

MOVE

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



ATTACKS ON PRISON STAFF SPARK PROTESTS

SEE PAGE 16

Rockford school bus drivers authorize strike PAGE 3

State employees hold 'Day of Action' PAGE 4-5, 11

Cook County employees battle layoffs PAGE 7

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
AFSCME

AFSCME Council 31
205 N. Michigan Ave.
21st Floor
Chicago, IL 60601



On the Move

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

Roberta Lynch, Executive Director
Mike Newman, Deputy Director
Nell McNamara, Editor
Dolores Wilber, Designer
Cover photo: Brian Poulter

COUNCIL 31 EXECUTIVE BOARD OFFICERS

State Executive Vice-President
Ralph Portwood, Stateville CC, Local 1866
Private Sector Executive Vice President
Yolanda Woods, Hope Institute Local 2481
University Executive Vice-President
Dorinda Miller, U of I Clericals, Local 3700
Secretary
Dave Delrose, Will County, Local 1028
Treasurer
Rob Fanti, Sheridan CC, Local 472

BOARD MEMBERS

State Conference Board Co-Chairs
Gloria Arseneau, (RC-14), Northeastern Illinois State Employees, Local 2794
Gary Ciaccio (RC-9), Shapiro, DC Local 29
Kathy Lane, (RC-63), Northwestern Illinois State Employees, Local 448

REGION I VICE-PRESIDENTS (Cook and Lake Counties)

Safiya Felters, Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Local 2854
Ellen Larrimore, Northeastern Illinois University, Local 1989
Stephen Mittons, Department of Children and Family Services, Local 2081
John Rayburn, Chicago Public Library, Local 1215
Kobie Robinson, Cook County Assessor's Office, Local 3835
Crosby Smith, Ludeman Developmental Center, Local 2645

REGION II VICE-PRESIDENTS (Northern Illinois)

Garry Cacciapaglia, City of Rockford, Local 1058
Carlene Erno, Department of Children and Family Services, Local 2615
Tom Minick, Moline Schools, Local 672
Yurvette Simmons, United Cerebral Palsy of Will County, Local 3237

REGION III VICE-PRESIDENTS (Central Illinois)

Mark Kerr, McFarland Zone Center, Local 2767
Gary Kroeschel, Sangamon County State Employees, Local 2224
Matt Lukow, Springfield Area State Employees, Local 1964
David Morris, Illinois State Employees, Local 805
Steve Nordyke, Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Local 2600
Trudy Williams, Fulton County Sheriff's Dept. & Courthouse, Local 3433

REGION IV VICE-PRESIDENTS (Southern Illinois)

Chris Milton, Madison County, Local 799
Cary Quick, Choate MH/DC, Local 141
Mike Turner, Southern Illinois Department of Corrections, Local 415
Tim Worker, Vandalia CC, Local 993

TRUSTEES

Stephen Howerter, Canton Correctional Center Employees, Local 3585
Miguel Vazquez, Aurora Sanitary District, Local 3297

RETIREE CHAPTER 31 REPRESENTATIVE

Larry Brown

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

State employees in a fight for all Illinois workers

Rauner aiming for total control over our working lives



BY ROBERTA LYNCH

WE HAVE TO FACE THE HARSH REALITY THAT OUR STATE HAS A GOVERNOR WHO IS DETERMINED TO DRIVE DOWN THE WAGES AND STRIP THE RIGHTS OF ALL WORKING PEOPLE.

Melanie Hindrich, wife of a correctional officer at Menard Correctional Center, posted a photo of her husband and four young children on Facebook and asked this simple question:

"GOVERNOR RAUNER, PLEASE tell me how you can look into these children's eyes and tell them that their father, who puts on a uniform and goes into a maximum security prison five days a week, putting his life on the line, does not deserve what he is paid."

Of course, the sad truth is that we have a governor who could easily look into those children's eyes and tell them just about anything, no matter how harmful or horrid—a man without scruples who cannot be shamed.

In his first year as governor of Illinois, Bruce Rauner's income increased from \$58 million to \$188 million—a 300 percent jump! He made more in one hour—while bopping around the state to cut ribbons, chow down at local diners, and march in parades in his phony 'regular guy' costume—than Melanie's husband or most other state employees will make in an entire year.

But that isn't stopping this governor from trying to slash the income of state workers who are on the front lines every day, rescuing abused children, providing aid to needy families, keeping criminals off the streets, responding to natural disasters, caring for the elderly and disabled and much more.

Nor has it stopped him from trying to portray those employees as greedy and grasping—making the false claim that they're demanding a contract that would cost the state an additional \$3 billion. In fact, their proposals don't come close to that cost.

Even more tellingly, Rauner continues to complain loudly about the union's demands

while refusing to meet with the AFSCME Bargaining Committee which has made very clear it's prepared to modify its proposals.

Think about it: Bruce Rauner is attacking AFSCME members for demanding too much but won't meet with those employees to allow them to propose less! That's a Catch-22 if ever there was one.

The governor's real agenda all along has not been reaching a fair contract settlement but vilifying public employees as underworked and overpaid.

Of course, it would take someone like Gov. Rauner—who's never bothered to spend a day in a state prison, veterans home, psychiatric hospital or human-services office—to imagine that state employees are anything but hard-working.

And it would take someone who has nine homes and makes \$90,000 an hour to think that an average annual wage of \$60,000 is too much for average folks like state employees—many of whom have college and even graduate degrees, yet still struggle to pay the bills and save for their kids' education.

Rauner is determined to make that struggle harder by freezing pay and drastically increasing health care costs for every state employee. If he succeeds, the result will be that even as the cost-of-living goes up, state employees will see their income go down by thousands of dollars every year.

Rauner is part of a new oligarchy that's determined to undo the decades of progress our nation has made in creating a middle class that can fully participate in our society, not just devote every waking moment

to the struggle to survive. This elite fears all forms of democratic participation—hence their intense hatred of unions which are the essence of workplace democracy.

We have to face the harsh reality that our state has a governor who is determined to drive down the wages and strip the rights of all working people—and he's prepared to spend millions of dollars of his own vast wealth in service of that "cause."

He's held up a state budget for more than a year now, forcing human-service agencies to close their doors, cutting off help for the homeless, autistic kids, victims of domestic violence, needy students and so many more. They're only collateral damage in his obsessive effort to decimate unions.

And he has boasted of his willingness to "take a strike"—as though he were the one who would be withstanding a blow. In fact, if state employees make the difficult decision to go on strike, it will only be because he has left them no choice.

That's why the battle that state employees are fighting right now is so vital to every working person in Illinois. More than seeking to drive down state workers' incomes and silence their voices, Bruce Rauner wants to exercise total control over their working lives.

If he achieves that goal, he wants to bring the same authoritarian ethos to every workplace in the state. It's critical that every AFSCME member, no matter where you work, support state employees as they make a stand for justice and dignity for us all.

Rockford school locals ready for a fight

Bus drivers make strong statement with overwhelming strike vote

The cancerous austerity-driven economic policy that has infected public-budget writers at every level of government has Rockford's board of education in its icy grip, as it attempts to push its non-academic employees deeper into poverty with unaffordable increases in health-insurance premiums.

BUT SCHOOL DISTRICT #205 AFSCME members are fighting back, led by bus drivers' 183-4 vote to authorize the union's bargaining committee to call a strike.

All three AFSCME locals that bargain with the district – the 238 drivers who belong to Local 1275, 473 paraprofessionals under Local 692's contract and 165 nutritional services workers represented by Local 3210 – are in negotiations for a new contract.

