

ON THE MOVE

STATE WORKERS BRING IT ALL HOME!

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On the MOVE

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**GUEST COLUMN:
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LEE SAUNDERS**

**A Message for Illinois
AFSCME Members**

*We will never, ever abandon the things
that make us AFSCME Strong*



BY
LEE SAUNDERS

**WE ARE A
UNION THAT
BELIEVES IN
FREEDOM,
EQUALITY AND
OPPORTUNITY
FOR ALL.**

It's been a challenging few years for all AFSCME members, but Council 31 has stood right in the eye of the storm. The Midwest has been ground zero in this all-out war on our union, and so it was critical that you hold the line.

And you did. The more ferociously you were attacked, the more fearless you became.

For four years, you went toe-to-toe with a bully, whose obsession was nothing less than to burn our union to the ground. But you prevailed. When Bruce Rauner froze your pay, when he walked away from the negotiating table, when he tried to dictate outrageous demands, you stood your ground and continued to go to work every day for the people of Illinois.

You stood up for yourselves, mobilizing for a strike authorization vote that passed overwhelmingly. And then finally, together with other labor unions, you put boots on the ground and got yourselves a new governor—giving Bruce Rauner the beat-down he deserved!

After years of denigration and demonization, you now have a governor in JB Pritzker who respects you, who wants to invest in your work, who honors your commitment to your communities and to public service.

The proof is in the state contract you negotiated and ratified this year. You got the back pay that was owed to you. You got your first raises since 2014. You got protections against forced overtime, expanded parental leave, important worker safety provisions, and more.

Illinois set the pace and led the pro-worker wave that swept the country in last year's mid-term elections. Remember Scott Walker? Well, we sent him packing and showed him the door. And we elected friendly governors in Michigan and Maine, New Mexico and Nevada, and Kansas too.

Make no mistake about it, though: We will need to mobilize with the same fire and intensity in 2020. The same wealthy special interests that were behind Bruce

Rauner and the Janus case will be fighting dirty once again. This will be a make-or-break election, up and down the ballot, with so much on the line for our union and the labor movement, for all working families and the entire nation.

We may have lost the battle with the Supreme Court last year, but they don't get the last word. National right-to-work in the public sector has presented a significant new challenge, there's no question about it.

But we have more than survived, sisters and brothers; we have emerged with renewed energy and vitality.

When the Court rendered its decision in Janus, a lot of folks left us for dead. The pundits were writing our obituary. And our enemies were getting ready to dance on our grave. But they don't know us. They don't understand what we're made of.

We don't hand over our rights and freedoms, and we don't walk away from our seat at the table. In the face of adversity, we showed loyalty and resolve. We weren't defeated or demoralized; we were emboldened and inspired.

In overwhelming numbers, AFSCME members rejected the propaganda blitzes and the dishonest drop campaigns. With courage and conviction, with pride and passion, we stood up and said: I'm sticking with my union!

We have to keep up this work. We can't become complacent—not when the other side continues to try and destroy us. We have to maintain our commitment to internal organizing, and we also have to pursue an aggressive growth agenda based on external organizing.

To know where we're going, I think we've got to know where we've been. To meet today's challenges, we need to look back at yesterday's heroes—emulat-

ing their character, summoning their courage, standing on their shoulders.

We wouldn't be here today if Wisconsin state employees in the 1930s hadn't fought a corrupt patronage system and formed the union that would eventually become AFSCME. And we need to demand justice just like the sanitation workers of Local 1733 did in Memphis more than 50 years ago.

We're a diverse union—as diverse as the country we serve—in every possible way. And we don't run from that diversity; we embrace it as a source of strength.

But what unites us is a set of core principles: public service and the common good; community security and cohesion; respect for our neighbors and for each other. And we have a duty to speak out clearly and emphatically any time those values are threatened.

We are a union that believes in freedom, equality and opportunity for all. We treat everyone with decency and respect. We believe in solidarity—the idea that an injury to one is an injury to all.

We are obligated to say something when our differences are exploited rather than celebrated, when some people take every opportunity to divide and distract.

Your work is already stressful and dangerous under the best of circumstances. It gets even harder when some people try to fan the flames of division—as part of a cynical strategy to deflect attention from the nation's real challenges: grotesque income inequality, wage stagnation, failing schools, a retirement crisis, and more.

Public service is a calling. Whether you're a social worker or a corrections officer, whether you work with veterans or neglected children, it's in our nature to bring people together; to rally all of us around our common humanity; to help heal in moments of crisis; to make our communities safer and stronger.

We are AFSCME. We will not compromise our convictions. We will never, ever abandon all the things that make us AFSCME Strong. We will stand tall and walk proud—speaking up for everyone, fighting for everyone, backing down from no one.



AFSCME members in Illinois state government gathered to celebrate step justice at the 21st Biennial Convention in October.

Justice at last for state employees

AFSCME wins fight to get back pay and safeguard union rights

Across Illinois this fall, AFSCME members in state government have had a lot to celebrate. Tens of thousands of employees happily welcomed back wages owed to them for illegally withheld step increases, and nearly 1,000 of those AFSCME members evaded Rauner's scheme to deprive them of their collective bargaining rights.

Back pay— with interest

Last year, AFSCME won a court ruling that found Bruce Rauner had acted illegally when he froze employee step increases on July 1, 2015. But Rauner refused to comply with legal directives to make employees whole for their losses.

The Pritzker Administration, on the other hand, immediately agreed to honor the ruling and has been working to restore fairness for AFSCME members—starting with placing employees on the appropriate step this April.

Then in September, thousands of employees received checks—often for tens of thousands of dollars—to compensate for the step payments that Rauner had withheld. With back wages in hand, AFSCME members are now able to catch up on many of the personal debts and responsibilities they had trouble managing during the Rauner years.

And that's not all. There's still one last "step" in the step

increases battle AFSCME members fought so hard and long to win. In compliance with state law, in October AFSCME members also received the seven percent interest owed on their back wages.

"Because we remained united and determined in defying Bruce Rauner for four years, we're standing strong

today," Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. "We never stopped fighting for justice for every AFSCME member and our hard work and diligence has paid off. Justice prevailed at last."

"Though it's been a struggle, it's been worth going through," AFSCME Local 3280 member and Anna Veterans' Home CNA Tonya Banks said. "I'm thankful for my job and for our union fighting for our rights."

"The back pay was nice to get, that's for sure, but then you think of the days you couldn't buy your kid a Halloween costume or get that new refrigerator you needed, and you remember this was all because of an act of meanness by the governor," said AFSCME Local 2258 Chief Steward Ed McCann, a human rights investigator for the state.

"Thankfully the union had the organization, the reserves, to fight back. That's what collective bargaining does for you. You can fight a billionaire governor and win."

Hundreds retain union rights

In another AFSCME-fueled victory, in August the Pritzker Administration withdrew hundreds of petitions that Rauner had filed at the Illinois Labor Relations Board in the final months of his administration seeking to strip nearly 1,000 employees of bargaining rights.

The affected employees are union members who were alarmed and angry that they were threatened with the loss of AFSCME representation. Their jobs sometimes include the title supervisor, but they are "working supervisors" who do not have the authority to direct work or hire and fire employees.

Council 31 attorneys vigorously opposed these petitions at the Labor Board, arguing that employees should never have been targeted for removal, but the process was grindingly slow under the Rauner administration, leaving anxious union members in limbo.

"Being forcibly removed from AFSCME representation

would have had a devastating impact on the lives of these employees had Rauner been successful," Council 31 Associate Director Tracey Abman said. "They would have lost their back pay, the stipend, all the gains we've made in this contract. More importantly, they would have lost the peace of mind that the protection of collective bargaining rights brings."


