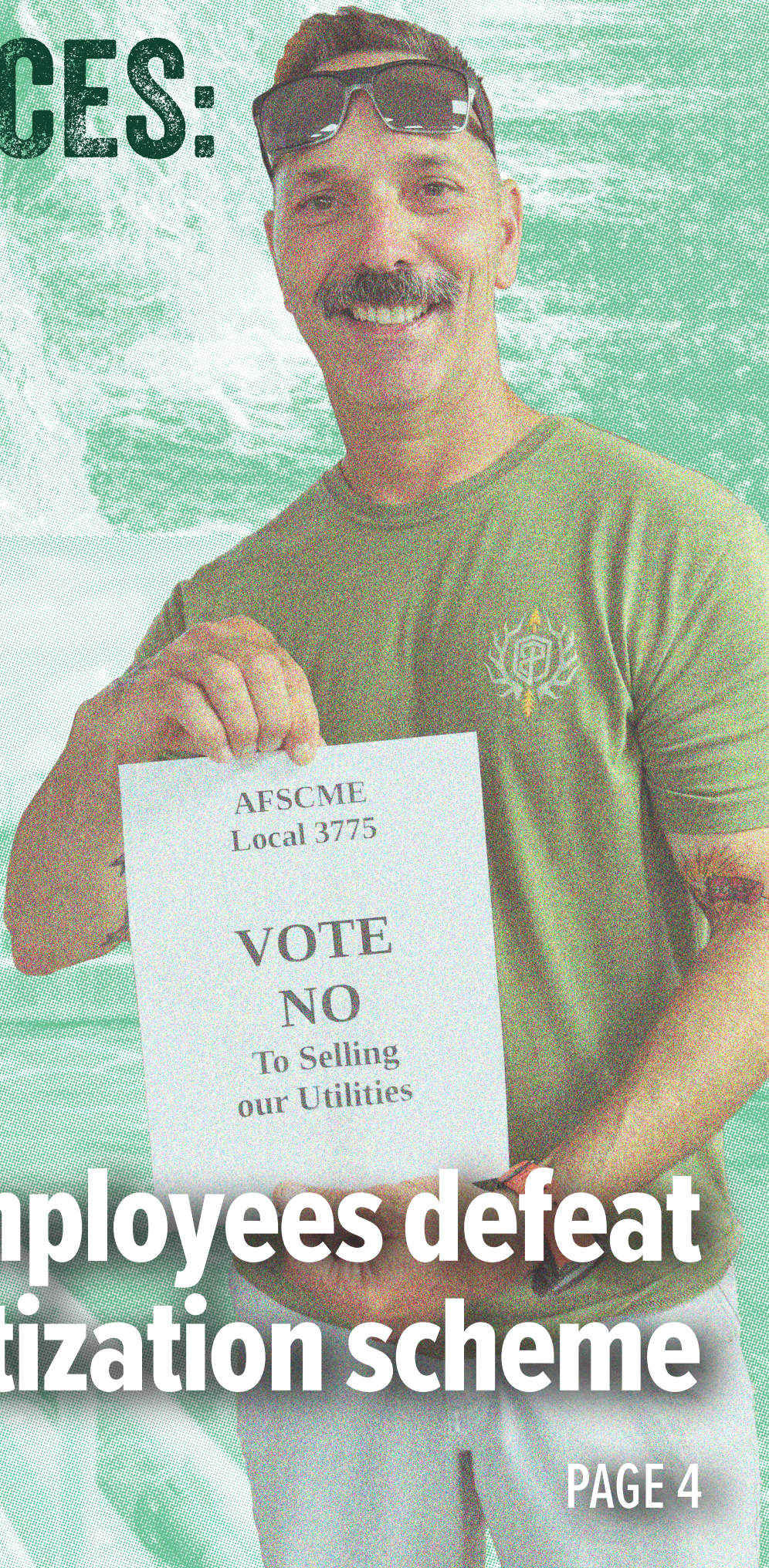


ON THE MOVE

**PUBLIC SERVICES:
NOT
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SALE**



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205 N. Michigan Ave.
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BY ROBERTA LYNCH

WE CAN
TAKE ACTION
TOGETHER
TO STAND
UP FOR
OURSELVES.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Politics truly does matter—a lot

I hear it more and more these days: A pox on both their houses. Many folks say they’re fed up with politicians, too many of whom promise one thing and do another.