And all face demands to steeply increase what the workers pay for health insurance. With the average annual pay at \$16,181 for bus drivers, \$14,280 for paraprofessionals and \$11,373 for nutrition services workers, the board is demanding a premium increase on a plan for employees with families to \$467.42 a month, from \$183.33, with no pay increase.

"Losing money doesn't work for any of us," said Tracy Goodwin, president of Local 1275. "There's money there – we've been through their finances three times. They just don't want to spend it on us."

The locals have taken steps

to inform and mobilize their members. The organizing started when local-union officers began recruiting leaders for member action teams, or MATs. Each team captain is responsible for passing along information from the union's leadership to 10 members and communicating feedback from those members.

The MATs have been important in mobilizing members for informational pickets and turn-out at school board meetings. "We are able to hit every single person with phone calls, e-mails or face-to-face conversations to get information out," Goodwin said. "At our last union meeting, three-fourths of our members were there."

Local 692 President Donna Henderson said, "We're hoping the board agrees to a fair contract."

But they aren't counting on it.

Building a united front

"RPS does not want to negotiate when it comes to wages and benefits," said Madeleine



Members from all AFSCME public school locals turned out for an informational picket.



Local 1275 members gather for an informational picket.



Local 1275 member Amber D. Winterrowd speaks at an informational picket.

Sherod, president of Local 3210. "They were very closed-minded about economic issues. Any kind of movement on the economic package was on our end."

Informing members is the key, she said. "We're making sure the information to union members is correct, so they understand what's going on when we sit at the table."

But the community also needs to know, she argued. "We spoke out at board meetings to inform the public of our plight and our battle. Our kids go to school, too, and we need to clothe them, buy them footwear and feed them."

The locals all have the same fight, and are working to build a unified front to face the employer.

"We went to the paras' union meeting to show them we're supporting them," Goodwin said. "We're trying to stick together."

And all three groups had members at the informational picket and board meeting. The union leaders maintain that their role is essential in the education of the district's children.

The paraprofessionals work to meet the educational needs of special-education children. The bus drivers get 18,000 students safely to school each day. And the nutritional-service workers make sure the students get the fuel they need to get successfully through the school day.

"A child with a full belly is more open-minded to their education," Sherod said. "Our people are critical to the district's job of molding and shaping our children. We may not be superintendents, but we take our jobs as seriously as they do."



Local 1275 members voted 183-4 to authorize the union's bargaining committee to call a strike.



Rain didn't stop Rockford school workers from demonstrating their solidarity.

Election 2016 points to continued conflict

Hundreds of AFSCME members and retirees put in thousands of hours knocking on doors, stuffing envelopes and making phone calls on behalf of the union's endorsed candidates to help counter the tens of millions of dollars thrown into state legislative races by Gov. Bruce Rauner and his ultra-wealthy crowd.

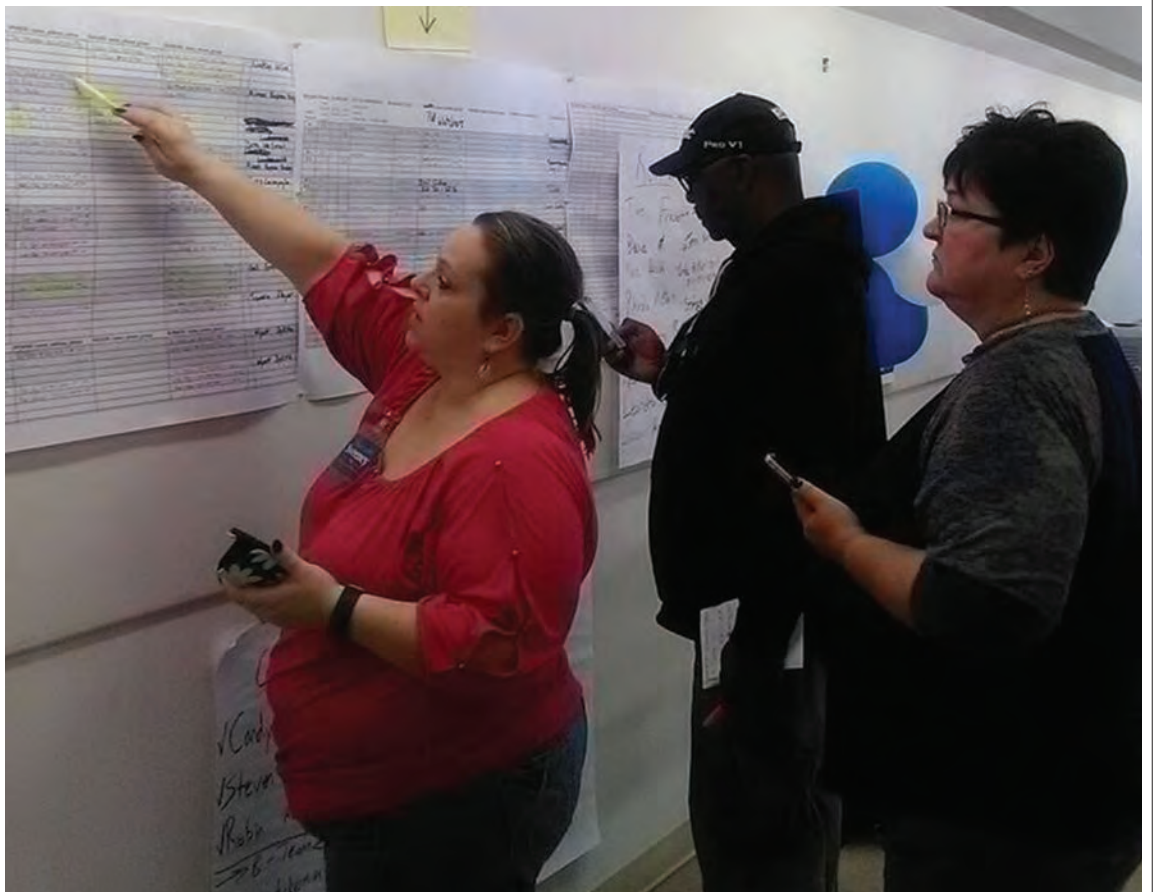
IT WAS A MAJOR EFFORT that made a difference in some races, but it wasn't enough to fend off all of Rauner's assaults on union-friendly legislators. While Rauner did not succeed in his goal of gaining control of the General Assembly, he did manage to defend all but one incumbent Republican and to defeat several downstate Democratic legislators, taking a small but significant bite out of state House Speaker Michael Madigan's and Senate President John Cullerton's majorities.

That's a problem for the labor movement, because these are the political leaders who have been standing with working families

against Rauner's attempt to eliminate unions in Illinois.

Rauner has vowed to continue to hold up a state budget until legislators agree to his demands to weaken unions. Rauner did take a strong symbolic hit with the defeat of Leslie Munger, his hand-picked candidate for state comptroller. Union-endorsed Susana Mendoza, who has vowed to challenge Rauner's mishandling of state finances, won that race decisively.

Another bright spot for union members was the election of Tammy Duckworth to replace Mark Kirk in the U.S. Senate. As a congresswoman, Duckworth stood up against trade deals that



Local 448 members prepare to walk Rockford-area precincts.

jeopardized U.S. jobs and was a strong voice for veterans. She's expected to continue that kind of advocacy in the Senate.

While AFSCME's endorsed presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, did carry Illinois, she did not carry the day and Donald Trump is now the nation's president-elect.

In a statement on the Trump victory, Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch pointed

out that Republicans now control all three branches of the federal government, paving the way for further consolidation of wealth and power in the hands of a small elite that has already made huge gains at the expense of the rest of the country. Trump has already voiced his support for anti-union right-to-work laws. And it's quite likely that he will appoint an anti-union jurist to the vacant seat on the U.S. Supreme Court,

paving the way for the court to try to knock out public employee unions by outlawing fair share fees.

