



MOVE

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



Budget battle draws 15,000 to Capitol

See pages 3, 5, 10-11

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 112
Chicago, IL



On the Move

AFSCME Illinois On the Move is published 8 times annually by Illinois Public Employees Council 31 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO. Send correspondence to: lcohen@afscmeillinois.org or: AFSCME, On the Move, 205 N. Michigan Ave., 21st Floor, Chicago, IL 60601

Henry Bayer, Executive Director
 Roberta Lynch, Deputy Director
 Linc Cohen, Editor
 Dolores Wilber, Designer

Council 31 Executive Board Officers
 STATE EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
 Lori Laidlaw, Thomson CC
 Local 2359

CITY/COUNTY EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
 Carmin Willis-Goodloe, Cook County Hospital, Local 1111

PRIVATE SECTOR EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
 Yolanda Sims, Hope School
 Local 2481

UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
 Dorinda Miller, U of I Clericals,
 Local 3700

SECRETARY
 Barney Franklin, City of Chicago,
 Local 2946

TREASURER
 Sam Rossi, Departments of Revenue and Lottery, Local 2467

Board Members

STATE CONFERENCE BOARD CO-CHAIRS
 Gloria Arseneau, (RC-14),
 Northeastern Illinois State employees,
 Local 2794

David Ford, (RC-63), Murray DC,
 Local 401

Randy Hellman, (RC-6)
 Pinckneyville CC, Local 943

**REGION I VICE-PRESIDENTS
 (COOK AND LAKE COUNTIES)**

Darlene Banks, Local 4008, Little City
 Patricia Ousley,
 Department of Employment Security,
 Local 1006

Ed Schwartz, Cook County DCFS,
 Local 2081

Denise Slaughter, New Hope Center,
 Local 1232

Eva Spencer-Chatman, Chicago Read
 MHC, Local 1610

Laverne Walker, City of Chicago,
 Local 505

Kevin Johnson, city of Evanston,
 Local 1891

**REGION II VICE-PRESIDENTS
 (NORTHERN ILLINOIS)**

Gary Ciccio, Shapiro DC, Local 29

Rob Fanti, Sheridan CC, Local 472

Ralph Portwood, Stateville CC,
 Local 1866

Pat Sanders, IYC Joliet, Local 1753

Garry Cacciapaglia, city of Rockford,
 Local 1058

**REGION III VICE-PRESIDENTS
 (CENTRAL ILLINOIS)**

Gary Kroeschel, Sangamon County
 State employees, Local 2224

Richard Heitz, Canton Correctional
 Center, Local 3585

Matt Lukow, Springfield Area State
 employees, Local 1964

David Morris, Illinois State employees,
 Local 805

Matt Pederson, Eastern Illinois Univer-
 sity, Local 981

Cameron Watson, Jacksonville CC,
 Local 3549

Trudy Williams, Fulton County Sheriffs
 Dept. & Courthouse, Local 3433

**REGION IV VICE-PRESIDENTS
 (SOUTHERN ILLINOIS)**

Larry Flynn, Vienna CC, Local 415

Cary Quick, Choate MH/DC, Local 141

Michael Hamil, SIU-Carbondale,
 Local 2887

Barb Reardon, Southern Illinois State
 Employees, Local 1048

Trustees

Ken Kleinlein, (RC-6) Western CC,
 Local 3567

Kathy Lane, Northwestern Illinois State
 Employees, Local 448

Tom Minick, Moline Schools, Local 672

Retiree Chapter 31 Representative
 Virginia Yates



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**Race to top,
 race to bottom
 on collision course**

Those promoting a better education are trying to cut the wages and benefits of those who get it



**BY
 HENRY BAYER**

**WE NEED
 BETTER SCHOOLS,
 BUT WE ALSO NEED
 JOBS
 THAT PAY BETTER.**

There's a lot of media attention focused on the "race to the top," the national effort to improve the performance of public schools throughout the country.

IT'S ONE OF THE FEW GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS THAT HAS BUSINESS SUPPORT. WHILE I DISAGREE WITH some of the particulars – the emphasis on merit pay and test scores, for example – I do believe that the program's thrust points in the right direction.

I'm sure all AFSCME members want our children to get the best education possible. We have no choice if we want to maintain the high living standards that became part of the American way of life after World War II.

Ironically, at the same time the government applies its resources to lifting education standards, there is a concerted campaign being conducted by elements in the business community, to force a race to the bottom when it comes to wages and benefits.

The downward trend has been evident for some time in the private sector. It is driven by a combination of related factors, including:

- The declining percentages of workers represented by unions;
- Unfair trade laws that have exported well-paying jobs to other countries; and
- Tax measures that favor the rich.

The result has been a decline in real wages, growing inequality of income, fewer workers with employer-provided insurance, and even fewer with pensions that provide retirement security.

Having largely succeeded at depressing compensation levels for private-sector workers, the corporate community has now trained its sights on public employees. Hardly a day goes by

without an editorial blasting away at "Cadillac" public pension plans or health care subsidies for retirees.

Taking the argument to its extreme, a recent commentary in the Boston Globe advocated abolishing public-sector unions altogether because they've been so successful in raising wages and benefits.

The rationale of those launching the attacks is that public employees shouldn't be treated any better than workers who labor for private businesses.

By this logic, if a group of people were blind in one eye, rather than trying to restore their sight, we should poke out an eye of the folks fortunate enough to have two.

Where were the strident voices now urging "parity" between public and private sector workers when private-sector workers were granted bargaining rights in the 1930s under the National Labor Relations Act, but public employees were excluded? In the half century from then to 1983, when we finally won collective bargaining rights in Illinois, I don't recall any of their voices being raised about public employees getting paid far less than their private sector counterparts and with far less generous benefits.

For them, parity's not the real issue. No, they see an opportunity to play on people's frustrations as a means to drive down public employees' wages and benefits—thus further reducing expectations for what constitutes fair compensation in our society.

It's the very same corporate types pushing the race to the top

in education who are driving the pace car in the race to the bottom in employee compensation. They want better schools so the kids of working and low-income families will be prepared for jobs of the future. But they want to drive wages so low that those jobs won't be worth much when our kids get there.

At one time, American workers were urged to believe in the American Dream, which would allow them to own a home, take vacations, have a few dollars in the bank, send their kids to college, and retire with a measure of dignity and security.

But today that dream looks more like a fantasy as corporate America pursues a relentless drive to increase profits at the expense of workers' economic security. So suddenly workers are labeled "overpaid" if they're earning say \$45,000 a year, barely enough to pay a mortgage and keep the kids in sports shoes.

And the sad reality is that workers earning those wages do indeed make a lot more than hundreds of millions of their fellow citizens. That's why we've got to rev up our engines and get the compensation race cars turned around.

Otherwise, when the young people of today succeed in that educational race to the top, they're just going to have to turn around and drive right back to the bottom as they head out into the world of work.

We need better schools, but we also need jobs that pay better. And to get there, we need a bigger, stronger labor movement. To protect all of the gains that we in the public sector have made, we need to do all that we can to help unions grow once again in the private sector as well. In the end, maybe it's not the case that we're all in separate cars racing past each other; but rather that we're all in the same boat—and we will all sail or sink together.

Thousands deliver the message: 'Raise revenues! Save Our State!'



After many small steps, the campaign for a responsible state budget took a giant leap on April 21, when 15,000 people jammed the streets around the state Capitol for the Save Our State rally and march.

"I'M ANGRY THAT THESE GUYS AREN'T DOING ANYTHING," SAID LOCAL 674 MEMBER JEANNIE Riordan of Bloomington, referring to state legislators. "It's wrong for them to hold citizens of Illinois hostage, because they don't feel like doing what they're supposed to do."

A heightened sense of urgency brought out the biggest crowd Springfield has seen in more than a quarter century as the prospect grows that legislators will make deep cuts in education and other vital state services, borrow billions of dollars, drag out the state's already shameful payment backlog and then go home to campaign for reelection.

Rally makes history

WITH MILLIONS OUT OF WORK, Council 31 Director Henry Bayer told the rally as he pointed to the Capitol, "The people across the street, 177 individuals in the General Assembly, all have jobs with decent pay and good benefits. Their job is to enact a responsible budget with enough revenues to fund the ever-increasing demand for services that hard-pressed Illinoisans are putting on the

state. But they are turning their backs on their constituents."

Bayer noted that the legislators are planning to go home May 7 – nearly two months before the deadline to craft a state budget.

"Imagine if a teacher left the classroom two months before the end of the school year," he said. "The parents of those kids would be outraged. Or if a cop left his beat before the end of his watch. People in the community would be angry."

Bayer to legislators: Do your job

BAYER REFUTED THE LEGISLATORS' conventional wisdom that they can't raise taxes "because people are hurting":

"If we raise revenue for senior programs, will the elderly be hurt?"

"If we raise revenue for child care, will working families be hurt?"

"If we raise revenue for community colleges and state universities, will students be hurt?"

"If we raise revenue for programs for the disabled, will those individuals be hurt?"

"If we raise revenue for

public safety, will communities be hurt?"

"If we raise revenue for schools, will kids be hurt?"

