court level, has gotten all of the wages owed paid in most state agencies, and has gotten half the wages owed paid in the five remaining agencies.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Sue Scherer, D-Springfield, now goes to the Senate.

“The employees have already done the work,” Scherer said during the floor debate in the House, “and they deserve to be paid for their services.”

The legislation earned bipartisan support. Republican Rep. C.D. Davidsmeyer of

“The employees have already done the work and they deserve to be paid for their services.”

— Rep. Sue Scherer

Jacksonville said action should have come a lot sooner.

As *On the Move* went to press, the Senate had yet to act on the legislation. The union is urging AFSCME members in all affected departments to call their senator and demand action on HB 3763.

Member activism has been a critical piece of the battle every step of the way, working together with the

union’s legislative team and attorneys to win a series of interim steps both in the General Assembly and in the courts.

To become law, the bill would have to be signed by Gov. Bruce Rauner or the legislature would have to override his veto. Scherer said she hoped the governor would sign it, despite his anti-union views.

“I would hope that the governor would recognize this as the oldest bill,” she said. “I would hope he would do the right thing.”

AFSCME continues to press for a court decision ordering that the back wages be paid. Last September, a panel of state appellate court judges ruled that employees must be paid the wages they are owed, but the Attorney General has appealed that decision to the Illinois Supreme Court.

# OPPOSITION GROWING TO RAUNER'S BUDGET

**G**ov. Bruce Rauner is attempting to use the budget crisis facing Illinois – one he helped create – to pass a raft of measures that would weaken the state's middle class, while doing nothing to improve economic competitiveness.

The state is facing a \$6 billion funding shortfall in fiscal 2016 due to the rollback of income tax rates at the beginning of this year. Those tax breaks went disproportionately to wealthy people and corporations. Rauner has proposed closing this gap purely through devastating cuts to vital services, state universities and local governments.

Rauner says he won't support any new revenues to avert those cuts unless the General Assembly passes legislation that would drastically reduce pensions, weaken workers' compensation laws, and allow local governments to create "right-to-work" zones that would greatly weaken unions.

"The governor says he's willing to negotiate, but his idea of negotiating is to offer lawmakers two choices: either cut services that millions of people depend on or enact laws that would hurt countless middle class families," Council 31 Legislative Director Joanna Webb-Gauvin said.

While offering two options that would hurt everyday Illinoisans, Rauner has asked nothing of the state's wealthy or large corporations.

The governor's clear bias in favor of the state's rich and powerful was on display when he announced on Good Friday that he was freezing \$26 million in grants that help autistic children, provide burial funds for the indigent, and fund teen after-school programs. Days later, he announced that he was green-lighting more than \$100 million in special tax breaks for some of Illinois' biggest corporations.

"The governor's budget priorities aren't based on what's best for the state – they're based on what's best for the wealthy few," Webb-Gauvin said.

## WORKING FOR A RESPONSIBLE BUDGET

Rauner's fiscal 2016 budget reflects those priorities. It leaves more than \$2 billion in corporate tax breaks untouched while making steep cuts to many state agencies, state universities, and nonprofit disability agencies. It also cuts by 50 percent the portion of the state income tax that goes to local governments.

AFSCME is lobbying hard against these cuts – and it's not alone. The union is part of the Responsible Budget Coalition, which is urging lawmakers to resist the governor, stand with middle class families and pass a budget

that addresses the state's needs.

There is evidence the coalition's work is paying off and that lawmakers are getting the message.

"The thought that you can cut your way to prosperity is a myth," Sen. Toi Hutchinson, a Democrat, said at a press conference attended by other members of the legislature's Black Caucus. "We have over \$5 billion in debt, because the General Assemblies year after year after year took money from the public pension system and used it to spend on programs because they didn't want to talk about taxes."

Some Republicans are resisting the governor, too. Rep. David Leitch, for example, told WBEZ radio that the governor's proposed cuts to mental health services were irresponsible.

"The emergency rooms pick up more and the jails pick up more," he said. "Any cuts the state makes, simply means somebody else has to pick up the cost."

Despite such comments, AFSCME members and others will have to keep the pressure on lawmakers to resist cuts – and resist giving Rauner the anti-worker legislation he wants.

"You can't predict what deals will be made in back rooms," Webb-Gauvin said. "It's going to take strong, consistent pressure from constituents to keep lawmakers from accepting a rotten deal."





## Disability services cuts would have steep human cost

Community agencies that care for people with developmental disabilities have been dealt a one-two punch by Gov. Bruce Rauner's heartless approach to budgeting.

The governor's fiscal 2016 budget proposal would reduce spending on such agencies by more than \$82 million through rate cuts, elimination of grants and increased restrictions on who would be eligible for care. The cuts would jeopardize services and keep the average wages of direct support providers (DSPs) below the poverty line.

On the heels of that proposal, the Rauner administration announced the governor's unilateral decision to freeze spending on \$26 million in social services and public health grants. Community disability agencies depend on such grants to run vital programs, such as those that help children with autism. Those immediate cuts caused layoffs in disability agencies

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## University employees speak out against proposed budget cuts

Of all the devastating cuts contained in Gov. Bruce Rauner's budget proposal, among the deepest are those to state universities.

The governor's fiscal 2016 plan would slash funding to state universities by 31 percent – or \$390 million. The cuts would result in nearly 3,000 positions eliminated and, as a result, a reduction in critical services.

"Staff cuts that deep will impact everyone from the clerical, technical and maintenance and dietary staffers AFSCME represents, to professors," Council 31 political director John Cameron said in testimony to the House Higher Education Appropriations Committee. "Any such cut will impact the experience of students, from less help in the financial aid office to fewer class offerings to reduced hours at campus facilities to dirtier bathrooms."

The budget would cut to the bone funding for a university

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# Disability services cuts

Continued from page 9  
around the state.

AFSCME members who work at community disability agencies are not standing idle. They're speaking out against the governor's budget, taking the argument directly to lawmakers.

"During my 10 years at Ray Graham I've seen staff positions not filled because we don't have the money, and that makes it harder to give quality care," said Audrey Lake, a member of AFSCME Local 3492 who works as a DSP for Ray Graham Association. "Now the Governor's budget would cut \$2 million dollars from Ray Graham."

Lake testified in March before the Senate Appropriations Committee, which will play a key role in determining the fiscal 2016 budget. She was blunt in her assessment of Rauner's lack of concern for the people with developmental disabilities she supports on the job.

