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



PEOPLE POWER

10,000 strong at
the State Capitol

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Making our voices heard

Why protests matter

“If protesting solved problems, Illinois wouldn't have any problems.”



BY
ROBERTA LYNCH

**PROTESTS
HAVE BEEN
AN ESSENTIAL
ELEMENT
OF EVERY
SUCCESSFUL
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FOR SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL
CHANGE.**

THAT'S WHAT GOVERNOR RAUNER HAD TO SAY IN RESPONSE TO THE 10,000 CONCERNED CITIZENS who journeyed to the state capital on May 18 to express their opposition to his so-called "Turnaround Agenda."

The governor had already sped out of Springfield by the time thousands of protesters marched from the Old State Capitol to the "new" Capitol a half-mile away.

Clearly he wanted to convey that he had no interest in hearing their concerns, much less heeding them.

But, of course, he couldn't really escape. As soon as he arrived at his downstate destination, reporters began grilling him about the overflow crowd that jammed the street (and every other available space) in front of the Capitol.

That's when he professed his contempt for the value of protests—a view that demonstrates a shocking ignorance of the history of our nation. Weren't the American colonists who challenged British rule in 1776 effectively "protesters"? When they marched down to Boston Harbor for that incendiary Tea Party, weren't they engaged in one of our country's pioneering protests?

Of course that action alone did not drive out the British. But it did inspire countless colonists to enlist in the battle for freedom and liberty—a battle that, in case our governor hasn't noticed, was indeed won.

That's the thing about protests. Seldom does one march, one rally or one sit-in bring about systemic change. But the accrual of such actions educates, inspires and conveys a sense of urgency. Each protest builds on the one before. And it is this growing intensity that demands attention and achieves action. Protests are potent messages delivered in human form that can shake the complacency of the powerful and lift the spirits of the disempowered.

The simple truth is that protests have been an essential

element of every successful movement for social and political change.

We need only reflect on the civil rights movement and the vast transformation it has effected in our own lifetimes. Would change on that scale—the dismantling of an entire system of legal segregation and discrimination—have been possible without the moral authority and passionate conviction expressed in the innumerable actions of protest, from lunch-counter sit-ins in the smallest of towns to massive marches in our nation's capital?

Or we can think back on how workers in our country gained the right to join together in unions to improve their lives. Standing against an entire corporate class bent on denying their right to form unions, millions of workers all across the country walked picket lines, went out on strike, and occupied factories until the day finally came that the corporate elite could resist no more.

Today we too often forget the workplace struggles and tumult that shook the entire country during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but there is no denying that those multitudes of protests were essential to forging the rights workers have today. Every day we are the beneficiaries of those protests when we exercise our right to bargain a contract, file a grievance and demand fair treatment on the job.

Now we are in a battle to defend those rights here in Illinois. Thousands of AFSCME members and retirees—from state government, local governments, universities and nonprofit agencies—joined the throngs at the State Capitol on May 18. We came to protest Rauner's refusal to bargain with state employees, his efforts to take away the basic bargaining rights of local government employees, and his budget blockade that is forcing program cuts and layoffs at state universities and human service agencies.

We came to stand in solidarity with workers injured on the job whose benefits Rauner wants to cut, with construction workers whose right to a "prevailing wage" he wants to take away, with home health aides whose overtime hours he wants to eliminate, and with students whose MAP grants he has on hold.

We came building on dozens of smaller protests that have been held at the Capitol in recent months—by university students, by the homeless, by child care providers, by disability advocates, by teachers, by victims of domestic violence, by clergy, and by the scores of others who are being harmed by the governor's insistence that laws to take away workers' rights must be passed before he will allow passage of a state budget.

We used our vacation time or took a day off with no pay. We got up at dawn to make the bus or packed our cars full of co-workers, or rode our motorcycles with union colors flying. We scrambled to find child care or brought our children along for a great lesson in civic engagement. We came with canes and walkers, even in wheelchairs. And many of us who couldn't make it wore our union t-shirts in solidarity, followed it all on Facebook or Twitter, and joined in the cheering from afar.

Will that one day of protest—even such a mighty day—turn around Rauner's turnaround game plan? Not very likely. But this much is certain: We sent a message of labor unity and determination and built a stronger fighting force for the battles to come.

So yes, Governor Rauner, protests do solve problems—that's what history has shown time and again. That's why we'll keep standing up together in our worksites, in our communities and at the State Capitol until we have gained the fair treatment that all working people deserve.



On the Move

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Mike Newman, Deputy Director
Nell McNamara, Editor
Dolores Wilber, Designer
Cover photo, David Kreisman

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RETIREE CHAPTER 31 REPRESENTATIVE

Larry Brown

Rauner still refusing to bargain

Legal dispute before the Illinois Labor Relations Board

Bent on driving down wages and benefits and taking away workers' rights, Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner's "Turnaround Agenda" is an all-out attack on working families. And from Day One of his administration, state employees have been the governor's top target.

SO WHEN RAUNER WALKED AWAY FROM CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS IN JANUARY, HIS END GAME WAS obvious: Imposing his destructive demands on our state's public service workers.

AFSCME has been fighting for a better way, pressing the Rauner Administration to return to the bargaining table and seeking to pass legislation that would require arbitration of the differences between the two sides.

House Bill 580 sought compromise and preservation of critical services by allowing an independent, neutral third party.

But Rauner vetoed the bill on May 16. He accompanied his veto with public statements and a letter to state employees that were rife with misleading claims and outright falsehoods.

The governor portrayed HB 580 as a bill that would force him to accept the union's most recent bargaining proposal, rather than what it actually is: A bill to let an independent arbitrator choose between proposals that the union and the administration would each make.

AFSCME members urged their lawmakers to protect public services, ensure fairness and override the governor's veto of HB 580. Rauner put tremendous pressure on Republican legislators to vote against the override, however, and the bill failed in the last week of the legislative session in May.

"The governor didn't like the fair arbitration option because it would have required him to be moderate and seek compromise," AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "Public service workers in state government keep us safe, protect kids, respond to emergencies and much more. They want to stay on the job, but they need

fair pay and health care they can afford."

Labor Board to rule on impasse

AFTER WALKING OUT ON TALKS with the AFSCME bargaining committee, Rauner claimed that negotiations on a new state contract were at an impasse. AFSCME strongly disagreed, making clear that the union was prepared to continue to negotiate.

However, the Rauner Administration filed an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge against AFSCME for refusing to agree that impasse had been reached. That charge has been consolidated for hearing purposes with a ULP that AFSCME filed against the Rauner Administration for bad-faith bargaining.

The Illinois Labor Relations Board hearing on these charges got underway in early May and has been proceeding on an almost-daily basis ever since. Under pressure from the



Workers flooded the Illinois State Capitol grounds during the May 18 Rauner is Hurting Illinois march and rally.

"The governor didn't like the fair arbitration option because it would have required him to be moderate and seek compromise." — Roberta Lynch

Rauner Administration, the Labor Board's Administrative Law Judge has set a hearing schedule that is unprecedented in its intensity.

The administration's legal filing makes very clear that it is trying to get Labor Board approval to impose its harsh terms on state employees, including four-year pay freezes, four-year step and longevity freezes, doubled health care premiums or drastically higher co-pays and deductibles, and the elimination of all safeguards against privatization of state services.

Next steps

IF THE LABOR BOARD RULES IN Rauner's favor, the governor has made clear that he will immediately seek to impose these extreme terms on state employees.

Although AFSCME would appeal an unfavorable ruling to the Appellate Court, the administration is likely to rush to try to put in place the most onerous

elements of its proposal. At that point, union members' only options would be to work under those terms or go out on strike.

"State employees do not want to be forced to strike," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "They are very concerned about the economic impact on their own families, as well as the programmatic impact on the countless citizens they serve.