"Yes people are hurting and that's why we need HB 174, to stop the hurt!"

Bayer said Illinois can afford the essential services that a tax increase would support.

"What we can't afford is public officials unwilling to do their job. We can't afford politicians who will vote to lay off public safety employees, and teachers, and nurses, and social workers, and caregivers who provide vital services."

Eliminating thousands of jobs doesn't help the unemployment problem or ease the pain for communities and families he argued. And the people who are hurting the worst, those laid off or those in low-wage jobs, won't see much if any increased tax burden.



"Yes people are hurting and that's why we need HB 174!" Council 31 Director Henry Bayer told those assembled at the April 21st rally.

"We're going to insist that legislators stay here until they get their job done," Bayer said. "And if they don't, we're going to do our jobs – as citizens. We'll be there when they get home and we'll deliver the same message from now until Election Day."

Building a campaign

The April 21 Save Our State rally, which got the attention of national media, wasn't the beginning, or the

end, of AFSCME's campaign to get state legislators behind a significant revenue-raising measure. The Responsible Budget Coalition came together last year, after an

AFSCME push to put a tax increase into last year's budget fell short. The Senate had passed HB 174, but the House wouldn't even take it up and refused to move any measure that would raise significant new revenues.

The RBC held its initial rally at the end of September, then went to Springfield during the veto session in October for a statehouse rally.

In December, the union withheld primary election endorsements from any legislative candidate who would not pledge support for raising revenues.

Continued on page 15

AFSCME members talk about why they marched

CLARENCE MCGEE, LOCAL 416, JUVENILE JUSTICE SPECIALIST, WARRENVILLE YOUTH CENTER — "I want these legislators to know that what they are doing is having a detrimental affect on real people."



DEBBY PERRY, LOCAL 805, DCFS OFFICE COORDINATOR — "I have never seen the



state in such disarray, with everybody hurting, layoffs, losing jobs, service cuts, while our legislators do nothing. I wanted to give it a shot today – to stand up."

TED GARGANTIEL, LOCAL 416, CORRECTIONS SUPPLY SUPERVISOR, WARRENVILLE YOUTH CENTER — "Maybe they'll listen if enough people come out. We've got to do something. You can't just sit around and hope somebody else does it."

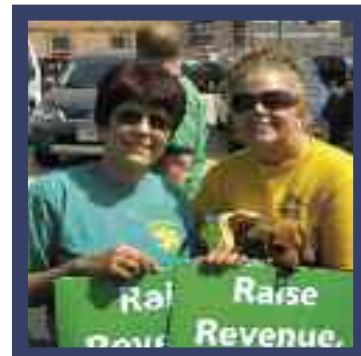


MARTHA WYNN, LOCAL 674, HUMAN SERVICE CASEWORKER, MCLEAN COUNTY — "I came to make some noise. We need funds for the



handicapped, the elderly. When our clients go to the doctor, the doctor doesn't get paid. I want my voice heard."

SUZANNE RENSING, LOCAL 1805, JUVENILE JUSTICE EDUCATOR, PERE MARQUETTE YOUTH CENTER — "I learned grassroots lobbying through my mom, (Pat Rensing, also pictured, recording secretary, Local 943)



and I wanted to help support raising revenues and stopping the cuts. It was so awesome that so many people came out for the same cause. I hope the legislators got the message." PAT — "I was so proud to march with her. Mother and daughter transformed into union sisters!"

Pension cuts for new hires put all public employees in the crosshairs

Though numerous legal experts concur that the state constitution bars reductions to pension benefits for current public employees, powerful forces are mounting an all-out campaign to test that interpretation.

THE RECENTLY ENACTED STEEP CUTS FOR NEW HIRES IN ILLINOIS WAS ONLY THE OPENING VOLLEY in the campaign by Chicago's corporate elite to eliminate defined-benefit pension plans. Consider the following from the Chicago Tribune, the influential mouthpiece of the city's big-money interests. It came in an editorial page diatribe following Gov. Pat Quinn's signing of the bill that cut pensions for state, university and municipal employees hired after Jan. 1:

"By offering less generous benefits to future public employees, this bill should prevent some problems many years from now. It doesn't, though, solve — or even relieve — the current crisis: The state still has unfunded pension and retiree health obligations of some \$130 billion, and its current annual

pension costs don't decline. Legislators need to cut those current costs before their session ends."

A constitutional challenge coming?

THE PAPER ECHOES THE ARGUMENTS of the Commercial Club of Chicago's Civic Committee, which asserts that the pension benefits of all public employees can be cut going forward.

"Chicago law firm Sidley Austin, citing Illinois case law and a 1979 Illinois attorney general's opinion, has concluded that the state can reduce pension benefits that employees will earn in future years."

It does acknowledge that some top legal minds disagree: "Former federal Judge Abner Mikva and former state appellate Judge Gino DiVito

counter that Sidley is wrong, that employees are entitled to retire with the pension scheme that was in place on the day they were hired."

But the Tribune goes on to urge that legislators chop the pension benefits of employees now working, testing that interpretation of the constitution, which says: "Membership in any pension or retirement system of the State, any unit of local government or school district, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, shall be an enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired."

If successful, the attack on public employee pensions, which is being pursued in nearly every state and big city in the country, would cap a long-sought goal of the corporate elite to end traditional defined-benefit pensions for all working families.

The last bastion of retirement security

THEIR EFFORTS HAVE ALREADY largely succeeded in the private sector—especially in those industries that lack a strong union presence. The battle by AFSCME and other public-employee unions to preserve retirement security and dignity in old age is the major remaining obstacle in

their quest.

Public pensions are actually a key tool for driving economic growth in the states, both through the purchasing power of retirees themselves and through the direct investments of pension assets in job creation.

Big business has poured millions into sophisticated PR campaigns aimed at convincing the wider public that public-worker pensions are a drain on the economies of state and local governments.

But a new study strikes at the heart of their argument.

"We do need a debate on public pensions," according to a report by the Progressive States Network, "but one that sees protecting them as part

of a broader campaign to restore retirement security for all American workers, especially in the wake of a stock market collapse that has revealed the empty promises of Wall Street in hyping 401k-style private accounts as a substitute for the guaranteed retirement income of social security and defined-benefit pensions.

"Public pensions are actually a key tool for driving economic growth in the states, both through the purchasing power of retirees themselves and through the direct investments of pension assets in job creation. Any reforms undertaken should be done to both enhance the positive economic role of retirement systems in our state economies and to increase equity among retirees to raise living standards for low-income retirees."

And of course one could argue that everyone, not just CEOs with multi-million dollar golden parachutes, deserves to know that they have a secure and comfortable retirement waiting for them when their working days are over.

International convention set for June in Boston

Delegates will set course for tough times, choose new secretary-treasurer

Local unions across Illinois are electing delegates to AFSCME's 39th International convention, scheduled for June 28-July 2 in Boston, where they will choose a new secretary-treasurer for the union and make decisions on overall policy for the coming two years.

DELEGATES WILL ALSO PARTICIPATE IN EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS, HEAR SPEECHES FROM prominent labor and national

leaders, attend a rally and meet with people from across the country who do the same kind of work that they do.

Union leaders expect more than 5,000 delegates and guests to "focus on expanding our organizing efforts, securing important legislative victories, increasing our political activities and promoting public services at every level of government."

According to the union's constitution: "Locals shall be entitled to delegates on the basis of membership as follows: 100 or fewer, one delegate; more than 100 but not exceeding 200, two delegates; more than 200 but not exceeding 300, three delegates; more than 300 but not exceeding 400, four delegates; more than

400, one additional delegate for each 1,000 additional members or fraction thereof" (article IV, Section 6).

Each local will carry voting strength proportional to the number of members in that local.

Policy resolutions or proposals to amend the constitution must be submitted by a local to the International Secretary-Treasurer at International Headquarters and postmarked at least 20 days prior to the opening of the convention.

The secretary-treasurer election was made necessary

by the impending resignation of longtime AFSCME leader Bill Lucy.

"Bill has been an inspiration to AFSCME members around the country

for almost 40 years," Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said. "He'll be hard to replace, and the choice is an important one for our union."



Keeping the pressure on — coalition meets with legislators

A FSCME members and their partners in the Responsible Budget Coalition didn't rest on their laurels after the April 21 Save Our State rally.

TWO WEEKS OF CALL-IN DAYS, WITH 10 LARGE ORGANIZATIONS EACH TAKING A DAY — COUNCIL 31 members made their calls on April 30 — were combined with lobbying of individual legislators from key districts.

Jim Dixon, a Human Service Caseworker with the Department of



Healthcare and Family Services and a member of Local 2600, met with Rep. Raymond Poe, R-Springfield. Some of the points he made:

- "I make my home in Springfield. I see how state budget cuts are hurting our community already, and I am very afraid that if we don't raise more revenue soon it will be a disaster for this town.

- "The state is so behind in its bills that we're having trouble getting our doctors to see us on state insurance.

- "The senior citizens center isn't getting its state payments, and they had to lay people off. That's not just a cut in services to seniors; it's more hard times for

Springfield families.

- "Next year's cuts in state aid to local governments will cost Springfield \$2.5 million and Sangamon County just under \$1 million.