Lynch vowed that the union will not retreat in the face of such attacks on the ability of employees to form strong unions. "We will stand up and keep fighting for the basic right of all workers to join together to advocate for a better life and for the dignity of every human being," she said.



Members gather in Carol Stream to get out the union vote.

Political Action

Local union activists who were pounding the pavement were clear about their goals for the 2016 election: They didn't want a state government bought and paid for by Gov. Bruce Rauner.



Connie Stone-Wooten, Local 2794, Department of Children and Family Services – "I see the urgency of this election. We need Democrats in there to back us in our fight with Rauner and block his moves to come after us."



Jeanette Garcia, Local 1669, City of Chicago – "I wanted to support the cause. We can't have Rauner's people in here. I'm against letting him buy the legislature."



Dennis Williams, president, Local 1610, Chicago-Read Mental Health Center – "Gov. Rauner is attacking working people by attacking unions. If we aren't out here supporting the union's endorsed candidates, why would they support us? Rauner has all this money. We have to have people power."



Lynn Payer and Linda Loew, Local 1989, Northeastern Illinois University "Working people worldwide are being exploited by the rich and powerful," Payer said. "I believe that in order to have a democracy, we need to have a prosperous working class and middle class. I'm out here today because I want to take action on my beliefs."

Rauner vetoes of living wage, anti-privatization bills are sustained

No budget progress on the horizon

No significant progress was made during the veto session in finding a compromise that would allow for passage of a state budget.

GOV. BRUCE RAUNER continues to hold hostage the budget and the people who rely on the critical state services that are not being funded. Rauner is demanding that the General Assembly first pass his so-called "Turnaround Agenda," an effort to

weaken unions and lower working families' incomes with the false promise it would solve the state's structural deficit problem.

Veto of wage bill holds

THE LONG, HARD BATTLE of direct-service providers

in state-funded non-profit private agencies to get a living wage for the vital work they do hit a roadblock when legislators failed to override Gov. Bruce Rauner's veto of HB 5931, which would have raised DSPs' base pay to \$15 an hour.

The vote came after a flurry of last-minute phone calls from AFSCME members in non-profit agency locals to their legislators capped off a campaign that included gathering petition signatures, posing questions at electoral forums, phone calls and personal visits to legislators, letters to the editor, emails to lawmakers, comments

on social media and more phone calls. All but one Republican representative voted against the override. The tally was 64 for, 42 against, with 71 votes needed to override.

"The fact that a majority of legislators voted for this measure is an indication that we are steadily building support," said Council 31 Legislative Director Joanna Webb-Gauvin. "We aren't going to give up in this fight."

Privatization limits don't get past governor's veto

THE EFFORT BY AFSCME and the Illinois Nurses Association to draw a legal line in the sand that would

forestall rumored plans to further privatize the provision of health-related services in Department of Corrections and Department of Juvenile Justice facilities could not secure the votes to override a gubernatorial veto.

The bill, HB 5104, would have established the policy that further expansion of privatization of medical and mental-health services is not in the best interest of the state. Illinois already uses a vendor to provide such services at some of the DOC and DJJ facilities.

Continued on page 7

Legislative



Update

Disability workers keep up pressure for fair pay

Legislators fall short in effort to reverse Rauner's veto of wage-increase bill

Direct support personnel who care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in nonprofit agencies are fighting to get fair wages.

THEY SPENT THE FALL ON A campaign that included gathering signatures on a petition, posing questions at electoral forums, phone calls and personal visits to legislators, letters to the editor, emails to lawmakers, comments on social media and more phone calls. The nonprofit

residential programs where they work are entirely dependent on state funding and haven't received an increase in the state's reimbursement rate for the past eight years.

Average pay is just \$9.35 an hour, without an increase in state funding, it's been hard for

workers to get even modest pay raises, meaning they have an almost impossible time balancing care for the vulnerable with the challenge of caring for their own families.

Their efforts have focused on enacting HB 5931, the Community Disability Living Wage Act, which was written to raise the base pay of DSPs to \$15 an hour. Gov. Bruce Rauner vetoed the bill earlier this year, and legislators did not override that veto during the Nov. 15-17 veto session.

Christine Rivera works at Ray Graham Association and is an executive board member of Local 3492. She testified at an Oct. 17 Senate Human Services Committee Hearing. Following is an excerpted version of that testimony.

I've been a DSP at Ray Graham Association for 15 years. I make less than \$12 an hour, or roughly \$25,000 a year. ...

My husband and I split up a year ago, and I had to ask my grown kids to move back in because I couldn't make it financially. ... I live from check to check. I was hospitalized with pneumonia earlier this year, and even with insurance I have a \$750 hospital bill and no idea how I'm going to pay it.

When you are a DSP you need a hundred hands to do everything. I work in a group home for six men. I get them up in the morning: give them a shower if they had an accident during the night, help them shave and brush teeth. I get them dressed and tie their shoes. I prepare their breakfast. Some have swallowing problems so I puree their food and put a thickening agent into their beverages to make sure they don't choke. I give them their medications – making sure they don't spit out their pills – and monitor their blood pressure. Then I get them loaded onto a bus

–we have some men in wheelchairs – and take them to their day program. Some days I also drive one of our clients to his job in the community, or take clients to doctors' appointments.

They all need someone to care for them 24-7. One of my guys likes to run away, and it's not easy to keep your eyes on him and cook a meal or change the linens.

It's getting harder to hire staff at my agency. The starting wage at Ray Graham is \$9.30 an hour. Walmart pays more. McDonalds pays more. Dog walkers get paid more. DSPs provide well-being, safety and a better quality of life for the disabled individuals we support. ...

The governor's veto was an insult to DSPs as well as the folks we serve. It suggests flipping burgers has more value than a human life.

Union helps RocVale employees stand up for the children

They've only had a union contract for two years at RocVale Children's Home.

EVEN SO, THE DIRECT SERVICE personnel at this Rockford facility are learning that the union is a tool they can use to advocate for the young people whom they serve. It started with an assault by an older resident on one of the youngsters. Then the finger-pointing began.

"We get the chance to advocate for our clients and residents at team meetings, and we've reported for nearly three years that this individual was causing problems," said Lindsay Williams, vice president of Local 2515. "But management didn't listen. And when a manager said it happened because of staff not doing their job, it rubbed me the wrong way. Management failed to realize how

important we are.

"How much we care about our individuals made us stand up."

One of the main problems is short staffing. Wages are too low to attract and keep staff at RocVale, and nearly all of the non-profit agencies that provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

"There are kids we have to keep in line of sight," Williams said, "but it's not possible sometimes because of short staffing. Management knows how short of staff we have been and they were willing to let us work that way. That led to a really sad turn of events."

Union members decided to use the ensuing crisis to improve the

home's environment for the children they serve.

They set up a meeting with the manager who "discredits what we do," Williams said. "We felt the situation could have been prevented if he had been with us instead of against us. We wanted him to listen, and put credit in our work."

The manager was hanging around outside the room where staff was being interviewed by investigators, Williams said. "We felt he was trying to intimidate us, so we cancelled the meeting."

The next day she got a call from the agency CEO. "I told him the trust had been broken, but we met with him and we were able to get down to the real nitty-gritty."