Team effort prevails

Local 2467 executive board member Rick Walsh, a revenue audit supervisor in the Department of Revenue, took a leadership role, helping to identify and bolster people to preserve at the Labor Board to preserve their bargaining rights.

"We organized. We had a game plan and we were motivated," Walsh said. "Everyone was very stressed out and everyone knew it would be best to stay within AFSCME, especially those who had gone eight years without a pay raise when they weren't in the bargaining unit."

The clock ran out on Rauner and the petitions stalled at the labor board after he lost the governorship. Pritzker withdrew the petitions in August and September, but a few cases already on appeal in circuit court will need to be resolved separately.

"Rauner just wanted to strangle our ability to come together and fight as a union, and he took every avenue he could to accomplish that goal," Walsh said. "Thankfully Council 31 invested a lot of financial resources to protect us; otherwise we could have lost our rights."

"Our contractual rights were tested every day during the Rauner years," Abman said. "We had a union so we could stand up, fight back and prevail. People understand that very much. A huge sigh of relief went out throughout the state when Pritzker agreed to withdraw the petitions." 



A Fair Tax for Illinois

The proposed Fair Tax constitutional amendment would change the state constitution to eliminate the requirement that Illinois tax all income at a single rate, allowing instead for higher rates on wealthy people and lower rates for working people. More than 30 other states have such a fair, progressive tax system.

Why do we need Fair Tax reform?

The old way of taxing income in Illinois is unfair and inadequate. It's unfair because it taxes working people too heavily while letting wealthy people off easy. Working people in Illinois now pay almost double what wealthy people pay in taxes as a share of their income.

The old way is inadequate because it doesn't raise enough revenue. That causes recurring budget deficits at every level of government (state, counties, cities, universities, school districts), underfunds pensions, pushes up property taxes and forces harmful cuts to public services and jobs.

What will the Fair Tax amendment mean for Illinois?

- Lift the unfair burden on lower and middle-income Illinoisans;
- Require only those making more than \$250,000 a year to pay more;
- Cut or maintain taxes for 97% of Illinoisans;
- Address Illinois' structural budget deficit;
- Generate additional revenue to fund our schools and public services; and
- Make the wealthy pay their fair share.

Will I pay more? No.

97.3% of taxpayers will get a tax cut or pay the same.

2.7% of taxpayers will pay more on income over \$250,000 per year.

“It is absolutely vital that we go to the polls next November and vote yes for a Fair Tax. We need to replace our unfair tax system with a system where the wealthy pay their fair share.”

– Illinois AFL-CIO President Michael Carrigan

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 wealthy pay a smaller proportion of their income than working people.



14.4%

The percentage of income working people pay in taxes.



7.4%

The percentage of income the wealthy pay in taxes.

“We have a \$3.2 billion deficit and \$15 billion in unpaid bills. A Fair Tax is the only way to fix the state's finances without drastically cutting funding for schools and services.”

– Illinois Federation of Teachers

City of Chicago grapples with \$800 million shortfall

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot faced a daunting challenge in crafting a 2020 budget that did not cut services or staff, while raising enough revenue to close an \$800 million budget gap.

The budget plan she put forward in mid-October had some good news for city of Chicago employees and the city residents who depend on the services they provide: The budget gap would not be closed by laying off employees or cutting services. But the proposed budget also included one large disappointment and left many unanswered questions for the future.

Neglecting mental health

Since 2012 when former Mayor Rahm Emanuel shuttered six public clinics in the city's most vulnerable neighborhoods, more than 50 frontline clinical positions have been cut in the remaining Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) mental health clinics.

Despite her campaign promises to reopen the shuttered city clinics, Mayor Lightfoot's proposed budget adds no clinical staff to the five remaining clinics. Instead, the Mayor's budget allocates more than 90% of new mental health funding to private contractors.

"Our union has kept up the fight to reopen the closed clinics to address the drastic decline in treatment options, especially in Chicago's lower-income communities," said Council 31 Special Projects Director Meg Lewis. "Working together

with a coalition of community organizations, AFSCME has presented the city with our own proposal to invest the new funding in expanding public safety net services and increasing access through community outreach, expanded clinic hours and additional locations for clinical services."

The proposed budget also continues to reduce resources for combating sexually transmitted infections (STI). In 2017 CDPH cut staff assigned to HIV surveillance and in 2018 abruptly closed the Englewood STI Clinic, leaving the South Side—which has the highest rate of STI in Chicago—with-out a full-time STI clinic.

The Mayor's proposal would cut additional positions, instead seeking contract agencies to carry out similar work.

As of now, there is no public health commissioner ready to take on these challenges. Allison Arwady, Mayor Lightfoot's nominee for head of CDPH, appeared before the City Council's Committee on Health and Human Services in early October.

She shocked aldermen by claiming that closing the clinics had been a good idea and voicing her opposition to reopening them or expanding public mental health treatment options. After several hours of intensive questions, the committee refused to confirm Dr. Arwady's



nomination as public health chief, instead voting to defer consideration to a later date.

Pension problems persist

Chicago pension funds, including the MEABF in which most AFSCME members participate, are in trouble. The city is playing catch-up after decades of underfunding.

The city of Chicago's required contribution for all of its pension systems in 2020 is \$1.69 billion—\$387 million more than in 2019. The Center for Tax and Budget Accountability estimates that the required contribution will

spike to \$2.2 billion by 2023.

That increasing pension payment puts enormous pressure on the city budget. When Mayor Lightfoot first laid out the fiscal challenges facing Chicago, some pundits immediately began to call for cuts to employee pension benefits, a violation of the state constitution.

AFSCME will continue to push for the city to commit to making significantly higher contributions to the pension funds over the coming years to restore financial stability and protect the retirement security of the hundreds of thousands of active and retired city employees who don't have Social Security to rely on.

To do so, the city needs significant and stable revenue.

Revenue options

Given the size of the budget shortfall, Chicago must increase taxes or fees in order to avert severe cutbacks. But state law currently limits the city's options.

During the state legislature's veto session, Mayor Lightfoot pressed for passage of a progressive increase in the real estate transfer tax—to bring in additional revenue from those who can afford to pay—and to open a publicly-owned Chicago casino.

Prospects for either option were dim in the veto session where lawmakers need a higher threshold of votes to make laws immediately effective, said Council 31's Director of Political and Community Relations John Cameron.

If the measures don't pass, the city will have to find new revenue options without help from Springfield or make significant cuts.

"That's why it's so important to support Governor JB Pritzker's plan for a Fair Tax amendment to the Illinois constitution, which will be on the ballot in November 2020," Cameron said. "By ensuring the wealthy pay their fair share, the state will raise an additional \$3.5 billion in new revenue and increase the amount going to cash-strapped local governments."

COOK COUNTY BUDGET HOLDS STEADY

In early October, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle unveiled a 2020 budget plan that largely kept county government operations moving forward on the same track.


From the outset, Preckwinkle made clear that her plan would not include any employee layoffs—although it would eliminate hundreds of vacancies in the Health and Hospitals System (HHS).

HHS has been struggling with a large increase in uncompensated care and slow reimbursements from the state's Medicaid program, leaving a large budget deficit and threatening the hospital's role as an essential health care safety net. Eliminating vacant positions is intended to stabilize the system's

budget while seeking to address the core issues that created the shortfall.

Like Chicago, Cook County faces a revenue problem.

"More than half of the revenue the county relies on doesn't keep up with inflation or is declining," said Adrienne Alexander, Council 31's director of intergovernmental affairs. "The proposed budget continues a base property tax levy that hasn't changed since 1996, so we're going on 25 years since a cost of living adjustment for the county. That's a glaring structural deficit."

For this year, the county has a balanced budget with no layoffs. But new revenue is a must to ensure critical public services remain intact. 