- "You need to make a choice here. You can be for a bill that will build our community back up. Or you can keep sitting by the sidelines and letting things fall apart. I and a lot more of your constituents want to hear a strong statement saying you will vote for HB 174."

Cary Quick, president of Local 141 at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna, talked to Rep. Brandon W. Phelps, D-Harrisburg.

"I think we can all admit



that when it comes to jobs, in Southern Illinois we don't have a lot going on," he said.

"We can all come up with companies closing down - we lost a bakery, a shoe factory, the flat bed trailer company. Metal-working shops are laying off and part-timing people. That leaves Choate as one of the three largest employers in the area. ...

"Between Choate and the prisons, state employment is one of the biggest engines in our economy.

So when we are talking about the cuts in the state budget we will see without a tax increase, we are talking about fewer jobs in our area. And that means fewer people shopping

and eating out and buying homes, so that's more jobs lost. ...

"Mental health patients are sitting in jails and hospitals because they are regularly told that Choate can't take more patients because there aren't enough staff.

"At the developmental center, we are under investigation from the U.S. Department of Justice partly because we were operating with too few staff."

These kind of stories are being repeated all over the state, with roundtables and in-district meetings taking place with some 20 legislators. Yet many observers fear that the General Assembly is going to duck — borrow more and end its session early with a budget that will only last for part of the year, then try to get out of the way of the train wreck that will ensue.

Quinn's budget would hurt entire state

A FSCME members and retirees, and nearly everyone who lives, works, goes to school in or visits Illinois, will be affected if Gov. Pat Quinn's budget for fiscal year 2011 goes through as originally proposed.

THE BIGGEST CUTS COME TO EDUCATION, WITH THE LIKELY LAYOFF OF THOUSANDS OF teachers and support staff, leaving kids with bigger classes and fewer related services. Higher education would also get slashed, with students facing higher tuition and employees facing harder bargaining and more demands for concessions.

Some details:

- Local governments, which now get 10 percent of state income-tax revenues, would only get 7 percent — amounting to more than \$300 mil-

lion in cuts.

- The lag between when the state owes money and when it pays will lengthen, making life even more difficult for nonprofit service providers who depend on state funding. Some of them

are already on the verge of closing their doors or laying off staff.

- And to make matters worse for community disability agencies, where most of the already underpaid workers haven't had a raise in three

years, Quinn's proposal cuts 2.5 percent from their reimbursement rate.

- Cuts to community mental health programs could have devastating affects on the city of Chicago's clinics, and to private, nonprofit

agencies like Heartland Human Services.

- Health-care costs would be shifted to state and university retirees, with an especially heavy burden for those who aren't yet eligible for Medicare (see page 14).



The myth of the overpaid public employee

New budget must bring public wages back down to reality," the headline in Crain's Chicago Business demanded.

THE ARTICLE ASSERTS THAT "PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ARE THE WEALTHY, AND ILLINOIS TAXPAYERS ARE THE ONES FALLING BEHIND."

In this opinion piece in Crain's, John Tillman, CEO of the Illinois Policy Institute, claims that state workers earned an average of 15.7 percent more than private-sector workers. What he doesn't say is that this compares someone working part-time at McDonalds to a teacher, or someone cleaning hotel rooms to a public defender. Not that workers in these low-wage private-sector jobs have less dignity or deserve only the low wages they are getting, but the training and experience needed for many public-sector jobs does command a higher wage. Tillman is making an unfair comparison.

When you stack comparable jobs side by side, it turns out that Tillman is all wrong.

Employees of state government earn an average of 11 percent less than comparable private sector employees,

while local government workers get 12 percent less, according to a study just issued by Center for State and Local Government Excellence. The study compared wages, taking into consideration education, training, experience, job location and occupation, among other factors.

It found: "An analysis spanning two decades shows the pay gap between public and private-sector employees has widened in recent years," with government workers getting farther behind.

Workers are 'poor saps' to Wall Street

SO DON'T BE FOOLED WHEN THE Wall Street Journal says, "There really is growing inequality in America. It's the 45 percent premium in pay and benefits that government workers receive over the poor saps who create wealth in the private economy."

There they go again, with the phony comparisons. In fact, when figuring in benefits, state employees still make 6.8 percent less than those in comparable private-sector jobs, according to the center's study.

And despite the paper's feigned interest in folks who it calls "poor saps," the column isn't about making any workers better off, as AFSCME International President Ger-

ald McEntee argued in a letter to the Journal's editor: "You take shots at public-service workers who provide vital services all across the country," McEntee wrote. But "the real issues facing the American economy and its struggling workers are increasing wealth inequality and the failure of wages to keep pace with inflation. While you point out that wage increases in the public sector outpaced the increases in the private sector between 1998 and 2008, you completely miss the point that inflation far exceeded wage growth in both sectors, a clear sign that something is wrong with our economy."

'Grand Canyon' divides rich from the rest

IT ISN'T PUBLIC EMPLOYEES WHO are eroding the middle class, McEntee said: "During the past three decades, as private-sector workers lost health-care coverage and pension benefits, the chasm between the rich and the middle class grew into a veritable Grand Canyon, its expansion fueled by a drop in private-sector union membership and falling tax rates for the wealthy."

That assertion is backed up by statistics:

- In 1970 the ratio of compensation of the top 100 CEOs to the average worker was 45 to



one. By 2008 it was a whopping 1,081 to one.

- In 2009 the top 25 hedge fund managers chalked up total earnings equal to that of 658,000 entry-level teachers.
- The richest 10 percent now control nearly 70 percent of the wealth, while those with incomes in the bottom 50 percent have a little more than 2 percent of the wealth.

The attacks on public employees are building in their intensity. People with millions to throw around are throwing their weight behind a drive to cut the wages of working families who have carved out a decent life for themselves by working hard, joining a union and fighting for fairness.

The strategy has been to bust unions and slash wages in

the private sector. The next step is to turn those working families against public-service employees, whose wages the big shots haven't yet succeeded in cutting.

"To set the record straight," McEntee said, "AFSCME members receive an average salary of \$45,000. After a career of service, they earn a whopping average of \$18,000 a year in retirement benefits. And because many of them do not receive Social Security, this may be their sole source of retirement income."

He concluded: "I don't expect the Journal to champion the cause of everyday Americans such as our members, but stop using them for target practice."

Benefits choice period offers new options for state and university employees

The annual benefits choice period for state and university employees and retirees ends May 31, though the state did not send out booklets this year. The information, including which HMOs are available, can be found on the state's website: www.benefitschoice.il.gov.

A NUMBER OF NEW PROVISIONS IN THE STATE'S BENEFIT PLANS THAT WERE NEGOTIATED IN THE AFSCME 2008 master contract go into effect on July 1.

- Dental benefits are enhanced, with the annual

per-person maximum benefit increased by \$250, to \$2,500, and the lifetime orthodontia (braces) benefit increased by \$250 per person, to \$2,000. In addition, the schedule of dental benefits is adjusted to

reflect any changes in "the usual and customary charges statewide for all covered services."

- Vision benefits are enhanced. For in-network providers, where there is a flat \$10 co-payment for exams, for lenses and for standard frames, the allowances for standard frames will be increased to \$70 wholesale from \$50 wholesale, and the allowance for contact lenses will be increased to \$120 from \$100. For out-of-network benefits, the reimbursement allowances for single-vision lenses will be increased by

\$10, to \$50; for bifocals and trifocals by \$20, to \$80; for frames by \$20 to \$70; and for contact lenses by \$20 to \$120.

- Premiums from employee paychecks will remain the same in fiscal year 2011, for both employee-only coverage and for dependent coverage. As in the past, premiums for dependent coverage are calculated on a weighted-average basis for dependent managed-care-plan options, so individual plan dependent premiums for HMOs could go up or down, but on average they will be unchanged.

Federal law now mandates parity for mental health treatment

THE MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND EQUITY ACT OF 2008, which was enacted as part of the federal fiscal stimulus package, requires health plans to cover behavioral health services at levels equal to those of the plan's medical benefits. For state of Illinois health plans, effective July 1, behavioral health services will now be included in an enrollee's annual plan deductible and

Legislators keep busy while avoiding budget issues

A legislative session that should have been focused on the state's disastrous budget deficit, never came close. Instead legislators turned their attention to a maze of less urgent matters. Council 31 lobbyists worked hard to advance measures that benefit AFSCME members and to defeat or neutralize those that could cause harm. Below is a roundup of some of those measures and where they stood as *On the Move* went to press.

Bills AFSCME supports

Confidentiality for employee evaluations

BOTH CHAMBERS HAVE PASSED, **HB 5154**, which would amend the Personnel Record Review Act to prohibit the disclosure of the performance evaluation of any public employee. It now goes to the governor. In the last legislative session, the freedom of information law was revised over AFSCME's objections to make the performance evaluation of any public employee working for any jurisdiction in the state of Illinois (except for teachers) available to any citizen via a FOIA request, would effectively nullify that provision and keep performance evaluations confidential.

