

ON THE

MOVE

RAUNER'S GONE— BARGAINING RESTARTS

PAGE 5



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**BIG WINS IN
LOCAL ELECTIONS**
PAGE 3

**FAIR TAX:
GET THE FACTS**
PAGES 8-9

**LEGISLATIVE
SESSION UNDERWAY**
PAGE 11



BY ROBERTA
LYNCH

WE'RE
BEGINNING
ANEW

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It's finally spring in Illinois

*Our union grew stronger during the long,
hard winter of Rauner's reign*

Spring has been slow in coming this year. As I write it is mid-April and snow is falling steadily outside my window. But slow though it may be, spring is coming. The trees have been sprouting buds, patches of green grass are appearing, and earlier this week it was so warm, folks were walking around in t-shirts and shorts.

It's a potent reminder that slow though it may seem, we're beginning anew too. We've survived the harsh winter of Bruce Rauner's tenure—with its blizzard of attacks on public employees and our union—and we're coming back stronger than ever.

State employees are back at the bargaining table after three long years. Rauner walked out on negotiations for a new contract in January 2016 based on a false claim of impasse. When he tried to impose his harsh terms—including astronomical increases in health care premiums—union members sent a powerful message by voting overwhelmingly to authorize a strike. Then AFSCME went to court and secured an injunction that stopped him cold.

Even though the union also won a court ruling that required negotiations to resume, Rauner refused to come back to the bargaining table. When JB Pritzker became governor, he pledged that he would renew negotiations—and that's just what he's done. Now the AFSCME Bargaining Committee is hard at work on reaching a fair settlement that rejects Rauner's attempts to subvert job rights, advance privatization and weaken our union.

State employees have also had to struggle through four years without their scheduled step increases after Rauner froze steps in July 2015. AFSCME won that battle in court too, but again Rauner failed to comply. And again,

Governor Pritzker has begun to set things right—restoring all employees to their proper steps as of April 1.

Rauner's gone, but the damage that his stormy term in office has done remains—especially the mountainous state debt he piled up, leaving Illinois with a budgetary disaster. Fortunately, Governor Pritzker is sowing the seeds now that can put our state back on solid ground with his campaign for a fair tax that will ensure the wealthy pay their share.

That kind of tax reform is long overdue. If we can put the necessary constitutional amendment on the ballot in 2020 and gain voter approval, we will greatly increase the odds of repairing ailing public pension systems and strengthening struggling public services. See page 8-9 to get the facts on the fair tax.

There are other changes coming too. AFSCME's participation in state legislative and local government elections across the state helped bring fresh voices to the General Assembly and to city councils in Chicago, Springfield, Peoria and more. These new elected officials are more willing to stand up to all the powers-that-be, to speak out for working families, and to oppose efforts to privatize public services or undermine union rights.

In the General Assembly we've been laboring to raise the pay of low-wage frontline workers in community disability agencies which depend on state funding. Even in the


dark ages of Bruce Rauner, AFSCME's grassroots lobbying secured raises for these workers that averaged more than 10% over the past two years. But they're still not paid enough to sustain a family or mitigate the need for a second job, so we've renewed that effort in the current legislative session.

And then there is the AFSCME Strong program which is coming into full bloom—tens of thousands of members signing the pledge card to refuse to let Bruce Rauner and his uber-rich allies destroy public employee unions in our country.

The Illinois Policy Institute (IPI) and the National Right-to-Work Committee joined forces with Rauner to get the anti-union majority on the US Supreme Court to overturn a decades-old precedent that ensured that all union-represented employees would contribute to the cost of representation.

The Rauner crew claimed that employees would rush to leave their unions once they no longer had to pay dues or a fair share fee. In fact, former feepayers have signed up by the thousands, making clear that unions will continue to thrive.

Our battles are far from over. The IPI continues to use FOIA regulations to gain access to our personal information, invade our privacy and spread their falsehoods. The wealthy elite in Illinois are renewing their efforts to slash or even eliminate public employee pensions. The forces of privatization are regrouping and looking for more public services to commandeer.

We know they'll keep on attacking and there will be more hard times to come. But we've shown we can survive and even thrive in the harshest of weathers. For now, let's welcome all the signs of spring's renewal and take pride in the more powerful union that we've become. 



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

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RETIREE CHAPTER 31 REPRESENTATIVE

Larry Brown

AFSCME-backed candidates prevail in local elections

We're helping shape local governments for the better

Candidates who garnered AFSCME backing based on their pledges to stand with working families won big in local government elections across the state on April 2.

Chicago City Council wins tip scales

In Chicago, AFSCME helped elect candidates who are committed to shaping a more progressive, pro-worker city council. In the first and second rounds of city elections, some 38 candidates endorsed by the union won their seats after

three too-close-to-call races were called in the AFSCME candidates' favor.

The Progressive Caucus in the City Council has stood with union members to block privatization and prevent service cuts. Now that caucus will be larger and can do even more to promote equality and economic progress for all.

"The support of AFSCME Council 31 played a huge part



Members from Locals 2040, 2025, 46, 2615 and Chapter 31 Retirees gathered to get out the vote for Debra Faralli, East Moline School Board candidate.

in the grassroots coalition that helped deliver the win," said newly-elected 40th Ward

Alderman Andre Vasquez. "Together we will continue to build community and improve our city!"

"AFSCME provided tremendous support, enabling us to run a positive, issues-focused campaign centered around bold ideas and independent leadership," said newly-elected 47th Ward Alderman Matt Martin. "We wouldn't be where we are today without them."

"Thanks to the support of the sisters and brothers of AFSCME, I am alderman of the 20th Ward," said newly-elected Alderman Jeanette Taylor. "Our journey has just started. We will model what community and labor relationships should and can look like."

AFSCME made no

hold them accountable," Council 31 Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Adrienne Alexander said. "We need to ensure that the jobs that AFSCME members perform and the services we provide are protected."

Making political gains across the state

AFSCME-backed candidates also fared well in cities like Springfield and Peoria.

"Where we coordinated our work and resources with local unions, and where AFSCME members were most engaged, that's where we were most successful," Council 31 Political Action Director Jason Kay said. "For example, in Peoria, AFSCME-endorsed candidate Rita Ali was the number one vote-getter elected to the city council."

In Springfield, the city council now tilts more favorably toward working people.

AFSCME Local 805 member and steward Erin Conley won in the 8th Ward (sidebar), 6th Ward incumbent Kristin DiCenso retained her seat, and Willie "Shawn" Gregory won by one single vote in the 2nd Ward (so close there may be a recount).

"AFSCME's efforts helped



AFSCME Local 805 member Erin Conley wins Springfield City Council seat

What inspired you to run for office as a union member?

I've always been a solution-driven person. I love Springfield. I love living here. I wanted to be part of making this a stronger community.

I'm a union steward. It's very important to me to ensure that all workers' rights are respected. I know this is particularly vital in Springfield, where union workers are an important part of our economy. Union workers have decent wages and benefits, making our community a better, healthier place to live.

How did AFSCME's support help your campaign?

I've walked for so many candidates as an AFSCME member so I know what we can do. But when AFSCME members turned out for me and my race, it blew my mind. We had volunteers helping us for a couple weeks up to the election and on Election Day.

My union brothers and sisters were a base of support that I knew I could rely on and it meant so much to me. Campaigning can be tough. It's a lot of work and I got very tired. To know that I had AFSCME backing me, that meant the world.

What do you hope to accomplish on the city council?

Springfield has wonderful, unique neighborhoods. But we have seen a lot of contracting out of basic city functions like street and sidewalk safety and repair, and the service isn't so good. These services should be provided by the city and by city workers. I want to improve our neighborhoods so people want to live in Springfield.