Easterseals employees vote yes for AFSCME

Employees at Easterseals Academy in Machesney Park voted overwhelmingly to form a union and join AFSCME Council 31 on September 11.

These new AFSCME members work with young people with developmental disabilities in the classroom and in community-based instruction from kindergarten until age 22.

They're courageously striving for a safe work environment, respect and a voice in the decisions that impact them and their students.

"It's not about the money, our main concern is safety," said Susan Erb, a paraprofessional. "We've had staff get broken bones and concussions. We've been bitten, scratched, kicked and threatened with murder. Understaffing just increases safety concerns."

But these kinds of behaviors are no deterrent to the dedicated employees. They

just want the support and tools needed to do their jobs well.

"I still love my job," Erb said. "These kids need to be able to express their frustration and it's our job to teach them how to express it appropriately. But we need things to support our students, like more trained substitutes, more staff and more resources like calming rooms."

Calming rooms have padded walls so students can take time away to relax or punch the walls to vent frustration without getting injured or hurting someone else. Walks outside help too, Erb said, but it's not always feasible when there aren't enough staff to cover all the students.

Respect is another big




Employees at Easterseals in Machesney Park formed a union with AFSCME for respect and safe working conditions.

issue at Easterseals. Employees want an end to unfair treatment and favoritism.

The new union members have elected their first bargaining committee and are

ready to begin negotiations. While the employer did not wage an anti-union campaign when they organized, Erb does not anticipate easy bargaining.

"I'm a little worried that our fighting will come with contract negotiations, but we're ready," Erb said confidently. "We're strong. We are so empowered." 

AFSCME members support one of their own

Earl Boitnott has dedicated more than 20 years to serving his community as an AFSCME Local 699 member and laborer in the City of Bloomington public works department.

Now he's struggling to stay alive as he battles a fatal and inoperable brain tumor, determined to live his life to the fullest and help others as much as possible with whatever time he has left.

Boitnott's wife Gina took him to the emergency room on October 2 after he started losing weight and complained of a bad headache. Images from a CT scan showed a large mass in his brain and Boitnott underwent emergency surgery.

Doctors discovered a glioblastoma multiforme, an extremely invasive tumor, and told him and his stunned family that he had only months to live.

Boitnott is just 45 years old. He and his wife have two sons and two granddaughters,

with a grandson on the way in December.

Boitnott's fellow AFSCME members have rallied around him. The local is 100% union and 100% behind their friend and co-worker. Boitnott's son is also an AFSCME member with the city.

To show their affection, friends designed a shirt with a big E for Earl on the front and "Boitnott Strong" on the back. The E is filled with words that describe Boitnott: Buddy, prankster, father, salsa maker, son, honey and husband.

"Earl, Gina and their sons are selfless individuals that are always there when someone is in need," AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Renee Nestler told the Bloomington City Council while announcing

a Local 699 benefit for the Boitnott family. "Earl has always been the first to show up and the last to leave when helping others with projects."


Along with his co-workers, friends, family and the entire community have rallied around

Boitnott. On November 3, they came to the fundraiser to help his family handle medical bills and a lack of income as they care for Boitnott and spend as much time together as possible.

"The fundraiser was packed for five hours straight," Nestler said. "There was nowhere to park and people just kept coming. While we don't always agree with management, this is something everyone has pulled together on. Supervisors, city council members and the city manager came to the fundraiser to show

their support for Earl."

Boitnott is undergoing chemotherapy. He hopes that while treating his cancer, the doctors will learn how to help others with the same type of cancer and extend their lives as much as possible.

"Earl is just a gracious, optimistic guy," Nestler said. "He's handling this horrible situation with such grace and we're proud to stand with him." 

To donate to Boitnott's fundraiser, visit gofundme.com/earlboitnott.



AFSCME Local 699 member Earl Boitnott (bottom, center) surrounded by his co-workers and friends.

Wrongly accused but made whole

With their union, two longtime employees fought for justice

After three long years of struggle, two dedicated mental health technicians returned to their jobs at Ludeman Developmental Center in Park Forest this September.

The Ludeman Center cares for individuals with severe developmental disabilities. These residents can be volatile and challenging to serve. AFSCME Local 2645 members Candice Argue and Tisha Williams were both working one-on-one assignments in the fall of 2016 when a resident accused them of abuse.

"None of it added up from the beginning," said Local 2645 President Crosby Smith. "There was no evidence pointing to them as the guilty party or that even put them there at the time of the alleged incident. Eyewitnesses were ignored and no one else was investigated."

The two women were put on administrative leave from October 2016 to September 2018 while the accusations against them were reviewed by the department. Last fall they were fired and placed on the Health Care Worker Registry, blacklisted from their profession.

Argue said during that time she was deeply concerned about the people she served every day. "I had been working in that house for three years and had a really good rapport [with the residents]. A change in staff like that is really hard on them and my co-workers told me that some individuals were looking for me."

But the hardest part of the entire ordeal was seeing the impact it had on her three children.

"The worst part of being wrongly accused was everything my children lost," she said. "I was used to working overtime to ensure bills were paid, the kids were taken care of and I had some money in the bank. But my kids had to stop all their extracurricular activities. I lost my house, my car. I lost so much. I had to pull money from here and there just to make sure we were able to live our everyday life."

Argue and Williams would spend another year this way before justice finally prevailed.

Union steps up

When the two women were fired, their local union

filed a grievance on their behalf. At every step of the grievance process, management held to its position. So the union moved the case to arbitration.

"This case is why unions exist," Council 31 attorney Scott Miller said. "The state's case was based on triple hearsay and had huge holes. Their witnesses only served to bolster our case. When management rested their

"This case is why unions exist."

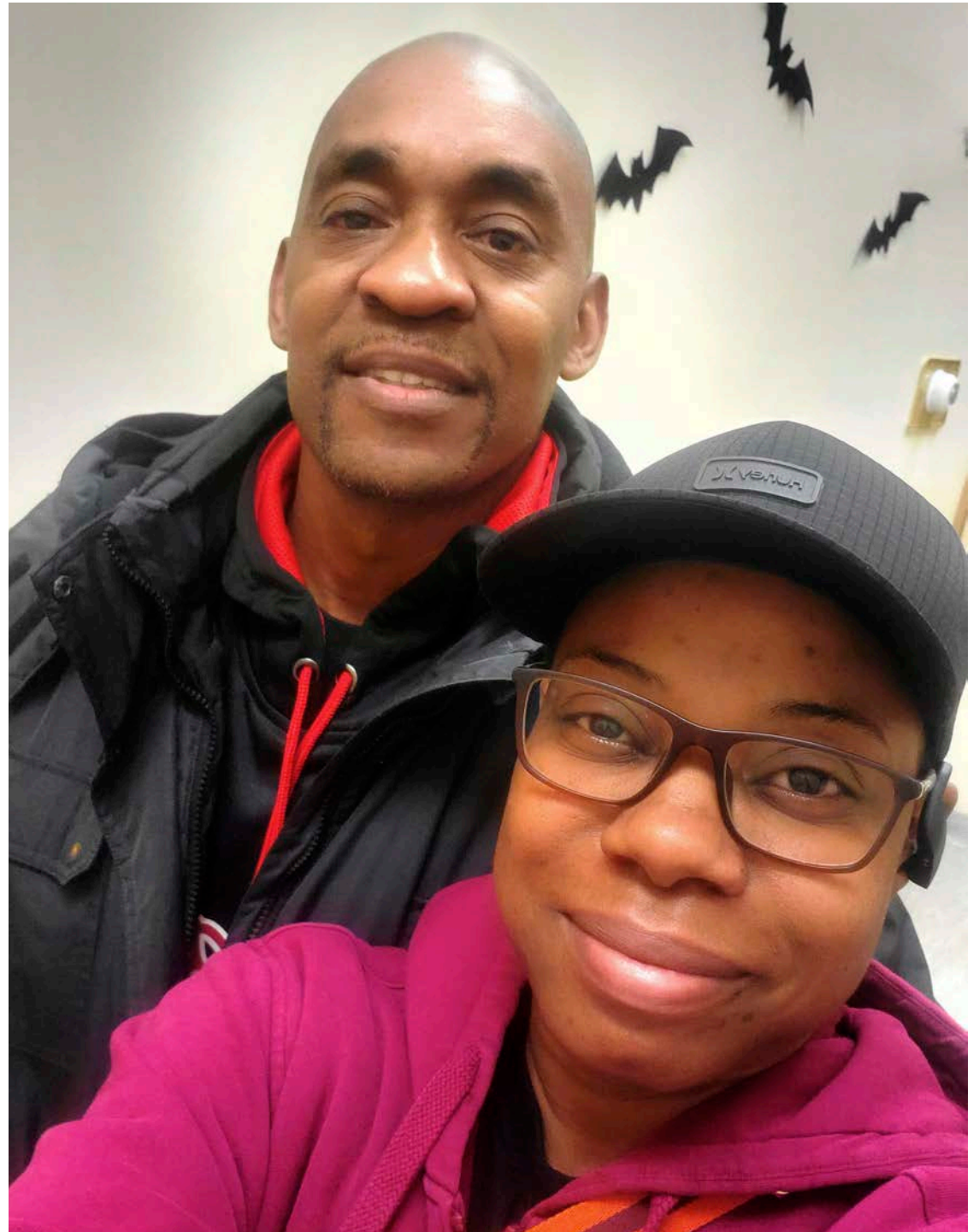
case, we called for a directed verdict, which means the other side didn't have a legal leg to stand on."