"Governor Rauner doesn't care what our individuals need. He wants to cut \$800,000 from Ray Graham's Specialized Living Center," she said. "That facility would have to close, 100 individuals would lose their homes and their friends, and 100 staff would lose their jobs."

## Struggling below the poverty line

DUE TO EIGHT YEARS OF STAGNANT state funding, average wages for DSPs remain below the poverty line for a family of four, leading to increased employee turnover at community disability agencies.

**"Governor Rauner doesn't care what our individuals need."**

— Audrey Lake

Rauner's proposal will make it even harder for agencies to attract and retain the employees who play an essential role in teaching and supporting people with developmental disabilities.

"Here in Springfield, Panda Express has openings starting at \$9 to \$11 an hour. Marco's Pizza is hiring drivers starting at \$10 to \$14 an

hour," said Yolanda Woods, president of Local 2481 at Hope School in Springfield, who testified before the House Appropriations Committee. "Hope School is having trouble hiring because they pay a little over \$9 for very hard, responsible work."

For Woods, Rauner's decision to freeze grants that help children with autism was felt personally. Her 2-year-old son, Nevelle, is diagnosed

**"Hope School is having trouble hiring because they pay a little over \$9 for very hard, responsible work."**  
— Yolanda Woods

with autism and has benefited from The Autism Program (TAP) at Hope School.

"TAP is where my own son was first evaluated and received his diagnosis of autism," Woods said. "He could not speak to express his wants and needs. His only method of communication was crying. After a few months of social skills training, Nevelle began to echo words. He pointed at items he wanted instead of crying. He is making progress and it was TAP who started him on that journey."

While opposing Rauner's budget proposal, AFSCME, community disability agencies and the families of people with developmental disabilities also remain allied through the Care Campaign, which is lobbying lawmakers to pass legislation that would increase DSP wages to \$13 an hour over time.

Legislation to increase DSP wages has been introduced in both chambers of the General Assembly – HB 3255, sponsored by Rep. Robyn Gabel, and SB 1822, sponsored by Sen. Heather Steans.

"Rep. Gabel and Sen. Steans want our individuals to get what they need: DSPs who are alert and fresh and patient, not DSPs who are stressed and impatient from working two jobs to keep their families out of poverty," Lake said. "They want to move our individuals forward. Governor Rauner's budget would push them back."

# SHORT REPORTS

## Son of Illinois AFSCME member awarded Family Scholarship



JACOB CHAPMAN, THE SON OF Local 1048 member Leslie Chapman, a public service administrator in the Illinois Department of Public Health who lives in Ava, is one of this year's recipients of AFSCME's Family Scholarship.

Each year the AFSCME Family Scholarship Program, awarded by the international union, provides \$2,000 scholarships to 10 high school

seniors that will be renewed for \$2,000 each year for a maximum of four years, provided the student remains enrolled in a full-time course of study.

In an essay titled "What the AFSCME Family Means to Me," Jacob wrote that "the steady wage increases and health benefits negotiated by AFSCME have helped protect my family from inflation and a widening wealth gap."

Jacob, who will attend Southern Illinois University in the fall to study finance, wrote that he hopes to "create jobs that provide good wages and benefits... similar to what AFSCME has provided for my mother."

## Privatized foster care agency leaves Illinois after scathing IG report

AN INSPECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT from the Department of Children and Family Services illustrates the dangers of contract-

ing out government services to companies that place profits over providing quality services.

A summary of the investigation was included in the OIG's annual report, released in January. It concluded that National Mentor Holdings, a private subcontractor, suffered from "a culture of incompetence and lack of forthrightness."

The investigation focused on two girls, 11 and 12 years old, who were placed in the home of a foster mother who had previously committed fraud and had abandoned a 9-year-old foster son with special needs. While the OIG's report does not identify the "private agency" to blame, reporting by BuzzFeed confirmed that Mentor is the company in question.

The girls, who had both been diagnosed with mental health issues, required specialized care. Mentor placed them with a foster mother who ran a day care business and "prioritized the needs of her

Continued on facing page

# University employees oppose budget cuts

Continued from page 9

system that is already starved for resources. At Eastern Illinois University, for example, building service workers have already been reduced by 17 percent over the previous three years.

Further cuts would mean not only layoffs, but a reduced standard of living for the employees who remain.

"This is too deep a hole to plug with staff pay cuts," Cameron said. "At EIU, AFSCME members are at the end of a four-year contract where – between very modest pay raises and paying more for insurance – workers have already fallen behind the cost of living."

In many ways, Rauner's proposal would set the state university system back decades – literally. The proposed funding for Northeastern, for example, hasn't been at such a low level since 1988 – 27 years ago.

## Putting the burden on students

AFSCME MEMBERS AREN'T JUST speaking up for themselves. They're also speaking up for families who would bear the brunt of tuition increases forced by the sharp reduction in funding. Those increases could, in many cases, either result in students taking on more debt or even having to give up on obtaining a college degree.

"State universities have been an avenue to success for many middle- and low-income students who cannot afford private college tuition," Cameron said. "Tuition hikes that price those students out of an education are not a viable solution to this cut."

Students who aren't shut off from attending face another issue – a decline in the quality of their education as universities are forced to cut classes and have greater difficulty attracting and retaining quality faculty.

"Our engineering program

was 3rd in the nation and we are now tied for 6th," said Local 698's Jim McGuire, a storekeeper at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee. "The university has more than contributed to our economy and state revenue through education of its students and cutting-edge research. When will we return to fully supporting the staff and faculty who make that happen?"

In his testimony, McGuire noted that strong state universities help the economy in other ways, too. Like any other large employer, they serve as an economic anchor in their communities.

"A cut to the university budget in wages and spending is obviously going to have a negative impact on the local economy and businesses," he said. "Cuts would clearly harm not only the university but our local government and our state's future economic growth."

# Next chapter in pension saga takes shape as Supreme Court decision nears

**A**s On the Move went to press, the state Supreme Court had yet to announce whether it would uphold a Circuit Court ruling striking down pension cuts for active and retired state employees, state university employees and downstate teachers.

HOWEVER, WHATEVER THE EVENTUAL DECISION, IT IS CLEAR THAT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AND RETIREES will have to continue defending their right to a secure retirement for some

time to come.

If the justices overturn the Circuit Court ruling – which declared the pension-cutting law, known as SB 1, “null and void” because it violated the state constitution’s pension protection clause – a lengthy case would likely get underway, with the central question being whether the state’s fiscal crisis is so dire that the state is justified in invoking “police powers” to override the constitution. The Circuit Court ruling held that the constitution’s language was absolute, regardless of the state’s financial woes.