The union group had a list of changes they wanted to see happen:

- Remove the assaulter from RocVale;
- Move the assaulted child back to the facility;
- Ensure that the assaulted youth receives appropriate counseling services;

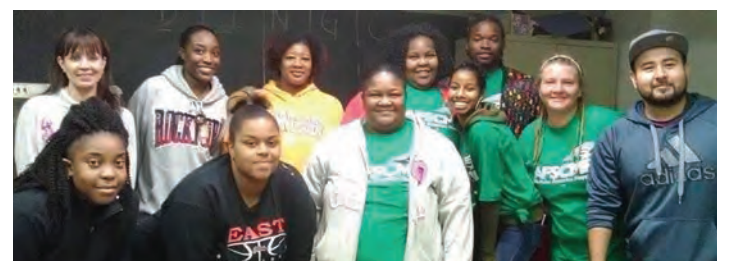
How much we care about our individuals made us stand up.

- Remove two supervisors from RocVale until the state Department of Children and Family Services investigation has concluded;
- Offer counseling to staff;
- Offer training on crisis management for such assaults to direct-service personnel at RocVale; and
- Create a plan to address the safety and security concerns brought forth in the meeting,

and share that plan with the union in 10 days.

"The meeting was powerful," Council 31 staff representative Sara Dornier said. "Our members were focused on the children and advocated for them."

Williams said the top management person on site was supposedly on leave starting the next day. "I don't know if it was what we did or not, but he's gone," she said. "We stood together and spoke the truth. We realized that together we can make changes that will improve our residents' lives. Management didn't know how much we could do. If they had it their way, they would have fired some staff and moved on."



Local 2515 members felt they had accomplished something for the children they serve after a meeting with their agency's CEO.

AFSCME works to block layoffs in Cook County budget

Cook County's FY '17 budget plan raised a storm of controversy with the threat of hundreds of layoffs.

NEARLY 200 AFSCME members who work for Cook County were threatened with layoffs, even though County Board President Toni Preckwinkle's 2017 budget plan passed with full funding.

That number could have hit 600 county employees, many in public-safety agencies, if the board declined to pass proposed revenue-raising measures, including a tax on sweetened beverages.

The union did not accept the need or the logic for any layoffs, and union members spoke out

'Why would a health system with insufficient nursing staff that routinely uses expensive contract nurses lay off licensed practical nurses?'

at the budget hearings against those layoffs.

The beverage industry waged a high-profile campaign against the tax on pop and the pressure on county commissioners was very intense. AFSCME supported revenue-raising measures, including the beverage tax, Council 31 Regional Director Helen Thornton told board members at one of four public hearings on the budget.

"Cook County government is already understaffed on the

frontlines in public safety and almost every other department," she said. "Layoffs would not only harm the affected employees and their families but would also damage the crucial services that they provide. Every possible measure should be taken to avoid such layoffs."

Beverage tax passes

A majority on the County Board agreed and adopted the ordinance to establish the new beverage tax. But the Cook County Health and Hospitals System still went forward with its plan to layoff 175 employees.

Union members spoke out at the budget hearings against those layoffs, pointing out that the Health System is planning to add 400-500 new jobs.

"Why would a health system with insufficient nursing staff that routinely uses expensive contract nurses lay off licensed practical nurses?" Thornton asked. "The layoffs will also impact back-office staff, another area where the health system routinely supplements staff with private contractors."

Health System jobs saved

There are about 50 licensed practical nurses like Felicia Greenwood in the hospital system with a lot of years working at County Hospital and working with the patients.

"We know the policies, procedures, protocols: we know how it's done at CCHHS," Greenwood said. "LPNs provide continuity of care. If you allow this layoff to happen, it



Helen Thornton

won't be an easy road for us LPNs and our families, but the hardest hit will be our patients."

As a result of union pressure, the layoff of the LPNs was cancelled and positions were found for almost all the other staff slated for layoff.

"We're very pleased that virtually no members lost their jobs," Thornton said. "But too many employees were forced to take lower-paying positions. We continue to believe that the layoffs were unnecessary and counter-productive."

Toxicology lab faces contracting out

Layoffs slated for the Medical Examiner's office come from a plan to privatize toxicology services, despite a lack of documentation for the administration's claim that such a move would save money and increase efficiency. Toxicologist Mary McMillin said these claims were unfounded.

"The ME says privatization is necessary because the toxicology lab doesn't have new technology to improve efficiency," she said to the commissioners. "But the equipment is there and many of the toxicologists have experience using it. For the ME to be so mistaken about this basic fact shows what little thought went into this privat-

ization scheme.

"Efficiency can definitely be improved," she said. "We have many ideas we could share."

She said, "If you dismantle the Toxicology Lab, the county will be at the mercy of these two private labs. With so little competition, if the for-profit labs decide to increase the cost of testing we would have no other recourse but to pay."

"The current lab works closely with pathologists in the office, law enforcement officials and even families who have lost a loved one," toxicologist Puanani Payton said at one of the four hearings. "Privatization will negatively impact the ability to get definitive and defensible results on the cause of death, and will cut off bereaved families from information they need for closure," she said. "Toxicology staff will no longer be available to provide depositions or testify in court, a critical need for law enforcement. And the disruption in the chain of custody caused by shipping samples across the country will become an issue in criminal cases."

Public defenders need help

The budget adds no staff for the Public Defender's office, even though its caseload has been steadily rising. This contributes to longer stays in Cook County's already overcrowded jail.

Thornton voiced union support for adding staff in the Public Defender's office. "Attorney case loads are too high, driving a need to request delays and continuances," she said. "As the PD often represents clients who can't afford to make bond, these delays drive up costs in the jail system."

Legislative Update

Continued from page 5

The union argued that, given the difficulties Illinois faces in providing adequate care to DOC and DJJ inmates, the Illinois legislature should restrict expansion of vendor-provided services.

Emanuel's pension plan on hold

AN ATTEMPT TO SHORE UP city of Chicago workers' pension system by creating a third tier for everyone hired after the bill passes had not reached the House floor for a vote at press time.

The bill would increase new hires' pension contributions

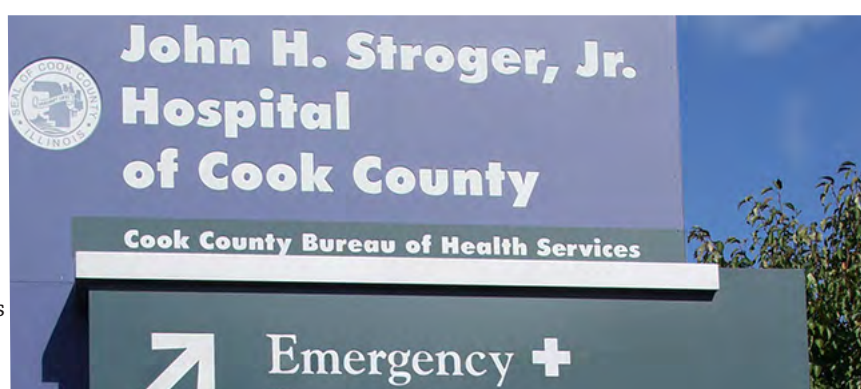
The legislature should restrict expansion of vendor-provided services.

and lower the unpenalized retirement age. It would increase the city's contributions, aiming for 90 percent funding by 2058, and give the state and the pension system options to enforce mandated payment levels.

The new funding is desperately needed to bring stability to the MEABF, which is severely underfunded.

However, Council 31 Research Director Martha Merrill said the union has serious concerns about the much higher contribution that will be required of new hires.

In response to AFSCME concerns, the legislation was amended to insure that those employees will not end up paying more than their plan is actually worth.