"However, they also do not want to have to accept the harsh terms that the governor is trying to force on them," she added.

A decision by the Rauner-appointed Labor Board is likely in the late summer or early fall. And AFSCME members will then decide what course is best for themselves, their families and the citizens they serve.



Illinois unions joined together to protest Gov. Rauner's anti-worker demands.

Legislative Update

Rauner holding budget hostage

More than a year into Bruce Rauner's term as governor of Illinois, the state is still waiting for a fiscal year 2016—let alone 2017—budget. Some legislators speculate there may not be a state budget until Gov. Rauner is out of office.

“THERE IS CONSENSUS AMONG BOTH PARTIES IN BOTH CHAMBERS ABOUT HOW TO PUT A BUDGET TOGETHER,” AFSCME Council 31 Community Relations Director John Cameron said, “but Governor Rauner won't agree to the revenue side of the equation unless he gets his anti-union measures.”

With the budget stalled, a host of policy and appropriation bills are likewise left in limbo, causing irreparable damage to the state.

A bipartisan working group of budgeteers agreed on an outline of the state's spending priorities and how much those priorities would cost. They project the expenditures at \$37 billion

and revenues at \$32 billion. That leaves a \$5 billion hole to fill with new revenue, in addition to the mounting \$7 billion debt the state owes in unpaid bills.

The budgeteers even agreed upon a list of potential revenue-raising options for the General Assembly and governor to consider. The problem is that Rauner continues to insist he won't work on a budget plan unless his non-budget demands are met. He's demanding legislative changes that would weaken workers' rights and undermine the economic security of working families.

In a typical year, the state would have a budget by the end of May and the legislature would



The spring legislative session ended May 31 without a budget for fiscal year 2016 or 2017.

reconvene for a veto session in the fall.

“The current situation is

unprecedented and dangerous,” Cameron said. “It is unclear what the next step in the budget pro-

cess will be, as many legislators face re-election campaigns in November.”

Critical services await action

WHILE LEGISLATORS CONTINUE TO PUSH GOV. RAUNER TO COMPROMISE ON A BUDGET, A HOST OF core government responsibilities were left unaddressed in the spring legislative session that ended May 31.

There is no telling how long this impasse can last. Despite being without a budget, there is money coming in to the state and money being spent, largely because of court mandates. The high-profile areas of state spending that necessitate an appropriation bill—higher education and human services, for example—only make up a small portion of state spending.

“The question is how long can nonprofits survive, how long can universities operate?” AFSCME Council 31 Legislative Director Joanna Webb-Gauvin said. “These critical state responsibilities are limping into next year. Our state is

being torn apart. We'll either be ground to dust or people will rise up and demand action.”

DSP \$15 wage bill approved

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSED AFSCME-backed legislation that sets a progression toward a \$15 base wage for DSPs—Direct Support Personnel who serve more than 27,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

DSPs provide daily personal care (eating, grooming and dressing), teach essential skills and attend to complex medical needs for their clients.

Rep. Robyn Gabel and Sen. Heather Steans, chief sponsors of House Bill 5931, were instrumental in getting this bill to the governor's desk, as were the dedicated lobbying efforts of DSPs, their employers, and

advocacy groups.

DSPs from across the state spent the day at the State Capitol on April 12, telling lawmakers what it's like to work 60-hour weeks and still struggle to make ends meet.

The average wage for DSPs is \$9.35 per hour, or \$19,488 a year—less than the federal poverty level for a family of three. Poverty wages mean nearly half of Illinois DSPs rely on some form of public benefits, despite working full time.

Because its policy of poverty wages fail to retain adequate caregiving staff, the State of Illinois is non-compliant with a court order that ensures access to community care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Rauner now has 60 days to either veto or sign this critically needed bill into law.



PHOTO: DAVID KREISMAN

Higher education hurting for funds

HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING IS stuck in the budget quagmire. In order to keep state schools open for the rest of the current academic year, both chambers passed legislation to provide \$600 million in stopgap funding and Rauner signed the

bill. However, Rauner vetoed another bill passed by the General Assembly that would have restored funding to aid 125,000 students in need through the MAP grant program.

AFSCME members from across the state joined a rally for higher education in Springfield on April 20. Participants urged legislators and the governor to

find a funding solution for Illinois colleges and universities.

Hundreds of university students, faculty, staff and supporters filled the rotunda, chanting, "Fund our schools!" while members of AFSCME Local 1989 (NEIU) and 2887 (SIU-Edwardsville) delivered more than 1,500 signatures to Rauner's office, urging him to take action.

Right now there is no light at the end of the tunnel for Illinois' higher education system—or its students. Universities are looking at layoffs, furloughs and even closures while student applications dwindle because of funding uncertainty, further hurting the strained budgets of these institutions.

Human services and back pay for state employees

MOST NONPROFITS THAT receive state funding are dependent upon that revenue to operate. After a year without payments, human service organizations in Illinois have cut services, reduced staff and even closed as a result of the budget stalemate.

Sitting on the governor's desk right now is yet another stopgap funding bill. Senate Bill 2038 would provide \$700 million to state-funded agencies that offer public health, mental health, substance abuse and autism services, and more.

An earlier measure, Senate Bill 2046, provided even more funding for human services and also included funding to repay the back wages owed for more than five years to state employees. It too is sitting unsigned on the governor's desk.

After the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the back wages owed to state employees are not due without a legislative appropriation, AFSCME focused on securing back pay in the General Assembly.

Rauner claims that he wants to give state employees what they are owed and protect critical human services for the most vulnerable children, families and seniors in the state. But while this legislation seems the perfect opportunity for the governor to achieve both of these goals, he has not signed either bill.

Instead, he is using the measures as leverage in the budget back-and-forth, implying he may sign them if legislators bow to his union-weakening demands.

Illinois State Museum to partially reopen

LAST FALL, RAUNER VETOED A bill that would have saved the Illinois State Museum from closure. In his veto message, the governor said he would not sign such a bill unless it included new policies, such as charging admission to the public and instituting a private board to operate the museum.

Sen. Andy Manar put together a bill that incorporated the ability to accept private funding for the museum and allowed for admission fees, but prevented privatization of any components of the museum's operations. Republican legislators refused to accept that compromise and the bill was never called for a vote.

In late May, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources announced it would reopen the State Museum in Springfield with an admission fee, but not the other sites.

IYC-Kewanee to close

THE BIPARTISAN LEGISLATIVE Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability (COGFA) voted to reject the governor's plan to close the Illinois Youth Center at Kewanee, but the Rauner Administration ignored the advisory vote.

Early in May the Department of Juvenile Justice announced that it would move forward with closing down the center, even though there is no plan to provide counseling, education and other services to the special populations of vulnerable youth who are currently housed there.

"Our goals are to successfully rehabilitate the youth in our care and give them the best possible chance at a successful future," Shannon McDermott said at a COGFA hearing on March 30. McDermott is a member of AFSCME Local 801 and teacher at the center's school. "I'm proud to say that 35 percent of our students leave Kewanee with a high school

Labor launches new anti-Rauner coalition



Illinois Working Together, a diverse coalition of labor organizations, was launched to fight back against Gov. Bruce Rauner's attacks on working families and protect the vital services all Illinoisans rely on.

Co-chaired by the Illinois AFL-CIO and the Chicago Federation of Labor, the coalition is working to highlight the damage the governor has caused to Illinois since he took office and the potential economic devastation of his "Turnaround Agenda."

"AFSCME Council 31 is proud to be a part of Illinois Working Together," said Roberta Lynch, the council's executive director and a member of the coalition's steering committee. "It is critical that the labor movement joins together in an organized effort to defeat Bruce Rauner's demolition politics."