Primary election date changed

THE GOVERNOR HAS SIGNED **SB 355** into law, making it PA 96-886. It moves the primary election from its current date of the first Tuesday in February to the third Tuesday in March. The early February date reduces voter participation because of cold



weather and also makes it more difficult to challenge incumbent legislators because of the difficulty of getting a campaign off the ground over the Christmas holiday season. Changing the primary date to March will open up participation in the political process.

No loss of pension benefits for voluntary furloughs

HB 4644, WHICH IS BACKED BY AFSCME and the Quinn administration pursuant to a mediated grievance resolution, would ensure that state employees are permitted to purchase credit for up to 24 furlough days, if taking the furlough would otherwise affect their benefit. The measure has passed the Senate.

Allow state universities to borrow

THE HOUSE AND SENATE have passed **SB 642**, which would give state universities borrowing authority, enabling them to do short-term borrowing to remain fully operational until state funding comes through. The universities have had difficulty meeting their payrolls in recent months because of the delay in the funding the state has appropriated for them.

Strengthen legal protections for EMTs

THE HOUSE HAS PASSED **HB 5668**, legislation that would include emergency medical technicians and paramedics who work for local units of government under the provisions of the Firemen's Discipline Act, giving them core workplace due-process rights. At press time the bill had gone to the Sen-

ate floor and was awaiting action.

Prevent ripoffs by debt settlement companies

THE HOUSE HAS PASSED **HB 4781**, legislation backed by state Treasurer Alexi Giannoulis and Attorney General Lisa Madigan to cap debt settlement fees, require licensing of settlement companies, and require disclosures and warnings to consumers. The bill was initiated because consumers often end up paying large fees and having their credit ratings damaged when they turn to debt settlement companies to help resolve credit card debt problems. At press time the bill had been sent to the Senate floor.

Make Illinois' tax structure fairer

SJRCA 38, 92 and **101** and **HJRCA 27**, would open the door to fairer taxes in Illinois by initiating the process to amend the state constitution and allow a progressive tax structure. The measures stalled in committee and never got a hearing.

Bills AFSCME opposes

Jobs of school district employees put at risk

THE HOUSE HAS PASSED **HB 4886**, which would allow local school boards to establish a four-day school week, effectively cutting the pay and benefits of school-support personnel such as bus drivers, cafeteria workers or classroom

aides. A Senate committee was holding the measure at press time.

Benefits for workers injured on the job would be cut

SB 3830, SPONSORED BY gubernatorial candidate Sen. Bill Brady, would make it easier for employers to cut off benefits for workers who suffer serious on-the-job injuries that necessitate being off work for more than two years. It has not emerged from a Senate committee.

Tuition waivers for university employees' children

HB 4706 WOULD REPEAL the law that permits children of state university employees to receive a 50 percent tuition waiver. It is being held in a House committee.

Creating further staffing problems in state government

HB 541 WOULD IMPOSE A hiring freeze on state government until the state is able to pay within 30 days of billing all the money it owes vendors. Given the state's current fiscal woes, this bill would effectively paralyze state government, preventing even the most essential positions from being filled. It is being held in a House committee.

Emergency budget act: too much power for governor

GOV. PAT QUINN HAS pushed for an Emergency Budget Act that would appropriate a lump sum for state operations and give the governor broad powers to make cuts in any part of the budget he so desires.

Current state employees are mostly protected, because of the agreement Council 31 worked out to settle grievances filed to block layoffs. No facility closures or state-employee layoffs can be initiated in the coming year's budget.

At press time it was unclear if the governor could use the power to implement increases in retiree health care premiums.

Quinn's original plan would require retirees to pay a premium of as much as \$54 per month if they are currently on Medicare and as much

as \$500 per month if they are not yet eligible for Medicare. And Quinn might be able to further cut funding for non-profit agencies that serve individuals with developmental disabilities or mental illness.

AFSCME has made it clear to legislators that the union is unalterably opposed to any form of the Emergency Budget Act.

Fixing a bad bill

Union works to amend Tollway privatization bill

A SENATE COMMITTEE has sent **SB 3482/HB 4623** to the floor. It could radically alter road planning and building in Illinois, permitting private entities to design, construct and operate toll roads. It originally would have allowed for the privatization of existing toll roads in Illinois, including the Illinois Tollway Authority.

AFSCME strongly opposed the bill because of the threat it posed to the jobs of union members who work at the Tollway. The Illinois AFL-CIO joined in helping to stall the measure's progress in order to ensure that union members' interests were protected.

Following extensive negotiations, Council 31 lobbyists were successful in adding language to the bill that will exempt all existing tollway facilities and operations from any form of privatization. In addition, the labor movement was able to get language into the bill that will ensure that if a new road is built and operated by a private vendor, the rights of the employees to form a union will be strengthened.

The legislation requires that the employer must remain neutral if workers start an organizing drive. And when a majority of workers sign cards for a given union, the employer must recognize that union as the official bargaining representative. Any private toll road operator must also have a wage and benefit package comparable to what current Tollway Authority workers get.

Given the inclusion of these strong labor protections, AFSCME has withdrawn its opposition to the bills and is officially neutral.



Springfield library employees outside the main library.



Storytime protest by Rockford Public Library workers.



Public libraries — a vital

If you live in a town with a public library — most of us do — take a moment to reflect what it means to your community.

It's probably somewhere in the main business area, a recognizable building — new in some communities, 100 years old or more in others. When you go in, it's quiet in there, but not silent. You'll likely find a lively mixture of people, young and old, well dressed or less so, tapping on computers, sitting at tables scribbling notes, ranging the stacks or lounging to read in soft chairs.

"Our nation's public libraries should be treated as national treasures," wrote blogger Christina Gagnier in April as a preview to National Library Week. "They are places of first discoveries, first words read, first experiences and the place where the 'light bulb' goes on for children and adults alike when it comes to literature, math and the sciences."

National trend reflected in Illinois libraries

Most every public service — even third-rail functions like police and fire protection and primary and secondary education — are under pressure.

As the ongoing economic crisis and, in Illinois, the state's concurrent but only partially related budget crunch ripple endlessly outward, every level of government is feeling the pinch. Libraries, many functioning in special districts, separated from municipal government, have been somewhat insulated from past budget crises, but this time is different.

Nor is the problem isolated to the Land of Lincoln.

A survey found that in 2009 "while library use soared, a majority of states reported cuts in state funding to public libraries and to the state library agencies that support libraries and statewide library programs," according to the library association.

Following are some AFSCME members' observations about what those cuts mean for the libraries where they work.

Layoffs, branch closings in Springfield

"The economy has hit us hard," said Louis Parker, who works for the city of Springfield's Lincoln Library. "The library is going downward, with 10 layoffs last year. We postponed two more by taking furloughs."

One of the layoffs was an outreach librarian, who used to go to hospitals, senior high rises, nursing homes and private homes of people who can't get out on their own.

On Feb. 26 the city's two branch libraries closed, making it much harder for many people to access a library.

The main library has shortened its hours during the week and is now closed on Sundays.

"Just plain not being here when the public is used to having us here," is the

biggest difference, said Jenny Holmb staff, it takes longer to get new books

At the same time, Parker said he library services. "There are lines of pe mothers use the children's programs. look for jobs and fill out resumes, but

Usage up in Aurora

"We haven't had any service cuts the Aurora Public Library. "But we k

Meanwhile, "Our numbers of vis entertainment, like DVDs, CDs and g budget relief. DVD checkout is up al dren's and teen programming."

The library is adding computer cl resumes, do Internet searches and use The bookmobile serves schools, shut-

Layoffs, hours cuts plag

After 22 layoffs and five more ret pared down hours at its main location week and for two to four fewer hours