How has being a union member impacted your life?

I was a single mom for a long time without any child support. Being a union member meant I got regular raises, my children had health care and I had a sense of security and support. And after more than 20 years with the state I've worked up to the point where my kids can go to college and I can continue to help them as make their way in the world.

I can't put a price tag on what the union has done for me. It has completely changed what I thought my life would be and I will always be grateful. That's why I became a union steward. This union gives so much to me and I want to give back to others. 🦋



AFSCME Local 3738 Recording Secretary Leslie Thomas and President Nicole Cunningham volunteered in Springfield on Election Day.

endorsement in the Chicago mayor's race. In a run-off election, Lori Lightfoot defeated Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle. Both candidates had expressed respect for public employees and pledged support in union questionnaires.

"The aldermanic races were critical because no matter who the mayor is, we always need to

make these wins possible," Council 31 Legislative Affairs Specialist Dominic Watson said. "Conley won in a conservative district and Gregory ousted a Raunerite incumbent because we knocked on doors, made calls and educated our members. We helped push these candidates over the finish line and change the dynamic of our city council." 🦋

DSPs continue their fight for living wages, quality care

Building on momentum, AFSCME members fight for more progress

For many years, AFSCME members who care for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities in community agencies have organized and lobbied to win funding from the state for pay raises.

Their efforts have borne fruit. Over the last two years, Direct Support Personnel (DSPs) have

won funding earmarked for wage increases totaling \$1.25 per hour. While this is important

progress, the average starting wage for DSPs is still just \$10.49 per hour—below the federal poverty level for a family of four.

DSPs are now pushing for another increase from the state in the 2019 legislative session.

Two AFSCME-backed bills call for increases that will ramp up the starting wage to at least \$15 per hour by 2022. The bills are SB 1148 (sponsored by Sen. Heather Steans) and HB 2148 (sponsored by Rep. Robyn

Gabel).

As deliberations over the state's FY 20 budget get underway, these bills are an important way to educate lawmakers on the issue and bring it to the forefront in the budget talks.

A workforce crisis

In Illinois, more than 27,000 individuals with intellectual

and developmental disabilities live in community residential settings and rely on DSPs to enhance their quality of life.

From daily personal care (eating, grooming, and dressing) to teaching essential skills and attending to complex medical needs—often working with individuals with challenging and sometimes injurious behaviors—the work of DSPs can be physically demanding and emotionally draining.

Very low wages for such difficult work results in high employee turnover, which in turn negatively impacts the quality of services provided.

Because of rising wages in competing sectors, community disability agencies are experiencing staff vacancy rates of up to 49 percent despite strenuous efforts to recruit new workers.

Providers are relying more on overtime to cover shifts, leading to staff burnout and driving up costs. In some cases, shifts can't be covered, putting individuals with disabilities at risk.

Educating lawmakers

Dozens of local DSP union leaders gathered in regional trainings across the state in March to develop plans for workplace organizing and to learn how to educate their legislators.

AFSCME members are part of a broader coalition with employers and the families of people receiving services. Together, the coalition successfully educated members of the Illinois General Assembly over the last two years. But after the 2018 election, there are a lot of new faces in Springfield.

AFSCME members will meet with their legislators in their district offices during the April spring break. And AFSCME is hosting a DSP Lobby Day in Springfield on May 1, when legislators will meet with service providers as a group and one-on-one to learn about the critical need for adequate funding.

"DSPs are incredibly dedicated to the work they do and the well-being of the people they serve," Lynch said. "Their fight is not only for their own livelihoods. They always keep the health and safety of the individuals in their care at the forefront of their minds. They won't quit fighting for them."



PORTRAITS OF SERVICE



Aaron Dunlap
AFSCME Local 3348

"We are their family," Local 3348 Vice President Aaron Dunlap, a DSP at Pinnacle Opportunity, said of the agency's clients. "We are there 24/7 when no one else is to provide care, love and stability."

Dunlap worries that the low pay will continue to hurt the individuals he serves as skilled staff seek better paying work elsewhere. He also worries about his own family's needs. He works a second job to provide for them.

"Bills in a household don't stop and neither do I," he said. "A raise will allow me to take some days off to spend with my family who mean the world to me."

Rhoda Moseley
AFSCME Local 3017

"It makes a big difference for our clients to have someone constant in their life," said Local 3017 President Rhoda Moseley, a DSP at EPIC in Peoria.

"With more staff we could do more with the clients, expose them to more. When we have enough staff, we can take the time to laugh and talk with the clients and give them the attention they need," she said.

"But people are so worried about paying bills, getting gas, affording child care. They have to work another job or work overtime. So when a job opens up that pays more and allows more time at home, of course they're going to take it. That's why there's a turnover crisis."



Karen Johnson
AFSCME Local 2871

"Staff shortages and a revolving door of staff mean that our clients aren't getting the care that they deserve," said Local 2871 President Karen Johnson, a DSP at Clearbrook whose job entails bringing clients into the community to learn job skills.

"DSPs are worn out from working so many hours. I find myself almost falling asleep at the wheel on my way home from double shifts," she said.

Johnson's goal is to spend more time with her 14-year-old daughter. She's an excellent student but Johnson can't be home to help with homework or attend school functions: "A raise would allow me to spend more time at home and focus on my daughter more."

State contract negotiations resume

After more than three years, back at the bargaining table



“This is what hard work and dedication gets you.”

Negotiations for a state contract for more than 30,000 AFSCME-represented employees in state government finally resumed on March 25. The AFSCME Bargaining Committee, comprised of more than 200 members elected by their co-workers and representing every local union in state government, was at the ready.

It was the first bargaining session since January 2016 when former governor Bruce Rauner made the false claim of “impasse” and broke off negotiations.

AFSCME took Rauner to court and won a ruling that no impasse exists, but he would never return to the bargaining table. When Governor Pritzker took office, he made clear that he was prepared to restart negotiations.

A long road back to the table

“Our union played a huge role in this,” Local 2258 President Charlene Raickett said, a member of the bargaining team. “We knew going in with the Rauner administration that we were going to have an uphill battle and we had to get the troops out to pound the pavement.”

“We couldn’t lay down and take what he was willing to give us,” said bargaining committee member and Local 124 President Byron Clemons. “We showed we weren’t scared to strike, even though we didn’t want to.”

“We had 80 percent of the membership willing to walk out

on a strike and we won every single court battle,” Raickett said. “He campaigned on the idea of destroying us, and he was not successful. Everything we’ve done to get us to this point I attribute to our members being active and engaged.”

“This is what hard work and dedication gets you,” Local 472 President Nick Crisman said, another bargaining committee member. “Making the phone calls, campaigning, making our voices heard. In the end if we’re all in it, then we’re loud and they have to listen.”

“The AFSCME Bargaining Committee remained steadfast in its determination to secure a fair settlement throughout the challenges of the Rauner years,” said AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director and chief negotiator Roberta Lynch. “We will carry that commitment forward in these negotiations.”

Making a new deal

The current situation is unprecedented.

No governor has ever declared impasse; there has never been such an extended

break in contract negotiations; and negotiations have never continued from one governor to another.

Both union and management proposals that were on the table in 2016 are the subject of the renewed negotiations, including Rauner’s

proposals to eliminate protections against privatization, expand mandatory overtime, reduce overtime pay, limit recall and bumping rights, expand the use of personal service contracts, weaken seniority rights, and much more.

“It feels strange because we’re picking up where we left off but in a completely different atmosphere,” Crisman said. “It’s a complete 180 as far as the feeling in the room.”

“It’s astonishing,” Clemons agreed. “We were able to accomplish more in one day with the Pritzker Administration than we did in four years with the previous administration. Morale is great.”