There’s no doubt that politicians of both parties have let us down at one time or another. But honestly, we can’t paint them all with the same brush. Though few and far between, there have been Republican elected officials who stood up for working families. In fact, it was Republican Gov. Jim Thompson who signed into law legislation guaranteeing collective bargaining rights for public employees.

Unfortunately, we’ve now entered an era where Donald Trump exercises near-total control over Republican politicians—and the results have been truly alarming. After countless campaign promises to fix the economy, President Trump has ended up slashing funding for public services, busting federal unions, and handing out tax breaks to billionaires. And all that while doing very little to improve the financial security of working Americans.

The rest of us still have to worry about the cost of putting gas in our cars, buying our groceries, educating our children, making our rent or mortgage payments—the list goes on. Because AFSCME members have a union, most of us are able to count on annual raises that come close to keeping up with inflation. But the great majority of Americans don’t have a union (even though polls show they wish they did). And some of them have gone years without any pay increase at all.

Certainly, Democrats don’t always get it right. Many of us can remember when then-Gov. Pat Quinn withheld a negotiated pay increase from AFSCME members (which we eventually got back!).

And now we find another Democratic governor, J.B. Pritzker, who worked constructively with AFSCME members to negotiate our cur-

rent state collective bargaining agreement, suddenly acting to drastically downsize one of southern Illinois’ only care centers for individuals with disabilities and laying off some 250 AFSCME members (which we’re determined to stop!).

In between those two Democrats, though, we had Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner and it was plain for all to see that there *is* a difference—a very big one. Rauner worked tirelessly to wipe out public sector unions entirely—beginning with ours. He stalled at the bargaining table, trying to force us out on strike while he plotted to bring in strikebreakers (in the end, we took him out!).

AFSCME has a long and solid record: When Republicans stand with us, they can win our support. When Democrats abandon us, we’ll leave them too.

But in today’s political landscape, there’s really no equivalency. And this was driven home to me most powerfully during our recent PEOPLE Conference to determine endorsements for the Nov. 3 general election.

The actions we take in legislative races are based most fundamentally on voting records—how politicians actually voted on issues of importance to AFSCME members.

Here’s what we found: 83% of Democrats in the Illinois House of Representatives have a 100% AFSCME voting record and 70% in the Senate. Republicans? Only a handful of them in the statehouse had at least a 64% voting record—and our union endorsed a number of those.

In the U.S. Congress, Republicans never got higher than a 13% AFSCME voting record—and several had 0%. They have become monolithic in their votes that hurt working people.

Just as important as voting records is who we can count on when the chips are down. And we saw that recently too.

When members of AFSCME Local 1110 were on strike at Illinois State University earlier this year, Sens. Elgie Sims and Dave Koehler, along with Rep. Sharon Chung (Democrats all), showed up big time. They didn’t just talk the talk, they walked the walk—in one instance, very literally: Sen. Koehler and Rep. Chung actually walked with Local 1110 leader Chuck Carver right into the office of the university president to present petitions of support for the strikers with some 7,000 signatures. And Sen. Sims, a graduate of ISU, personally pressed the university president and trustees.

So, yes I know, it’s particularly galling when elected officials who call themselves our “friends” let us down—and it’s particularly important to remember that our only true “friends” are those who steadily stand with us.

That’s why the delegates to the PEOPLE Conference declined to make any endorsement in the governor’s race but instead pointed out the numerous instances in which Republican Darren Bailey has stood against the interests of AFSCME members.

In the end, this much is clear: The current administration in Washington, D.C. has been the true “friend” of the billionaire class—not working people. Every day they are doing far more damage to our families and our futures than we can fully grasp. Every day they remain in power, the prospects for our jobs and our communities get bleaker.

So we’ve got a clear choice before us now: We can continue to gripe about both parties and become stuck in place. Or we can take action together to stand up for ourselves and to fight to shift some of that power our way, to make our state and our country fairer, to make our union stronger, and to make our prospects far, far better. 