AFSCME won.

The arbitrator ordered that Argue and Williams be made whole: taken off the registry and put back to work with full back pay and lost overtime. They will also receive the stipend, step increases, back pay and interest won through the state employees' contract negotiations—and the state will pay the full fee for the arbitration.

AFSCME is still ensuring the ruling is fulfilled, and the arbitrator retains jurisdiction so that if the state does not comply, Williams and Argue won't have to grieve again. The two women started back at work on September 16, 2019.

"I was near tears to see them both back on the grounds knowing neither one was



AFSCME Local 2645 President Crosby Smith and Candice Argue, a mental health technician who was wrongfully fired.

capable of something like that," Smith said. "Every time someone showed them some love, embracing them and welcoming them back, I got more emotional. They shouldn't have had to go through that. Period."

Argue said she's happy to be back at the job she's been doing for 13 years, getting

to know the new individuals that she's working with now. But she's still picking up the financial pieces of the last three years. She said at one point she was ready to just give up, but her union didn't give up on her.

"Had this been a regular facility that isn't union, I wouldn't know what to do. I'd

have had to pay a lawyer out of pocket and fight just to prove I was wrongly accused," Argue said.

"It was a long struggle, but Crosby never stopped. He constantly sent emails, put our names out there to keep our case relevant. Even when I was tired out, he stayed on it." 🐉

Worried? Overwhelmed? PSP Can Help!

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



Call now:
800.647.8776



STRENGTH IN SOLIDARITY

21ST BIENNIAL CONVENTION 2019

Gathering under the theme “Strength in Solidarity,” some 1,000 delegates, alternates and guests from across the state met in Springfield on October 17-19 for Council 31’s 21st Biennial Convention, where they set our union’s path for the next two years.

MORE THAN 450 DELEGATES elected by their local unions voted on policies that will guide our work and vision. They adopted resolutions that pledged to continue the fight for fairness on a number of fronts, including building the AFSCME Strong program, defending members’ right to a voice in the workplace and safety on the job, passing the Fair Tax initiative, protecting retirement security and more.

Two rounds of workshops helped equip delegates and guests with the knowledge and tools necessary to wage successful contract campaigns, prepare for the 2020 elections and defeat anti-union assaults. Special guest speakers including AFSCME International President Lee Saunders and Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois President Patrick Devaney invigorated the crowd with messages of unity and power.

And AFSCME Council 31 members gave retiring Illinois AFL-CIO President Michael Carrigan a special presentation of thanks for being an

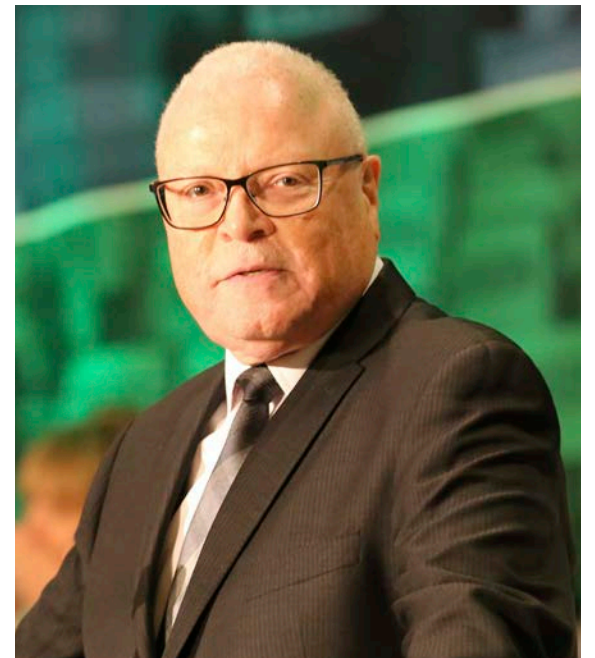
unwavering champion for AFSCME members in the fight against Bruce Rauner.

“No one organization could have done it alone. We did it together,” Carrigan said. “I can’t say enough about AFSCME and what you all did. Everywhere I looked I saw green.”

Strengthening our union

Solidarity enabled us to emerge from four years of Bruce Rauner’s assaults more united than ever. Now AFSCME members look to build our union even stronger. In her convention address, AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch stressed the power of standing together as one.

“The last four years strengthened our bond of solidarity. This convention is for celebrating how far we’ve come and preparing ourselves for the battles ahead,” Lynch said. “Solidarity isn’t just a word. It’s who we are and what we do!”




“What unites us is our shared core values of public service and the common good. We will not let anyone tear us apart!”
—AFSCME President Lee Saunders

And Deputy Director Mike Newman said: “The thing I’m most proud of is simply being part of this great union and all that we have accomplished together. We’ve proven strength in solidarity. Our union never backs down and our union will never quit.”

Carrying the fight forward

Convention delegates adopted an amendment to the AFSCME Council 31 constitution providing for a temporary rebate from local unions to Council 31 to strengthen our union’s ability to continue building the AFSCME Strong program; providing members with high-quality contract negotiations and enforcement, legal advocacy, and legislative, policy and communications support; mounting the kind of comprehensive campaigns that enabled the union to beat back efforts to drastically slash public pensions, weaken bargaining rights and privatize public services; and responding to attacks from the Illinois Policy Institute and similar groups in the wake of the Janus decision.

AFSCME Council 31 members left the convention reinvigorated, ready to return to their local unions with a renewed focus on encouraging every member to get involved in the union and carry the fight for justice forward in Illinois. 

AFSCME MEMBERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Several outstanding AFSCME members were recognized for their achievements and contributions at work and in their communities



- **In Memoriam:** Public Service Award to fallen Deputy Troy Chisum of Local 3433 (not pictured)
- **Steward of the Year:** Our most active, well-informed and dedicated local union stewards—Roxane Boutte, Local 3692, and Jake Merritt, Local 2073

- **Public Service Award:** For going the extra mile at work and in the community—Louis Parker, Local 3738
- **Jane Fitzgerald-Gloria Arseneau Award:** For extraordinarily dedicated union activists—Kathy Lane, Local 448, and Russell Thomas, Local 988



Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch addressed some 1,000 AFSCME members, retirees and guests, kicking off the union's 21st Biennial Convention.