Employees are struggling to get t get on computers or just get into the l

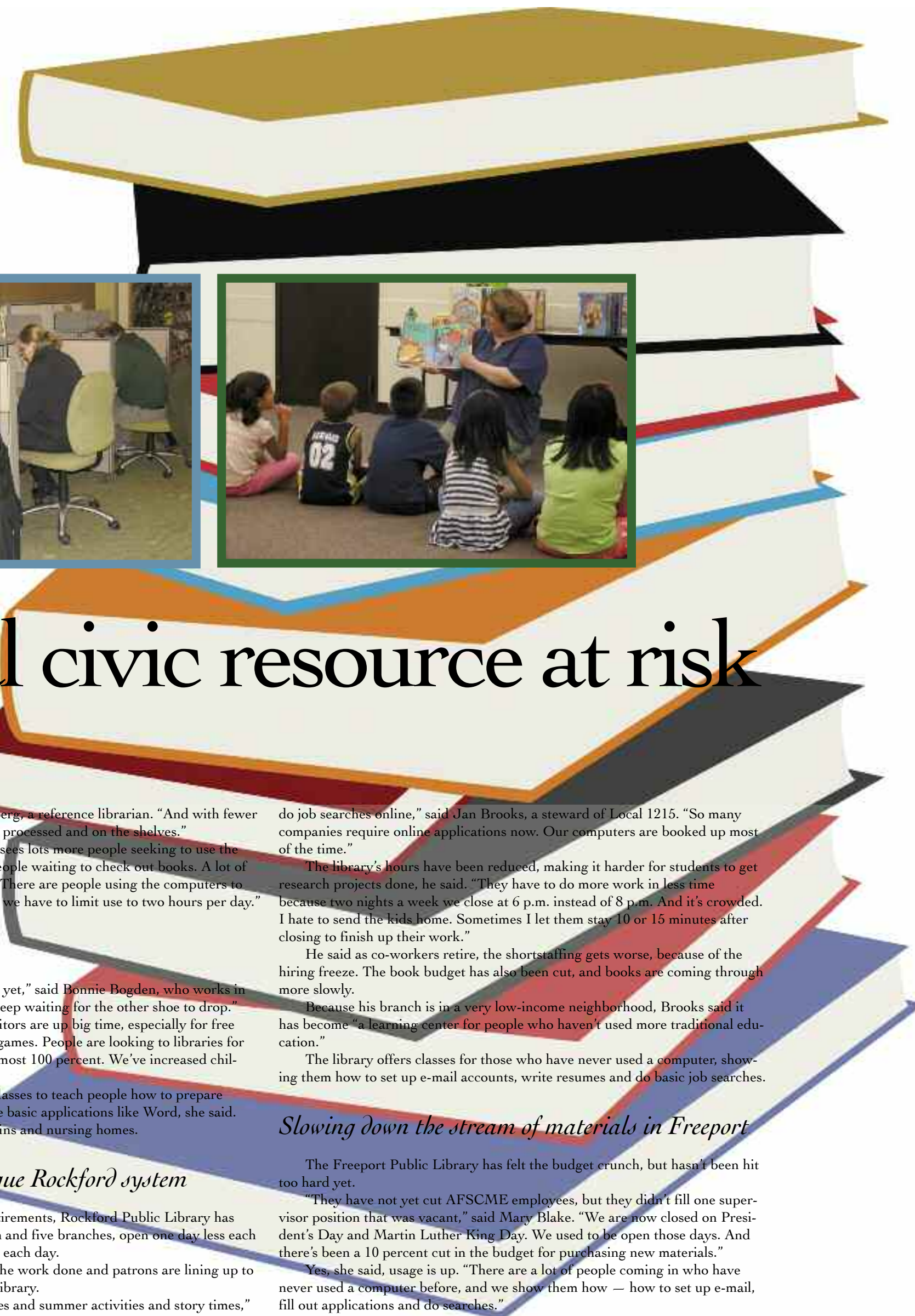
"It has limited pre-school activitie Local 3350 President Karla Janssen s the desks. The rest of the work — and There are carts and carts and carts of can find them. Everybody is working

The patron count is up, she said. puters at her location, and usually a li

In Chicago's inner city:

Reduced hours, pages who reshel is gradually paring down the staff in C system are leading to a significant red

"I work in an inner-city branch a



Public library a civic resource at risk

erg, a reference librarian. "And with fewer processed and on the shelves." sees lots more people seeking to use the people waiting to check out books. A lot of There are people using the computers to we have to limit use to two hours per day."

yet," said Bonnie Bogden, who works in deep waiting for the other shoe to drop." visitors are up big time, especially for free games. People are looking to libraries for most 100 percent. We've increased chil-

lasses to teach people how to prepare the basic applications like Word, she said. ins and nursing homes.

Freeport Rockford system

irements, Rockford Public Library has and five branches, open one day less each each day. the work done and patrons are lining up to library. es and summer activities and story times," said. "Pretty much all we can do is cover there's lots of it – just isn't getting done. books that aren't on the shelves, so no one 150 percent." The circulation is up. There are 30 com- ne to get on them.

Freeport a learning center

ve books laid off, and a hiring freeze that Chicago's large and highly regarded library uction in services. nd there are so many people coming in to

do job searches online," said Jan Brooks, a steward of Local 1215. "So many companies require online applications now. Our computers are booked up most of the time."

The library's hours have been reduced, making it harder for students to get research projects done, he said. "They have to do more work in less time because two nights a week we close at 6 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. And it's crowded. I hate to send the kids home. Sometimes I let them stay 10 or 15 minutes after closing to finish up their work."

He said as co-workers retire, the shortstaffing gets worse, because of the hiring freeze. The book budget has also been cut, and books are coming through more slowly.

Because his branch is in a very low-income neighborhood, Brooks said it has become "a learning center for people who haven't used more traditional education."

The library offers classes for those who have never used a computer, showing them how to set up e-mail accounts, write resumes and do basic job searches.

Freeport Slowing down the stream of materials in Freeport

The Freeport Public Library has felt the budget crunch, but hasn't been hit too hard yet.

"They have not yet cut AFSCME employees, but they didn't fill one supervisor position that was vacant," said Mary Blake. "We are now closed on President's Day and Martin Luther King Day. We used to be open those days. And there's been a 10 percent cut in the budget for purchasing new materials."

Yes, she said, usage is up. "There are a lot of people coming in who have never used a computer before, and we show them how — how to set up e-mail, fill out applications and do searches."

Rockford Fighting back

Library employees are not taking these cuts lying down. In Rockford, workers did public storytime readings to demonstrate what was being lost by cuts.

And in Evanston an ongoing battle gained a six-month reprieve on the city's attempt to close the system's two branch libraries and layoff 16 employees. Local 1891 got support from an active friends of the library group.

Saving libraries is worth the fight, as the American Library Association says: "Libraries are essential sources of the information that is essential to the functioning of a free and democratic society, and librarians serve as guardians of the public's access to that information, and to ideas more generally."

I was there on April 21

AFSCME members tell their stories

Council 31 invited electronic feedback from members who attended the April 21 rally. On these pages are selections from those who submitted comments as well as photos showing some of the 4,000 AFSCME members who made the trip.



Trudy Williams is from Canton, and works for Fulton County. She's the president of Local 3433.

Council 31 had a tent set up near the rally site, so AFSCME members would have a place to assemble and march together.

"I arrived at the tent very early. Slowly, at first, then in waves my Sisters and Brothers filled the tent to overflowing. I could feel, hear and see history being made. As I inched forward to listen to the speakers one man said to me, "Step in closer. We all are one today. Our shirts are just a different color." What I didn't get to say back is - we all serve. We all give more than is asked. We all care. We all fight for fairness. We all search for someone with courage who will stand up, ignore the politics, and simply - so very simply - do the right thing. I was there. I am a witness."

Stephen Williamson from Springfield is a member of Local 1019.

"I believe the only way to fail something is by not doing it. I was not going to miss such an event. By noon the streets were covered in seas of Blue, White, Pink, Red and Green. Banners were flying high in the clear and beautiful day. The people were orderly, organized and had a purpose for being present. About 12:05 the sea of dark green AFSCME 31 started flooding Second St. The numbers and density of workers was incredible. I fell in with my AFSCME 31 crowd and marched. The day ended, and I was very proud of what the workers of Illinois had reassured. That the people, when necessary will stand as ONE."

Rich Root, from Pekin, is a member of Local 1964.

"This was my first but far from the last. It felt good to stand shoulder to shoulder with average people who work hard and deserve some security. Legislators are going to work hard to save their own (behinds). It is no more complicated than that. Let the early-release parolee or the mentally disabled patient come knocking on their front door and they'll call the police ASAP. I just hope the police are slow to respond because so many have lost their jobs. Not until they are affected personally will legislators have the guts to do what they have known should be done a long time ago."



Deanne Vasiloff, from Granite City, is a member of Local 799.

“This day was one that will remain in my memory for a long, long time. Marching around the Capitol with all the other AFSCME sisters and brothers in that sea of green was truly awe-inspiring. The only thing that topped the march was the rally inside the Capitol with all the sisters and brothers uniting in the chanting. I have never participated in something like this rally before - but let me tell you, it could easily become habit-forming!”

Blake Hiland, vice president of Local 3549, is a correctional officer at Jacksonville CC.

He lives in Plainville. “It was the most AWESOME event I have EVER attended. It made me PROUD to be a member of AFSCME! No other union could have pulled it off.”

Mary Robb, from Decatur, is a member of Local 2600.

“This rally was the most inspiring I have ever attended! 15,000 Illinois citizens who all believe strongly in our State and the Legislative actions. I headed my group to Michael Madigan’s office. Even though he wasn’t available for comment or discussion, we all left our written messages about the utmost importance of tax reform and a ‘responsible budget’ which does not include cutting employment and much needed services to the citizens of Illinois.”

John Demmert, from Arlington Heights, is on the executive board of Local 2871 at Clearbrook.

“It was impressive to see all these people joining together for one purpose, and yet we all had our own personal reasons for being there. Different people, different jobs, but the same cause. I just hope that our legislators understand and listen to our message.”

Quizsanda Jackson, from Chicago, works for the city and belongs to Local 1669.

“I felt GREAT being part of history. I did it for the generations to come. This showed there is NO way unions are dead or going anywhere. We’re alive and kicking. The sisterhood and brotherhood were outstanding. I know we made a difference. I’m proud to be Union.”

Denise Eastwood, from Aurora, is a trustee of Local 2283.

“My husband came with even though he is not a member. We are concerned with what is happening to our state. Each and every person there wanted the same thing; to be able to support their families and to protect their loved ones.”



SHORT REPORTS

AFSCME action helps slow march toward DJJ-DCFS merger

GOV. PAT QUINN HAS PROPOSED to merge the Department of Juvenile Justice into the Department of Children and Family Services.