One of the coalition's first undertakings was organizing the massive May 18 march and rally in Springfield.

"Marching side by side with working people from all different labor groups made me feel more powerful," said Eric Johnson, a caseworker at the Illinois Department of Human Services and member of AFSCME Local 1805 from Glen Carbon. "We are not alone. Together we can win a better future for Illinois."

To get involved, visit IllinoisWorkingTogether.org or find them on Facebook at [Facebook.com/IllinoisWorkingTogether](https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisWorkingTogether).

diploma. That's the highest rate of any juvenile center in the state."

The facility was built in 2001 specifically to treat acutely mentally ill youth and those with problem sexual behaviors.

"Our buildings were designed with the best physical layout to manage these unique populations," said Tod Williams, president of Local 801. "Kewanee is PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) -certified with more than 400 closed-circuit cameras to prevent sexual victimization, and it has the only 24-hour health care unit in the state. When you look at what our facility has to offer, we don't understand this decision."

AFSCME has called on CMS to freeze all vacancies in the Departments of Corrections and Juvenile Justice to ensure that IYC-Kewanee employees will have the opportunity to secure other positions, and has begun impact bargaining with the department over its closure plan.

"The fact is that the closure of IYC Kewanee is about cutting expenditures and cut-

ting important services—not improving lives," AFSCME Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman said after the governor began closure procedures.

The Rauner Administration has announced plans to transform IYC-Kewanee into an adult facility, but with no specifics and no timeline.

Legislators look at Department of Corrections

LAWMAKERS PASSED A BILL TO curtail the governor's efforts to further privatize medical care at the Department of Corrections.

The anti-privatization legislation, House Bill 5104, is sponsored by Rep. Greg Harris and Sen. Andy Manar. This important effort will likely stall at the governor's desk.

Last summer, Rauner announced that he would close the Hardin County Work Camp in Southern Illinois. After public hearings, COGFA voted to preserve the camp. Once again, the governor ignored the bipartisan legislative committee's

recommendation and closed the facility.

The Hardin County Work Camp was a minimum-security satellite of the Shawnee Correctional Center in Cave-In-Rock that housed 200 inmates and employed 66 staff. The facility provided extensive community services to neighboring counties and skills training to inmates.

In the last few weeks of the legislative session, the General Assembly voted to re-open the work camp by passing House Bill 4326. Rep. Brandon Phelps and Sen. Gary Forby are the chief sponsors of the legislative effort.

AFSCME has also been working to modify or defeat HB 5417, legislation that would severely restrict the use of isolation in the state's prison system. Isolation is an important option for addressing violent behavior and other potentially dangerous inmate activity. Council 31 lobbyists and local union leaders have met with the bill's sponsor to explain the limited options that our overcrowded, understaffed prison system has to prevent violence and preserve order.

Sharing the love for libraries

Facing cuts, AFSCME members are a strong voice for public libraries

Americans love our libraries. According to the Pew Research Center, the importance of libraries in our communities is an ideal that more than 90 percent of us share.

MORE THAN EVER, LIBRARIES PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO OUR COMMUNITIES LIKE LITERACY building, career development and access to technology, and they increasingly act as a safe haven for youth. Libraries play a key role in reaching seniors, veterans, immigrants, families, children and young adults.

Even so, politicians have cut funding for library programs and services in recent years, forcing library employees to struggle to maintain their wages and benefits.

Library funding has even drawn opposition—and deep-pocketed attacks—from national anti-tax extremists. Americans for Prosperity, a PAC funded by the billionaire Koch brothers, helped quash an effort to fund a new library in Plainfield, Ill., in this spring's primary election.

AFSCME, the voice for library staff

WITH MORE THAN 25,000 members who work in libraries, AFSCME is the largest union of library employees in the country. Here in Illinois, nearly 3,000 library employees are members of AFSCME Council 31. They work in municipal library systems throughout the state, including Chicago, in addition to numerous state schools, universities and specialized libraries.

Throughout Illinois and across the nation, AFSCME members who work in libraries are fighting back against cuts in library hours and services,

promoting innovative programs and services, defending professional standards, and protecting employee wages, pensions and health care benefits.

Union-represented library employees have higher wages and better benefits than their nonunion counterparts. Union-represented librarians are paid 25 percent more per week and library assistants and technicians who are union members are paid 50 percent more. These employees are also more likely to have retirement plans, health insurance and paid sick leave.

More and more Illinois library employees are choosing to join AFSCME. Homewood Public Library employees recently petitioned to become part of AFSCME and are awaiting Labor Board certification.

In Rockford, library pages in the public library system recently joined with their co-workers in AFSCME Local 3350. The pages are now included in the bargaining unit and are in the process of

negotiating their first contract with their fellow members.

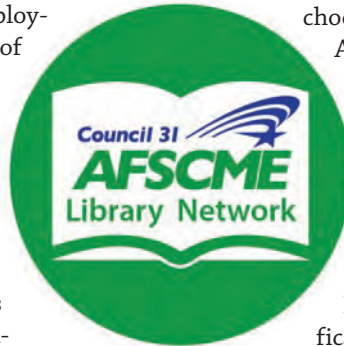
"We are thrilled to have these new members in our local," said Amanda Meyers, librarian and president of the local. "These pages wanted to join our union to win respect and a living wage. Together, we are stronger and have even more power to fight to raise standards for library workers in Rockford."

"Traditionally there have not been a lot of opportunities for library pages who want careers at the library," said Asia Housen, one of the pages and a member of the local executive board. "I think this is a big step toward changing that."

AFSCME launches Library Network

IN AN EFFORT TO ENGAGE, inform and connect library employees all across Illinois, AFSCME launched the AFSCME Council 31 Library Network during National Library Week. The Library Network includes a periodic e-bulletin with local and national news as well as updates on critical issues facing library employees.

Library workers face big challenges. This new network will ensure that AFSCME members who work in libraries across the state stay connected as they organize to improve the standard of living of library employees and preserve the critical services that libraries provide to our communities.



A strong majority of Homewood Public Library employees recently signed up to join with 25,000 library employees in AFSCME.

"It's important that we're active in our union. We need to stand together, not just when it comes to staff benefits, but to protect the programming and the relationships we have built in the community. We need to make sure we have a voice in the priorities of the library."

JOSE HERNANDEZ, Berwyn Public Library
AFSCME member for 12 years
and Local 1041 recording secretary

"Four years ago, when Mayor Rahm Emanuel tried to make big cuts to library staff and hours, we all fought back together as a union and we won. That wouldn't have been possible without our union. Why just sit on the sidelines? If you see something that needs to be done, get involved and make it happen."

JOHN RAYBURN, Chicago Public Library
AFSCME member for 22 years, Local 1215 president and
Council 31 executive board member

"I'm the supervisor of the children's department and I love my job. I love doing story time, helping kids find the materials they need and seeing new families coming in. And buying all the children's books is one of my favorite things—I feel lucky."

TERRI BASSLER, Belleville Public Library
AFSCME member for 22 years and Local 1765 president

If you are a library worker, sign up for the AFSCME Library Network at AFSCME31.org/Library.

From an AFSCME family to a Nashville star

One of the brightest new country stars in Nashville comes from an AFSCME union family right here in Illinois.

WITH HER DEBUT ALBUM “MIDWEST FARMER’S DAUGHTER,” MARGO PRICE HAS LANDED A guest spot on “Saturday Night Live,” a video on CMT, and a rave review in Rolling Stone, which called her “undeniable” and compared her to Loretta Lynn.

But what looks like a rocket ride to stardom is really the latest twist in a long road that started in Aledo, Ill., southwest of the Quad Cities, where Margo and her sisters were raised by mom Candace and dad Duane. He worked for 25 years in Illinois prisons, first as a correctional officer at East Moline, where he was a member of AFSCME Local 46, and then as a lieutenant at Hill Correctional Center (Local 1274). Duane was a PEOPLE contributor and after his retirement in 2010 joined AFSCME Retirees.