As is normally the case, negotiations are first focusing on non-economic issues. The initial bargaining sessions focused on improving working conditions and protecting job rights got off to a solid start,

with the Pritzker Administration demonstrating a willingness to back away from some of Rauner’s most onerous proposals.

But the real challenge will come when the parties tackle economic issues: State employees have gone four years without a pay raise and want to see real gains, but the state is in dire fiscal straits and management is sure to resist any proposals that add to the already mountainous debt.

The AFSCME Bargaining Committee is not deterred by such challenges. Bargaining sessions are scheduled through the end of May, and the committee members are prepared to go into the summer months if needed to reach a fair settlement.

“If state employees were able to survive the Rauner Administration,” Clemons said, “we can do anything.”

Moving forward on steps

When Bruce Rauner froze state employee step increases as of July 1, 2015, AFSCME filed charges against him at the Illinois Labor Relations Board and eventually won a court ruling that said the freeze was illegal and steps must be restored.

Gov. Pritzker announced on his first full day in office that he would comply with that ruling and act to end Bruce Rauner’s illegal four-year freeze by placing employees on the appropriate step going forward.

On April 1, Janel L. Forde, the acting director of the Department of Central Management Services (CMS), sent a memo to all affected state bargaining unit employees reaffirming that commitment.

“Upon taking office in January, Governor Pritzker made clear it was a top priority of his Administration to ensure employees received past due step increases and set a goal that all affected employees would receive such increases effective April 1, 2019,” the memo stated. “Through all our coordinated efforts, we are on target to have impacted employees placed on the appropriate step.”

The memo also confirmed that eligible employees who were supposed to have received longevity pay increases after July 1, 2015 will also see their pay adjusted.

CMS said all adjustments would be reflected in the April 1-16 pay period and issued at the end of April (as *On the Move* went to press).

Local 472 President Nick Crisman said of his local’s reaction to the news: “Some were cautious, and I understand their reservations. But when the CMS memo came out saying we’re going to see it, everybody was happy. Hopefully it helps with people staying here because we’ve lost a ton of correctional officers who didn’t get the pay they signed up for.”

AFSCME is continuing to press for a timetable for payment of back wages owed since Rauner’s illegal step freeze began.



Local 1866 member Ebony Chambers and Vice President Eugene Washington.

Solidarity prevails in Rockford privatization fight

School bus drivers convince district to reverse course

Rockford public school bus drivers of AFSCME Local 1275 banded together to oppose District 205’s plan to outsource bus services to a private, for-profit corporation—and they prevailed.

After a lengthy bid process and with a public hearing looming on April 9, the district informed AFSCME on March 27 that no bids would be accepted and that the district would not pursue outsourcing for the upcoming school year.

“We’re fighters, that’s why we prevailed,” said Local 1275 President Stacy Owens. “It took a lot of work. You can’t just sit back, or you’ll watch it all go right by you.”

“Amazing. That’s the only word I have for it,” said Local 1275 Executive Board member Catina Barnett. “You fight, and you fight, and all of a sudden

you win. Because we stuck together as a union our dreams are coming true.

“It was all about teamwork,” Barnett said. “Making the phone calls, sending the emails, showing up to the board meetings. It also has to do with history. We went on strike last year and I think management remembers that. Sticking together is what has always made the difference.”

“We know that we have to be one, we have to be a team,” Owens agreed. “We have to come together, stick together and fight together.”

Standing up for what’s right

The news is good for both drivers and students.

The experience of other school districts shows that when bus services are privatized, corporations cut corners to maximize profit, putting the safety of children at risk, taking accountability out of the hands of residents, and undermining wages and benefits for drivers who live in the community.

According to a two-decade long independent study, the total cost for taxpayers is \$223,900 higher per year when a typical school district privatizes bus services.

Offering public testimony backed by a crowd of supporters, AFSCME members urged the school board at its meeting on Feb. 26 to put student safety first and say no to outsourcing.

“I know how important it is to have drivers who care about safety and take pride in their jobs because I hear from parents all the time who thank us for getting their kids safely

bidding process, AFSCME members built support in the community, getting favorable news coverage of their plight. The bus drivers started a petition gathering hundreds

“How does a private school bus company make a profit? The only way is by squeezing workers and shortchanging kids’ safety.”

to school,” Darrell Freeman told the board.

“A for-profit company would be bad for drivers, our families and all the families we serve. Think about it—how does a private school bus company make a profit? The only way is by squeezing workers and shortchanging kids’ safety.”

Throughout the RFP and

of signatures and sent more than 200 emails to the eight board members considering the decision.

Looking ahead

Despite hearing the powerful testimony of the bus drivers’ solid case against privatization, the school board pressed forward with its plans to outsource. However, in a stunning reverse-course, the district contacted AFSCME on March 28 to notify the union that the bid process had been cancelled—at least for the upcoming 2019-2020 school year.

President Owens said that members feel relieved after getting through this latest fight together.

“It was really tough being afraid of losing our jobs. We need our jobs. This is how we support our families,” Owens said. “But now without the threat of outsourcing hanging over our heads, we can feel better going into negotiations.”

“This is a huge victory, but the fight isn’t over,” AFSCME Council 31 Regional Director Doug Woodson said. “The district cancelled their plans for this school year, but as we know from experience they will likely try again. We need to stay vigilant and ready for the challenges ahead.

Owens and Barnett said their local is ready to stand strong at the bargaining table during upcoming negotiations and beyond. And after driving Rockford’s schoolchildren for more than 20 years each, both Owens and Barnett are ready with a smile every school morning and at the end of each day.

“I love seeing their faces every day,” Barnett said. “I know that if someone is struggling you can brighten them up by saying something positive to them on the way home. That means the world.”

“We know that we have to be one, we have to be a team.”



Union prevails in DOC, DJJ class action grievance

Arbitrator orders health and safety protections for AFSCME members

A FSCME members in the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice successfully used their union contract to enforce health and safety standards.

To address the growing incidence of assaults on employees in DOC and DJJ facilities, AFSCME Council 31 filed a class-action grievance against both departments that detailed the scope and extent of assaults on employees. The union argued that the employers' responses have been inadequate according to both the union contract and state OSHA law.

On March 25, Arbitrator Terry Bethel issued a ruling granting the union's grievance and affirming the gravity of the situation.

In his decision, Arbitrator Bethel indicated that both DOC and DJJ have failed in meeting the state's responsibility to "provide a safe environment in its corrections facilities and youth centers." He said his finding was based on "the evidence and testimony presented at the hearing, including the large number of assaults, the lack of thorough training, the failure to address certain conditions, and the testimony of the employees who were assaulted."

"My decision," he said, "is simply that the departments have not acted to the extent feasible to prevent injury to their security staffs."

The arbitrator remanded the case to the parties to shape a remedy within the next 120 days that improves safety in DOC and DJJ facilities, and he retained jurisdiction over the case to ensure that a satisfactory plan of action is developed.

Long time coming

The decision is "long overdue" said AFSCME Local 1866 President Ralph Portwood.

"This has been ongoing and now we have documentation to back up what we've been saying all along. And it has teeth to it. The arbitrator still has jurisdiction so we can bring it back to him if they're not adhering to the decision."

The case was built systematically with dozens of grievances at facilities across the state involving everything from

staff assaults to inadequate equipment and training.

"All these grievances we've been writing and labor-management meetings we've been having, they all came together in this case," Portwood said. "Now they have to listen to our concerns and address them."

"There's a feeling of optimism," Local 2073 President Shaun Dawson said. "Finally having an outside entity say there is a problem justifies the

the prison system and, in some instances, assaults committed against them.

"The danger that management has ignored is outlandish," said Local 416 Vice President Ashley Landrus, a juvenile justice specialist at Illinois Youth Center in St. Charles who testified in the hearings.