Statewide Day of Action exposes Rauner's refusal to negotiate

State employees demonstrate unity, resolve

When Gov. Bruce Rauner's efforts to impose a set of extreme demands on state employees rather than bargain a new state contract was affirmed by the Illinois Labor Relations Board on Nov. 15, shock waves rippled across the state.

Many members didn't realize how serious the situation was until that ruling came down, according to Tad Hawk, president of Local 1805 in the Metro East region. "Now they're ready to move forward," he added.

Thousands of AFSCME members joined in Nov. 17 Day of Action activities in every corner of the state.

"We had a fantastic turnout" at the Local 1805 rally in Caseyville, Hawk said. More than 200 members were

there to send Rauner the message, "Don't Dictate, Negotiate!"

The union is appealing the ILRB decision in state court, but while that case is pending, Rauner clearly intends to try to move forward with imposing his "last, best and final offer" at the bargaining table, which includes no pay increases for four years and a 100 percent increase in employees' health-care costs. He would also do away with standards that prevent unaccountable outsourcing of public services for private profit.

"That's the scary part," Hawk said. "He wants to privatize state services and take our jobs away."

'Not the way to save Illinois'

If the governor does move forward to impose his version of the contract, union members must accept those

terms or go on strike.

"This is not the way to save Illinois," said Tawny Proulx, president of Local 172 at Mabley Developmental Center in Dixon and a member of the union negotiating committee. "We spent our lives doing this work. Why should we give that all away?"

"The governor should take a good hard look at all the people who are going to be hurt by this," she said, including not just state workers, but the people they serve.

In issuing a finding that negotiations between the Rauner Administration and AFSCME Council 31 were at "impasse" and no more bargaining was required, the ILRB rejected a recommended decision and order advanced in September by its own administrative law judge, who presided over months of hearings in the case last spring.

"The judge heard the facts and found there was no impasse on key issues and urged the board to order Gov.



Charleston



Chicago



Champaign



Centralia



Dwight



Springfield



Kankakee



Kankakee



Springfield

Rauner back to the bargaining table,” Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. “The board was wrong to ignore her findings. Our union strongly disagrees with this ruling. We have consistently made clear that we are prepared to continue negotiating, while the Rauner administration’s refusal to meet has sabotaged the collective bargaining process.”

Union members to Rauner: ‘Don’t Dictate. Negotiate!’

The ruling confirmed what seems to have been Rauner’s goal from the start of bargaining.

“He had no intention to negotiate with us,” Proulx said. “When they walked out on us in January, it was as if they had no intent to reach an agreement.”

That impression is backed up by something Raun-

er said on the campaign trail when he was running for governor. “I may have to take a strike and shut down the government for a few weeks,” he said in a 2013 campaign speech. “I will do it proudly because it’s the right thing to do.”

‘Strike would hurt every Illinois citizen’

“They want more work for less pay,” said John Royal president of Local 124 at Alton Mental Health Center. “We’ve been telling our members this is real for a long time and now they are seeing it. When the ruling was announced, my phone was blowing up.”

But Royal said the union would not stop fighting back.

“The governor is trying to force state workers to accept his unfair terms or go out on strike,” Lynch said.

“Rauner’s path of conflict and confrontation is unfair to workers and wrong for the people of Illinois. Public service workers in state government deserve fair treatment and they want to do their jobs. They know that a strike would hurt every Illinois citizen and they are doing everything possible to avoid that course of action. But union members also know that they cannot let one mean-spirited man dictate all the terms of their employment. And they’re prepared to fight to prevent that.”

See Page 11 for more Day of Action photos from around the state.



Homewood



Anna



Thompson Center, Chicago



Rock Island



Springfield



Waukegan

Chicago budget plan better than most years, but...

Battles continue to save IPRA jobs, preserve health care for retirees in need

A FSCME members who work for the city of Chicago are facing few if any layoffs as Mayor Rahm Emanuel's budget for the coming year works its way through the City Council.

ISSUES INTERTWINED WITH THE budget are at the forefront of AFSCME's lobbying efforts.

Union urges assigning IPRA investigators to new agency

IN THE WAKE OF SEVERAL high-profile police shootings, the city is moving to disband the Independent Police Review Authority, which has been responsible for investigating such shootings. A pending ordinance would scrap the agency and replace it with a Civilian Office of Police Accountability, which would have a stronger mandate to hold officers accountable.

But neither the ordinance nor Emanuel's budget proposal discusses what will happen to IPRA's highly trained and experienced investigators, who have not caused or contributed to past problems with IPRA and who could and should be moved to the new agency.

"We are having discussions with the city and there has been some movement," Council 31 Special Projects Director Jo Patton said. "Management's earlier position was that these employees would be terminated and would have to reapply. They no longer are saying that, but they haven't yet agreed to our position, which is that all the investigators should be

moved over to the new agency."

Retirees could lose affordable health insurance

The Emanuel Administration is pushing forward with its three-year phase-out of subsidized health insurance coverage for City of Chicago retirees. But AFSCME retirees are fighting back.

The phase-out would be particularly hard on retirees who are not Medicare eligible, Council 31 Benefits Director Martha Merrill said. That includes those who are not yet 65, as well as a small number of older retirees for whom the city did not pay into Medicare.



sional Republicans will move quickly to repeal the ACA. There is a plan not on the ACA exchange that non-Medicare-eligible retirees can get – but

city of Chicago retiree in the municipal fund.

"There are other options, but none of them will be even remotely affordable for a single retiree who is not covered by Medicare and has no income but their city pension," Merrill said. "And finding the one best suited to the individual would be a complicated process at best."

AFSCME has enlisted the aid of concerned aldermen to press the Emanuel Administration to extend city health-insurance subsidies for retirees with modest incomes who are not eligible for Medicare.

All the highly trained and experienced IPRA investigators should be moved over to the new agency

The city claims retirees will be able to get coverage under the Affordable Care Act. But there is a very real danger that Donald Trump and Congress-

this city-initiated new Blue Cross Blue Shield plan would cost around \$1,400 a month, 16,800 annually. That's nearly half the average pension of a

**Worried?
PSP can help!**

**Call the AFSCME
Personal Support
Program.**

1-800-647-8776



We're here when you need us.

"PSP helped me"

"I was dealt with in a completely professional and compassionate manner from my very first call to PSP."

"PSP helped very much. It felt good to talk to someone who listens and understands and helps you to deal with problems and issues."

"Setting up the appointment was done very promptly and professionally. The session was very helpful. I feel much better than I did before I got here."

Day of Action sends message from the front lines

continued from page 9

Thousands of AFSCME members in every corner of the state showed they were ready and willing to fight back.



Dixon



La Salle Veterans Home



Chicago



Local 2258



Champaign

GET THE FACTS!



While they are working hard every day to serve the people of Illinois, state employees should not have to worry about their future.

Illinois state employees have been inundated with misleading and negative communications from Gov. Bruce Rauner and his administration.

For example, the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) has produced videos rife with falsehoods and glaring omissions about key issues of contract negotiations, including health care and what happens if state employees are forced to strike.

AFSCME31.org/FairContract is a new web page that provides factual information about what's at risk in this fight for a fair state contract and how the administration's last, best and final offer would impact AFSCME members and their families.

One of the first posts on the website is a two-minute AFSCME video (pictured) debunking some of the most misleading statements from a CMS video about the Rauner Administration's health care proposals.

RETIREE NOTES

Retirees provide big boost for AFSCME political program

AFSCME RETIREES ACROSS THE state worked on mailers, phone banks and Saturday walk programs to get out the Election 2016 union vote. Hundreds of retiree-to-retiree phone calls were made for AFSCME-endorsed candidates.

"Members were working daily on the election," said Bob Lovell, a Sub-chapter 86 member. "I've been volunteering for weeks. It's a great feeling to have an impact."