A ruling upholding the Circuit Court decision would undeniably be good news for all the public service workers and retirees who have fought for years against draconian pension cuts – in the General Assembly, then in the courts.

A positive ruling would do nothing, though, to address the solvency of the SURS, SERS and TRS pension systems, which face massive funding shortfalls after decades of neglect by politicians.

“AFSCME and its partners in the We Are One Illinois union coalition, which has led the effort to have the pension-cutting law struck down, are ready to work in good faith with elected officials on a solution to the pension crisis that ensures solvency while being fair to employees and retirees,” Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said.

Unfortunately, any solution to the pension issue would have to win approval from Gov. Bruce Rauner, who has only offered one idea: forcing all public employees into the lower Tier 2 plan for

all of their remaining years of service.

## Undermining the court

EVEN THOUGH THE SUPREME Court hasn’t announced a decision in the SB 1 case, Rauner has already gone on the attack against the court, questioning its legitimacy.

“I don’t trust the Supreme Court to be rational in their decisions,” Rauner told the Daily Herald. “I think they’re activist judges who want to be legislators.”

Rauner added that he believed the Supreme Court was part of a “corrupt” system because it hears cases argued by trial lawyers who contribute to the campaigns of judges – though Rauner said nothing about the pro-business groups that also attempt to influence judicial contests.

That argument is very simi-

lar to the one Rauner has used to justify his belief that public employees and their unions should not be allowed to have a voice in the political process.

“The governor apparently defines ‘corrupt’ as anyone who dares to disagree with him,” Lynch said.

Rauner has also expressed support for repealing the constitution’s pension protection language, which would open the door to ending defined-benefit plans entirely. It’s all too likely he will try to get such an amendment on the ballot in the 2016 election.

“The Supreme Court is going to have the final say on this particular case, but the fight to defend retirement security is far from over,” Lynch said. “We won’t have any time to rest on our laurels, no matter what the court decides.”

## SHORT REPORTS

Continued from facing page

business over the care of the girls.”

Buzzfeed reported that Mentor, a for-profit company, works with a non-profit entity, Alliance Human Services, to enter into contracts to provide foster care services. Alliance signs contracts with governments, then pays much of the money to Mentor.

“This convoluted system acted to further muddle the chain of command and add unnecessary complications to the delivery of services to clients,” the OIG report found.

Ultimately, the OIG recommended that children and foster homes assigned to Mentor should be moved to “reputable, contracted child welfare agencies” and that DCFS should avoid contracts with agencies that rely on subcontractors like Mentor.

Soon after the report’s release, Mentor announced it was shuttering its operations in Illinois. It denied the OIG’s report led to that decision,

telling BuzzFeed “we cannot provide a service in a manner that meets our standards.”

Previous reporting by BuzzFeed exposed Mentor’s involvement in a long history of child deaths and sexual abuse. Former employees told BuzzFeed that “the search for high profit margins meant child safety suffered.”

### “Fight for 15” gains momentum in Illinois, nationwide

ON APRIL 15, TENS OF THOUSANDS of low-wage workers and their supporters took part in protests across the nation and around the world to highlight the need for increased wages for fast food restaurant employees, home care workers, adjunct professors and others.

Protests took place in more than 200 cities in 30 countries. In Chicago, thousands filled the streets in the downtown Loop, demanding fair wages and improved working conditions. They were joined by members of



Workers and supporters of the “Fight for 15” campaign called for higher wages during a demonstration in Chicago on April 15.

AFSCME Cab Drivers United who came out to show their support.

The Fight for 15 campaign began in 2012 with a focus on fast-food workers, particularly at McDonald’s restaurants. Since then, it has expanded to fight for improved wages for

workers in other industries who are unable to make ends meet despite working full-time in jobs that also offer little in the way of health care benefits or paid time off.

“If we were paid better wages, that would bring more money into the community,”

Douglas Hunter, a maintenance worker at a West Side McDonald’s, told Progress Illinois. “More young people would go to jobs like McDonald’s instead of standing on a street corner. “The protests also drew attention to the plight of university professors, some of whom are paid so little that they have to rely on public assistance programs, even though they hold advanced degrees – and carry massive student loan debt.

“In my wildest dreams, I would never think I would be a Ph.D. on welfare,” Wanda Evans-Brewer, an adjunct professor at Concordia University in River Forest, told the Chicago Tribune.

One rally outside a McDonald’s even inspired Brinks security guards to walk off the job to protest their own low pay.

“We put our lives on the line and have a very dangerous job working 45 to 60 hours in a week,” Alex Alvarez, an armored truck driver, told Progress Illinois. “It isn’t even a Chicago problem – it’s a problem nationwide.”

# AFSCME volunteers help elect union-backed candidates in local government

With public employees and the labor movement in Illinois facing unprecedented attacks, having pro-union voices in mayoral offices and city council seats has taken on added importance.

THANKS TO THE WORK OF AFSCME'S PEOPLE PROGRAM, SOME NEW VOICES WERE ADDED to the political dialogue in cities across Illinois, including Chicago, Springfield and Joliet, in the aftermath of the April 7 elections.

In Chicago, several union-endorsed aldermanic candidates emerged victorious. Two, Carlos Ramirez-Rosa in the 35th Ward and David Moore in the 17th Ward, were elected outright in the first round of voting on Feb. 24. They will be joined by Susan Sadlowski-Garza, who prevailed in a tight contest to represent the 10th Ward – pending the results of a recount.

PEOPLE also endorsed four incumbents who won another term on the council, overcoming well-funded opposition. They include the 38th Ward's Nick Sposato, who won outright on Feb. 24, as well as several runoff winners: Toni Foulkes in the 16th Ward, Willie Cochran in the 20th Ward and John Arena in the 45th Ward.

Local 1669 President Ed Johnson volunteered for Sadlowski-Garza's campaign, knocking on doors on the southeast side.

"If we don't have people in there looking out for our interests, the City Council will be looking out for someone else," Johnson said. "We need to have people in the council that are on our side and will work for our benefit, not for the rich and famous."

## Downstate victories

IN SPRINGFIELD, AFSCME VOLUNTEERS helped Jim Langfelder win the race for mayor. Langfelder's support for public employees and public services earned him the endorsement of the PEOPLE committee in the area.

The union also supported



**"If we don't have people in there looking out for our interests, the City Council will be looking out for someone else."**

— Ed Johnson

two winning City Council candidates: incumbent Kris Theilen in the 8th Ward and newcomer Jim Donelan in the 9th Ward.