"The issues that the arbitrator heard, the stories from staff, were the very evidence we've brought to management. They acknowledge it but they didn't care to have a hand in fixing it."

"Working in the environment that we do you have to expect an element of violence, but you shouldn't get used to it and that's what we've had to do," said Dawson. "It

"The case was built systematically with grievances across the state."

of assault so there would be fewer. They wanted to present a false reality that things aren't that bad. But we had the bodies in front of them to testify to the conditions employees are exposed to on a daily basis, and the arbitrator saw the truth."

Change for the better

The arbitrator's decision mandated that the departments must work with union repre-

"This whole process has taken such a long time," Landrus said. "We've held press conferences, issued reports, rallied at our workplaces and lobbied legislators. I'm ecstatic that something positive has come out of all our hard work."

"Our success in this case is going to change the way business is conducted in the departments," Portwood said, "and it shows our younger members why we do what we do as a union."



issues we've been bringing up for more than four years. Our safety concerns aren't a random complaint. There is a true and legitimate problem."

Bearing witness

Over eight days of hearings, the union's claims were powerfully bolstered by AFSCME members who came from across the state to describe growing dangers in

doesn't have the shock value it did. We need to get back to 'oh my god, I can't believe that happened.'"


During the arbitration, DJJ and DOC blamed problems on staff instead of taking any ownership of the situation.

"It was tough to sit through that," Dawson said. "They tried to decrease the numbers when they reported them and modify the definition

sentatives to find solutions to the problems plaguing both staff and inmates.

"Moving forward we're going to be able to create a dialogue, hearing from both sides," Portwood said.

"For the first time in a long time, we feel like things are going to get better," Dawson said. "Now management must work with us to find the solutions."

"One of our members suffers terribly from PTSD from being severely beaten, and she cried when she heard the news," Dawson said. "The level of importance that this arbitration has to our members, the ones that have been hurt and seen people they work with every day get hurt, it's groundbreaking. We received vindication in this arbitration." 



ILLINOIS NEEDS FAIR TAX REFORM

Wasting no time in taking up a cause AFSCME has long advocated for, and which was a centerpiece of his campaign, new governor JB Pritzker has proposed fair tax reform. The plan would cut taxes for working people while making wealthy folks finally pay their share—raising desperately needed new revenues in the process.

Current system is unfair, inadequate

The state's current tax structure is inadequate because it doesn't raise enough revenue, leaving state government with a \$3.2 billion budget shortfall in the current year alone, not to mention more than \$8 billion in unpaid bills and \$134 billion in long term pension debt. As a result, critical needs like state and local government services, schools and universities, and infrastructure such as roads and bridges are all underfunded.

The current tax structure is also unfair, because the revenue it raises comes disproportionately from working people, while letting rich folks off easy. Right now, the state Constitution mandates that everyone from a billionaire to a health care aide pay the same income tax rate.

When you add in sales and property taxes, working people wind up paying almost twice as much of their income in taxes (14.4%) as the state's wealthiest people (7.4%). That's why the National Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy every year ranks Illinois among its "Terrible 10" states with the most regressive taxes.

Pritzker: 97% pay same or less

A fair tax with higher rates for people with higher incomes and lower rates for people with lower incomes is the approach used by most other states—more than 30 of them, including four of Illinois's five neighbors—and the federal government.

Gov. Pritzker's proposal would raise taxes only on income over \$250,000 a year. That's just 3% of Illinois taxpayers. And even their rates would remain lower than in most surrounding states.

Everyone else—the 97% making less than a quarter-million dollars—would pay the same or less than they're paying now. In addition, the plan would create a new child tax credit to benefit families and double the property tax credit to help homeowners.

In all, this fair tax plan would raise \$3.4 billion a year, more than 90% of it from millionaires. The revenues could be used to fund schools, support public services, improve infrastructure and pay the state's bills.

"Under Governor Pritzker's fair tax plan, millionaires would pay more while working people pay the same or even less," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "Public services and schools would get needed reinvestment and the state could pay its bills. Raising the necessary revenue from those who can afford to pay a little more—while holding the line on taxes for 97 percent of filers—is the fair tax reform that's long overdue in Illinois."

Strong support for fair tax

A study by the University of Illinois found that moving to a fair tax structure "could narrow Illinois' growing income disparity, cut property—as well as income—tax bills and deliver billions of dollars in extra annual revenue to combat state deficits and underfunded schools and infrastructure," the Associated Press reported.

That's why opinion polls re support for the fair tax: 64% in Illinois, and more than 70% in

But voters can't have a say of the state Senate and Ho the fair tax constitutional a measure then needs supp statewide election, likely in

Big-money in

The main forces organized and corporate CEOs—which group called Ideas Illinois Politifact—and the anti-union Bruce Rauner and the Koc

This shouldn't surprise uni forces have long pushed t out collective bargaining a pension protection clause.

"Why would any of us ever with its well-documented p ble-talk, to get the real fac "The IPI has the same age the wealth and power of th

The opposition's criticisms wealthy people and busin marginally higher taxes, st between tax rates and mig with the most millionaires, tax rate—more than 12%, fa Illinois.

They claim that Illinois wou but that's wrong, too. Pritzi or cut taxes for some 97% making less than \$250,00 law the legislature must ra all, the fair tax will offer the harmless while targeting in who can most afford to pa

Finally, some wrongly belie to allow a fair tax would al pension clause. That's not would each require a sepa votes in the General Asser fair tax but little if any for c

In truth, the fair tax is the s could take to rebuild the m families] away is not high Times editorial board wro inconsistently funded publ state financial crisis that di from setting up shop or ex

TELL L SUPPORT

AFSCME, the Ill unions statewide the fair tax our legislator to voice tax by calling AF at 844-236-5649

repeatedly find widespread public support for the fair tax. 84% in a recent survey by Think Big Illinois and 86% in polls from the Paul Simon Institute.

may until a three-fifths supermajority of the Illinois House approve a resolution to put the fair tax amendment on the ballot. The ballot will be held in November 2020.

Interests opposed

Interests opposed to the fair tax are big business and wealthy individuals. They have launched a dark-money front to air TV ads debunked as “false” by the Paul Simon Institute funded by Koch Brothers.

Some union members. The same big-money interests that want to cut pensions, lay off workers, wipe out the state constitution’s protections for workers.

Some who rely on the Illinois Policy Institute, a conservative think tank with a propensity for distortions and double standards. “Do you really care about anything?” Lynch asked. “Or is it just the agenda it has always had, consolidating power and wealth among the already super-rich.”

Some arguments fall flat. While they claim that businesses would flee if asked to pay more, studies have shown no correlation between high taxes and migration patterns. In fact, the state of California, also has the highest top marginal tax rate, far higher than the fair tax plan for Illinois.

Some who would raise taxes on the middle class, but the fair tax plan would maintain the current level of tax on 90% of taxpayers, including everyone earning less than \$100,000 a year. And whereas under current law, the state would raise taxes on everyone or no one at all, the fair tax plan offers the option of holding the middle class tax-free while increasing taxes at the top, among those earning more than \$100,000 a year.

Some who believe that amending the constitution to allow for a referendum also opens the door to repealing the amendment. But that’s not the case, as the two separate issues require separate amendments with separate votes in the General Assembly. There’s strong support for the fair tax and changing the pension clause.

Some who see the single most important step the state can take to help the middle class. “What’s driving [working class] income taxes,” the Chicago Sun-Times wrote, “but poorly funded public schools, underfunded public universities, low wages and a lack of job opportunities discourages job-creating businesses from expanding.”