ON THE MOVE

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Larry Brown

Wealth inequality in US reaches all-time high

The rich have more than ever before—and they’re spending it to get even more

The share of the nation’s wealth held by the richest Americans has hit a new record. The top 1% now controls roughly 31.6% of all U.S. household wealth—the highest percentage in history.

The wealth of today’s billionaires even eclipses that of the robber barons of the early 1900s. Today’s top 0.00001% holds four times as much wealth as the same cohort did during America’s early industrial days.

And while the ultra-rich thrive, working people are falling behind on every front that matters—wages, housing, health care, retirement—as inflation steadily outpaces earnings.

Out of the inequality of the early 20th century, the American labor movement was born. To fight today’s inequality, union members will again be at the forefront.

Who has the power?

A June YouGov poll asked Americans to rate how much power 40 different groups hold in society—from political factions to demographic groups to economic classes like CEOs and workers.

Billionaires came out on top by every measure: 81% of Americans say billionaires wield a lot of economic power and 75% say the same of their political power—the highest ratings of any group surveyed. CEOs weren’t far behind.

Workers, meanwhile, ranked near the bottom of the list for how much power people believe they actually have.

But ask Americans who should have more power, and the answer flips. Workers topped that list, with 64% of Americans saying working people deserve more power than they currently hold. Meanwhile, 62% said billionaires should have less power.

The message from the average American is clear: Concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few billionaires does not make for a healthy economy—or a healthy democracy.

Billionaires are buying elections

That imbalance of power is crashing into political life as well—billionaires are actively using their fortunes to tilt the playing field further in their own favor.

The 2026 primary cycle has already broken records. The Texas Republican Senate primary became the most expensive Senate primary in American history, with advertising spending topping \$120 million.

A single U.S. House primary in Kentucky drew more



Council 31 members call out the billionaire tax breaks passed under the “Big, Beautiful Bill” at an August 2025 press event.

than \$34 million in outside spending, much of it from billionaires with no connection to the district. A group of Silicon Valley billionaires raised over \$100 million just to fight a proposed California state tax on their own wealth.

This is money working people don’t have—and it’s being used to influence elections in favor of politicians who will serve the interests of corporations and the mega-rich.

The money keeps flowing up

Every measure tells the same story: Working Americans’ money are losing ground while the rich are capturing a bigger share of the pie than ever.

Nowhere is that upward drift more obvious than in President Trump’s signature tax and budget legislation, the so-called “Big, Beautiful Bill.”

The law delivers trillions of dollars in tax cuts weighted toward the richest Americans, even as it cuts

funding for public services and safety-net programs—many of which are staffed by AFSCME members.

According to a report from the Illinois Economic Policy Institute, the Trump administration’s series of project cancellations, funding cuts, mass firings of federal employees, and cuts to funding for crucial public services will shrink Illinois’ economy by \$10 billion per year and result in the loss of 86,000 jobs.

The report also finds that these program cuts will cause hundreds of thousands of Illinois residents to lose access to health insurance coverage and food assistance, while shrinking state revenues by more than \$1 billion per year.

Building the power to fight back

The clearest path to leveling the playing field between workers and the billionaire class is a stronger labor movement. Unions are one of the only forces in American life that can organize working people’s power to match the billionaires’ money.

That means investing in organizing, building union density and helping unions get the resources they need to take on the richest Americans in history—and win.



AFSCME members have stood opposed to billionaires’ skyrocketing wealth while working people fall behind.

Carmi employees defeat scheme to privatize their work

Members of AFSCME Local 3775 who work for the city of Carmi in Southern Illinois were threatened with the privatization of their city’s wastewater system, but they organized their community and sent the outside vendor packing.

Don Davis is a superintendent at the city’s wastewater treatment plant and secretary of Local 3775. He said employees in the wastewater department were called into a meeting where management sprung the news that they would be selling the service out of nowhere.

“They made it sound like it was a done deal,” Davis said. “I stood up and said, ‘Let me put this in layman’s terms: We’re going to be fired, we’re going to have the reapply for our jobs, and the benefits we’ll get will be nowhere near what we have now.’”

The company, American Water, is expanding into communities throughout the country, and it has a troubling track record.