CHARTING OUR PATH: RESOLUTIONS TO GUIDE OUR UNION'S FUTURE

Excerpts from resolutions adopted by delegates to the 21st Biennial Convention

Reducing violence on the job

BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 condemns the all-too-common indifference with which many in management and governmental officials respond to the vicious assaults that employees have suffered; and that AFSCME Council 31 will continue—through bargaining and when necessary through media, legislation, collective action or public protests—to fight for measures that can reduce violent assaults on the job; and that AFSCME Council 31 will work with local unions to ensure that any violent assaults that occur garner public attention that can pressure management to address the conditions that give rise to violence.

Protecting a secure retirement

BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 continues to strongly oppose any measure that would unfairly diminish the pension benefits of Illinois public employees or shift to defined contribution plans for such employees; and that Council 31 will work with the labor-based We Are One Illinois coalition to develop an educational and legislative strategy to address the inadequacy of the Tier II pension benefit; and that AFSCME

Council 31 will oppose any effort to eliminate the constitutional protections afforded to public employee pensions in Illinois.

Honoring the value of public service

BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 will honor and uplift the value of public service work and the workers who have dedicated themselves to the public good; and that AFSCME Council 31 will support the protection, expansion and improvement of public sector services and infrastructure, including efforts to open/re-open public facilities such as community-based service offices; and that AFSCME Council 31 and all local unions will continue to resist and defeat privatization schemes by seeking to negotiate and strictly enforce contractual language that limits subcontracting, improving service quality and building community support, legislative action and member mobilization.

Upholding core principle of solidarity


BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME Council 31 strongly condemns all efforts to divide working people against each other, abetting the forces who would undo workers' rights, drive down family

incomes, reduce access to health care, and weaken retirement security; and that AFSCME Council 31 will maintain its longstanding tradition of welcoming all employees to our ranks and treating everyone with respect and fairness; and that AFSCME Council 31 affirms that all people have the right to human dignity; irrespective of racial or ethnic background, immigration status or national origin, we share common values and goals such as hard work, love of family, and the desire to build a better life for ourselves and our children; and we recommit our union to upholding the core labor movement principle that an injury to one is an injury to all.

Ensuring an affordable, equitable health care system

BE IT RESOLVED:

That AFSCME will continue to fight to protect access to affordable comprehensive and quality health care for its members and their families through its collective bargaining, legislative, legal and political activities; and that AFSCME will work toward systemic changes to American health care that prioritize public need over private profit, including the regulation and control of the pharmaceutical industry to lower drug costs, improvements to the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, and moving towards a health care system that truly can ensure access for all. 

Meet the Council 31 Executive Board

PRESIDENT

Roberta Lynch

Executive Director, Council 31



"I'm so proud of the Council 31 Executive Board members who have risen to every challenge our union has faced and provided essential leadership to carry us through some very difficult times. We try to live our solidarity and our commitment every day."

STATE SECTOR EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

Ralph Portwood

Local 1866 | Stateville Correctional Center



"We do the job most can't do. We provide security, custody and control of our state's convicted felons. It's important to stay united because when we fight, we win! I love helping people and standing up for those who need someone to help them."

PRIVATE SECTOR EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

Yolanda Woods

Local 2481 | The Hope School



"As DSPs and paraprofessionals, we help the individuals we serve to be included in the community by assisting them with their daily living, vocational and coping skills. When we are united, we are powerful! There is no obstacle that we can't overcome. We can right wrongs, help workers to have a voice in their workplaces, and bring people up and out of poverty through unity, education and negotiations."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

John Rayburn

Local 1215 | Chicago Public Library



"The library is the cornerstone to every neighborhood. We help patrons of all ages get library cards, check out books, read, learn, apply for jobs and more. We also provide a heating and cooling center for the less fortunate. Workers must be united to keep our middle class strong."

SECRETARY

David Delrose

Local 1028 | Will County



"We work and provide critical services in most of the agencies in Will County government. Union solidarity is the strength and power that has empowered AFSCME to fight for members on the job, at the bargaining table, and in the political process. We are a fighting force for employees!"

TREASURER

David Morris

Local 805 | State of Illinois



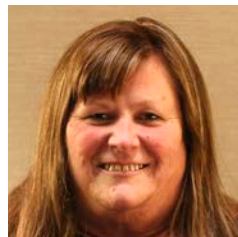
"We perform a wide range of critical services to protect and support children, families, the environment and our entire community. By standing together and pooling our resources, we can fight for fair working conditions. If we were on our own, we may have a good case, but we could never afford the cost to fight. Standing together makes the difference."

Board Members

STATE CONFERENCE BOARD CO-CHAIRS

Kathy Lane

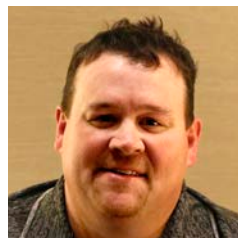
Local 448 | Northwestern Illinois State Employees



"We ensure the safety of children and families, maintain parks for families to enjoy and assist those who need food, employment and medical benefits, and more. State workers united when voting to strike and defeating Rauner at the polls. All of that resulted in one of the best contracts ever. Without everyone united we wouldn't be where we are today!"

Tim Worker

Local 993 | Vandalia Correctional Center



"We keep the community safe from inmates being released back into society before they should, and when they are released, being as rehabilitated as possible. We have to be united against anti-worker agendas that want to kill the labor movement."

REGION I VICE-PRESIDENTS (COOK AND LAKE COUNTIES)

Phillip Cisneros

Local 3969 | Office of the Cook County Public Guardian



"Our office protects and defends the elderly, the disabled and children who are at most risk for abuse, exploitation and neglect. I want to be able to say that I made a difference for all our members. Our unity is the only way to continue to receive great benefits, wages and ensure safety at our workplace."

Safiya Felters

Local 2854 | Central Chicago State Human Services Employees



"Public services strengthen our communities and bind us together as a society. Today, we are in an extremely hostile war to weaken unions. We must stick together—a stronger union improves the quality of our work life and bolsters working families and those we serve in the community."

Lloyd Marshall

Local 3477 | Cook County Juvenile Probation Officers



“We help at-risk youth navigate through some troubling times in their lives and reduce the recidivism rates within the communities we serve. Solidarity amongst our union members is a must. We must remain AFSCME Strong at all cost and never become divided. Our collective voice is stronger and louder than any individual voice.”

Stephen Mittons

Local 2081 | Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Chicago



“Our members are a vital part of the social safety net for children and families in crisis. In this arena, we are the first responders. Because of AFSCME, I have the ability to go to work and have a meaningful impact in my community. Knowing that I have an organization behind me that has me and my family’s best interests at heart motivates me to stay AFSCME and Union Strong.”

Kobie Robinson

Local 3835 | Cook County Assessor’s Office



“We are responsible for property taxes in Cook County, which is very serious for homeowners. It’s important to be united because if you step back from your personal situation and look at the big picture, many people are going through the same work-related issues and have the same concerns about their futures.”

Crosby Smith

Local 2645 | Ludeman Developmental Center



“Without us, and the skills we have, the individuals we serve would be forgotten and not properly cared for in the community. Our local is diverse. Together we are stronger and closer to achieving worker rights and justice for all. Hardworking people deserve to be paid properly and treated fairly.”