LAWMAKERS: SUPPORT THE FAIR TAX

The Illinois AFL-CIO and labor unions have made passage of the fair tax their #1 goal. You can call your legislator to voice your support for the fair tax or call AFSCME’s legislative hotline at 1-800-244-4449.

FAIR TAX FACTS

Will I pay more? No.

97.3% Will have the same or lower tax bill.

2.7% Who make more than \$250,000 per year will pay more.

Why do we need it?

Illinois is in a deep fiscal hole.

\$8 BILLION in back due bills.

\$2-3 BILLION budget shortfall in FY2019.

Bond ratings remain at record lows despite the 2017 tax increase.

Illinois’ tax system is upside down. The richest pay a smaller proportion of their income than the poorest.



14.4%

The percentage of their income the poorest pay in taxes.

7.4%

The percentage of their income the richest pay in taxes.

Can it be done? Yes!

The public supports it.

71% FAVOR/STRONGLY FAVOR



24% OPPOSE/STRONGLY OPPOSE



Making AFSCME Strong a priority

A FSCME Local 29 members at the Shapiro Developmental Center in Kankakee are proud to be AFSCME Strong. Employees at the state residential and training center for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities are tight-knit with a long history of being 100% Union.

“We’ve always been well organized, it goes back a long way,” said Local President Gary Ciaccio, a mental health technician who has worked at the center for 38 years. “Our leaders have always stressed internal organizing because we know that the more organized we are, the more successful we are.”

The anti-worker forces behind the recent Supreme Court case *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31* know that unity ensures success at the bargaining table too. That’s why they set out to eliminate fair share fees—they believed it would weaken and even destroy union solidarity.

“Employers always look at your numbers and they know

“Our strength is in numbers and in unity.”

if there are a lot of people who choose not to be members,” Ciaccio said.

Ciaccio said that unity became even more critical to the local after the Supreme Court ruled against working people in June.

“When fair share ended, we made we sure talked to every person one-to-one about the importance of everyone being a member to keep us strong,” he said. “We were worried there



AFSCME Local 29 members marched to the Capitol at the Back-Pay Lobby Day in Springfield on May 10, 2018.

would be drop-off after Janus but there hasn’t been.”

That’s because their work began even before that 2018 decision.

“We’ve been under attack since Rauner was elected, and that has actually helped us rally people around our union,” Ciaccio said. “We haven’t had a contract, our steps were frozen,

all these things guaranteed that members understood the importance of us standing together.”

While the local always has near 100 percent membership, that doesn’t mean they sit back and relax, Ciaccio said. They make sure to talk to every new hire and explain the benefits of being a union member.

Local 29 has also helped

organize private sector employees in the area who are now AFSCME members at KCTC, Good Shepherd and Pinnacle group homes.

Ciaccio encourages his fellow AFSCME locals to keep up the fight and never quit working for your local to be 100% Union: “Our strength is in numbers and in unity.”



Worried? Overwhelmed?
PSP Can Help!

AFSCME’S Personal Support Program (PSP) offers free, professional, confidential assistance to represented employees and their covered dependents.

Call 800.647.8776



PSP: Help when you need it

A FSCME Council 31’s Personal Support Program (PSP) has helped tens of thousands of AFSCME members and their dependents thrive since it was created in 1992.

The union-based employee assistance program expands AFSCME’s tradition of service to those it represents by providing professional counseling and support to individuals and families experiencing personal and life changes.

Access to PSP services is an employee benefit that the union seeks to incorporate into collective bargaining agreements whenever possible. The program has become a trusted resource for AFSCME-represented employees and their dependents who work for the City of

Chicago, Cook County, the State of Illinois, and several other employers throughout the state.*

PSP provides confidential and free short-term counseling, as well as referral services for a range of concerns, including parent-child or marital conflict, financial problems, grief and loss, depression, anxiety, and work-related issues like interpersonal conflict or stress on the job.

Whatever the situation, PSP sits down with each client, conducts an assessment and determines the best available treatment option. Often, treatment

is covered by AFSCME members’ health insurance plans.

PSP Clinical Director Cheryl Bristor-Wilson encourages AFSCME members who are seeking help for themselves or a loved one to reach out to PSP, but also to seek support from family, friends and co-workers.

“Don’t leave a problem unaddressed,” Bristor-Wilson warns. “It can impact your work and put your job at risk. There is help for you at PSP.”

Face-to-face sessions with a professional clinician are available at more than 40 locations statewide. Services provided by PSP are free of charge and counselors have flexible availability. Referrals to outside providers are made to enable individuals to use their health care benefits whenever possible.

In addition to counseling services, PSP also offers consultations and educational seminars to local unions and work sites on a wide range of topics, including stress and time management, grief and critical incident debriefings.

* State of Illinois, City of Chicago, and Cook County employees. Also: 347 Village of Round Lake Beach, 3905 Village of Fox Lake, 2891 Village of Homewood, 3780 Egyptian County Health Department, 2402 Randolph County, and 726 City of Pana.

“PSP helped very much. It felt good to talk to someone who listens.”

Legislative session 2019: Bills to watch

AFSCME is educating legislators to protect workers' rights

With thousands of bills introduced in this session of the Illinois General Assembly, the AFSCME Council 31 lobbying team at the State Capitol is on the job every day working to defeat measures that would harm AFSCME members and to build support for bills that improve job conditions and fairness for working families. Below are some of the key bills the union is currently tackling in Springfield.

SUPPORT

SJRCA1: Establish a fair income tax

Proposes an amendment to the Illinois Constitution to allow for a fair Illinois income tax structure in which the wealthy pay their share in order to reduce debt and invest in public services. (See page 8-9 for details.)

HB158: Increase revenues for cities and counties

Amends the Illinois Income Tax Act to increase the percent of tax revenue transferred to the Local Government Distributive Fund, restoring the rate to 10% by 2024.

HB921: Protect rights of educational support personnel

Ensures that educational support personnel retain their accrued benefits when they resume employment after a lay-off by the school board.

HB1482: Strengthen sentencing for violent crimes against state employees

Amends the Criminal Code to add employees of DCFS to a listing of other public employees against whom an assault is considered aggravated battery and a felony.

SB1148: Raise pay for disability workers in community-based agencies

Increases reimbursement rates for frontline disability workers, building toward livable wages. Ensures DSPs will earn a base wage above area minimum wage laws. (See page 4 for details.)

HB2524: Raise pay for state-contracted youth care workers

Directs the Department of Children and Family Services to increase reimbursement rates to delegate agencies and ties those increases with inflation starting in 2020.

HB3446: Protect disability benefits

Ensures that any participant in the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) retains disability benefits when they move between employers who participate in the IMRF.

SB163: Stop wage theft

Prohibits any person or business that is found to have violated wage laws from doing business with the state. Employees not paid wages by their employers are entitled to recover the underpayment with damages; failure to pay is a felony.


SB1300: Support Cook County pensions

Allows Cook County to contribute to the pension fund from any revenue source.

SB2026: Protect health care benefits

Prohibits the state from applying for any federal waiver that would reduce or eliminate any protection or coverage required under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), including pre-existing conditions and essential benefits.

SR144: Stop sale or lease of the tollway

Opposes any sale or lease of the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority or any redirection of its revenues. 



PASSED: **Collective Bargaining Freedom Act**

Gov. JB Pritzker signed Senate Bill 1474 into law on April 12. The Collective Bargaining Freedom Act protects collective bargaining rights for workers in Illinois. It makes sacred any collective bargaining agreements made between employers and employees and prohibits any restrictions on collective bargaining in local governments.

OPPOSED: **Attacking Public Pensions**

SCJRCA 9 establishes a ballot measure to amend the pension protection clause of the Illinois Constitution, which currently ensures that pension benefits cannot be diminished. If approved by voters, the amendment would allow the General Assembly to take away benefit accruals from members of any public pension system.