Liam McDonnell, a retired employee of the Environmental Protection Agency, said electing a pro-union mayor in Springfield was especially important to him given who is occupying the governor's mansion.

"I wanted to make sure that Jim Langfelder was elected in Springfield because of his position on labor in particular," McDonnell said. "He's not for these 'right-to-work' zones that Bruce Rauner's promoting all over the state."

McDonnell, who worked the phones on Election Day to get out the vote, said retirees have as much reason to be involved as active public employees.



"It's absolutely important for AFSCME Retirees to do this, because these attacks are not going to stop," he said. "Rauner is going to go after us and he makes no bones about it."

In the Quad Cities, AFSCME backed two candidates who will become new members of the Rock Island City Council: Virgil Mayberry in the 2nd Ward and Joshua Schip in the 6th Ward. In Silvis, the PEOPLE program

helped re-elect two aldermen, Kathryn Hall in the 2nd Ward and Bob Rockwell in the 3rd Ward.

In Joliet, the PEOPLE program helped Bob O'Dekirk prevail in the race for mayor and also helped re-elect District 1 Councilman Larry Hug.

"Bob was one of the few people on the City Council to support AFSCME and the workers in Will County when they went out on strike,"

Local 440 President John Dillon said.

John Bilecki, the PEOPLE chairman for Local 1028, which represents Will County employees, said local elections may not get the attention of statewide contests, but can be just as important.

"These are the people that are communicating to our state reps and state senators," he said. "All politics is local. You've got to start on the local level."

# LOCAL LEVEL



## After years of struggle, Heartland employees win new contract

THE NEW CONTRACT FOR EMPLOYEES AT HEARTLAND HUMAN SERVICES in Effingham stands as a testament to the power of working people to overcome even the harshest attacks on their rights and dignity.

The three-year agreement ratified in March was won only after repeated targeting of union activists, a constant stream of unfair labor practices, a failed decertification election and other delaying tactics aimed at breaking the spirit of employees of the non-profit mental health facility.

Their spirits did not break, though. In fact, they're stronger than ever.

"It's a lot easier to do your job when you're not worrying about what management's going to take away," Local 3494 President Trisha Katt said. "I think it's great to be able to say that we can move forward now. We can get back to why we're here and focus on doing our jobs and we have the security of the contract."

The contract is the second agreement since employees voted to form a union in 2006. At that time, Heartland management refused to bargain in good faith, resulting in a strike and lockout.

Even after an initial contract was secured, management refused to accept a union. In 2012, administrators pushed for a decertification election – one that was marked by intimidation, threats and surveillance used against employees.

That election ended in a tie. Normally, that would have ended the union, but management's tampering led the National Labor Relations Board to order a new election.

That ruling was appealed by management, along with other NLRB rulings. After losing the first round of appeals, management became more interested in reaching a settlement, Council 31 staff representative Dave Beck said.

"They were finally willing to negotiate," he said. "But they had to pay a lot of back pay and make quite a few changes to implement the NLRB's remedies before we even started negotiating again."

The new contract includes wage increases of 1.5 percent, 1.75 percent and 2 percent in successive years. The bargaining team also resisted management's attempts at takeaways.

"We were able to preserve our PTO and our holidays and came to an agreement over the health insurance, which is a huge deal here," Katt said. "Management wanted to strip seniority away and we were able to preserve that. We got a union shop – we got a lot accomplished."

Katt said Council 31 staff, the bargaining team and other local leaders should be proud.

"We wouldn't be where we were today if we didn't have a great bargaining team and great people involved in the leadership of the local," she said. "They deserve as much credit as anybody does."

The negotiating team included Council 31 regional director Kent Beauchamp, Beck, Katt, Elizabeth Baker and Elizabeth Hartke.

## Aurora employees stand firm over nearly four years

AFTER ALMOST FOUR YEARS OF negotiations, the City of Aurora's clerical, technical and professional employees finally have a new contract with fair wage increases – including retroactive pay to cover the long bargaining process.

Local 3298 President Anna Ishmael said that while negotiating sessions with the city were amicable, management didn't display a strong commitment to timely bargaining and some disagreements took time to resolve.

"There was no getting up and storming off or anything like that, but there were times we just weren't getting anywhere," she said. "The health insurance was a big part of it, and wages. We went round and round on that and had to keep coming back to the table to iron things out."

City negotiators also had to be persuaded to agree to wage increases to help cover increased health care costs.

In the end, the bargaining team secured a five-year contract that includes an 11.25 percent wage increase over that span. Nearly all of that increase was retroactive due to the length of negotiations.

"The city initially wanted to give us nothing for all those years we bargained with them," Ishmael said. "They held that stance for a while, but we were eventually able to negotiate our retro pay."

Council 31 Staff Representative Carla Williams led the bargaining team, which included Ishmael, Diane La Fan, Ben Torrance, Michelle Gumz and John Jerrard.

## Slow talks, but a good deal, in Jerseyville

LOCAL POLITICS IN THE CITY OF Jerseyville lengthened negotiations with Local 1479 over a new contract, but didn't stand in the way of members reading a satisfactory agreement.

The bargaining team secured a three-year contract that will see wages rise by 7.5 percent. Health insurance costs for dependent care have increased slightly, but the contract now also provides for a health care plan for recent retirees.

While the tone of talks was always positive, elections in the city prevented negotiations from moving quickly, Council 31 staff representative Carla Gillespie said.

"Two of the councilmen we were dealing with there were running for mayor and people were afraid to move too much," she said. "But at the end of the day we got a pretty decent contract."

The local's president, Steve Ficker, said that when negotia-

tions did take place, they went smoothly enough.

"I was quite pleased with the raises we received without having to give up anything significant," he said. "We didn't have any real problems with management."

The city's police were negotiating their own contract at the same time, and Gillespie said the separate units cooperated.

"These bargaining units worked together," she said. "I thought that was admirable."

## Aurora public works employees secure 10.75 percent wage increase

TALKS BETWEEN THE CITY OF Aurora and the Local 1514 bargaining team were sometimes contentious over two years of negotiating, but the effort resulted in a four-year deal with fair wage increases.

The city's public works employees will receive a 10.75 percent wage increase over the life of the agreement. In exchange, employee health care costs will increase somewhat.

"I think for a long time management tried to do all the contracts at once, so they kept us at the table for a long time and didn't want to make progress," Council 31 staff representative Carla Williams said. "When everyone else was settling, that's when they finally brought money to the table."