“From her adolescent years on up, Margo was just very interested in music,” her dad says. “She always had the radio on, went to voice lessons, piano lessons. Then she picked up a guitar. In high school she was a cheerleader and she would sing the national anthem at football and basketball games, a cappella.”

“At age 20 she decided she wanted to move to Nashville and try to pursue a music career,” Duane goes on. “Of course, as we all know, that can be a pipedream for a lot of people. She went through some real tough times.”

Those struggles—13 years’ worth from the time she dropped out of Northern Illinois University—are a frequent source of subject matter in Margo’s songs. Besides bad breakups, money troubles and hard drinking, there’s the heart-wrenching death of an infant son that touched off a tailspin and ended with a week-end in jail.

“She’s writing from the heart,” Duane says. “I think she

felt she’d come to a point where she was just going to sing what she feels, and with songs like ‘Hurtin’ (On the Bottle),’ I think a lot of people can relate.”

It’s working.

“Midwest Farmer’s Daughter” got a high-profile release on Third Man Records, the label owned by Jack White of the White Stripes.

In February, Margo performed for the first time at the Grand Ole Opry. Her parents were in the crowd.

Duane had seen the legendary show once before, as a child tagging along with his own parents. To return decades later with his daughter on stage “was euphoric,” he says. “It was just amazing to see her in that center circle where so many great performers have stood.”

“AFSCME got me a good wage, good benefits and good representation. The union is a necessity. Without it, where would the average Joe be?” — Duane Price



Rising country star Margo Price grew up in an AFSCME family in Aledo, Ill. Her father worked in Illinois prisons for 25 years. Photos courtesy Duane Price.



Visit AFSCME31.org/MargoPrice to watch a video of Margo performing at the Grand Ole Opry.

The coming months will find Margo making more memories at Willie Nelson’s annual picnic outside Austin, Texas, on July 4, on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon on July 14, and at the Pritzker Pavilion in Chicago’s Millennium Park on September 7.

“I’m just so happy for her that things have come around in her direction,” Duane says. “She’s still very humble. Other

than her spirits being lifted by a little bit of success, she’s still the same girl she was when I dropped her off in Nashville years ago.”

Duane remains a fan of his union, too.

“AFSCME got me a good wage, good benefits and good representation,” he says. “The union is a necessity, let’s put it that way. Without it, where would the average Joe be?”



10,000 STRONG

The sun was shining without a cloud in the Springfield sky early on the morning of May 18. The streets of the State Capitol were quiet.

But all over the state, buses of union members, retirees, families, community groups and faith organizations were getting on the highway. Men and women were setting up barriers and building a stage in front of the Capitol building where legislators would soon be in session.

Just before noon, thousands of people marched through downtown, passed the Governor's Mansion, and streamed onto the street in front of the Capitol, quickly spilling over onto the wide Capitol lawn and the porticos of nearby buildings, filling every space.

The cheers and chants of more than 10,000 people united together were deafening as they called on Gov. Bruce Rauner and his allies to drop their extreme demands that will hurt working families. Senate President John Cullerton and House Speaker Michael Madigan spoke briefly to the crowd, wild cheers answering their call to stand up to Rauner.

The protesters came that day to send a message: All Illinois citizens deserve a state budget and all working families deserve fair treatment. It's time for Rauner to end his war on the rights of working people and start working for the people of Illinois.

May 18 was a critical moment. The people of this state are demanding an end to Rauner's demolition politics and taking a stand for an Illinois that works for all. What follows are excerpts from the day's rousing speeches.

Governor Rauner is a mega-millionaire who thinks his huge wealth means he should be able to impose his will on an entire state. He's determined to ram through his extreme and harmful agenda—and he doesn't care how much damage he inflicts in the process.

He doesn't care about the hundreds of thousands of people who are struggling as never before because of his destructive policies—policies focused first and foremost on destroying the labor movement in our state.

Whether it's getting rid of prevailing wage or cutting assistance for injured workers, trampling on collective bargaining or undermining retirement security, every Rauner demand is designed to weaken our rights and drive down our standard of living.

MICHAEL CARRIGAN
President, Illinois AFL-CIO

From the minute he became governor 17 months ago, Bruce Rauner and his billionaire friends have used their enormous wealth to pressure, intimidate and manipulate anyone who stands in their path.

Today, we—the working men and women of Illinois, the people who pay our taxes and volunteer in our communities, the people who build our roads and coach our Little League teams—we are here to say one thing to Governor Rauner: Enough of your so-called Turnaround Agenda!

JORGE RAMIREZ
President, Chicago Federation of Labor

I am a customer of the Illinois Home Services Program. Thanks to taxpayers in Illinois, I can choose reliable people to come into my apartment and assist me.

Governor Rauner wants to freeze their wages and limit the number of hours of help I get. But the more money that goes to the average Illinoisan, the better is our economy.

Governor Rauner, stop attacking disabled people! Under your leadership of cutting, families are strained beyond capacity. You made this mess, Governor Rauner. Clean it up!

RAHNEE PATRICK
Director of Independent Living, Access Living

Bruce Rauner is wrong for our schools. While he holds our MAP grants and funding hostage, our schools, our students, and our workers are suffering. From Chicago State, to Eastern, to Western, to Champaign-Urbana, we're losing staff, programs, and the opportunity to make our state better.

Bruce Rauner is wrong for our communities. But Illinois is strong. Our students, our workers, our people are strong. We will weather this storm. We will survive this crisis. We will get our budget, with union power, people power, and the fighting spirit of Illinois activism.

STEPHANIE SKORA
Recent graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign





PHOTO: GARY OTTEN

Public service workers are motivated by the overwhelming desire to serve. To help. To support families.

Our governor is holding the entire state budget hostage. He doesn't care about the hardship he's causing. He just wants to weaken the right of employees like us to have a voice at work.

But we state employees are extremely concerned about the hardship of those we serve: ailing veterans, people with disabilities, at-risk children and families in need. Governor Rauner—it's time to stop the warfare.

JO ANN WASHINGTON-MURRY
DCFS child welfare specialist
AFSCME Local 2081

I strongly disagree with Governor Rauner's complete and total disregard for the safety and wellbeing of our children and for the security and health of our families.

When a politician pledges to serve, he must also promise to protect. But Bruce Rauner is trying to silence the voices of not just fire fighters, police and EMTs, but library workers, streets and sanitation workers, school district employees, and countless others.

JEFF MAHER
Firefighter
Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois

Governor Rauner has made it his mission to strip away our rights and attack our families' livelihoods.

When the government has a construction project, the taxpayers deserve a job done right and the workers deserve fair pay. That's what prevailing wage laws do.

But Governor Rauner wants to get rid of prevailing wage and throw Illinois' infrastructure into a race to the bottom.

That means cut rate construction projects, big profits for some, and low wages for everyone else. We can't afford to cut corners on construction and we can't afford to cut wages in our communities. Good jobs build strong communities.

LOGAN HALL
Electrician
IBEW Local 702

Governor Rauner's intransigence on the state budget is hurting schools and children throughout our state. Essential school programs are being cut. Resources to support students, especially in our most-challenged schools, are simply not available. Teachers are struggling to make ends meet in their classrooms. School districts that rely on state funds have been left with instability and uncertainty for the future.

Our kids feel this pressure in their homes and they feel it in their classrooms.

Today, in solidarity, we have taken a stand for good government that will help build a better Illinois and a stronger middle class.