PENDING: **Back Pay For Steps**

AFSCME is supporting passage of a supplementary appropriation to fund back wages for state employees who did not receive step increases.

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



AFSCME Local 3182 members Chastity Mitchell, Bonnie Marshall, Stephanie Erickson, Angie Guzman and Taylor Deal.

Lake County court clerks win first contract

AFTER FOUR LONG YEARS, employees at the Lake County Circuit Clerk's Office finally have their first union contract.

The largely female workforce organized a union in early 2015. But then-clerk Keith Brin refused to negotiate with the employees. He spent tens of thousands of dollars fighting the workers and was eventually charged with violating Illinois labor law.

The clerks took matters into their own hands. They helped secure an AFSCME endorsement for Brin's opponent, Erin Cartwright Weinstein and helped her win.

It changed the game completely for the new union.

"Erin Cartwright Weinstein was more willing to work with us," said Local 3182 Bargaining Committee member Stephanie Erickson, who serves as a clerk in a felony courtroom.

Despite the backing of the new clerk, Local 3182 bargaining team members Tamara Luster, Angie Guzman, Lisa Strandberg and Erickson were at the table for two years

as they pushed for adequate funding from the county board. They finally reached a four-year agreement, retroactive to 2016.

In addition to basic union rights like discipline for just cause, a grievance procedure, layoff and recall rights, and labor-management meetings, the team also secured overtime pay, created new job titles, boosted starting wages and won across-the-board wage increases totaling an effective 11%—plus a signing bonus—all while maintaining health insurance coverage.

"We fought really hard to improve wages and get people the overtime pay they deserved," Erickson said. "It was a lengthy process to say the least but, in the end, we got what we needed. We're really proud of how far we've come."

Erickson said they look forward to making further improvements. After 12 years with the circuit court, she feels they are in a better place than ever before.

"Employees are much happier now that we have our contract in place," she said. "Members have someone to go to with issues and concerns and a team that will absolutely fight for them and always have their back."

And it's a huge change to have an open and positive line of communication with the clerk.

"It felt amazing to get Brin out of office and get Cartwright Weinstein in," she said.

"That's what organizing

is all about," said AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Colin Theis who led negotiations for the local. "Making change for the better."



AFSCME Local 3982 President Unita Boyd and fellow SHA employees rally for a fair contract.

Fighting for fair treatment at SHA

MEMBERS OF AFSCME Local 3982 are used to having to fight tooth and nail for every improvement at the Springfield Housing Authority.

During recent negotiations for a wage-reopener, members were compelled to take a strike authorization vote because management refused to bargain in good faith.

"They weren't wanting to give us anything," Local 3982 President Unita Boyd said. "I've been here for 26 years, since before we had a union, and every time it's a fight."

Management wasn't budging from their offer of a 1% raise. But the employees knew they had to fight for more. Wages are low and employees have a hard time making ends meet.

The union conducted a wage study and showed that SHA employees were making less than neighboring agencies. Management didn't like those

results and commissioned its own study on the public's dime—but the union has yet to see those results.

"I guess they didn't like what they found," Boyd said with a laugh. "If we didn't have a union, we would never have gotten a raise. Ever."

Management also fights employees on basic rights already guaranteed in their contract. For example, employees can take up to two sick days without a note from their doctor. But the employer was disciplining people who didn't produce a note for even a half-day absence. The union took this case all the way to arbitration and won.

The pervasive disrespect is especially hard to take, Boyd said, when employees helped ensure that the Springfield Housing Authority received a "high performer" status from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2017.

AFSCME members stayed the course and fought for what was right. They held several pickets in front of the housing

authority and testified to the board of trustees. Despite the financial threat to low-paid employees, the local authorized a strike vote.

The determination of the union members ultimately forced the board to provide decent wage increases. AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Jessica Derhake and Regional Director Kent Beauchamp led negotiations with Boyd and Vice President Samantha Gaines on the bargaining team.

Employees received a 2.5% raise in 2018 and another 2.5% in 2019. In September they will be back at the table.

Maintaining quality service at privatized home

AFSCME LOCAL 2452 MEMBERS signed their final agreement as employees at Winchester House, a 170-year-old nursing home formerly operated by Lake County. The relatively short contract boosted wages and protected health insurance for the more than 70 employees who are preparing for a move to a new facility in 2020.

Transitional Care of Lake County owned by Innovative Health is set to open its doors in Mundelein, Illinois next year. AFSCME members will be there to provide the same excellent service they always have at the brand-new 185-bed facility, which will provide long-term nursing, memory care and short-term rehabilitative services.

President Nicole Thomas said negotiations went very well and the bargaining committee was able to remedy wage discrepancies for longer-term members.

"Some employees were not making as much as they should have based on their experience and they got the raises they deserved," Thomas said.

As of December 2018, every member received a 2% wage increase or a one-time wage adjustment based on years of experience—which ever is greater. The members also received an additional 1% increase on April 1, 2019.

The committee was able to hold the line on health insurance costs, setting the membership on a good trajectory for bargaining in 2020.



Local 2452 President Nicole Thomas with fellow members Maribel Novelo and Maricela Medoza on the job at Winchester House nursing home.

Thomas, a CNA for 16 years, and her fellow co-workers are looking forward to a new Winchester House.

"Winchester House means a lot to the dedicated workers who have been here for years," Thomas said. "We love our jobs and come to work faithfully every day. It's not just a building. The care we give makes this home a gift to the community."

AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Colin Theis led negotiations with bargaining team members Thomas, Maricela Mendoza, Maribel Novelo and Matt Meillor.

Social services make gains with AFSCME

AFSCME LOCAL 3696 recently acquired 120 new members, the social services employees at the Cook County Judicial Court.

Formerly members of the Metropolitan Alliance of Police, this unit of workers, who do work similar to probation officers, wanted to join their co-workers represented by AFSCME.

Stacy Dority-Edwards, a new union steward and executive board member said that

"Everything that AFSCME promised us they delivered on."

she and her co-workers are very happy with the results after finalizing their first contract as AFSCME members.

"Everything that AFSCME promised us they delivered on," she said. "They promised they would fight for us and they did. This is the best contract we've had in 21 years."

Dority-Edwards, a former public-school teacher, is a court liaison case worker for misdemeanor domestic violence cases. The work is a passion for her, and she loves making a difference.

She and her co-workers have been fighting for years for better wages. Now they are on the same pay scale as AFSCME members. They also won back furlough days and received a \$1,200 bonus.

The new members were especially proud to win a long-sought paid maternity and paternity benefit. And now, instead of having to take a full day of sick time for a doctor's appointment, they can take short periods of time off in a day. These gains mean a lot.

But most importantly, these new AFSCME members

have power in numbers. They join the Cook County master contract with more than 5,000 other AFSCME members to back them up.

Standing strong in Evanston

AFSCME LOCAL 1891 MEMBERS at the City of Evanston ratified a four-year contract with raises totaling 7% in the final three years, extra floating holidays and an increase of on-call pay.

The bargaining team also pushed off modest increases to health insurance rates for three more years and successfully secured a no-layoff clause to protect members from potential changes due to the city's financial problems.

President Dan Kwiecinski who has worked for Evanston in the public works department for 31 years said negotiations were long and drawn out because the city said they had no revenue for raises. His priority was to protect close to 300 members of the local

with the no-layoff clause and that was a big win.


Vice President Shawn Pestka who has worked at the city's public works department for 18 years said he's proud the team secured additional vacation time for members earlier in their careers.

"They did away with that benefit for non-union employees and they got a lot of flack for it. We felt that if employees saved up that time, they deserved to keep it. We stood our ground and kept that benefit."