The local's president, Tony Miller, had high praise for the bargaining team.

"They put in extra hours that they're not compensated for to broker the best deal they could," Miller said. "I couldn't have asked for a better bargaining team. They're just a well-rounded group of guys with the whole local's interest at heart."

Joining Williams and Miller on the bargaining team were Dan Piscoran, Ruben Delgado, Chris Olson, Jerry De Mario, Brett Bennett, Dave Burgess and Tim Hoehn.

## Wage increase, paternity leave for Berwyn employees

THE NEW CONTRACT FOR CITY OF Berwyn employees includes a 6 percent wage increase over its three years, as well as several other key improvements.

Along with better wages, the bargaining team pressed for – and won – eight weeks of paternity leave, matching existing maternity leave provisions. The contract also establishes severance pay for employees who serve at least 20 years, as well as an extra paid holiday. Health insurance costs will not rise while the contract is in effect.

"Everything went very smoothly with the city and the administration. There were no major bumps," Local 1041 Pres-

ident Ricardo Macedo said. "I can say that most of our members are satisfied. We were able to get something for everyone."

Management's hands-on approach to bargaining was helpful in this case, Council 31 staff representative Dick Crofter said.

"The negotiations went really well and that's because the mayor was in the room," he said. "The lawyers were a little difficult to work with but the mayor's really good."

Crofter led the bargaining team and was joined by Macedo, Jeannette Rendon, Angela Wagge, Jose Hernandez and Jessica Vela.

## Tough but fair deal in Jefferson County

A TIGHT FISCAL CLIMATE IN JEFFERSON County limited wage increases for members of Local 3664, but the contracts covering various departments still keep insurance costs in check and include other perks.

Most county employees will receive a 3 percent wage increase spread over two years. Circuit Clerk employees who retire early will receive a \$3,000 bonus. Health Department employees were not negotiating a new contract, but will receive a 5 percent increase in wages as part of a reopener.

"It's not the best deal but it's a fair deal," Local 3664 President Jim Wray said. "It was tough on our union and all the other unions."

Council 31 staff representative Jeremy Noelle said the county not only was cash-strapped, but also was concerned about cuts to local government funding sought by Gov. Bruce Rauner.

"Management was able to show us that there were some pretty major concerns with the lack of funds," he said. "They also were hearing the same rumors that we were about the new governor cutting revenue streams going to counties and cities."

Noelle led the negotiating team, which included Wray, Karen Backstrom, Deb Dees, Marsha Lueker, Tammy Walker, Kathy Holmes and Kevin Rainwater.

## Positive language changes for Ray Graham Association employees

LIKE OTHER COMMUNITY DISABILITY agencies, the Ray Graham Association has found it difficult to increase employee pay due to state funding that has not increased in eight years.

For the Local 3492 bargaining team, that meant making improvements elsewhere – including one that will make it easier for them to be involved with their union.

The three-year contract includes paid time off for

# RETIREE NOTES

## Health care premium refunds move forward after union victory over legal fees

THIS JUNE, SERS AND SURS retirees forced to pay increased healthcare premiums in 2013 and 2014 will receive a refund of the premium increases they paid as a result of the successful battle that AFSCME waged to overturn the law imposing those increases.

Now AFSCME attorneys have succeeded in backing off other lawyers who were trying to secure exorbitant fees for their roles in the case.

Attorneys representing AFSCME and its partner unions, the IFT, FOP, and INA, do not receive a portion of the total winnings, but rather are paid by the union based on their normal hourly rate. However, other groups who also sued the state signed "contingency fee agreements" with their lawyers, which allows those lawyers to seek exorbitant fees for their work. Initially, these attorneys were seeking upwards of 15 percent of the total award.

Union attorneys and AFSCME Retirees fought back, arguing that these fees were excessive. Ultimately, the court determines the fees, so AFSCME and its union partners went before the judge at an April hearing to argue

against such exorbitant fees for the other attorneys.

David Spinner, president of sub-chapter 87 (Decatur-Hillsboro), testified in court saying it is "unjust that 27,000 AFSCME Retirees should be penalized by having to pay twice for a lawsuit that we won."

Sangamon County Circuit Judge Steven Nardulli agreed with the unions' arguments, and ruled that instead of receiving 15 percent of the total award, these attorneys should only receive a little more than 2 percent of the total award.

The judge also noted that the attorneys representing AFSCME "participated in this litigation from the very beginning, and at each stage their arguments have been articulate, cogent, and of great assistance both to this court and to the Supreme Court."

## Rauner sets sights on eliminating pensions

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL, IN AN effort to score easy political points with retirees, Bruce Rauner would say that legislative attacks on retirement benefits were "wrong" and "unconstitutional," even if that contradicted his claim that pensions were "overly generous" and the product of a "corrupt" system.

Rauner revealed his true agenda on pensions in Febru-

ary when he called for "permanent pension relief through a constitutional amendment." Plus, despite his claim that previous laws were unconstitutional, Rauner has now indicated support for lowering cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for state and university employees – a scheme nearly identical to the one used in SB 1.

In an effort to circumvent recent court rulings striking down such attacks, Rauner is hoping to amend the constitution to weaken or even abolish the pension protection clause and is targeting Supreme Court justices that ruled in favor of retirees in recent cases.

In a recent meeting with the Chicago Tribune editorial board, Rauner laid out his plan to dismantle Illinois' pension systems. Rauner said the Supreme Court's Kanerva decision, in which the court found that increases to retiree health insurance premiums were unconstitutional, was "off base." He accused the judges of corruption simply because they upheld the rule of law.

Rauner wants to remove constitutional protection for public pensions so that he can enact pension cuts without risking another court challenge. He said he wants to use a constitutional amendment to "end-run the years of lawsuits" that would come from his plan to reduce pension benefits.

Rauner also said that he wants to go after the Supreme Court judges that correctly decided that the state constitution protects retirees' hard-earned pension benefits.

His solution: He wants to hand-pick the Supreme Court, calling for an end to judicial elections, leaving jus-

tices subject to appointment by the governor.

## Claims of pension opponents don't stand up to scrutiny

EARLIER THIS YEAR, REP. JOE Sosnowski, R-Rockford, introduced legislation to repeal the state constitution's pension protection clause.

Sosnowski's legislation has gained the support of Rep. Tom Morrison, R-Palatin, who declared his support in a column published on the Reboot Illinois website. Morrison's reasoning, however, is deeply flawed.