When American Water buys out a city’s publicly owned water infrastructure, the city gets a fat payout. But workers and residents are left to foot the true costs.

Studies have shown that private control of water treatment facilities results in lower water quality and higher costs for residents. One study looked at 10 Illinois communities that sold their water systems to American Water and found that rates more than doubled over a 10-year period.

Plus, workers are more likely to see pay and benefit reductions under private ownership, and many would likely lose their jobs altogether as the new owners slash costs to maximize profit.

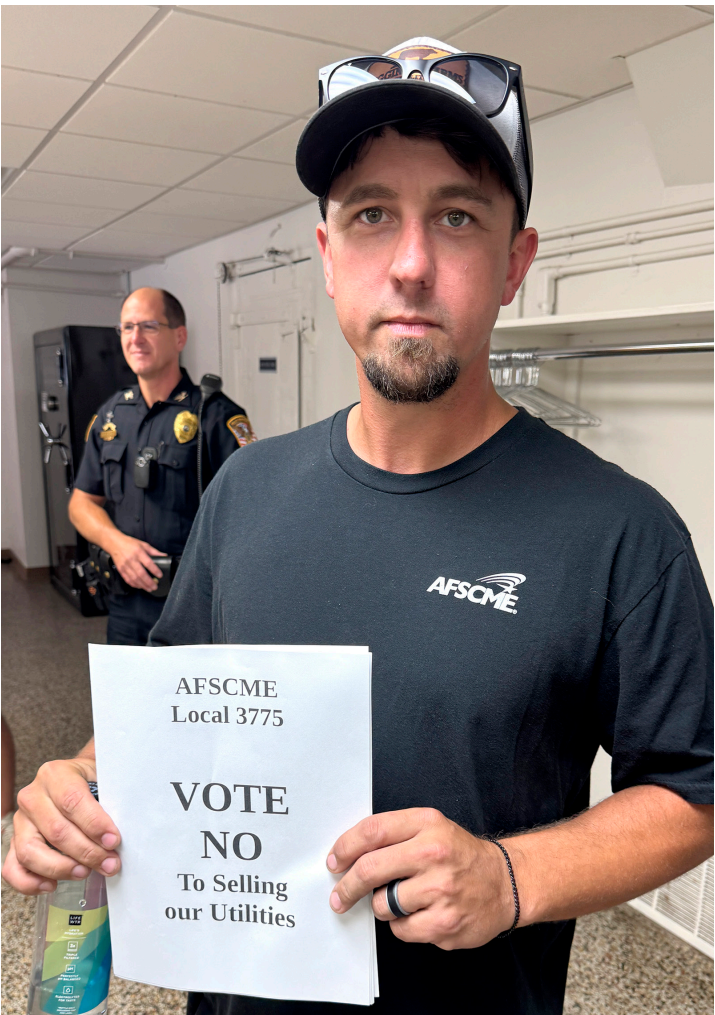
“Once you lose a public utility like this, it’s gone forever,” said Local 3775 President Ryan Stocke. “What is American Water going to do for the community? When we pay our water bills now, that money goes to the city and the city invests in the community. American Water would just keep draining our residents until they can’t afford to live here.”

They were going up against a large and influential corporation, so members of Local 3775 did what union members do best: They organized.

They made flyers that described the city’s privatization plans and urged residents to call their City Council representatives to urge a no vote. Then they mailed the flyers to 2,000 Carmi residents—just under half the city’s population.

The next City Council meeting was overflowing with angry residents.

On July 21, the Carmi City Council voted unanimously to reject American Water’s takeover bid.



Local 3775 members get the word out ahead of a City Council vote on the privatization of their wastewater system.

Justice prevails: Wrongly disciplined CHM workers win full reinstatement

Four fired union activists at the Chicago History Museum (CHM) have won the right to return to work—with full back pay—thanks to a settlement of unfair labor practice charges that AFSCME filed to hold museum management accountable for violating labor law.

CHM employees organized their union with AFSCME in 2025 and were eager to begin building a better, stronger museum.

But museum management at the time had different goals: They embarked on a bitter anti-union campaign, firing four union activists and disciplining seven more.

It was clear management targeted those employees for being supportive of organizing, which is illegal.