The team also made positive gains in standby/on-call pay.

"I'm proud of our contract," Pestka said. "Everything we get is hard fought. That's why unions are here."

"We're AFSCME Strong," Kwiecinski emphasized. "People who were exempt from the union have petitioned to get in and we've added more than a dozen members in the last year. They come to us because they aren't protected without a union."

Led by AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Eugene Boatright, Kwiecinski and Pestka were joined at the table by bargaining team members Jon Hahn, John Jaminski, Cheryl Patterson, Stan Hzeem, Kim Daufeldt and Lorena Neal. 

SHORT REPORTS

Comptroller halts payments on Rauner's costly contract

AFTER A RECENT PERFORMANCE audit showed that the state has spent \$27.7 million to date on an ineffective online health benefits enrollment platform and customer service center for employees that is riddled with problems, Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza suspended payments for the program.

"What's clear is Morneau

Shepell failed to meet performance standards, and they owe it to the State of Illinois and the nearly 500,000 MyBenefits users to make this situation right as soon as possible," Comptroller Mendoza said in a statement.

The Office of the Auditor General's findings confirm what AFSCME has been arguing: The contract was unnecessary in the first place, exorbitantly expensive, and the resulting work product has been sub-par.

"Rauner thought he would be successful in forcing AFSCME to an impasse and

unilaterally imposing his draconian health insurance changes," said Martha Merrill, AFSCME's director of employee benefits. "He rushed CMS into a contract with Morneau Shepell to be able to implement proposals that never came to be."

The audit also raised questions about the procurement process itself, citing protocols that the state failed to follow. Stakeholders had raised concerns, the audit found, but the Rauner administration moved forward anyway.

"What ended up happening is that Rauner wasted nearly 30 million dollars for a glorified

online open-enrollment platform run out of Georgia that the state could have done in-house," Merrill said.

AFSCME still has outstanding grievances on this issue. The audit's findings provide further evidence for the union's case.

1.4 million Illinois workers get pay raise

ON FEBRUARY 19, GOV. JB Pritzker signed a new minimum wage law that raises the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2025.

"We will have money to buy shoes for our kids and keep the lights on," said Adriana Alvarez, a McDonald's employee in Chicago and a leader of the Fight for \$15, which has been working for laws like this for years. "We'll be able to put breakfast on the table and maybe go out to the movies every now and then."

Illinois is the fifth state to raise its minimum wage to \$15, with New Jersey right behind; they join California, Massachusetts, New York and Washington, D.C. as momentum builds for a federal increase. Even McDonald's announced they would no longer lobby against higher minimum wage laws.

The minimum wage in Illinois is currently \$8.25 per hour. The new law raises the wage gradually with the first increase to \$9.25 set for January 2020. The wage rises again to \$10 that July and then by \$1 each year until it reaches \$15 in 2025.

The landmark law realizes one of the new governor's core campaign promises.

"Today, we are making it clear that if you work hard in this state, you deserve to be able to afford the goods and services you produce," Gov. Pritzker said the day he signed the law.

AFSCME members re-elected to SERS Board

AFSCME LOCAL 805 PRESIDENT David Morris, Local 2081 President Stephen Mittons and Local 1805 member Jeremy "Tad" Hawk were declared

re-elected to the State Employees' Retiree System of Illinois (SERS) Board of Trustees on February 21. No other candidates filed to run.

The SERS Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the operation of the pension system that provides benefits to more than 140,000 active and retired state employees.

The board consists of 13 members: the Illinois Comptroller, six trustees appointed by the governor, four active trustees elected by SERS members, and two trustees elected by SERS retirees.

Melissa Garman, an AFSCME retiree, is running for the open annuitant seat on the board (see page 15). There is another candidate vying for the seat, so there will be an election. Ballots will be mailed to SERS retirees on May 1 and are due back to SERS by May 30.

Rockford adds new members to its ranks

THE CITY OF ROCKFORD created a new position called Citizen Reporting Unit and stationed CRUs in police stations throughout the city to engage with residents who visit police stations with various concerns.

AFSCME Local 1058 President Christina Loudermilk quickly realized that these nine new employees should be part of the city bargaining unit and reached out to AFSCME Council 31 for help.

After learning more about the union and the contract's benefits and protections, a majority of the CRUs signed union cards and AFSCME submitted the necessary paperwork to the labor board. Now these workers are part of Local 1058 and covered by the current collective bargaining agreement.

"Be mindful of newly created positions or titles that aren't covered by the contract but should be," AFSCME Organizing Director Abbey Davis said. "Organizing unrepresented workers in our own workplaces is critical for building our strength at the bargaining table."

If you have co-workers who should be fellow union members, contact Davis at 312-641-6060.



Workers with Fight for \$15 Chicago rally for fair pay outside McDonald's. Photo: Fight for \$15 Chicago

RETIREE NOTES

Illinois Policy Institute targets AFSCME retirees

CHAPTER 31 RETIREE MEMBERS who receive their pensions from SURS and IMRF have been targeted by the Illinois Policy Institute (IPI). These retirees received a letter from the IPI attacking AFSCME and other unions and urging retirees to revoke their membership in AFSCME Retirees Chapter 31.

The IPI is the same organization that has waged an unrelenting attack on public employee pensions in Illinois in recent years, including leading a charge for a constitutional amendment to abolish the pension protection clause in the Illinois State Constitution. They want to open the door to drastic cuts in public employee pensions—or to eliminate them altogether.

If the pensions of current employees or new hires are eliminated, that will destabilize the entire pension system, putting retirees' hard-earned retirement security at risk.

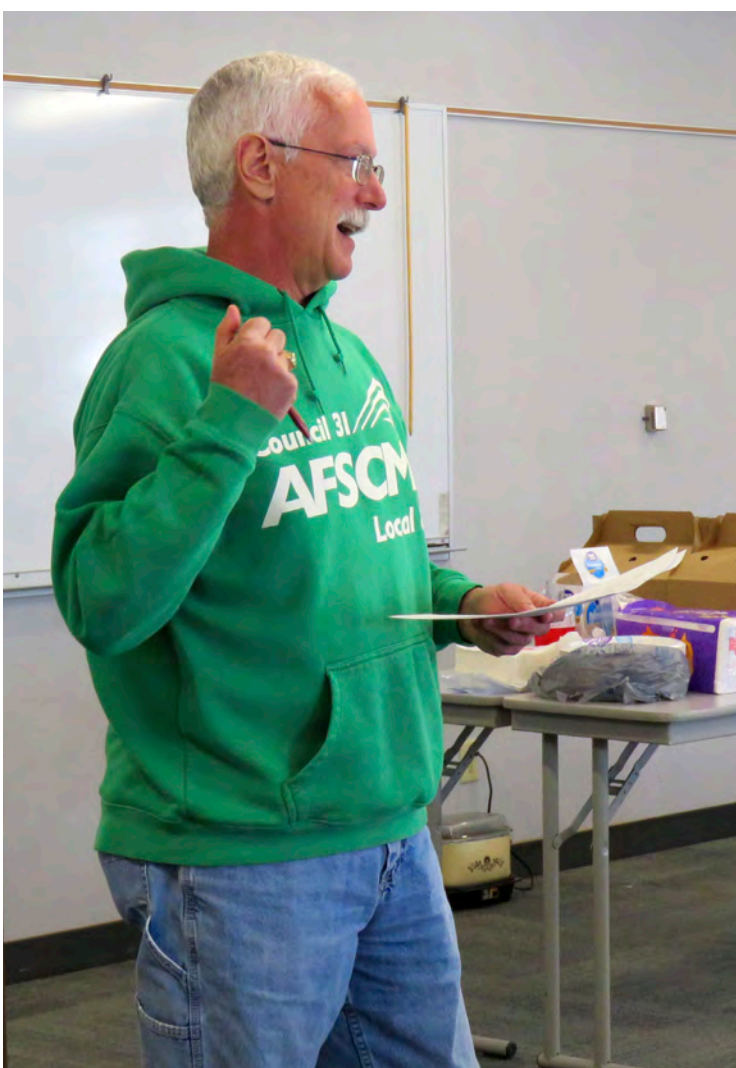
AFSCME has fought all the way to the Illinois Supreme Court to safeguard pension benefits and fought off Bruce Rauner's efforts to drastically reduce

retiree health care benefits. AFSCME has been leading the fight for dignity and security in retirement for public employees for decades and members are critical to that effort.