CRYSTA WEITEKAMP
Special education teacher
Illinois Education Association

In 2012, I was doing traffic control for a fuel spill clean-up project. A truck hit me, tearing my left arm off below the elbow and throwing me 20 feet into the air. When I hit the ground, I broke my other arm and my left leg.

If we didn't have a strong workers' compensation law in Illinois, my family and I would have lost everything.

Some people in that building over there want to join in a race to the bottom and make it even harder for workers like me who get hurt on the job. I urge all of the politicians in the Capitol to stand against these attacks on workers' compensation and stand up for Illinois workers!

AMY FASIG
Construction worker
LIUNA Local 773

We see the Rauner Turnaround Agenda for what it really is—an attack on all working people!

Child care providers feel the pain of Rauner's agenda. He wants to freeze our low wages for four years! His devastating cuts have resulted in over 48,000 children losing child care. Do you know what happens to working parents when their children lose care? They lose their jobs.

Bruce Rauner is no job creator. He's a job killer, and he's holding our state hostage so he can push through tax cuts for the rich and pay cuts, service cuts, and job cuts for the rest of us.

ANNETTE EDWARDS
Child care provider
SEIU Healthcare

PHOTO: DAVID KREISMAN

Promising students win AFSCME scholarships

Union members and their families benefit from annual scholarship opportunities to pursue their education goals

2016 LARRY MARQUARDT SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Larry Marquardt was a tireless organizer and union leader who dedicated his life to improving the lives of working people. He was the first executive director of AFSCME Council 31. In Marquardt's memory, Council 31 established a scholarship fund that offers members and their children financial assistance for higher education.

This year's winners of the Larry Marquardt scholarship of \$1,000 are:



Kiera Bouton is the daughter of Khrista Miskell, a paraprofessional at Conklin Elementary in Rockford and a member of AFSCME Local 692. Bouton is a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago. As a member of the nationwide organization United Students Against Sweatshops, she helped ensure that UIC sells union-made clothing.

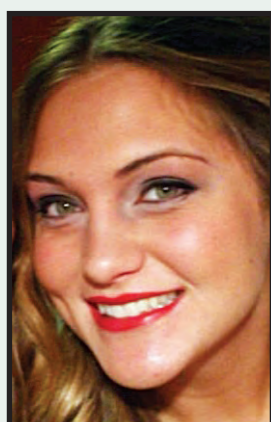
On a trip to visit a clothing factory in the Dominican Republic, Bouton "was able to live with and learn from the workers who fought and won their own union." Now she is passionate about creating "a global labor movement that would help working-class Americans and working-class low-wage workers around the world."



NiaSanda Jackson is a high school senior at Saint Ignatius College Prep in Chicago and was recently accepted to the Global Studies program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

"The reason that the labor movement has continuously stayed relevant is because workers' rights are consistently attacked by companies and governments alike," Jackson wrote in her scholarship essay. "For example, Governor Walker of Wisconsin ... not only undermined all that the unions have worked for, but essentially said that workers don't matter."

NiaSanda Jackson is the daughter of Quizzesanda Jackson, a City of Chicago employee and 22-year member of AFSCME Local 1669.



Eryn Krueger is a member of AFSCME Local 2224 and an insurance analyst for the State of Illinois. A single mother to an eight-year-old daughter, Krueger is working to put herself through college at Benedictine University.

Krueger grew up with a loving and devoted father. Before joining AFSCME, Krueger's jobs were nonunion. "Now I am able to recognize that my father was able to be so involved in my life because of his relationship with his union," she wrote in her scholarship essay.

Now Krueger is an active AFSCME member. "If my fellow co-workers and I do not come together through our union, we would surely lose our livable wages and benefits," she said. "Thanks to my local union, I am able to provide a warm home, healthy food and a great life for myself and my child."

Applications for the Larry Marquardt scholarship are due the third Friday in April each year. Visit AFSCME31.org/Union-Scholarships for more information on this and other opportunities.



Maxwell Brady awarded AFSCME Family Scholarship

Maxwell Brady grew up in a good home with access to high-quality medical care, and his mom, a librarian at a neighborhood branch of the Chicago Public Library, could take paid time off to care for him if he got sick.

Some kids may take this kind of life for granted, but thanks to his mother Joanne Brady, a member of AFSCME Local 1215 since 2006, Maxwell knows that these benefits are the result of workers joining together in a union.

Maxwell is one of 10 high school seniors nationwide selected for the 2016 AFSCME Family Scholarship Program. He will receive \$2,000 annually as he earns his four-year undergraduate degree at DePaul University in Chicago.

"We are very proud and very grateful that he received that recognition," Joanne said. "Being a union member enabled us to provide a wonderful life for Maxwell—it's been a real blessing."

In his scholarship application essay, Maxwell wrote that his mother's experience as a union member taught him valuable lessons: "AFSCME has affected me in many positive ways. Family is about future and I have a future of possibilities that wouldn't have existed if AFSCME weren't a part of my past and present."

"As a parent you want to insulate your child from the negative things in life," Joanne said. "The union has given our family peace of mind. I don't have to be worried about being unjustly fired from my job because I have a support network to protect me."

Maxwell's academic achievements were paired with extensive community service contributions. He has volunteered for the Museum of Science and Industry, the Brookfield Zoo and the Greater Chicago Food Depository. He has also been involved with sports and theater at his high school, Walter Payton College Preparatory in Chicago.

For information on AFSCME scholarships, visit AFSCME.org/Scholarships. The deadline for the Family Scholarship Program is December 31.

Student debt crisis hurts economy, working families

40 million Americans owe \$1.2 trillion in student loans

Student debt has hit crisis proportions in the United States. The cost of this crisis is damaging our economy and holding back working families.

STUDENT LOANS HAVE SURPASSED CREDIT CARDS AND AUTO LOANS TO BECOME THE LARGEST SOURCE of debt for individuals and families after home mortgages. People over the age of 30 owe two-thirds of all student debt.

Economists warn that this staggering amount of student debt is harming our economy. Because a large portion of their income is earmarked for student loans, fewer people are buying homes and cars, starting new businesses or saving for the future.

A broken promise

HIGHER EDUCATION NO LONGER assures a better life for students who struggle to find well-paying jobs after graduation. At the same time, the cost of college has increased tenfold since the 1970s.

For most working families, the high cost of education, the certainty of substantial debt and the difficult job market are undercutting the promise of higher education: opportunity, social mobility, getting ahead.

This broken promise is contributing to the growing income and wealth gap in this country.

Instead of fighting the student debt crisis head on, politicians are choosing corporate tax breaks over funding for higher education. Many states—including Illinois—have cut funding for higher education, resulting in students at public colleges and universities shouldering a bigger share of the financial burden for their degrees.

After taking out hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans for law school, AFSCME Local 3315 member Kate Dooley had a difficult time securing a mortgage loan for her first home.

“There’s nothing you can do,” Dooley said. “Any time you apply for a credit card, a home, or a car loan, it’s there with you.”

The mother of two young children eventually had to put her loan into forbearance to afford both her mortgage and her bills.

“When I decided to take on this amount of debt, I was 22 and I didn’t know what it meant,” she said. “I didn’t understand how quickly the interest would accrue.”



Dooley isn’t alone. An estimated 46,886 AFSCME Council 31 members and retirees—or members of their household—have student debt. At a national average of \$29,000 per person, that’s a lot of money.

Union offers student debt workshops

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THERE are options to help individuals and families successfully manage their student loan debt. To make sure union members are aware of their alternatives, AFSCME Council 31 is holding student debt workshops throughout the state.

Jeannene Frazier, a

caseworker for the Cook County Public Defender’s Office and a member of AFSCME Local 1767, attended the first of these workshops in Chicago earlier this spring to learn more about options for coping with student debt.

“I was contemplating a PhD in correctional psychology, but the debt was having me think twice about it,” she said.