Quinn originally planned to accomplish this by fiat — issuing an executive order to effect the merger. But AFSCME managed to generate sufficient skepticism among legislators that the administration was forced to slow down its timetable.

The executive order Quinn eventually issued establishes a process to plan for the merger, which then will be submitted for legislative approval.

Council 31 has been asked to participate in this process, and has agreed, with reservations.

“Given our firm opposition to the merger, we could of course simply boycott the entire process,” Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said in a memo to DJJ local union presidents. “However, we are very concerned that if we do so, new policies and procedures will be established regarding matters such as security and safety, programming and parole without any input from the union — which it would then be very difficult to challenge or overturn.

“At the same time, in a letter to the governor’s deputy chief of staff, I have

firmly reiterated that AFSCME’s participation in this process should not be construed as in any way diminishing our union’s opposition to the merger plan.”

The governor argues that the reorganization will make it easier to obtain federal funding for services to youth offenders. But AFSCME members don’t believe that merging the two very diverse agencies is needed to access federal dollars. The union has taken the same position as it did three years ago, when DJJ was created.

At the time many legislators alleged that just creating a “stand-alone” department for young offenders would significantly improve rehabilitation efforts — even without any new resources.

AFSCME pointed out that rehabilitation programs in the state’s youth correctional facilities had been cut to the bone — with education, counseling and vocational training all at barely functional levels. The union argued that without the resources to restore those services, no real progress could be made.

No new resources were provided, and three years later, no real progress has been made. So now these same forces don’t want the department to “stand alone” anymore, but instead would waste more time, effort and sparse resources on yet another reorganization, this time

merging into DCFS.

Thus far, neither agency has been able to provide any solid information as to how this transition would occur.



Bernice Grau

Workers, community want commitment on hospitals’ future

MORE THAN 10,000 PEOPLE IN the communities surrounding Resurrection Health Care’s West Suburban Medical Center and Westlake Hospital have signed a petition urging Attorney General Lisa Madigan to review the pending sale of both hospitals to Vanguard Health Systems, a for-profit health care corporation.

The Attorney General must review the sale because it involves a for-profit corporation taking over nonprofit hospitals.

The petition also seeks Madigan’s help in making sure the sales agreement meets several conditions, including a requirement that

Vanguard keep the hospitals open for at least 10 years and retain all current employees.

“Thousands of patients and 1,700 employees depend on West Suburban,” said Bernice Grau, a housekeeper at West Suburban, in testimony before the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board. She was among nearly two dozen hospital workers who spoke at the hearing. “We deserve a commitment to effective and caring management for the next 10 years.”

She told the board that, “It is not right that Vanguard will not give employees job security or offer to seriously discuss working conditions and patient care. It is not right that Vanguard will not give patients a commitment to invest in improving the quality of care at the hospital. So we are asking the Board to do what is right and require Vanguard to keep West Suburban open.”

Water next? Daley continues privatizing city’s assets

THE WASHINGTON-BASED NON-profit Food and Water Watch is urging Chicagoans to do what they can to block Mayor Richard Daley’s efforts to privatize the city of Chicago’s water works.

The group has issued a fact sheet that reminds Chicago that “Daley has privatized many public assets — from the Skyway toll road to the

parking meters — selling them off to the highest bidder.” And “Daley says more deals are on his agenda and nothing is off-limits — not even the water system. In fact, the water system could be next.”

Privatization might be good for Daley’s friends in high places, but it won’t be good for residents. The average annual water bill for an Illinois household using 5,000 gallons a month in 2003 was \$240.84 for municipal utilities and \$326.88 for private utilities with 1,000 or more customers.

And privatization didn’t work very well for Atlanta, the group points out: “Within the four years that United Water managed Atlanta’s water system, the company fell behind on maintenance. At one point the company accumulated a backlog of 13,000 service requests, and residents complained of brown water and low pressure.”

Chicago residents will remember what happened when the city turned over parking meters to a private outfit: Quadrupling of parking fees, broken meters and malfunctioning pay-to-park machines.

Similarly, and more ominously, “You lose control of your water supply,” Food and Water notes. “If the city privatizes the water system, you will have little say in many major decisions that affect your water supply and the city’s development. ... Daley’s administration may bargain away city oversight of bulk water sales and service area expansion, which could interfere with Chicago’s economic plans. The private operator may ... allow bottled water companies to bottle, sell and truck away Chicago’s water.”

In other words, somebody will be getting rich, and people who live in Chicago and those who work for the city Water Department will pay the price.

Food and Water Watch defines its mission: “Through research, public and policy-maker education, media, and lobbying, we advocate policies that guarantee safe, wholesome food produced in a humane and sustainable manner and public, rather than private, control of water resources including oceans, rivers, and groundwater.”

Hope School local builds contract campaign

WITH NEGOTIATIONS FOR A NEW contract between Local 2481 and Hope School kicking off, the union held a week of events in March that included a sticker day, AFSCME T-shirt day and a poster contest, in which different units competed to design the best poster supporting the bargaining team.

The final event took place in the street on the first day of bargaining, when the local brought in an ice cream truck and members were able to go out and get a treat at lunch time.

“We had a spirit week,” said Yolanda Sims, the local union president. “Our theme was ‘Don’t leave negotiations up to chance.’ We wanted to let management know that all our members knew we were at the table, were watching and were in support of the union.”

Organizing the events was fairly easy for a local that has built effective member action teams — with a MAT leader for every work site. The MATs help distribute the local’s newsletter, build turnout for membership meetings and other events



The ice cream truck played its music for Local 2481

and, in the run-up to bargaining, circulated surveys to get members’ input on contract issues.

“It’s something we’ve been working on for a long time, and we keep it updated,” Sims said of the MATs. “We always have to be working on them because there is a high turnover in our agency.”

Sims said management started out thinking “they could get over on us at the beginning. We had to put a stop to that.”

It helped to have the members involved, she said. Local leaders decided to build interest in the bargaining early.

“Usually it starts quietly, but our spirit week got people excited,” she said. “We are getting more people at union meetings, because they want to keep abreast of what’s going on. It alerts management that the membership is ready to do what it takes to move negotiations along.”

Springfield-based Hope School is a state-funded non-profit agency that provides developmental disability services.



AFSCME provides safety training in Lombard

BECAUSE PUBLIC WORKS employees' jobs are often in the streets of their cities and villages, they are the first public workers on the scene when an emergency hits.

If a tornado or storm pulls down trees and utility lines, if a hazardous substance spills from a truck or train, if a fire hydrant is hit by a vehicle, or any number of other emergencies, "calls go out to public works first," said Shaun Stillwell, president of Local 89 in the village of Lombard.

To better prepare themselves, the local and the village have taken advantage of AFSCME International's safety training program for first responders.

"We remove trees so fire trucks can get through," Stillwell explained. "Our buildings can provide staging areas for mutual aid from other towns. We close streets and help police and firefighters with traffic control. We're the first ones there if we have a hazardous material spill."

As part of the class, the workers reviewed the placards that trains and trucks put on tanks to identify the material inside.

Provided by the AFSCME Training and Education Institute, a nonprofit that is partially funded by a grant from the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences, the one-day session helps prepare workers for this role.

"It doesn't cost the village anything, but it's a plus for them and for us," Stillwell said. "It helps create a good relationship. And it's important to us that AFSCME is looking out for us. The trainer understands what we do and how it all works."

For a list of the institute's training programs, go to www.afscme.org/issues/5877.cfm.

Obama administration seeks to cut back on privatization

PRIVATIZATION EFFORTS DURING the Bush administration "wasted millions of taxpayer dollars," said Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union.

She and other federal employee union leaders are welcoming the Obama administration's efforts to do something about it.

There is "a growing appetite in Washington to rein in wasteful government spending and improve oversight of multimillion-dollar contracts," according to a Washington Post article. "The White House has proposed to cut \$40 billion in high-risk and noncompetitive contracts by the end of fiscal 2011 and to hire more government workers to manage large contracts."

The administration is moving to "clarify the defini-

tion of 'inherently governmental functions,' or jobs that should be performed by government workers instead of private contractors," according to the Post. "Such tasks are so directly tied to the public interest that they must be done by government workers."

They include setting agency policy, hiring workers, awarding contracts and jobs like inspectors at the Labor Department or airport security screeners with the Department of Homeland Security.

"But the guidelines also seek to define tasks that could be performed by either private- or public-sector workers, such as providing technical assistance to government officials evaluating contracts or managing an agency's information-technology infrastructure," the Post said.

Federal workers and their unions will be participating in the process of formulating the guidelines.

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

One-year wage package in Carmi

CITY OF CARMI EMPLOYEES HAVE good contract language and wanted to keep it as they went into negotiations. So they skipped a full round of bargaining, rolling over the existing contract with a 1.75 percent wage increase and no other changes.

"We did the same thing last year because it was an outgoing administration," Local 3775 President Kurt Cleveland said. "Then the bad economy hit and we wanted to give the new administration a chance to get the finances adjusted. So we didn't mess with anything but wages. Next year we want to negotiate the full contract and get into language."