Morrison claims that public sector retirement benefits "cannot be sustained." Nowhere in his article does Morrison mention the decades of missed payments to the pension fund by state politicians.

Morrison attempts to make the case that public pensions are fundamentally unsustainable. The fact is that pension funds are fiscally sound when they are properly funded. This is evident by the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF), the pension system for downstate municipal and county retirees. Unlike other pensions systems, counties and municipalities are required by law to make every payment to their pension fund on time.

The result is that IMRF is 86 percent funded, compared to the State Employee Retirement System which is only 36 percent funded.

The message is clear: politicians refusing to properly fund state pension systems are to blame for pension underfunding, not the modest benefits earned by retirees who dedicated their lives to public service.

## City of Chicago pension case on hold pending decision in state case

A LAWSUIT SEEKING TO REVERSE pension cuts to City of Chicago retirees has been delayed until the Illinois Supreme Court reaches a decision on a case dealing with state pensions.

The lawsuit filed by AFSCME, along with partner unions CTU, INA, and Teamsters Local 700, targets SB 1922, a law which sharply reduced pension benefits for employees and retirees who participate in the City of Chicago's Municipal Employees Annuity and Benefit Fund (MEABF).

The lawsuit charges that City retirees earned their promised pension and always paid their share into the pension fund. As with SB 1, the bill which reduced state and university pension benefits, AFSCME is urging the court to find SB 1922 unconstitutional.

In mid-January, union attorneys made a motion before Cook County Circuit Court Judge Rita Novak asking the court to temporarily restrain the City from implementing the law. While that was being argued, the Illinois Supreme Court announced that they would hear oral arguments on SB 1. Even though SB 1 primarily concerns state and university retirees, how the Supreme Court rules on that matter could affect the outcome of the Chicago retiree pension case.

As a result of the pending Supreme Court decision, the lawsuit concerning City of Chicago pensions is being put on hold. As of press time, the Illinois Supreme Court was expected to make a decision on the state and university pension case between April and June of this year.

# ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

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employees taking steward training, which will make attracting stewards significantly easier, Local 3492 President Tim Olaosebikan said.

The contract also improves union security by making Ray Graham a union shop. Employees will also receive a 1 percent bonus in the first year of the agreement. There will also be a chance for wage increases later, with reopeners in the second and third years of the deal.

Negotiations went well, which was unsurprising given

CEO Kim Zoeller's strong support for legislation that would allow community disability agencies to increase direct support provider pay to \$13 an hour.

"They're very cooperative in supporting the lobbying effort to gain additional state funds for employee wages," Council 31 staff representative Kathy Steichen said.

The bargaining team, led by Steichen, included Olaosebikan, Audrey Lake, Lenona Eizenga, Lenora Williams, Kevin Lane, Christine Garcia, Barb Hanzl and Jean Todd.



Members of Local 1058 and Rockford families have urged the City Council to raise wages of Head Start employees.

## Rockford Head Start workers take deadline deal, look to future

AFTER SIX YEARS WITHOUT A WAGE increase, Rockford Head Start employees hope their new con-

tract will finally allow their pay to rise, even if not right away.

The members of Local 1058 unit C voted to accept a three-year contract after the city imposed a funding deadline that would have put employees

in an even worse place financially and jeopardized a vital program for Rockford's low-income families.

"The budget cycle for the federal grant ended April 1, so if we hadn't cut a deal we would

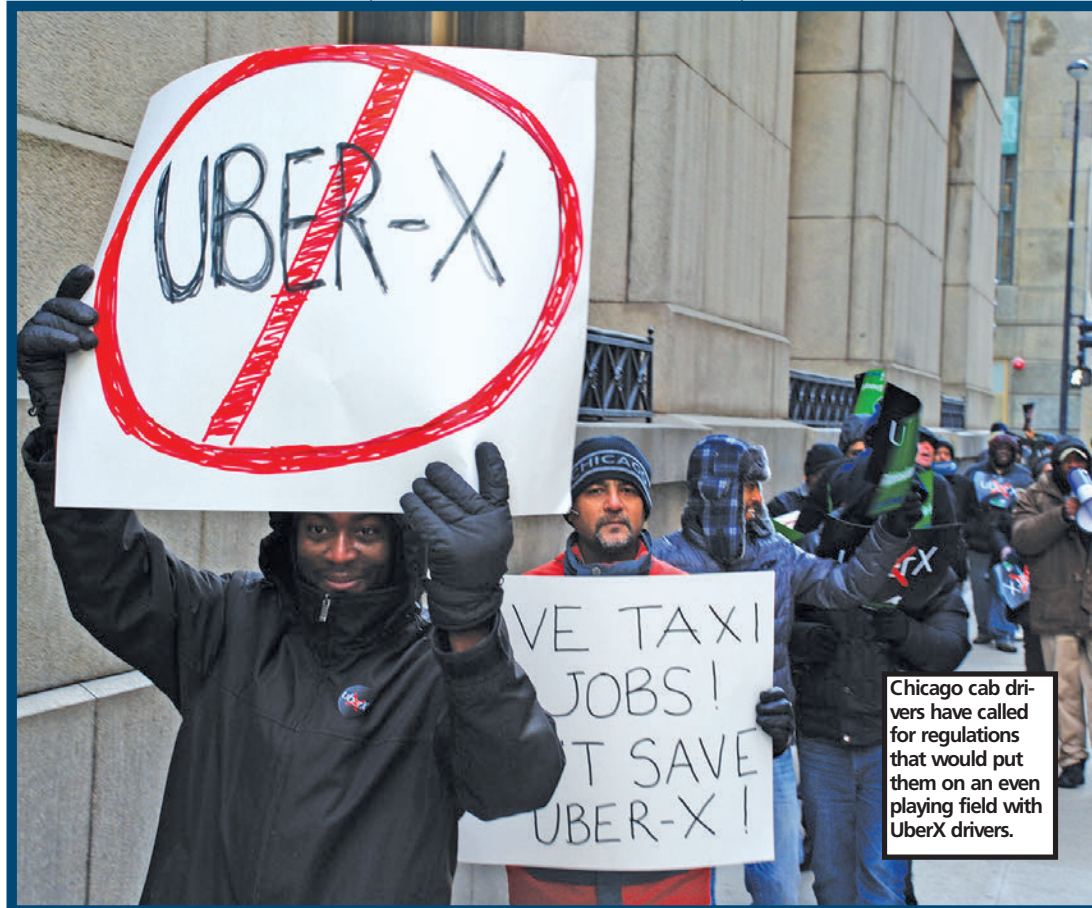
# “Rideshare” companies a bad deal for cities, customers and cab drivers

On the streets of Chicago – and now Springfield – an unregulated but deep-pocketed industry is undermining public safety regulations and jeopardizing the modest progress that taxi cab drivers have made in improving their working lives.