In response, AFSCME filed a series of unfair labor practice charges. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) investigated, and in May, issued a complaint against the museum,

a serious and relatively rare action that found museum management had broken the law and violated employees’ rights.

Now, a new settlement agreement between AFSCME, the NLRB and the museum closes that ugly chapter in the museum’s history.

The museum has been ordered to offer the four fired workers their jobs back with full back pay, plus interest, and reimburse them for any legal fees they incurred fighting against their illegal firings. One worker is due more than \$28,000 in total.

For the seven workers who were wrongfully disciplined, the

agreement requires the museum to remove all references to the discipline from their personnel files.

Marissa Croft is one of the workers who won her job back. She had worked for the museum for almost three years and had served on the union bargaining committee when she was laid off with no notice.

“It was shocking,” Croft said. “I had been at bargaining the night before. It just threw a wrench in our lives.”

Even though she no longer

worked at the museum, Croft continued to serve on the bargaining committee in the year that followed. She continued to show up both because she didn’t want to quit on her co-workers with whom she had fought to form their union in the first place, but also to send a message to management.

“I wanted to remind them that I’m a person, that I care about this cause, and I’m not going away,” she said.

Croft is “thrilled” to be returning to work at the

museum doing the work that she loves.

The two leaders of the museum’s illegal anti-union campaign, CEO Donald Lassere and HR Director Shatierra Parks, no longer work at CHM.

With new leadership at the museum, workers are optimistic that a new day has dawned—one where workers no longer have to fear that management will illegally fire them, and where their first union contract is now within reach.



CHM employees rally against management’s illegal retaliation.

Chicago Public Library branch opens at Obama Presidential Center

When President Barack Obama announced plans to build the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) in Chicago’s Woodlawn neighborhood nearly a decade ago, he made a clear distinction between the project and previous presidential libraries.

The OPC would be a sprawling campus, with a museum, outdoor gathering spaces, and a basketball facility. And instead of a private library or a library operated by the National Archives, the OPC would house a brand-new branch of the Chicago Public Library.

The OPC finally opened on June 19. The Obama Presidential Center library branch, like all CPL branches, is staffed by the proud members of AFSCME Local 1215.

The opening was a full-circle moment for Council 31. Our union was one of Obama’s earliest supporters, stretching back to his first campaign for Illinois Senate in 1997, when he was still a relatively unknown organizer from Chicago. During his first run for president in 2008, Council 31 made a rare move, breaking from AFSCME International by endorsing him in the Democratic primary. The rest is history.

It’s also been a full circle experience for library

employees, who transitioned to the OPC branch from other locations around the city.

“We’ve seen our teachers and our old neighbors all come in to the new location to check it out. There’s a lot of emotion there,” said Library Clerk Brianna Walker. “We also get to hear stories from patrons. People love to talk about how old they were when Obama became president.”

“Having lived in Chicago my whole life, in this neighborhood, life comes full circle in that way. I remember when this campus was a hole in the ground. Never once did I envision myself working here one day,” said Library Associate Pierre McCalister.

With the OPC estimated to receive more than 700,000 yearly visitors, one of the biggest challenges for branch employees has been making sure patrons know that the library is just that: a standard public library branch.

“A lot of people



Members of AFSCME Local 1215 staff the landmark CPL branch at the Obama Center.

automatically assume that because we’re new, that this is a bookstore. No, this is a library! You can check out books with your regular library card,” said Walker.

But in addition to the YouMedia, children’s areas, and shelves of books available for checkout that are standard across many CPL branches, the OPC branch also holds the President’s Reading Room, where Barack and Michelle curated a

collection of their favorite titles, and where the former president houses some of his most cherished books. The display in the reading room includes signed copies of books from the late Pope Francis and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, as well as a 1934 copy of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

Even with the branch teeming with patrons from all around the world, library staff have come to quickly

embrace the challenges and enjoy their work. Employees were able to get familiar with the campus and the branch’s collection prior to the OPC opening to the public, which has helped them handle questions from patrons. And staff are always there for each other to help with any challenges that arise during their work.

“CPL is a family,” said Library Page Jose Rodriguez. “We know each other, and it’s such a friendly space that I always feel comfortable coming up to ask questions to anyone.”