He was not alone. Retirees called and conversed about the political climate and received feedback on candidates.

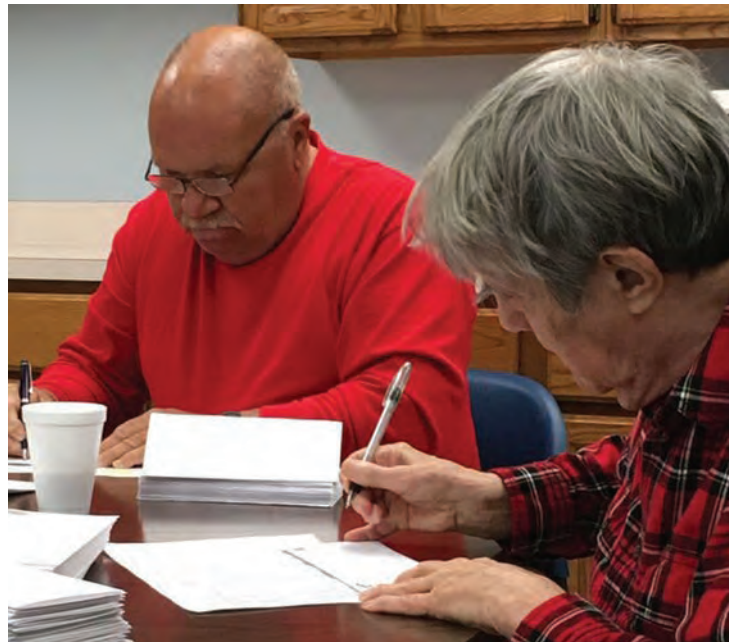


Ken Rhinehart calls union members and retirees on behalf of AFSCME-endorsed candidates.

"Some retirees are older and our phone calls make them aware of current political issues and it motivates them to vote," said Gary Mazzotti, also a Sub-chapter 86 member.

A friends-and-family mailer from chapter members discussed each district's AFSCME-endorsed state representative. Sub-chapters around the state stuffed, sealed, stamped and mailed thousands of letters to AFSCME members.

Retirees placed their boots



Mike Woodcox and Frank Looney get a political mailing to retirees ready to go.

on the ground in Saturday walk events and on Election Day, discussing political campaigns at the doors of active and retired union members.

"For local races, the more contact you have with citizens, the better off you will be," said Larry Blum, a Sub-chapter 86 member said. "People are tired of negative television ads. When it comes down to it, people need good old-fashioned human contact."

AFSCME's PEOPLE program is fueled by passionate and committed retirees. "We are helping because we care," Lovell said. "We want candidates in office who will help middle class families and support the unions. We are here to try and make Illinois better."

Republicans target Medicare

ACCORDING TO EARLY REPORTS, so-called Medicare "reform" is a top priority for president-elect Donald Trump and the Republican majorities in both houses

of Congress. House Speaker Paul Ryan, has been pushing hard to shift Medicare to a voucher program, and it appears likely that Republicans will quickly move forward to try to enact such a plan.

Such a voucher program would effectively privatize Medicare, making it less affordable and less reliable. The president-elect said on the campaign trail that he opposed any changes to Medicare and Social Security. But his new transition website includes a revised health policy agenda that could encompass the sorts of changes that Ryan has proposed, the Washington Post reported.

There is precedent for the assault on Medicare and Social Security, according to Michael Phelan of the Social Security Works group. In 2005, a reelected President George W. Bush and a unified Republican Congress set out on a plan to privatize Social Security. The American people stood up and protected a system that has never missed a payment, doesn't add a penny to the deficit, and can pay full benefits for near-

ly two decades.

Phelan said the same kind of mass organizing effort will need to be launched this time around: "The only thing standing in (Ryan's) way will be a united American public who know that our Social Security system must be expanded, never cut, and that Medicare is a vital lifeline for seniors."

Affordable health care at risk for Chicago retirees

IF THE EMANUEL ADMINISTRATION follows through on its planned phase-out of all city of Chicago health care plans for city retirees, many could find themselves without any health insurance coverage at all on January 1. The city is telling retirees they can purchase coverage on the health care exchanges under the Affordable Care Act, but even those plans are unaffordable for many. Moreover, Trump has vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act as one of his first acts

have affordable health care in their retirement."

New law brings benefits to certain married retirees

RECENT STATE LEGISLATION NOW provides the option to establish and fund a spousal benefit to certain IMRF, SURS and TRF annuitants who were not married at the time they retired but have entered into a marriage or other legal relationship since. This benefit is an amount, roughly 50 percent of the retiree's pension payment, which is paid for the lifetime of an eligible surviving spouse. If the annuitant in one of these systems did not have a spouse eligible for a surviving spouse pension, he or she received a refund of surviving spouse contributions. To establish this benefit, the annuitant will have to pay back the amount of this refund.

This legislation applies to retirees who:

- Married in Illinois on or after



Harriet Baker.

in office.

Retirees who are not eligible for Medicare will be especially hard hit. For example, city retirees who are not Medicare-eligible currently pay \$876 a month for health care, while the new plans could cost as much as \$1,400.

"It's like the city of Chicago tied cement blocks to our feet and dropped us in Lake Michigan to drown," said Dorothy Harding, a Sub-chapter 60 member.

AFSCME continues to press the Emanuel administration and the Chicago City Council to provide adequate and affordable health care coverage for retirees.

"The city's decision to ignore its responsibility to retirees is unconscionable," said Martha Merrill, the director of research and benefits for AFSCME. "We continue to press for a solution that ensures Chicago retirees

Feb. 26, 2014; or

- Entered into an Illinois civil union on or after June 11, 2011; or
- Entered into a legal relationship in another state or jurisdiction that was not recognized in Illinois until after June 11, 2011, or Feb. 26, 2014; and
- Are still in this same marriage, civil union or legal relationship.

Those eligible for this benefit can contact their pension system to request an application. The numbers for each pension system: SURS, 217-378-8800; IMRF, 800-275-4673; TRS, 800-877-7896.

The refund may be paid in a lump sum or spread out in separate payments. No one is obligated to re-establish this benefit. For all systems, the window to apply for this benefit is Dec. 29, 2016, through Dec. 28, 2017.



Larry Blum (from left), Bill Voss, Linda Blum and Frank Looney stuff envelopes.

SHORT REPORTS

Union works for Beverly Farm employees

MANAGEMENT AT BEVERLY Farm, a non-profit private provider of services to the developmentally and intellectually disabled, had developed a bad habit. Like many such agencies across Illinois, this largely state-funded, Godfrey-based agency can't pay its direct service personnel enough to keep them around for very long, because the state hasn't raised the reimbursement rate for employee wages in eight years.

Only those most committed to the work do stay. The result is extremely short staffing, which then results in brutal amounts of mandatory overtime for those who are still around.

"They were working people 72 hours a week, which is an ungodly amount," said Tim Killebrew, who works in the developmental training center and is a member of Local 3784.

Killebrew has a heart condition. His doctor has ordered he be limited to 40 hours of work per week – no overtime. Here's where the bad habit comes in.

Management responds, as they do in all such cases of employees with medically restricted hours, by counting against him the overtime that they would have scheduled if he didn't have the restriction. So his record showed he was missing work by taking family and medical leave.

According to the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, employers only have to give you a certain amount of such time per year. So Killebrew's FMLA time was being eaten up, even though he was working a full-time schedule. If his FMLA time ran out, he would have been at risk for discipline.

Killebrew filed a grievance objecting to the practice.