REGION II VICE-PRESIDENTS (NORTHERN ILLINOIS)

Terrence Boone

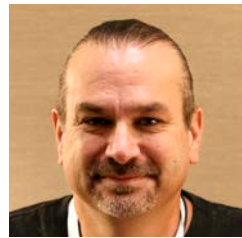
Local 672 | Moline Coal Valley School District #40



“We strive to make the schools a safe, clean environment for the students, staff and community to ensure the best facilities for learning. As corporate America grows so do greed and attempts to privatize public jobs. Unions lift those jobs up and in turn we support the community. Having the opportunity to negotiate a fair, dignified contract is something we all need to fight for.”

Garry Cacciapaglia

Local 1058 | City of Rockford



“The work we do is essential to Rockford. Showing a united front to management strengthens our bargaining position. We need every member to sign an AFSCME Strong card because when management sees that local membership is strong, then they know we will be harder to face at the bargaining table.”

Carlene VanDyke

Local 2615 | Illinois State Employees, Quad Cities



“Without public servants, our communities would come to a screeching halt. My motivation to be active in my union comes from my thankfulness and respect for those generations that paved the way before me—and for the generations to come after us, who deserve the same opportunities for fair wages, a voice on the job, health insurance and a pension!”

Thomas Opolony

Local 89 | Village of Lombard Public Works Department



“We allow residents to go about their day in a safe and productive manner by keeping the village well maintained. It is extremely important for workers to be united and AFSCME Strong. We as a union have the power to change things for the better for all. The stronger we our as a union, the stronger the rest of the world will be. I enjoy being of service to others and love to be a source of help to those in need.”

Yurvette Simmons

Local 3237 | Center of Disability Services/Easterseals



“As DSPs, we are responsible for helping disabled individuals reach their highest potential and live a full life. We are the helping hands to success. One finger can scratch, five fingers make a fist and can serve a mighty blow. United we stand, divided we fall.”

Miguel Vazquez

Local 3297 | Fox Metro Water Reclamation District

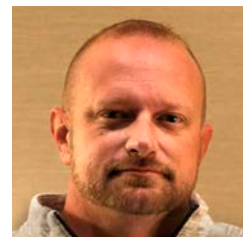


“We chemically treat an average of 42 million gallons per day of wastewater to protect the health of our communities, environment and wildlife. We give water a second chance in the ecosystem. Having the right to bargain our wages and other benefits is a privilege. The only way to maintain it is being united, being AFSCME Strong. We are stronger in numbers.”

REGION III VICE-PRESIDENTS (CENTRAL ILLINOIS)

Shaun Dawson

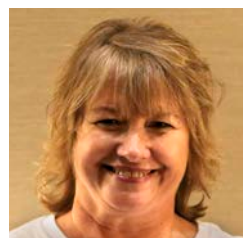
Local 2073 | Logan Correctional Center



“We house some of the most volatile offenders in the state and provide valuable treatment for the mentally ill. The strength and unity of this union is what allowed us to persevere against the staunchest of adversaries. With our union, we shall see a day that assaults on the job are the rarity and not the norm.”

Lori Gladson-Justice

Local 51 | Illinois State Employees, Peoria



“We as public servants help our community in almost every facet of their well-being. We must never forget that people actually died for an eight-hour workday and a living wage. People gave their lives so that we could do better. Our strength comes from within. United and standing tall, together we can accomplish anything.”

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Steve Howerter

Local 3585 | Illinois River Correctional Center



"We help protect the public by keeping convicted felons incarcerated, while providing numerous educational opportunities to reduce the risk of recidivism. We've seen what

can happen when anti-union politicians gain a foothold. If we don't stand united in the face of those who don't care about employees and their families, then we will all surely fall divided."

Melanie Hoyle

Local 2600 | Capitol Area Human Services and Public Aid



"Our local assists the most vulnerable people by helping them receive needed services such as health care, LINK, SNAP benefits, WIC and many other programs. Unions

are the backbone of the middle class. Wages and benefits would diminish for all Americans without unions to lead the charge for worker rights."

Matt Lukow

Local 1964 | Illinois State Employees



"Our local keeps agencies headquartered in Springfield functioning—including DOC, DJJ, the state police and the treasurer—which is especially critical when it

comes to public safety. Our fight against Rauner over the last five years was so important for the future. We'd never have a contract right now if we hadn't stayed united and he would have privatized everything. If that didn't show you why it's important to be in the union, I don't think anything else would."

Trudy Williams

Local 3433 | Fulton County



"We protect and serve all the residents of Fulton County. We make this county run. Solidarity is the lifeblood of AFSCME. Solidarity is the lifeblood of all unions. I was born

into a union family. I was taught to defend and protect workers' rights, a fair wage, and safety rules and regulations."

REGION IV VICE-PRESIDENTS (SOUTHERN ILLINOIS)

Jerry Grammer

Local 1175 | Menard Correctional Center



"The work we do keeps the community safe and teaches low-level offenders how to reintegrate back into society as productive members. We keep the labor movement moving!

Get involved. To be an effective leader you must be willing to learn. The best way to learn is to be active."

Tad Hawk

Local 1805 | Metro East State Employees

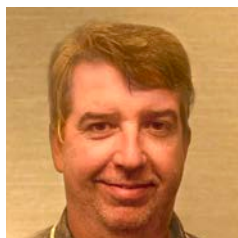


"Many vital services that the community relies on are provided by our members. We have over 850 members in 12 counties that work for almost every state agency. By joining

together, we can demonstrate our commitment to fight for common goals."

Chris Milton

Local 799 | Madison County



"We work in the courthouse, the health department, the facilities and much more. We do work that's undervalued and under-appreciated. Our membership is very

strong. We know we always do better when we work together. You're only as strong as your group. The minute that you're not united is the minute you lose the thing that people before us fought for. You have to have each other's backs. I may not know you, but I have your back."

Cary Quick

Local 141 | Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center



"We care for individuals in mental crisis so they can be a functional part of society and for those with developmental disabilities so they can lead a full and meaningful life. At this

time when our enemies are so well-funded and organized, our union solidarity gives us the ability to build and preserve a strong and respected middle class."

TRUSTEES

Thomas Brown

Local 3654 | Southwestern Correctional Center

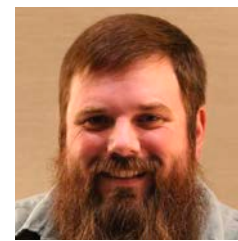


"We risk our lives every day to keep the state of Illinois safe. The union is strong in numbers and the more voices, the better the message gets across. We have a voice at work about

fair wages and a good work environment. Every member is treated fairly and equally."

Jeffrey Reighter

Local 2856 | Graham Correctional Center

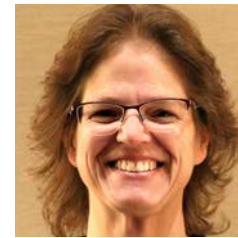


"We put our lives on the line every day to keep the community safe. By being united we were able to negotiate the best contract I've been a part of in my career. Together we

fought for the back wages to be paid and, most importantly, put boots on the ground to defeat Illinois' worst governor."

Tamara Rietman

Local 3693 | LaSalle Veterans Home



"We enable our aging veterans to continue to live as independently as possible. The level of care provided at our facility is amazing. Labor unions were formed in this country

to make sure that workers would always have a safe working environment with a fair wage to provide for their family. It's important that we honor past sacrifices by standing by our union."

RETIREE CHAPTER 31 REPRESENTATIVE

Larry Brown

Retiree Sub-chapter 56



"For workers it is important to be united so we can all retire and maintain a lifestyle with dignity in our later years of life. For all retirees, it is equally important to work

together and stay AFSCME Strong to keep what was promised to us when we retired."

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



The Homewood Public Library bargaining team with community supporters.

Homewood library employees win first union contract

EMPLOYEES AT HOMEWOOD Public Library certified their union with AFSCME three years ago. Now, after two years of picketing, leafleting, marching and testifying for a fair contract, these new AFSCME members finally have a first contract.