THE INDUSTRY CALLS ITSELF “RIDESHARING,” BILLING ITSELF AS CONNECTING CARS WITH PEOPLE who need them through smartphone “apps.” In reality, these companies aren’t much different from cab companies – except they face far less regulation and they treat their drivers even more poorly.

“Rideshare” companies – particularly Uber, which dominates the industry and is bankrolled by wealthy investors – have kept regulations at bay despite ongoing questions about qualifications and licensing of its drivers.

“Uber asks its customers to put their safety in the hands of strangers, yet expects no oversight despite a very spotty track record,” said



Council 31 Associate Director Tracey Abman.

In Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s administration has supported only watered-down rules that pale in comparison to those governing taxi cab and limousine services. On the state level, a bill that would have put meaningful rules into place was vetoed by Gov. Pat Quinn during his final days in office.

Uber’s ability to court politicians was on display

when it launched in Springfield in January: The company’s first customer there was a city alderman.

## Separate and unequal

WHILE UBER’S ARMY OF AMATEUR drivers operates with little regulation in Chicago, the city’s professional cab drivers have suffered.

When Uber first came to the city, its operations were illegal but didn’t compete with

cabs. Instead, the company focused on providing relatively expensive rides in luxury vehicles.

But that all changed when the company launched its UberX service, which competes directly with cabs on price and has far fewer restrictions on who can be a driver.

“Uber isn’t successful because they developed an app,” said Cheryl Miller, a Chicago cab driver. “They’re successful because they have a

business model that skirts regulation and have the resources to put millions into advertising, marketing and campaign contributions.”

Uber has flexed its muscles to prevent strong regulations in Chicago, even though it recruits, pays, hires and fires drivers just like a cab company. Despite the similarities, the difference in regulation is stark:

- Cab drivers are required to pass a background check, drug test and physical annually. Background checks for “rideshare” drivers are left up to the company.

- The city sets strict limits on the number of cabs on the road to help control traffic and pollution. There is no limit placed on “rideshare” drivers, many of whom don’t live in the city or even in Illinois.

- Taxi cab drivers are required to have commercial insurance policies. “Rideshare” companies rely on drivers’ personal policies, even though such policies don’t cover commercial vehicle use.

“There’s a responsibility when you’re in a cab to show your licenses on a regular basis,” Miller said. “An Uber driver could get their license suspended and you wouldn’t even know.”

The good news is that Uber’s strong-arm tactics have unified cab drivers as never before. Through the new AFSCME affiliate, Cab Drivers United, drivers are now lobbying city officials to implement rules that will not only make competition fair, but also help ensure good customer service and safety.

“It’s unbelievable that the City has failed so miserably to act to stand up for its own residents, workers and visitors, but we will not rest until the public and drivers are protected,” Miller said.

have lost \$300 in our members’ pockets,” Council 31 staff representative Ed Sadlowski said. “It was an agreement out of necessity.”

Employees will get a 1.3 percent wage increase retroactive to April 2014. Health care costs will also remain stable through the end of 2016. More importantly, the contract allows for two wage reopeners, the first of which is already being negotiated.

Head Start employees are using that opportunity to continue community outreach and putting pressure on the City Council to invest in the program as it once did.

“They used to put in \$750,000 of the city’s money to supplement the federal grant, but this administration doesn’t want to do that,” said Kristen Hughes, the unit chair. “We push ahead because we believe that the families in this community deserve respect and assistance. We’re going to keep trying to educate the aldermen and the community members and the

politicians making these choices.”

The negotiating team, led by Sadlowski, included Hughes, Bobbie Washburn, Teresa Mallo, Theresa Ramos and Traci Madison.

## Wages will rise for City of Streator employees

THE NEW CONTRACT FOR CITY OF Streator employees includes an 8 percent increase in wages spread over three years – an amount that will help offset an increase in health insurance costs.

The Local 1592 bargaining team had a good relationship with management and also had a clear sense of purpose, said Jim Scudder, the local’s president.

“We didn’t get everything we asked for, but I’m pretty happy with what we did get,” he said. “The bargaining team was good and knew what they were asking for and how to fight for it.”

A notable improvement to

the contract is a new educational stipend – employees who obtain an associate’s degree will receive a \$500 per year stipend, while those earning a bachelor’s degree will receive a \$1,000 annual stipend.

Council 31 staff representative Randy Dominic led the bargaining team and was joined by Scudder, Scott Lucas, Lynn Haydon, Mary Mackjust and Bill Lee.

## Tough bargaining for Kreider Services employees

LONGTIME EMPLOYEES AT KREIDER Services, a community disability agency in Dixon, will be rewarded for their tenure under the terms of a new three-year contract.

The Local 1268 bargaining team won two longevity steps for longtime employees. That change will help address a problem in which employees with decades of service were making nearly the same as newcomers.

“Some people have 20 or 30 years,” the local’s president, Karen Beauchamp, said. “Those people have been loyal.”

Bargaining was difficult, Council 31 staff representative Randy Dominic said, because the agency hasn’t had a funding increase from the state in eight years. Still, the contract does include a \$250 signing bonus and a 1 percent wage increase in the final year.

“One percent doesn’t sound like much, but with the budget uncertainty, we thought it was a good deal,” Dominic said.

Dominic led the bargaining team and was joined by Beauchamp, Jackie Long, Carrie Vaughn, Dave Miller and Jen Reiners.

## Wages to rise 8 percent in Wheeling

RELATIVELY SMOOTH NEGOTIATIONS yielded a three-year contract for Village of Wheeling

employees in Local 1344.

The local’s bargaining team secured an 8 percent increase in wages spread over the life of the contract. Local President Joshua Berman said negotiations went relatively quickly once the two sides resolved an issue over accrual of comp time.

“We agreed to a cap of 80 hours a year which is pretty normal for surrounding communities,” he said. “Everything was pretty amicable otherwise.”

Berman complimented the bargaining team, which represented the various divisions of the village’s public works employees.

“We all had expertise from every angle,” he said. “They worked together really well.”

The talks were led by now-retired Council 31 staff representative Matt LaPierre, who was joined by Berman, Chris Surdam, Sean Lindsay and Scott Wilson.