Now that she knows her options, Frazier feels more confident in pursuing her educational goals.

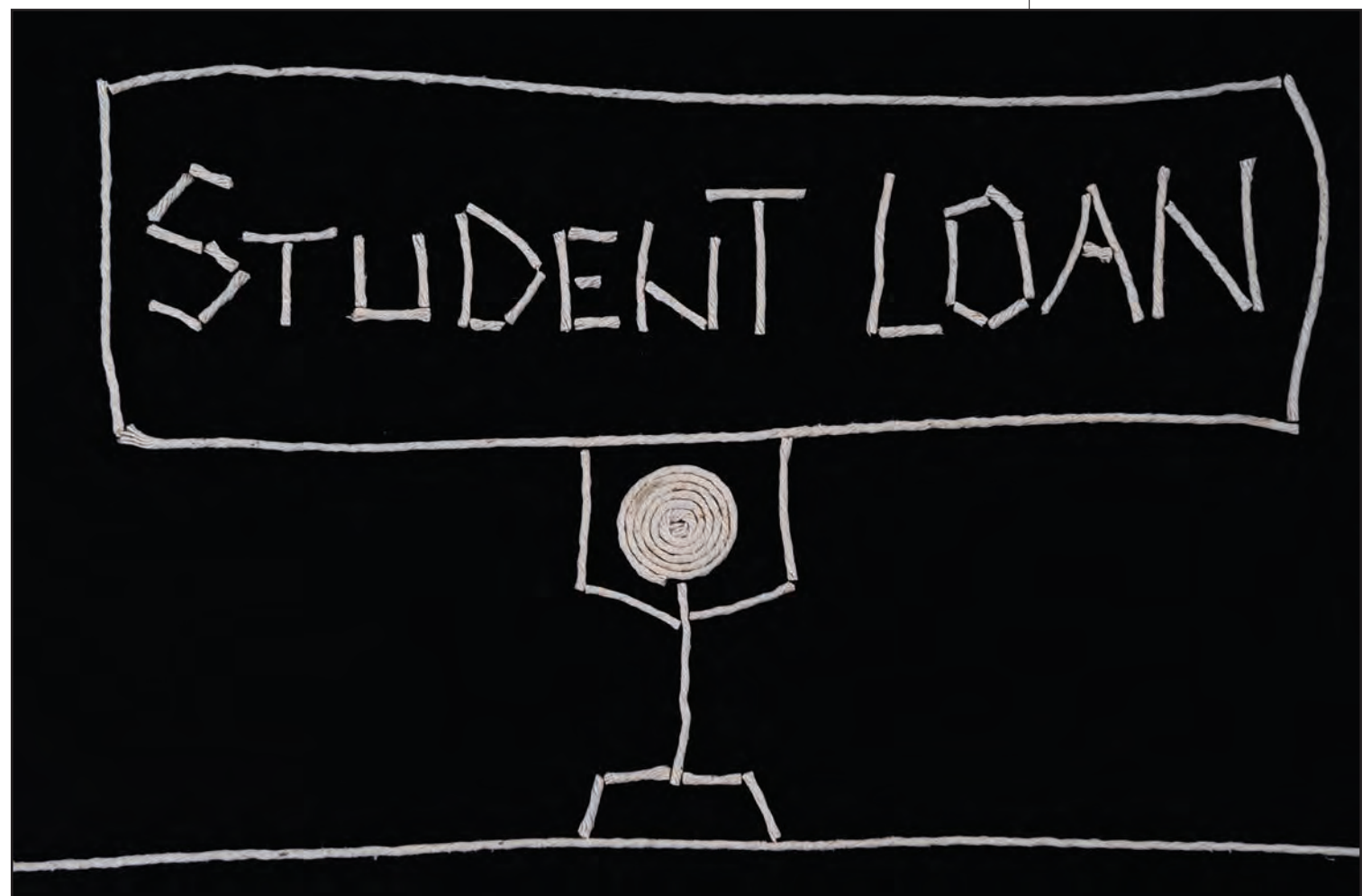
“I’m what you would call a lifelong learner,” Frazier said. “I tell my grandchildren that it’s never too late to go back to school, it’s never too late to learn something.”

“There’s nothing you can do. Any time you apply for a credit card, a home, or a car loan, it’s there with you.”

— Kate Dooley, AFSCME Local 3315

An estimated
46,886
people living in
AFSCME
Council 31
households
hold student
debt.

For student
debt resources,
visit
AFSCME.org



RETIREE NOTES



John Weir, president of sub-chapter 55 (Harrisburg) and Chapter 31 Executive Board trustee.

Retirees rally at State Capitol

Hundreds of AFSCME retirees came to Springfield on May 18, joining more than 10,000 people at the State Capitol. The protest called for Gov. Rauner to stop hurting Illinois and drew national attention to the statewide struggle to safeguard workers' rights.

Retirees elect advocate to SERS Board



RETIREES ELECTED JOHN TILDEN as their Annuitant Representative on the State Employees' Retirement System Board of Trustees.

After a nearly 40-year career as a counselor and psychologist in state service, Tilden became a retiree activist. He now serves as president of AFSCME Retiree Sub-chapter 66 (Lake and McHenry Counties) and is on the AFSCME Retiree Chapter 31 Executive Board.

"I know that politicians mismanaging pension funding has caused the SERS to be underfunded—not retirees who faithfully paid our contribution out of every paycheck," Tilden said. "As your representative, I will fight for the fiscal security of the pension fund and oppose efforts to reduce our pension benefits."

State and university retirees' health care costs could rise

MANY POLITICIANS ARE MISLEADING state and university retirees into believing their health care benefits are shielded from cost increases.

While AFSCME and other unions won an important victory when the Illinois Supreme Court upheld labor's position in the Kanerva case in 2014, that case dealt only with retiree health care monthly premiums, not out-of-pocket costs. In fact, over the years, out-of-pocket costs—co-pays, deductibles, prescriptions, etc.—have regularly increased, consistent with the increases that active state employees pay.

"That's why the battle state employees are waging for a fair contract is so important to SERS and SURS retirees," AFSCME Retiree Coordinator Dave Amerson said. "If Rauner imposes huge health insurance cost increases for co-pays and deductibles on active employees, those could end up being passed on to retirees too."



Retirees from Subchapter 163 (South Cook County) enjoy the bus ride to Springfield on May 18. Roderick Proby and Karren Halloway pictured in mid-ground, Catrina Mansilla and her sister Maria Montalvo in foreground.

New rule aims to protect retirement savings

UNDER A NEW RULE PROMULGATED by the U.S. Department of Labor, financial advisors can no longer consider their own compensation when recommending products to clients.

"Middle-class and working families who are struggling to save and invest for a secure retirement shouldn't have to worry that their financial advisors aren't putting their customers' interest first," said Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio.

Until this rule was passed, financial professionals could steer retirement savings into high-priced, risky investments in order to produce big commissions and fees for themselves.

Big business interest groups have launched an effort to repeal the new rule.

UnitedHealthcare rumors

DESPITE A MAJOR OPERATIONAL shift by UnitedHealthcare, little is likely to change for state and university retirees' Medicare Advantage plans.

In April, UnitedHealthcare announced that it would exit the health care open exchanges of many states, generating consternation among UnitedHealthcare customers nationwide.

However, because the UnitedHealthcare plan used by many state and university retirees in Illinois is an employer-sponsored plan, it is not affected by UnitedHealthcare's participation in Afford-

to federal bankruptcy law passes, only retirees would risk having their pensions reduced. Traditional creditors, such as wealthy hedge funds and bond owners, would lose nothing.

Under the Manhattan Institute's proposal, if Illinois was able to show that it has an underfunded pension system, it could ask the judge to restructure pension payments and reduce retirement benefits for pension holders.