The librarians, paraprofessionals, clerks and more had been motivated to form a union after new management froze wages, reduced every-

“We knew a union was the only way for our voice to be heard.”

one’s hours and capped sick time—taking away any time already earned above that cap.

“They stole our time,” bargaining committee member Lisa Stilts said. “A member who was pregnant had been saving her time for when she needed it and they took hers away too.”

The staff took their concerns to the board, but got no response. That’s why they decided to organize a union. But management did nothing

but drag its feet from that point forward.

“I think they thought that we would just give up,” Stilts said. “And it was a struggle. We’ve had more than a 90% turnover, but we didn’t give up. We knew a union was the only way for our voice to be heard and to have a collaborative partnership with management.”

The new contract establishes union protections like a “just cause” disciplinary process, grievance procedure, seniority protections, layoff and recall rights and more.

“Now if we have problems, we have remedies,” Stilts said. She served on the bargaining committee along with Sandy Sullivan and Margaret Novak, led by AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Cameron Day.

The employees also won back the hours that had been taken away, and will now receive their schedule for each month in advance instead of finding out on Friday when they will be working the following week.

Another big win for the team was adding holidays and personal and vacation days for part-time employees who didn’t yet have the benefit of paid time off.

Stilts said community involvement was critical to their success.

“As librarians we see retired people, families with children, teachers who come to tutor students, so we had a lot of community support.

“At one board meeting more than 100 people came and many stood up and spoke out for us. That was a turning point.”

Stilts says the outcome was worth the struggle. She envisions a stronger library for her community and hopes that she and her co-workers have started a trend as the first south Chicago suburban library to unionize.

“This is the community

that I live in and serve, and we want our library to be operating at the same standards as our schools and park districts,” Stilts said of her drive to keep improving conditions at the Homewood Public Library.

“I have two daughters who are proud of me,” she said. “This is why you do it, to show your children that you have to stand up for what’s right.”

City of Champaign makes gains

USING INTEREST-BASED arbitration for the first time, AFSCME Local 1960 at the City of Champaign settled a three-year contract in less than three months.

President Dave Brewer felt the process was helpful for his local, which in the past has taken a year to negotiate a new contract.

“We didn’t give up anything and that’s the most important thing.”

Led by AFSCME Council 31 Staff Representative Christina De Angelo, the bargaining team included Brewer, Vice President Aaron Allen, Chief Steward Brad Hardcastle, Kelly Brown (executive board member), Vontay Marshall, Dave Richmond and Seth Brewer.

With interest-based bargaining, you work with a federal mediator from the start, said De Angelo. Everyone receives training in the process, and a timeline is set for submitting

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AFSCME Local 1960 members (left to right): Dave Brewer, Aaron Allen, Dave Richmond and Vontay Marshall.

Continued from previous page

issues for discussion. Each side is allowed a maximum of 10 issues and the group votes on solutions as a whole.

“We loved the process,” Brewer said. “It gave us the opportunity to explain the reason behind what we were proposing. We saw the city nodding their heads in agreement.”

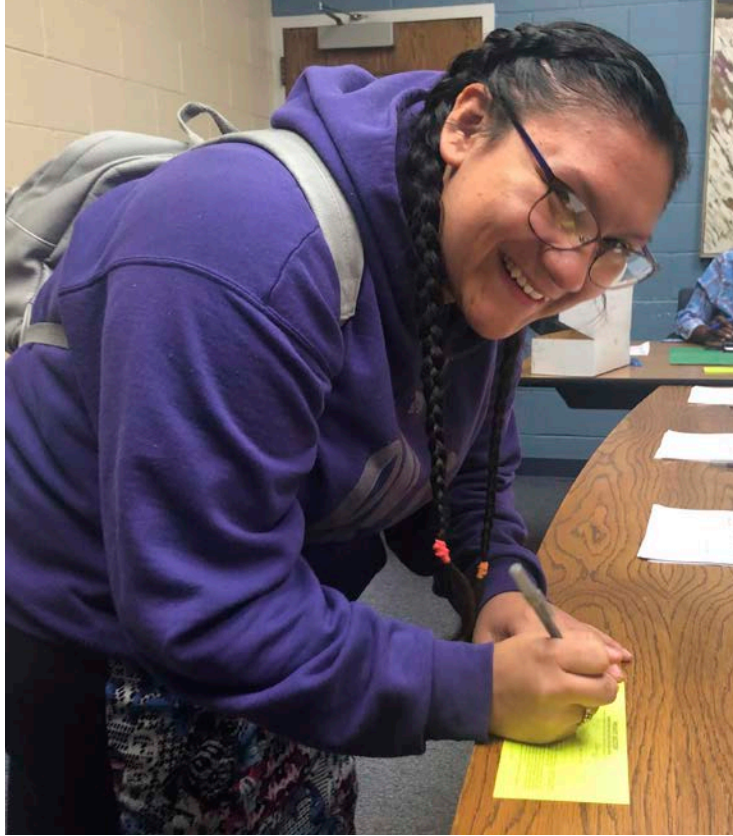
The team won advanced notice of shift cancellations, improvements in overtime and comp time policies, higher wages for telecommunicators, across-the-board salary increases of 7.25% over the life of the agreement and more. The contract expires June 30, 2021.

“We didn’t give up anything and that’s the most important thing,” Brewer said. “I give all the credit to everyone on our team. We made sure we were prepared before every session.”

Brewer is a concrete maintenance worker II. He said their diverse local represents employees in 911, public works, police front desk and the operations and parking division. He’s served as president since January.

Milestone keeps making strides

THIS SEPTEMBER AFSCME Local 2515 members at Milestone Inc. ratified their third



Local 2515 members ratified their third union contract.

union contract since forming their union with AFSCME in 2014, improving wages and making no concessions.

Working as direct service personnel at a non-profit serving people with disabilities in Winnebago and Boone counties, Milestone employees are part of AFSCME’s Care Campaign, which has both lobbied for increased resources for youth and disability workers at the state legislature and worked to improve wages and

working conditions in contract negotiations with private employers.

“It was a 15-month contract and that’s good because Milestone raises are few and far between,” said President Mike Rauner. “We want to ensure raises more often and that employees aren’t being taken advantage of, like doing higher level work without being paid for it.”

The membership turned out in force to ratify their newest agreement, which includes



wage increases for all full-time and part-time bargaining unit staff. The contract also includes two additional personal days for staff with more

they do, according to Rauner. “It takes a special person to do this work and we are going to keep standing up and fighting for them to be paid a fair wage.”

Led by Council 31 Staff Representative Sara Dorner, the bargaining team included Rauner, Donna Nelson (treasurer), Kimberly Simons (secretary), Lindsay Williams (executive board member) and Jessie Barnes-Harris (executive board member).

“Next round we’re going to be fighting for a lot more,” Rauner said. “We’re not afraid to stand our ground. That’s why I got involved in the union, because I’m all about change and I’m not afraid to stand up to management for what’s right.”

“Next round we’re going to be fighting for a lot more.”

than 10 years of service and secures benefits like paid time off, tuition reimbursement and more.

The gains were important because Milestone employees are “extremely underpaid” for the hard and demanding work



Local 1989 at NEIU still pushing for step plan

AFSCME Local 1989 members at Northeastern Illinois University are continuing their fight for a fair contract with step increases to reward loyalty and experience. Their fight is gaining traction and broad-based support in the university community and beyond. At a rally on October 22, they were joined by the university professors’ union, students, striking Chicago Teachers Union and SEIU Local 73 members, and fellow AFSCME members of Local 2806. Together they marched to the NEIU President’s State of the University address.

RETIREE NOTES



Chapter 31 executive board members (top); President Larry Brown (bottom).



AFSCME Retirees set bold agenda

HUNDREDS OF AFSCME Illinois Chapter 31 retirees gathered in Springfield on October 16 and 17 for the organization's annual convention.