“Members should not be misled by the IPI’s attempts to trick retirees.”

“Members should not be misled by the IPI’s attempts to trick retirees into dropping out of AFSCME,” said Retirees Chapter 31 President Larry Brown. “That would deprive the union of the resources needed to win legal and legislative battles protecting retirement security.

“If you or anyone you know received this mailing, please respond to the Illinois Policy Institute mailer just like thousands of current public employees have done: Tear it up and throw it out,” Brown said. “Continue to be part of AFSCME Retirees Chapter 31, the most effective force standing up for public sector retirees today.”



Sub-Chapter 86 member Gary Mazzotti speaks to fellow retirees at a Springfield membership meeting.

SERS Trustee Election

Vote to protect your pension.

In the SERS trustee election, your vote is your voice.

Vote Melissa Garman to fight for your retirement security!

 **Melissa Garman**



SERS Annuitants: Watch for your ballot the week of May 1, mark it for **Melissa Garman** and return it right away! Ballots due May 30.

SERS Retirees: Vote for Garman

“I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT retirees need to have a strong representative on the pension board to protect the benefits that we’ve earned,” said Melissa Garman, Chapter 31 executive board member and candidate for the open State Employees Retirement System (SERS) Retiree Trustee position.

Garman is a longtime AFSCME member who became an advocate for her fellow public employees after being hired by the Department of Children and Family Services in 1985. She was a union steward in Local 448 for many years. After retiring in 2016 she joined AFSCME Chapter 31 and was soon elected president of her DeKalb County sub-chapter and a member of the Chapter Executive Board.

“I have a deep understanding of the issues retirees face and understand the importance of communicating up-to-date information,” said Melissa. “I hope state retirees choose to support me on the ballot.”

SERS will be mailing out the ballots to all annuitants around May 1. Cast your vote for Melissa Garman and return the ballot by May 30.

Legislative attacks on pensions

BILLS WERE INTRODUCED this legislative session to either eliminate or seriously undermine the pension protection

clause in the Illinois State Constitution, including HC19, HC20, HC 21, & SC9.

In addition, HB 1625 proposes creating a third-tier, 401k-style pension plan that would put all investment risk on employees. And HB 3131 would require each retirement

for decades for not fully funding public pensions.”

(See page 8-9 for facts on the fair tax.)

Prescription drug costs

DRUG COMPANIES ARE MAKING huge profits by hiking the prices on medications that seniors depend upon.

The retail prices of some of the most popular medications older Americans take to treat everything from diabetes to high blood pressure increased by an average of 8.4% in 2017. This rate of increase is four times the rate of inflation.

AFSCME is taking action. At the federal level, AFSCME and partners in the Alliance for Retired Americans are asking Congress to insist on the removal of extraordinary monopoly protections for pharmaceutical firms in the revised North American Free Trade Agreement. Failure to



Stay connected & take action

Stay informed on fast-action items! Sign up for emails and text alerts at **AFSCME31.org/RetireeAction** or contact Chapter 31 Retiree Coordinator Maria Britton-Sipe at **mbritton-sipe@afscme31.org**.

system to post online the names of all persons receiving an annuity and the amount of the annuity paid.

“We need to protect the benefits we’ve earned.”

“We continue to rigorously oppose all such legislation,” Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. “But we must also support commonsense legislation, like the fair tax, to finally fix the chronic structural deficit that has been used as the excuse

strike these provisions from the pact will provide huge giveaways to Big Pharma and keep medicines unaffordable.

On the state level, Chapter 31 has joined a coalition supporting legislation to lower the costs of prescription drugs:

- HB 53 would make manufacturers explain why they raise prices and require drug makers to provide justification for price increases above a certain threshold.
- HB 1441 would allow for importation of safe, low-cost drugs from Canada.
- HB 3493 creates a board to oversee and regulate drug price increases so manufacturers can't take advantage of patent monopolies to raise costs on sick people.



selves and need assistance. It's happening throughout the community and the state—people are helping others, helping them recon-

nect with their community and giving them the resources they need to survive.

Public service workers like us are part of a bigger network, all helping people who need it.

What have you learned from your public service career?

Before I started at Maryville, I was doing administrative work. I got laid off and I took a job at Maryville Academy doing totally different work. I never thought I would be here long. But when I saw what these girls were going through, I felt I had to do something. I've been here ever since. We've made a lot of difference. And I've been challenged in so many ways. We are helping so many. I'm not going anywhere.

How does your union improve your work?

With AFSCME, there's been a tremendous change in the environment for employees. Before we won a union, we had not had a raise in three or four years. When we formed a union, we were finally able to get an increase in pay. And now our employer must recognize that we have a voice in decisions that are made and treat us fairly.

The most important thing in our work is that we're professional with the people we serve. We need them to know that we're here for them no matter what. We want to make them feel like they are the most important thing. And we do a much better job at that if we're being treated fairly.

How has your union job impacted your life?

My parents didn't have a union behind them for support at their job. Having AFSCME as part of my job has helped me in so many ways. Financially I've benefited, and I feel more secure in my position here. I also know that I have a voice to be heard.

I've had the union represent me in meetings with management and as vice president I've had the chance to help other employees in the same way. That has been amazing. 🦋

Dorothy Smith

AFSCME Local 55

RECOVERY COACH TECHNICIAN, MARYVILLE ACADEMY

Tell us about your job at Maryville Academy.

I work directly with moms who have addiction issues and their children. The moms have been placed in our substance abuse recovery program after detox so that they can participate while living with their kids or as they wait to be reunited with them. We assist the moms with looking for housing and applying for jobs and teach them parenting skills.

Some of the moms struggle with taking care of their kids because they haven't had a lot of experience with them and they are going through a lot. They've been given the chance to have them back in their lives, but at the same time they are dealing with their addiction. We try to direct and guide them on how to show their children that they care.

What's your inspiration to go to work every day?

It makes me happy that I'm able to make a difference in people's lives, especially when it comes to the children. I dedicate my all to what I do every day. I'm determined to have a positive impact with care and words of encouragement.

I also have a great rapport with my co-workers. We're a team. There are good people here.

What's your favorite part of the job?

I love the toddlers. I love knowing that I can help them with their development.

And I love just putting a smile on people's faces, making them happy. When I see someone looking down, I go over and say 'Hey, how are you today? You don't look like yourself.' Sometimes it's just those few words that show you care, and they open up.

I also love finding creative ways to keep the moms positive through different activities. For Black History Month this year I created Black History Jeopardy—a game just like the show. I can't tell you how thrilled the moms and the staff were. Everyone was getting educated but in such a fun way. Everyone was a winner, everyone got a prize.

What's the most challenging part of your job?

When we aren't on the same page as management, it can be difficult. I try to make sure we're informed of things we should be aware of within the program.

It can be hard some days working with people who are struggling. But our team takes the bumps in stride. We know what we're up against and we know that this is what we're here to do.

How does your job provide a valuable public service?

We all provide a service for those who are less fortunate, who can't do for them-