This federal legislation attacking public service workers' pension benefits is already being promoted by the Illinois Municipal League.

AFSCME retiree elected president of Trades & Labor Council



AFSCME RETIREE AND LONG-time union activist Jim Dixon was elected president of the Springfield and Central Illinois Trades and Labor Council for a two-year term.

Dixon worked for the State of Illinois for 14 years and credits his career advancement in state government to the union's Upward Mobility Program.

He served first at the Department of Revenue as vice president of his local, then at McFarland Mental Health Center where he was a union steward. Most recently Dixon was a Medicaid caseworker for the Illinois Department of Human Services where he was vice president of AFSCME Local 2600.

"Even though I've been involved in the labor movement my entire life, I see my responsibilities as an AFSCME retiree as the most important fight," Dixon said. "If we don't stop the tide of attacks against public servants, then community service will not be a viable career path for our children and grandchildren."

able Care Act exchanges.

While the insurance carriers offered by the state plans can be affected by a variety of outside concerns, state and university retirees continue to have constitutionally protected access to affordable, high-quality health insurance.

Anti-worker groups attack pensions

STATE LEGISLATURES AND governors cannot declare bankruptcy for their pension debt alone.

That would change under new federal legislation introduced by the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank dedicated to the abolition of all defined-benefit pension plans.

Under traditional bankruptcy, every creditor is at risk of losing part of what is owed to them. But if this amendment

Longtime activist leaves a better workplace



After helping to form a union at the City of Springfield's Police Department in the 1980s, Nadine Williams has served as an officer of AFSCME Local 3738 ever since. She recently retired after 38 years of public service.

What made you help organize a union with your co-workers?

Right's right and wrong's wrong. Most of us were working our tails off but civilian police department employees weren't getting raises back in 1988. We decided to look into various unions and we chose AFSCME.

I checked into what other city employees were being paid. When we found out how low we were paid compared to others doing the same job, we knew we were doing the right thing.

When I got hired by the city in 1976, I was working two or three jobs to make ends meet. But once we unionized and got our first contract in 1992, I was able to quit working so many jobs as I watched my wages go up.

How did your union job allow you to take care of yourself and your family?

My family has a long history of being union. I remember when my dad was on a three-month strike in the '60s and the town pulled together as a family to make sure everyone had food on the table. It taught me that it's important to look out for everybody.

My union job has helped me provide for myself and my loved ones. I was able to take care of my mom when she had breast cancer and my grandmother who had a stroke. And now I care for my uncle who suffers from advanced Parkinson's disease.

I've taken in many children over the years, relatives of mine. I'm willing to help anybody who's willing to help themselves. The children stay with me because it's a safe place. I was raised to always take care of family.

My adopted five-year-old son, Kayden, was born with a hole in his heart and addicted to drugs. He has learning disabilities and is on the autism spectrum. After a lot of work with his teachers and speech therapists, I'm so proud to say that next year he will attend kindergarten in public school. He's amazing.

I know I am fortunate to be able to count on a secure retirement so I can devote my time to caring for my family. I'm no one special. I just like helping people and my union job has helped me do that.

What worries you about the future for working families?

Our biggest problem is a lack of empathy for our fellow working people. We can't only care about what goes on with ourselves and not about anyone else.

“It's critical that we all leave our workplace better than it was when we came. We're in this together.”

— Nadine Williams

Workers in unions make more money and have better benefits than workers without unions. One of the biggest fallacies that people fall for is that workers in unions are taking from everyone else. But the truth is that we help set a higher standard for all working people. We're in this together.

What excites you about the future for working families?

Right now a lot of young people are getting involved with politics and they are learning their history. They see that without unions there is no middle class. I hope that the younger generation continues to be more involved in workplace unions and that as a result more people form unions.

What life lessons has your union activism taught you?

Always do the right things for the right reasons. Make sure you represent everyone fairly. Your word is your bond. Treat people how you want to be treated. It's important to have a good ear and listen to what people are telling you.

We are all taking up where someone else left off. It's critical that we all leave our workplace better than it was when we came. The same is true when it comes to our kids, our environment, our schools, and our life.

We need to always think of what we're doing to make sure that we leave this world better than it was before we came. We're the caretakers of all.

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Niles local negotiates first union contract

AFSCME LOCAL 2953 MEMBERS won their first union contract after a protracted fight for better wages and a voice on the job.

The 36-member local provides a broad array of public services for the Village of Niles. Members include community support officers, staff at the senior center and fitness center, and finance, health and clerical employees.

The new unit will see wages increase by nine percent over the four-year agreement, a \$600 signing bonus and an additional longevity step after 10 years of service.

Negotiations went on for more than a year. As a first-time small bargaining unit, the new local was able to turn to interest arbitration to reach a settlement. Even after the arbitrator issued its decision, it took several months for the employer to agree to finalize language.

"It was a long struggle for Local 2953 to win our first contract," said President Jennifer Seymour. "But our bargaining team was great and stood strong through it all."

Seymour is an accountant who has been with the village for 17 years. When the economic downturn hit, she said, the village was looking for places to save money. Because the police, fire and public works teams were under union contracts, the administrative and technical staff who run the village were vulnerable.

"We're the first ones they're going to start cutting," Seymour said. "We felt the only way we could have a voice is if we organized a union. Then they would have to listen to us."

So Seymour and her co-workers did just that.

"It's really helped us because now they can't just ignore us. They can't sweep our issues under the rug—they actually have to face them," Seymour said. "We've argued two grievances already and won them both. Before we were union, they never would have listened."

AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Kathy Steichen led negotiations with Seymour, Dwight Ropenack (vice president), Minas "Sam" Serbekian (treas-



Village of Niles AFSCME Local 2953 Secretary Allie Brown, Treasurer Sam Serbekian, President Jennifer Seymour and Trustee Teresa Wywrot.

urer) and Bernie Knapick (executive board member).

Alsip employees hold firm

THE VILLAGE OF ALSIP PUBLIC works, water department and clerical staff of AFSCME Local 3053 ratified a new three-year agreement in February. After rejecting their employer's final offer, they went back to the table and won significant gains that the 30 members unanimously approved.

Employees will receive a \$1,500 signing bonus plus two percent wage increases in each year of the agreement. Other gains include on-call premium pay, overtime pay on weekends, employer-paid Commercial Driver's License testing, and increased uniform pay.

The bargaining committee successfully protected the current health care plan without any adverse costs or changes and also negotiated a new framework

(continued on next page)



Members of Local 3053, Village of Alsip (L-R): Shawn Cunningham, Robert Merchantz, Rebecca Keating, Violet Regan and Jason Kubicki.

(continued from previous page)

to advance to higher positions and receive on the job training.

AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Ken Anderson led the tenacious bargaining team, which included Shawn Cunningham (president), Jason Kubicki (vice president), Robert Merchantz (treasurer), Rebecca Keating (recording secretary), and Violet Regan.

Village of Fox Lake sewer and water team wins raise

WHEN AFSCME LOCAL 3905 negotiated the union contract in 2013, their employer requested to renegotiate health care in the third year of the agreement.

"We agreed to look at health care again," said Treavor Warren, president at the time, "but only if we could also renegotiate our wages."

Warren and AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Chris Hooser worked together to negotiate a 2.5 percent raise for the 21 members of the local while also keeping the current health care coverage and costs the same.

"We have a good working relationship with our employer," Warren said. He has served the village as a mechanic at the wastewater plant for 16 years.

In an effort to save the village money, the union offered to negotiate without the presence of lawyers.

"We just wanted to talk it out—and it worked perfectly," Warren said.

Belleville Public Library employees stand together

TERRI BASSLER HAS WORKED for the City of Belleville Public Library for nearly 30 years. She serves as president of AFSCME Local 1765 and helped negotiate the union's new contract.