"After years of unrelenting attacks on both our retirement benefits and our ability to organize a union to protect those benefits, we have come out on the other side even stronger," said AFSCME Illinois Chapter 31 President Larry Brown. "Our members have spoken and set before us a bold agenda, including action to address our state's structural deficit, reduce the cost of prescription drugs and safeguard our members and our ability to organize."

Retirees expressed frustration with the continual attacks on their benefits, when the clear, underlying problem with pensions is the gross underfunding by the legislature. They pledged to continue fighting for retirement security for all public employees and retirees.

"The big secret," Center for Tax and Budget Accountability Executive Director Ralph Martire told delegates, "is that pensions have subsidized state budgets for many years. When you do the math, we see that state spending is not the culprit, rather there is an unmistakable structural deficit that must be fixed by addressing our tax policy in a rational way with the Fair Tax amendment."

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky also addressed delegates, explaining that she will be joining the retirees' state campaign to combat out-of-control prescription drug costs for seniors.

Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch thanked delegates for their efforts to beat back each attack by Bruce Rauner's administration and his cohorts, including the Illinois Policy Institute.

"We understand, however, that our work is not finished," Lynch said. "We must continue to educate and build our retiree membership every day."

For a full list of resolutions passed by the delegates, attend your local sub-chapter meeting, call (217) 788-2800 or email mbritton-sipe@afscme31.org.

Lower drug prices now!

AFTER A LIFETIME OF WORKING to make our communities a better place, every retiree deserves respect. AFSCME has long held that access to

affordable health insurance is a form of respect, but access means nothing when the price of daily prescription drugs is out of reach.

That's why AFSCME joined the Lower Drug Prices Now Coalition (LDPNC), a group of advocacy organizations focusing on reducing the cost of prescription drugs.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimates that prescription drug expenditures in the U.S. totaled \$333 billion in 2017, up from \$121 billion in 2000. Drug prices have increased faster than inflation for at least 12 straight years.

The coalition is working in the US Congress to pass H.R. 3, which addresses one of the leading causes for high drug prices: the lack of cost controls. The government doesn't regulate prices, unlike many countries where governmental agencies negotiate prices for every drug.

H.R. 3 puts the federal government on the side of all Americans by negotiating directly with prescription drug corporations for lower prices. The legislation will lower drug prices, including insulin, regardless of where a person gets their health insurance plan.

"We must limit drug companies' power to extract profits at the expense of people's health by harnessing the government's power to improve patients' lives," said Chapter 31 Retiree Coordinator Maria Britton-Sipe. "Urge your member of Congress to support H.R. 3."

Hall of Fame Honorees

INDUCTION TO THE CHAPTER 31 Hall of Fame is an honor bestowed on members who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, dedicating their time, energy and passion to keeping members informed, while also defending retirement benefits and maintaining strong sub-chapters. Five members were enshrined at the October convention.

HARRIET BAKER (Sub-chapter 93, Marion)

As an active employee, she overcame harassment from management to help organize AFSCME Local 3237 at United Cerebral Palsy of Will County and Easter Seals where she served as local president for nearly a decade. In Chapter 31 she has served as vice president and PEOPLE chair for her sub-chapter.

KATHY BREEDEN (Sub-chapter 77, Galesburg)

She was a longtime chief steward at her local, setting a high bar for activism. In retirement, she was elected president of her sub-chapter and served on the statewide executive board. She's dedicated to political organizing on behalf of AFSCME-endorsed candidates.

SHARON HEITKAMP (Sub-chapter 85, Centralia)

She served on the state negotiating committee while working, then became heavily involved in her sub-chapter after she retired. She is still vice-president and PEOPLE chair.

MARY LAURENT

(Sub-chapter 59, Alton) She is known both in AFSCME and her Central Labor Council as a relentless activist. She serves as a liaison to other community organizations, educating them on the importance of the labor movement. She continues to be her sub-chapter's vice president and PEOPLE chair.

REBECCA SPINNER

(Sub-chapter 87, Decatur) A cornerstone of the AFSCME and AFL-CIO political programs, she can always be counted upon to assist members with complicated health care questions and is the secretary-treasurer in her sub-chapter.

Barb Franklin recognized with Lifetime Achievement Award

LONGTIME AFSCME ACTIVIST Barb Franklin helped steer the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans for the last 10 years as president. As she handed over the gavel to Don Todd, an AFSCME retiree activist from Springfield, she was honored with the organization's Lifetime Achievement Award.

"After serving on the frontlines of the battle to preserve retirement security, I am proud of our efforts and believe that I am handing over the baton to another strong leader," Franklin said. 🦅



Retiree Barb Franklin receives IARA's Lifetime Achievement Award.



when we negotiate our contract, it's always on the back burner—but we fight it off. With the union, you have the same face in the building every day that the kids and

staff know and feel comfortable talking to. But if you contract the work out, you might have eight or nine different people a week. The union helps with safety in the schools. Custodians have the alarm code, keys. If you contract out just to save money, you don't know what type of person is coming, you get what the company sends.

How has your union job impacted your family?

Not only do I get a good wage and health insurance, I get the benefits of sick days, vacation days and personal days to spend time with my family. I have three girls: 23, 20 and 18 years old. I know where I'm going to be every day. I know what my hours will be on a daily basis. I was able to take my kids to school or pick them up. That stability and flexibility has been so good for my girls. They never had to want for anything. You work hard and it pays off.

Why are you active in the union?

I've been active for 16 years as an executive board member, a steward, vice president and now president. I thought it was important to learn the ins and outs of the union. I think every AFSCME member should. People complain, but they need to get involved to understand it. We all have to agree to do something and get involved in our local union. Everybody should be a part of it.

If you used to be fair share, remember that the Janus ruling is messed up. Because even though you don't pay dues, you still reap the benefits and we still represent you. That's just not right. I'm paying my union dues because if it weren't for AFSCME, we wouldn't have the wages and benefits that we have now, that have

Corey Colvin

AFSCME Local 822

HEAD CUSTODIAN,
ROCK ISLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tell us about your job at Longfellow Elementary.

I've worked for the Rock Island school district as a custodian for 19 years. Now I'm the head custodian here at Longfellow. I start at 5 o'clock in the morning. I cover five classrooms, eight bathrooms and the office. I clean those first and then I clean the cafeteria after breakfast. After that I go outside to pick up trash, clean windows, the grounds and steps, and I'm ready to respond to any calls. As president of my local, I also handle calls from members. There is something new or a different challenge every day in this job.

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

It's the best job to have in the world. I love doing what I do. That motivates me to get up every day. My mom kept a school paper from when I was young. I wrote that I wanted to be a custodian in a building when I grew up! I get a kick out of seeing the kids every morning and interacting with them. They like to laugh with you. You can build a rapport with them. You want the kids to respect you, just like you want to

respect them, so I treat them like they're mine. I scold them if they're doing something wrong and praise them when they do something right. They look up to you.

How does your job provide a valuable public service?

This is a public school. I don't care how much money you make, we're all here to serve these kids and that's our job. Nobody is more important than anyone else. I service the students differently than a teacher, principal, superintendent or school board member, but the bottom line is that we're all here for the kids. Some principals and staff may think we aren't equal to everyone else, but if it weren't for us the kids wouldn't be able to come to school and learn in a clean building on a daily basis. This is a community and we're all an important part of it.

How does the union improve your workplace?

Our union has an impact on the quality of work. The administrators and school boards are always threatening us with privatization—every four years

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taken years to get. Without union negotiations, we wouldn't get paid holidays, vacations, a nice wage or a percentage increase every year.

I tell new employees, remember that our union has always strived to get you the wages you have now. Most of the time they sign up that day. 