"I'm not new to the workplace and I've always been union," he said. "I knew what they were doing was wrong. They were doing this to other people, but I was the one that fought it. And I won."

The case went all the way to arbitration, where the arbitrator ordered all his time restored.

"This case sets an important precedent," said AFSCME attorney Tom Edstrom. "Now the



Tim Killebrew's winning grievance sets a precedent that will help many of his coworkers.

employer should know it can't take this approach with any employee at Beverly Farm."

Rauner push on workers' comp part of race to the bottom

ONE OF THE KEY BENEFITS OF the workers' compensation system, the set of regulations that protect workers who sustain on-the-job injuries, is that it provides strong incentives for employers to maintain a safe workplace. But a new report from the U.S. Department of Labor, "Does The Workers' Compensation System Fulfill Its Obligations To Injured Workers?" asserts that this incentive is being reduced as states engage in a cost-cutting "race to the bottom."

The report details how states are competing with one another to cut benefits for workers who lose time on the job and make it harder for those who are injured to prove that it was job-related. The result is that "working people are at great risk of falling into poverty as a result of workplace injuries and the failure of state workers' compensation systems to provide them with adequate benefits," the report says.

That's what's happening here as Illinois' corporate class "pushes ahead with efforts to strip workers of their rights and protections," state Sen. Andy Manar, D-48, said, adding that "Workers' compensation reform is a key component of Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner's agenda.

Rauner maintains that doing so will bring more jobs to the state, but there's little evidence to support that thesis.

"Proponents of the Rauner agenda argue that the way to bring more jobs to Illinois is to slash benefits for injured workers," Manar said. "Unquestionably, Illinois needs a robust economy and a climate that is welcoming to manufacturers and other businesses. How we achieve that is up for debate, but I cannot get on board with any plan that puts employees at significant financial risk."

Union gets award for community action in Springfield

THE FAITH COALITION FOR THE Common Good in Springfield gave its Community Award to AFSCME Council 31. Two retirees, former local union president Don Todd, and longtime activist Jim Dixon, accepted the award on behalf of AFSCME.

"We've been very involved with the coalition since its inception," Todd said. "Jim Dixon initiated the union's participation when he was a Local 2600 activist. When I became president of the Springfield retiree chapter, I was put on the coalition's board of directors. It's a great organization."

The Faith Coalition "brings together local congregations and clergy to address the injustices of racism and poverty in the central Illinois region," according to its website. The group helped forge a community benefits agreement for a

major high-speed rail project to make sure community concerns were addressed. Those included the setting of hiring goals for minorities and women to work on the project.

The coalition also works on education issues, and recently organized a demonstration at the governor's mansion to protest the damage his policies have caused to social services in Illinois.

AFSCME regional director appointed to Bicentennial Commission

COUNCIL 31 REGIONAL DIRECTOR Larry Spivack will serve on the Illinois Bicentennial Commission. The state has established the commission to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Illinois statehood. The commission will have a central role in planning and implementing the state's bicentennial celebration. The governor appoints 40 commissioners, and nine elected officials get one appointment each, with Spivack getting the nod from state Treasurer Michael Frerichs.

"My role on the commission will be to make sure the real story of the development of this state is told," Spivack said. "Or, as President Lincoln reminded us: 'Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.'"

"Any real celebration of Illi-

nois' history," he said, "will recount the stories of the Haymarket Tragedy, Pullman Strike, Memorial Day Massacre, the work of Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones with coal miners in the state, the Cherry Mine Disaster, the Battle of Virden and so many other working class heroes and their battles."

School bus driver gets 20 kids safely off burning bus

AFSCME MEMBERS NEVER quit going the extra mile to serve the public, teach kids, save lives, make their communities better and safer. And they mostly do it with no thought of reward, other than a secure, fairly compensated job.

But that extra mile rarely involves saving the lives of 20 children. That's what school-bus driver Renita Smith of AFSCME Local 2250 in Prince George's County, Md., did when she smelled smoke and the kids on her bus started yelling "Ms. Bus Driver, the bus is smoking."

She was going to radio the transportation manager, but then, she picked up the radio and "I looked through my side rearview mirror, I saw the fire. I unbuckled my safety belt, I opened the door, and I got my babies off that bus."

Once the neighbors came out, and took the children to safety as they got off, "I ran back on the bus to make sure that there were no more kids."

Take a look at the bus (pictured here, below) that she got back on to make sure.

Public service, indeed.



This is what driver Renita Smith's bus looked like minutes after she got the all the kids off safely.

Photo by Kevin Kennedy, AFSCME Local 2250

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Hope Institute local gets to 'yes' on bargaining goals

A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT between Local 2481 and Hope Institute will raise wages by an average of 3 percent in the first year, with insurance and pay rates to be discussed later for the second and third years. The parties agreed on a method of allocating extra shifts so that there will be fewer instances of mandatory overtime and voluntary overtime will be more fairly distributed.

"It was quiet," said Yolanda Woods, the local union president. "We didn't have to bring out the pressure."

The pressure includes an array of direct action tactics that have served the union well over the years.

"This local's history of activism makes the employer very much aware that the members are ready and willing to engage in struggle if that's needed," staff representative Erik Hostetter said. "But we had three priorities for this round of bargaining and the local was successful on all three counts."

He said those three were increasing wages, mitigating the stress and hardship of rampant overtime and short staffing, and improving the training and

ter, Dena Midiri, Charles Scott, Samantha Burgess, Erika Rolando and Gail Forrester serving on the bargaining committee.

Early start smooths the way to contract in Madison County

WAGES WILL GO UP 2.25 PERCENT in each year of a four-year contract between Local 799 and Madison County. Shift differential for evenings and midnights will go up 10 cents an hour.

Members with 25 or more years of service will get a \$250 longevity bonus in each year of the contract. Employees will pay the same amount for healthcare coverage. The county will increase its contribution to the insurance pool, a fund that helps decrease the cost of dependent and retiree health-care coverage. The local will get to hold orientation sessions for newly hired employees.

"We approached the county in mid-winter and suggested we get negotiations started early," said Chris Milton the local union president. "Our committee met and came up with a reasonable, good-for-the-group proposal and the administration accepted it. The last contract was settled 15 months after the previous one

'This local's history of activism makes the employer very much aware that the members are ready and willing to engage in struggle if that's needed.'

evaluation for classroom staff. The overtime agreement includes provisions that allow employees to sign up for unfilled shifts using text messaging, which helps staff who want extra work find the opportunities, thus decreasing the number of vacancies that must be filled through forced overtime.

The amount of vacation time accrued per year was increased by 5-10 hours, depending on an employee's length of service. Accrual of sick time will increase by a half-hour per pay period. The starting wage was raised to \$9.90 per hour, from \$9.75: "Doing our part in the fight for fair wages," Woods said.

Hostetter led the negotiations with Woods, Alisha Kalb, Ashley Jones, Diane Galvin, Richard Car-

had expired, so we were hoping we could work together and get it done."

He said the insurance pool emerged in the contract that settled the local's strike 10 years ago, when the county wanted to eliminate dependent coverage.

"This was the first time we ever resolved the contract before it expired," said Council 31 staff representative Carla Gillespie who led the bargaining committee. Milton and Cathi Gitchoff served on the bargaining committee, with Paul Kacera, Joli Sabatino, and Greg Faulkner representing the General group, Bill VanBuskirk, Denise Marler and Daryl Seaman representing judicial employees and Julie Ezell and Susan Faulkner for the circuit clerk's office.



Eric Hutchinson, Kristol Bland, Chris Dressen, Michelle Lebon and Patty Grissom served on the Pana Local 726 negotiating committee.