Staff representative Ty Petersen led the local's bargaining team, with Cleveland, Frank Elliot, Matt Gilpin and Mike Buckman.

Significant wage increases in Williamson County

WILLIAMSON COUNTY WORKERS bucked a nationwide trend toward wage stagnation and reached a settlement that will

raise wages by 17.5 percent over the term of a three-year contract. Local 3369 was also successful in adding two additional holidays: the employee's birthday and either Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve.

"We didn't make a lot of changes this time," said negotiating committee member Angie Jeters. "It went pretty quickly."

Staff representative Kevan Plumlee led the negotiating committee, with Jeters, Brenda Dale and Rhonda Murphy.

New Randolph County workers choose AFSCME

WHEN RANDOLPH COUNTY added three courthouse security officers to the payroll, the new employees looked around and saw that other workers belonged to AFSCME and had a union contract.

"I thought it would be good to have the same power behind us as the deputies have," said Jeremy Mueller, one of the new employees.

He talked to his co-workers and they signed cards for AFSCME representation. Council 31 staff representative Steve Joiner negotiated an agreement with manage-

ment that moved the group under the existing contract covering the sheriff's deputies. They got all the same benefits, including a 4.7 percent wage increase effective Dec. 1, 2009.

"This is something we want to do in all our locals," Council 31 organizing director Tracey Abman said. "If there are unrepresented employees where you work, let us know. We want them to be part of our union. It will help them, it will help you and it will help our union."

AFSCME helps Southern Illinois health department

A TWO-YEAR CONTRACT BETWEEN Local 947 and the Southern Seven Health Department will raise wages 2 percent each year, and included a one-time payment of 3 percent of the annual salary.

The health department turned to AFSCME to help it get the money owed to it by the state, and the union was able to expedite the payment.

"We have a good relationship," staff representative Kevan Plumlee said. "Management made a wage offer and we decided it was fair."

CHECK OUT COUNCIL 31'S NEWLY DESIGNED WEB SITE FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS ON YOUR UNION.

www.afscme31.org



RETIREE NOTES

AFSCME fights health care cost increases

INTENSIVE LOBBYING BY AFSCME Chapter 31 is sowing widespread doubts among legislators about Gov. Quinn's plan to dramatically increase the cost of health care for state and university retirees. Quinn's plan would require retirees to pay a premium of as much as \$54 per month if they are currently on Medicare and as much as \$500 per month if they are not yet eligible for Medicare.

AFSCME retiree activists from across the state have been meeting with their legislators in district meetings and traveling to Springfield to make clear how burdensome the proposed increases would be.

"So many retirees would be absolutely devastated by an increase in health care costs of up to \$500 per month for an individual plan," said Jeff Greenberg, member of Springfield Sub-chapter 86. "Many of us may end up losing the small pensions we have and paying the state just to keep the insurance. This was the first time I have ever lobbied legislators face to face. I believe that all of our visits and phone call have made an impact on legislators. I just hope they don't give the

governor new powers to run over retirees."

He is referring to the proposal that Gov. Pat Quinn is floating called an Emergency Budget Act that would give him authority to make some unilateral budget cuts for one year, with an eye toward slashing \$400 million from the state budget, according to Quinn's budget director.

AFSCME has been leading the fight against the Emergency Budget Act because it is widely rumored that Quinn wants to use it to make the cuts to retiree health benefits that the General Assembly is not willing to support.

Health care reform benefits seniors

THE HISTORIC HEALTH INSURANCE reform law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed by President Barack Obama on March 23, makes health care coverage affordable for 31 million Americans who are currently uninsured. The act also introduces an array of cost-containment measures and insurance reforms that will help preserve coverage for Americans who now have it.

The law has many benefits for seniors because it strength-



ens Medicare and it will help preserve employer coverage for retirees, particularly those who retire early. In fact, older Americans are among the act's chief beneficiaries.

"Misleading news reports, originating with opponents of health reform, have created a lot of misunderstandings, but the truth is, most Americans will keep on getting the same benefits they are used to, whether they come from Medicare, employers or Medicaid," Chapter 31 coordinator Maria Britton said. "The good news is that cost-saving features of the new law will help ensure that we can always count on our coverage, and that more Americans will have a right to the same kind of affordable insurance that we enjoy."

Not a penny of Medicare taxes or trust funds will be used for health care reform and there will be no cuts in guaranteed Medicare benefits.

Beginning immediately, the following will occur:

- The donut hole in Medicare Part D prescription

drug coverage will start to close, with a \$250 rebate in 2010 to anyone who falls into the reimbursement gap. Beginning in 2011, those in the donut hole will get a 50 percent discount on name-brand drugs, and in 2020 the Part D donut hole will be eliminated.

- Preventive care services such as annual check-ups and cancer screenings will be free for those on Medicare.
- Employers who continue coverage for early retirees will get help from a newly created \$5 billion federal re-insurance program for employer plans that cover retirees age 55 to 64.

As the law phases in, there will be incentives to create voluntary, employment-based programs that provide cash benefits for participants who need long-term care services in their homes.

Investments will also be made in chronic disease management.

There will be savings from Medicare, however, that will strengthen the program by adding nearly a decade of solvency to the trust funds. The savings will come from cutting the big subsidies to private insurance plans in the Medicare Advantage program and by fighting waste, fraud and abuse.

The overpayments to Medicare Advantage plans began in the Bush Administration as a way to move Medicare toward privatization, and they've led to record profits for insurance companies. Phasing out the subsidies will save Medicare \$120 billion over 10 years. Also, since \$3 out of every senior's Part B premium helps pay for the subsidies, the reduced subsidies will mean lower premiums for

all beneficiaries.

Without the lower subsidies, federal outlays for private MA plans will be more in line with costs under regular Medicare. But the act protects MA-plan participants by barring plans from charging them co-payments that are any higher than Medicare's for the same services. It also requires plans to spend at least 85 percent of their government payments on actual health care benefits; they can no longer use that money for their administrative costs, advertising and profits.

DuPage County gets a charter

AFTER NEARLY A YEAR'S WORK BY the organizing committee, 700 AFSCME retirees who live in DuPage County now have their own sub-chapter.

"Its time that union retirees in DuPage County have a voice in the happenings of our community and of our state," said Kim Johnson, the newly elected president of Sub-chapter 68. "Many of us were there when the union was first begun, and we are still here and still fighting."

The group meets on the first Thursday of every month at 1 p.m. at the Old Country Buffet in Lombard.

"I am very happy with the numbers of retirees that have come out to participate in meetings and have been told that many were quite surprised at the array of different speakers and topics that we cover," Johnson said. "One key reason for retirees to take part is that public-sector benefits have continued to be attacked and information and unity are the factors that will allow us to get the power we need to beat back the attacks."

Retirees stay on front lines in Resurrection campaign

MEMBERS OF CHICAGO SUB-chapter 60 have been playing a key role in Friends of HEART, the group supporting the Resurrection Health Care employees who are working to form a union in the eight-hospital Chicago-area chain.

"We retirees became involved in the organizing campaign at Resurrection about five years ago because of the serious problems that the employees at the hospital were having," said Georgean Simmons, a Chicago sub-chapter executive board member. Simmons is one of many AFSCME retirees from Cook County that have joined in efforts to improve the jobs and working conditions of Resurrection employees and improve health care in the Chicago region.

"Some of those employees have been working for 20 or 30 years without decent pension benefits," Simmons said. "If any of them bring up unionizing they are punished in some way. Those of us who have good retirement benefits must not only work to protect ourselves, but also to help others who work their whole lives to be able to retire with dignity."

Retirees participating in Friends of HEART have built great friendships while also having some fun in actions targeting the corporate management.

"We help show the union difference to Resurrection employees and express our solidarity with them, because we know how to fight for a strong union," Simmons said.



Retirees Stand Up for Fairness

Hundreds of retirees played an important role in Responsible Budget Coalition events held in April. The coalition is aiming to gain legislators' support for House Bill 174, legislation that would address the state's huge budget deficit by bringing in new revenues.

"Our state needs new revenues to uphold its commitments to retirees to provide affordable health care," Chapter 31 President Virginia Yates said. "We cannot afford to shoulder high costs because the state refuses to pass a responsible budget."

With 15,000 RBC supporters marching on the Capitol, AFSCME Retirees were on the inside. When they delivered the message during a House session by silently standing and holding signs in support of a responsible budget, they were ejected from the gallery.

"These retirees did not act disruptively," Yates said. "They stood so legislators would have to see the faces of the people who worked so many years and who are feeling the impact of the many cuts in services, the pushing back of payments to providers and the proposed cuts in the subsidy for health insurance."

Chapter 31 retirees also joined with the AARP and the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans in a series of Senior Lobby Days during March and April which focused on opposing the increases to state and university health care costs, as well as on Gov. Quinn's plans to slash in-home care for seniors.



DHS offices on Chicago's south side pose serious dangers

It's a sorry indication of the state's lack of interest in helping its neediest citizens that many of the Department of Human Services offices that serve them have deteriorated to the point of disintegration.

SOME OF THE WORST EXAMPLES CAN BE FOUND ON CHICAGO'S SOUTH SIDE WHERE LOCAL 2806 represents employees who serve community residents who need Medicaid, Food Stamps and other services.