Bassler and the bargaining team locked down two percent cost-of-living raises for all three years of the agreement despite the city's goal to renegotiate wages after one year. They were also able to reduce residency requirements so that employees can move outside city limits after 12 years of service instead of 20.

Bargaining team members Elaina Crowell and Brittany Maine sit on the insurance committee and work proactively with the city to decrease costs. As a result, in this new agreement, the city is paying \$25 more a month toward the employees' health insurance.

"It went well," Bassler said of negotiations. "We didn't have any big snags—our team was rock solid."

AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Carla Gillespie led the talks. AFSCME Local 1765 members Bassler, Crowell and Maine were joined on the bargaining committee by Andy Rowe (vice president).

A brighter future for Elk Grove Village Public Library

AFTER BARGAINING FOR NEARLY a year, members of AFSCME Local 3782 who work in the Elk Grove Village Library will see their wages increase by eight percent over the next four years. The bargaining team pushed especially hard to ensure that library pages—an entry-level position—have wage scales more proportionate to the rest of the bargaining unit. The team was able to add two extra steps in the contract for the pages and increase the amount of paid time off.

"Getting the cost-of-living raises was important to us," said President Jan Chrzan, a paraprofessional in the adult services department for 22 years. "We worked until we got what we thought was fair. When

we voted, 100 percent voted to ratify the contract and we were really proud of that."

Chrzan led negotiations with AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Colin Theis. Josh Fulkerson and Rhonda Szewczyk joined them on the bargaining committee on behalf of 65 librarians, library assistants, maintenance workers, pages, IT specialists and other library staff.

"I'm glad that we have a union," said Chrzan. "Right now libraries are changing so dramatically. Even our roles as employees are changing and sometimes portions of jobs are being eroded. It's kind of scary."

Chrzan believes having an active union will help ensure that library employees have a voice in decisions about changing roles and the evolution of the library itself.

"We want to ensure the process is well thought out and fair," she emphasized. "If we need to reduce staff, we can make sure we do it through natural attrition—not just, 'you're gone tomorrow'."

Sangamon County Board staff protects livelihoods

LADONNA MCCLANAHAN TRIES to be an advocate for herself and her co-workers. As a union steward and executive board member for Local 3738, she speaks up to management when needed.

"Having an active, engaged union ensures good communication between management



AFSCME Local 3738 members Bruce Patarozzi and Jeff Burt, security officers at Sangamon County Health Department.

and employees," she said. "We have an open invitation to meet with management and bring our problems and concerns to light."

Along with AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Roger Griffith, McClanahan negotiated a new three-year contract for more than 30 employees of the Sangamon County Board.

"After thorough negotiations that were very professional on both ends, we won cost-of-living raises for the next three years," said McClanahan, a clerk typist with the environmental health department who has served Sangamon County for 16 years. Instead of opening the entire contract to negotiations in the midst of a state budget crisis, the local maintained existing contract language.

"We wanted to keep what we already had negotiated because the county keeps getting shorted budget money from the state," McClanahan said. "This situation makes it so hard for local governments to run."

City of Springfield employees make gains

CLERICAL, TECHNICAL AND professional employees, Oak Ridge cemetery workers and city traffic wardens at the City of Springfield recently won a new union contract. More than 100 members of Local 3738 will benefit from a raised floor on their annual cost-of-living increases and the inclusion of step-parents and adult children in the sick time policy.

The team agreed to a new all-unit city residency requirement for any new hires, but was able to protect current employees who live outside the city.

"It was really important to the membership that longtime employees earn longevity pay," said then-President Nadine Williams. Employees who work more than 15 years now receive an additional 50 cents an hour and those who work for more than 20 years are paid a dollar more.

"We were also able to change the contract so that employees could take time off in 15 minute increments, preserving their hard-earned sick and vacation time," Williams added.

AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Roger Griffith led the bargaining with Williams. They were joined by Leslie Thomas (then-vice president), Lisa Weller (treasurer), Gloria Schweska (then-recording secretary), Lynna Thornhill (executive board), Tammy McLaughlin (executive board), and Louis Parker.



AFSCME Local 1765 Members serve the public at the Belleville Public Library.



AFSCME members including Local 1028 President Dave Delrose, county leaders and health advocates urged the board to protect public health programs.

WILL COUNTY CUTS PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

RAUNER POLICIES FORCE HARMFUL CUTS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES

On April 21 the Will County Health Department announced a layoff of more than 50 employees due to a \$2.1 million shortfall caused by the state budget crisis.

The county said the layoffs “are due to the decision by our Board of Health to mitigate a revenue deficit caused by the non-payment of state of Illinois grant funds.”

AFSCME Local 1028 immediately went into action to try to avert the layoffs, which would damage an array of vital services. More than 350 people emailed the Will County Board, urging the body to protect its vital public health services until the state funding comes through.

AFSCME members joined a press conference with county leaders and public health advocates on May 9. The group urged the board to provide a temporary infusion of funds until the state budget impasse ends.

“This layoff—which is the third layoff from the health department in as many years—puts very vulnerable populations at risk,” said David Delrose, a mental health counselor and president of AFSCME Local 1028.

Delrose was particularly concerned about the impact of this cut on the county’s mental health services. “These cuts have essentially eliminated the county’s adult mental health services, even though we are by far the largest provider of mental health services in this area,” he said. “The number of costly emergency room and inpatient hospital visits will surge and, in some cases, increase admissions to our county jail.”

Will County Sheriff Mike Kelley agreed. “National studies estimate that some 20 percent of inmates

in county jails are living with a serious mental illness,” he said. “This is a tragedy—but it’s also inefficient. Providing community mental health services so that people get the ongoing treatment they need is a necessary prevention measure we can all agree on.”

“I came to Will County’s Behavioral Health Program 15 years ago in the depths of a major depressive disorder,” Will County resident Bob Talkie told reporters. “If not for the service I received then, I wouldn’t be here talking with you. I pray this good work continues.”

In addition to elimination of mental health services, family case management services will be cut as a result of the board’s inaction.

Demetria Berry turned to the Will County Health Department for food assistance for her family. “I didn’t just get a coupon for food,” she said. Family Case Management services monitored Berry’s pregnancies, ensuring her diabetes was under control.

“Even more important to me, they did regular evaluations after my babies were born to make sure my children were meeting their developmental milestones. When I heard Family Case Management was being cut, I was shocked. It’s not right to take this critical service away from Will County children and families.”

AFSCME action prevents some cuts

The state did pass partial funding to local governments for public health programs this spring and Will County received about \$400,000. Those funds prevented cuts to hearing and vision services, tobacco prevention and HIV/AIDS programming. And the County Board

extended a loan to continue the mental health adult outpatient program.

However, led by county board member Chuck Maher, the Republican majority on the county board refused to come to the health department’s aid with a loan for the remaining funds needed.

The decision leaves thousands of Will County families without critical public health services, eliminating mental health services that decrease emergency psychiatric hospitalizations and Family Case Management services to all but the highest-risk families.

The board’s decision will result in the loss of 24 jobs. Thousands of families and people with mental illness will lose access to critical services.

Rauner policies hurting all

These substantial cuts will become permanent collateral damage of Gov. Rauner’s failed budget maneuvers.

“The cuts the Will County Health Department feels forced to make are just one example of exactly how much the state budget crisis is hurting the most vulnerable in our state,” Will County Executive Larry Walsh said.

“Once again, the Rauner Administration is responsible for the decimation of our vital public services,” AFSCME Council 31 Deputy Director Mike Newman said. “These harmful cuts are the direct result of the governor’s refusal to give up his anti-worker demands and work collaboratively with the General Assembly to pass a fair budget for our state.”

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