Pana local battles over health insurance

BARGAINING BETWEEN LOCAL 726 and the city of Pana resulted in a three-year contract that will raise wages 2 percent a year.

The new agreement adds a requirement for a safety person on the many jobs that put workers in danger. Employees will pay more for health insurance, with premiums for a family plan increasing by \$120 per month.

"We started off negotiations by cleaning up contract language, some of which was just outdated," said Chris Dressen, the local union president. "But when we got to the economic side, it was a long deal." The city wanted to eliminate retiree health-care coverage and sharply increase what active employees were paying.

"It took them a long time to realize that what they were doing was wrong," Dressen said. "We said we were not going to lose what we had. In the end we took a hit on insurance, but we'll recoup it in two years. They were coming after retirees on health care, but we kept them off that."

The local was well aware that the city is not in good financial

shape, said staff representative Randy Hellmann, who led the union bargaining committee. "We wanted to protect our interests, but we also had to protect our jobs and the health-care plan."

Columbia. They negotiated 2.75 percent raises. Workers will now get paid overtime for classes they are required to take to maintain their certification, if the classes are at times when a worker is

'It took them a long time to realize that what they were doing was wrong.'

Dressen said that health-care coverage is sure to be a tough issue in future rounds of bargaining. "We have a number of members who will retire in the next few years," he said. "It will be a battle from here on out to keep retiree coverage and health care for everybody."

Along with Hellmann and Dressen, Eric Hutchinson, Mike Sisk, Patty Grissom, Kristol Bland and Michelle Lebon were on the negotiating committee.

Raises for city of Columbia emergency medical services

MEMBERS OF LOCAL 2817, who work for the emergency medical services unit, agreed to a one-year contract with the city of

not scheduled to be on the job. If the classes are during their work time, they will continue to get regular pay. On major holidays, like Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day, both part-time and fulltime employees will get double time if they are scheduled to work.

"This is only the second time we've done this," said Mike Evans, a member of the bargaining committee. "Our union is relatively new. It took a while to get it done, but we're on good terms with the city. It's only a one-year contract, so we'll be back at it soon."

Evans, Brandon Layton, Kevin Mennel, Gary Hutchison and Ryan Young served on the committee, which was led by staff representative Ed LaPorte.

McLean County school-bus monitors, drivers win 6-year first-contract battle



McLean County school-bus monitors and drivers show off their new contract.

A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT THAT took five years to negotiate and ratify will give transportation workers for McLean County Unit District No. 5 schools located in Bloomington-Normal a wage increase of at least \$1 per hour in the first year and 60 cents an hour in each of the

It's bringing about unity in the workplace.

next two years.

The contract raises longevity pay by \$250 a year – to \$750 a year for those with 10-14 years of service; \$1,000 a year for 15-19 years; and \$1,250 per year for those with 20 or more years. All employees – monitors and bus drivers – are now guaranteed at least five hours of work per day, up from four hours. Seniority and transparency provisions are eliminating the toxic favoritism that creat-

ed divisions in the workforce. Choice of routes, who gets standby assignments, summer routes, after-school and charter assignments are now determined by seniority.

The long journey to get the contract began with an organizing drive that concluded in the fall of 2011 with an overwhelming vote to shed a management-dominated employee association and gain AFSCME representation.

The organizing effort received a jump start when the superintendent met with bus drivers and monitors and said, “When I think of teachers, I think of percent increases, and when I think of the transportation department, I think of nickels and dimes.”

After that, “We wanted change,” a member of the bargaining committee, Willie Curry, said at the time.

But change didn't come easily. The school administration decided to contract out transportation services. Negotiations were in limbo as the union fought the privatization, then

fought for recognition by the new employer, First Student. Forced to recognize the union, First Student resisted actual bargaining and encouraged long-frustrated employees to try to decertify the union. That was overwhelmingly rejected.

“It's a relief,” Curry, a bus monitor, said of finally getting

a contract. “It's bringing about unity in the workplace. It was a continuous battle for five years. Now we have a chance to change things. We are no longer at-will employees. They have to have just cause to fire you and the union can fight for us.”

She said the wage increases have helped attendance.



Signing the first contract.

'Having more hours and better pay and a union contract is a weight off people's shoulders. It gives us more security.'

“Having a union to support us is the biggest part,” said Samantha Lambros, a driver and also a bargaining committee member. “Having more hours and better pay and a union contract is a weight off people's shoulders. It gives us more security.”

Curry, Lambros, Jajwanica Brockington-Johnson, Kim Grant, Stacie Dalton, Gary Pargo, Billy Morgan, Annette Arnold, Candace Thedens, Charita Jeffery, Deb Peine and Floyd Short served on the bargaining team, which was led by staff representative Renee Nesler and regional director Kent Beauchamp.



Members of Local 2073 speak out.

Members protest out-of-control violence at Logan CC

Women's prison has second-highest rate of inmate-on-staff assaults

Sgt. Allison Kennedy speaks at the news conference.



THE NUMBER OF INMATE attacks on Logan Correctional Center staff was second highest for all the state's prisons. That was bad enough, but in the first seven months of this year the rate doubled.

Local 2073 members have had their fill, holding an Oct. 17 demonstration and press conference outside the prison gates to "sound the alarm and call for change," said Shaun Dawson, the local union president. "It has gotten to the point where staff and inmates expect violence. Security staff can't do their job, which is to provide a safe environment for inmates. And management won't do its job, which is to provide a safe environment for staff."

Several rank-and-file staff addressed the media, fellow union members and supporters.

"One day in March as I was

walking an inmate back from the yard, she got in my face and threatened me," CO Mal-lory Miller said. "She kicked at my knees, spit on me and said, 'I'm going to beat your ass.'

"Fortunately I had the inmate cuffed so I was able to keep control. I wrote a ticket and documented the incident, but the inmate was found not guilty of assault. There were no repercussions."

Miller works on a mental health unit, but the prison is critically short of mental health professionals.

"I hope today will make a difference," she said.

Sgt. Allison Kennedy endured a much more vicious attack when she tried to calm down an argument between two inmates.

"The inmate punched me in the face," Kennedy recalled. "She knocked me



State Senator Sam McCann came out to support AFSCME's demonstration and press conference.

to the concrete and began kicking me in the face, in the head, stomping on my head and neck.

A correctional officer "called for assistance and was able to get her off me long enough that I could get to my feet. The inmate came at me again, so I used pepper spray and she ran to her cell and closed the door.

"I had a very bad headache and bumps and scrapes. I was taken to the ER and learned I had a concussion. Then the back pain set in. For over three months I only slept a couple of hours at a time

Assaults are on the increase at a number of state prisons. Members at both Stateville CC and Pontiac CC also held rallies.

between the back pain and the anxiety I still feel."

She believes the lack of staff is due to high turnover at Logan, which is not typical of most Illinois prisons. But, "The No. 1 thing we need is for administration to back up officers in what we do. The inmate who did this to me – had me off work for more than three months, gave me an injury I am still suffering from – got only 15 days in segregation, and that was after the union raised a stink at a statewide labor management meeting."

Sgt. Ashley Schafer blames the problems on a management that does not recognize staff as assets who can help with solutions to the violence epidemic.

"The inmate who attacked Sgt. Kennedy had just gotten out of segregation after another assault," she said. "That same day, another

inmate strangled her cell mate until she was unconscious. She had wrapped a fan cord around her neck five times because she said she didn't like her anymore.

"I can't count the number of times I've had urine and feces thrown at me, been spit on, been threatened. Assaults at Logan are growing. Management needs to see that this is a problem and sit down with the union to figure out how to make this work safer."

Sgt. Ashley Schafer