Those caseworkers and other staff now find themselves forced to deal with violence in the workplace and in the surrounding community, drug dealers operating in the neighborhood or even in the offices and substandard working conditions in the buildings where state offices are located.

The local has been pressing the state to address these issues for many months, in meetings with management, by filing grievances and by filing complaints with the state Labor Department.

"There's a lot of crime in the neighborhood where one of our offices is located," Local 2806 President Marion Murphy said. "And it's getting worse. It's not safe to come in or out of the office," for staff or for the people seeking services. "They need to ensure our safety and the department has not."

The local has called in the area's state representative and the city alderman who repre-

sents the neighborhood where the office is located.

"They promised us more police and the state assigned an additional guard for the parking lot," Murphy said. "Employees' cars were being vandalized."

Labor Department inspectors keep pressure on

IN ANOTHER OFFICE WHERE THE number of security guards had been cut, one guard was attacked inside the building.

"Customers stand outside in line for over an hour and then come inside and stand some more," she explained. "They can end up standing in line for three or four hours."

The local has worked with management on changing the

intake system, so people get to take numbers and can sit in the waiting room, she said.

That decreases the amount of anger that builds up, and cuts the potential for violence. But people still have to wait for long periods because the offices are understaffed, Murphy said.

Many of the inner-city offices are in poorly maintained buildings, that have old carpeting and leaking roofs, she added. Mold is a big problem, and landlords who don't

get paid on time by the state or don't know if their leases will be renewed are reluctant to spend money on repairs.

The local has called in state health and safety inspectors.

"I walked through six offices with the inspector and every one had problems," Murphy said.

Progress comes slowly, with grievances and safety complaints moving slowly. But persistence helps.

In a sign that their actions are having an impact, DHS Secretary Michelle Sadler has reached out to Council 31 to ask for a cooperative effort to seek to improve conditions in the offices.

Marion Murphy is hoping those efforts are sincere.

"Sometimes they do quick fixes that don't help for very long," she said. "We just have to keep on them."

Feds will help public employees gain safer workplaces

Public employees in Illinois at every level of government will now have better access to the basic health and safety protections afforded to private-sector employees.

The federal Occupational Health and Safety Act does not cover public employees, though in Illinois the state Department of Labor has been given the authority to enforce OSHA regulations in state and local government workplaces.

That enforcement has historically been left to understaffed and sometimes under-trained inspectors. Now DOL has applied for and gained status as an OSHA State Plan. That will mean new federal resources to:

- Hire more enforcement staff to increase the frequency

and number of inspections of public-sector workplaces;

- Help reduce the number of work-related injuries and fatalities, particularly in high-risk professions such as transportation, firefighting, and law enforcement; and
- Increase awareness of health and safety issues in the workplace among public employees and employers.

The new federal dollars will boost the efforts of AFSCME members struggling to improve the health and safety at their workplaces.

Here's how to file a complaint

ILLINOIS PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ARE covered by a state-operated federally approved state plan to ensure workplace health

and safety. Under this plan employers must, in most cases, comply with federal OSHA regulations.

The law is administered by the state Department of Labor Division of Safety Inspection and Education.

Any employee or representative of employees who believes that a violation of a safety or health standard exists that threatens physical harm, or that an imminent danger exists, may request an inspection by giving written notice to DOL. If the department finds reasonable grounds to believe that such violation or danger exists, it will make a special inspection as soon as practicable. If DOL determines there are no reasonable grounds to believe that a violation or

danger exists, it must notify the employees or representative of the employees in writing. Upon request of the person giving notice, his or her name will not appear on the copy of the complaint form that is provided to the employer at the time of the inspection.

You can download a safety complaint form at: <http://www.state.il.us/agency/idol/forms/safetyforms.htm>

You can also get a form by writing or calling the nearest DOL office: State of Illinois Building, 160 N. LaSalle, Ste. C-1300, Chicago 60601, 312-793-7308; 2309 West Main Street, Marion 62959, 618-993-7090; or One West Old State Capitol Plaza, Room 300, Springfield 62701, 217-782-9386.

Benefit choice

Continued from page 6

out-of-pocket maximum for the Quality Care Health Plan. Behavioral health services will no longer be subject to separate co-payments, number of visit limitations, in-patient hospital limits, or other limitations stricter than those applied to other medical benefits.

Covered services that meet the plan administrator's medical-necessity criteria will be covered on the same basis as medical services. Behavioral-health services are provided in each health plan through specialty providers. Members should consult with their health plan to access these benefits.

The AFSCME Personal Support Program is also available to provide guidance to state bargaining unit members and covered dependents regarding mental-health treatment options. PSP can be reached at 1-800-647-8776.

'Save Our State!'

Continued from page 3

AFSCME members began this year's push on Jan. 7 when hundreds of phone calls went to state representatives from every part of Illinois.

Then they joined a throng of thousands at the state Capitol on Feb. 17, as the coalition mobilized its forces to press for immediate action on revenue-raising legislation.

Since then, RBC members have met with legislators in a series of in-district meetings — town hall sessions with groups of local legislators and roundtables with individual legislators.

organizations in a massive demonstration of support for the new revenues desperately needed to get Illinois out of its fiscal quagmire.

To follow up, AFSCME members took their turn on April 30 in a two-week RBC call-in campaign when each day a different organization

was responsible for phoning legislators to keep the pressure on.

The coalition is also taking its message directly to voters with television, billboards and radio ads, as well as an

interactive website (www.abetterillinois.com) and has garnered extensive coverage in Illinois media on the state budget crisis and the need to reform the tax structure.



Then came April 21, with the coalition mobilizing thousands upon thousands of union members, teachers, students, the AARP, Lutheran Social Services, Action for Children and dozens of other



Wall Street broke it; they should pay to fix it

THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE NATION'S SIX LARGEST BANKS, THE GUYS WHO NEARLY GAMBLED AWAY THE ENTIRE U.S. ECONOMY, TO FACE AN ACCOUNTING FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

That's the message the AFL-CIO and many other groups brought directly to the bankers' doors in Chicago and all around the country with their "Make Wall Street Pay" campaign.

At more than 200 events outside branches of the "Big 6" banks — Bank of America, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, Morgan Stanley and Wells Fargo/Wachovia — the labor federation is saying: Big Wall Street banks wrecked the American economy and killed American jobs — then took \$700 billion in taxpayer bailouts, choked off credit, handed out massive executive bonuses and hired an army of lobbyists to fight financial reform.

Now the banks should be forced to:

- Stop predatory and discriminatory lending;
- Keep families in their homes;
- Invest to rebuild communities and create new jobs; and
- Stop lobbying to kill financial reform.

"Big Banks tanked our economy and took our money when they needed a bailout," AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka said. "Now they're thumbing their noses at our communities but making billions in profits. It's time they pay up."

The Senate is now considering a financial reform measure that would rein in the worst abuses of these high-stakes gamblers and provide better regulation and more oversight. In committee hearing, executives of Goldman Sachs, which is being investigated for fraud because it was selling its clients products while secretly betting they would lose big money, enraged senators and created a media storm by its arrogant assertion that this ripoff was all part of earning an honest day's living.

Among other provisions to regulate such behavior, the bill, which is backed by the Obama administration, would create a Consumer Financial Protection Agency.

'One mission' for CFPB

That agency "will have just one mission: to look out for the financial interests of ordinary Americans," President Barack Obama said. "It will be charged with setting clear rules of the road for consumers and banks, and it will be able to enforce these rules across the board."

"This agency will have the power to make certain that consumers get information that is clear and concise — in plain language — so they can compare products and know exactly what they're getting into. It will ensure that banks and other firms cannot hide behind those ridiculously confusing contracts — pages of fine print that no one can figure out. It will have the ability to enforce and build on the credit card reforms we passed earlier this year, so that consumers aren't hit with unfair rate hikes, penalties, or hidden charges. It will require brokers to look out for the interests of families if they give advice about mortgages. And it will ensure transparency and fair-dealing for other financial products, like bank overdraft services and payday loans."

Gambling with our lives

Americans for Financial Reform — a coalition of organizations including AFSCME, the AFL-CIO and many other unions and public interest groups — explains on its website how the financial meltdown happened, and why it led to the current Great Recession.

"Complex financial products like derivatives are traded in secret instead of in an open market like the stock market, and are not subject to regulation. Big Wall Street banks gambled in these markets: they made tens of billions when times were good, and then when the gambles went wrong it threatened our whole economy, and we all paid trillions to bail them out."

"Wall Street traders and CEOs don't want any reform of derivatives and other complex financial products because unregulated trade has meant billions in profits and bonuses in their pockets. They have been playing Russian roulette with our money, and we're the ones who lose."

Despite the near universal outrage at the big banks' behavior, Senate Republicans who have collected millions in campaign contributions from Wall Street have been doing everything they can to block meaningful reform measures. Their unanimous voting bloc kept the Senate from debating the issue for several days, before Democrats threatened to hold round-the-clock sessions.

As On the Move went to press, debate on the Senate floor had begun, but a Republican filibuster was still possible on any effort to end debate and bring a real reform bill to a vote.