# THE EXPERTS WEIGH IN: "RIGHT-TO-WORK" IS ALL WRONG FOR ILLINOIS

**A**llowing local governments to implement so-called "right-to-work" rules would have a catastrophic impact on jobs and the economy in Illinois, according to a new report.

The report, "The Impact of Local 'Right-to-Work' Zones," specifically looks at what would happen if Gov. Bruce Rauner's plan for "right-to-work" zones was put into place by various counties in Illinois.

Under Rauner's proposal, counties and other local government units would be allowed to establish "right-to-work" zones in which workers represented by a union would not be required to pay any dues or fees to cover the union's costs.

Frank Manzo IV of the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and Dr. Robert Bruno of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign found that local "right-to-work" zones would "reduce worker earnings and decrease state and local tax revenues. The result would be a weaker Illinois economy."

The report found that if half the state's counties established "right-to-work" zones, the consequences would be devastating:

- Total labor income would fall by \$1.3 billion;
- The economy would shrink by \$1.5 billion;
- State and local tax revenues would be reduced by \$80 million;
- Labor unions would experience a loss of 200,000 members;
- Racial and gender income inequality would increase; and
- The number of workplace injuries and fatalities would rise.

Manzo and Bruno excluded Cook County from their analysis due to the unlikelihood of "right-to-work" being implemented there. Yet the entire Chicago region would suffer if the collar counties embraced Rauner's proposal.

"If local right-to-work zones were only passed in the Chicago six-county area, the regional economy would experience over 5,500 jobs lost and an economic contraction of \$2.6 billion," the report notes. "Both businesses and workers would relocate to other parts of the state with better incomes and higher consumer demand."

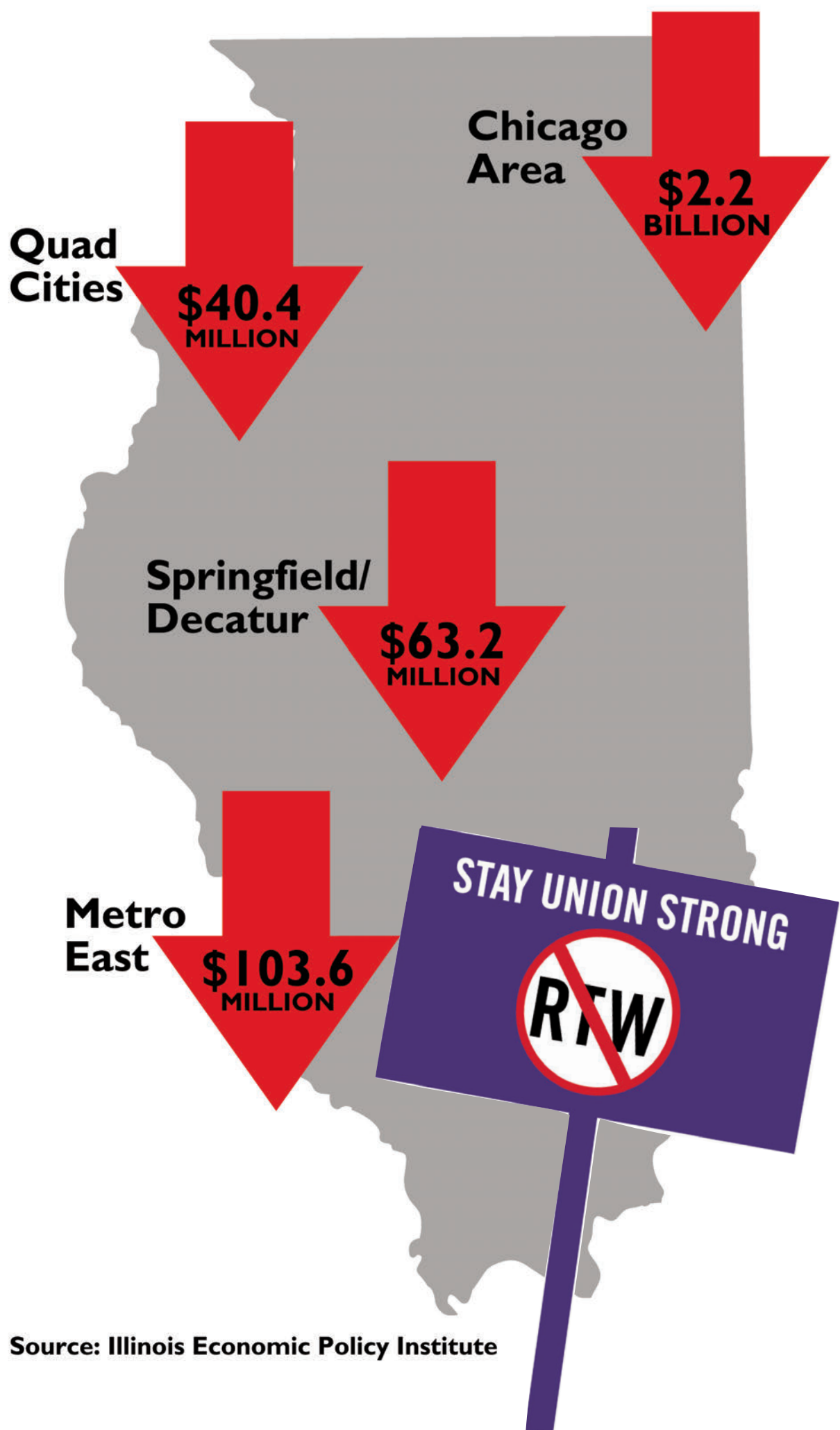
Other regions of the state would suffer greatly under "right-to-work" as well. Worker earnings would fall by \$40-60 million in the Champaign-Urbana, Quad Cities, Rockford, and Springfield-Decatur regions, \$16 million in Peoria-Bloomington and \$100 million in Metro East.

"Local right-to-work zones would eradicate good middle-class jobs, replacing them with low-wage employment openings and redistributing income from labor to capital," Manzo and Bruno found.

Local "right-to-work" zones would prove disastrous for workers, but would do companies no favors either, the report found. A patchwork of different labor laws from county to county would make business difficult for companies that operate in multiple counties.

"For a unionized chain of retail grocery stores in the Chicago area or a contractor employing union construction workers on a multi-county project in southern Illinois or a statewide manufacturer of construction and mining equipment using union labor, local RTW zones would be an unnecessary burden," the report said.

## How much money "right-to-work" would take out of workers' pockets in...



Source: Illinois Economic Policy Institute