Though the OPC is a new tourist destination for patrons from Chicago and beyond, branch employees have pride in knowing they are a part of a space that neighborhood residents can enjoy and appreciate as well.

“There’s a lack of public spaces for kids and teens. But here, there are activities for them, and they can spend time here. We have something in the South Side that’s iconic, that will become a staple of Chicago,” Rodriguez said.

“It’s a safe haven for the neighborhood,” Walker said. “That’s what libraries are. A safe haven for the wider public and for the people that live here.”



The Obama Center branch features some of the former president’s most cherished books.

Assaults on DOC and DJJ employees cause concern

AFSCME pushes for full staffing and safer facilities

On April 23, two correctional officers at Menard Correctional Center responded to an incarcerated individual declaring a crisis in his cell. When the correctional officers handcuffed him, the cell door malfunctioned. As the officers worked to open the door, the incarcerated individual slipped his hand from the restraints.

When the door was opened, the individual lunged at the officers, throwing punches at their faces and using the lead chain as a weapon. Though the individual was finally subdued with the help of responding staff, the two officers were left with serious injuries that required transportation to an

a serious concussion. The concussion was so severe that they had difficulty recalling the names of the juveniles involved.

Assaults like these occur on a regular basis throughout Illinois' prisons and juvenile facilities. Staff are regularly punched, have urine or feces thrown on them, and are sexually harassed by individuals in custody. DJJ and DOC employees must constantly be on guard against threats to their safety.

The impact of assaults

Lawrence CC alone had at least 47 incidents of assault in the first six months of 2026; with 29 causing injuries. While AFSCME has pushed for transparency on data regarding assaults and injuries from IDOC and DJJ, management has not been forthcoming, forcing the union to document such occurrences.

"Not only does it take a physical toll on the staff member being assaulted, but

it takes a mental toll on the people who respond to the incident and all of us at the facility," said Tenielle Fitzjarrald, a corrections counselor II at Lawrence CC and the president of AFSCME Local 3600. "You see the impact when the person you work with every day is out dealing with injuries. People are constantly out of work due to injuries from assaults or during a response to assault."

At Lawrence, the Emergency Response Team (ERT) is supposed to have six members per day shift but most days the facility is lucky to have two. And when ERT staff are across the campus when an assault occurs, it's left to other employees—including those on break, in training, or even in the restroom—to respond to a staff in distress call.

"Ninety-nine out of 100

of our problems are due to short staffing," Fitzjarrald said. "It's impossible with security staffing levels under 50% to double up when we go on a wing. We're spread too thin, and too much is asked of everybody. One person is never doing the work of just one person."

Fighting for solutions

AFSCME Council 31 has been fighting on many fronts to address this urgent and dangerous problem. AFSCME's grievance against IDOC in 2022 resulted in an arbitrator ruling that the department must take stronger measures to protect employees on the job.

But management continues to insist in many cases that assaults are simply an unavoidable part of the job.

AFSCME is now seeking an arbitrator's clear and specific order based on a number of proposals to increase safety for staff and curb the problem of assaults throughout the prison system.

At the top of the list is full staffing. Fully staffed facilities are safer facilities, but many of the state's prisons remain woefully understaffed, with posts undermanned and fewer staff available to respond whenever an assault occurs.

This year some progress was made when the General Assembly approved the 500 additional full-time IDOC employees included in Gov.

Pritzker's FY 27 budget plan.

While budgeting for more staff is a big step in the right direction, getting those new employees in the door is even more important.

AFSCME recognized DOC's recruitment challenges years ago and developed a plan for regional training centers. Our union then worked with the department to modernize its outdated and burdensome training academy system to allow cadets to attend a regional training academy closer to their home, meaning less time away from their families and a higher likelihood of success.

The regional training academies began showing results right away, with the number of cadets graduating in each cycle increasing by more than 140%.

AFSCME is also proposing a process that would allow for expedited arbitration any time a dispute between the parties arises over safety to avoid grievances languishing for long periods without a resolution.

DOC employees are also encouraged to fill out and send an AFSCME Council 31 Staff Assault Reporting Form to docinfo@afscme31.org any time an assault occurs. Full documentation of every incident is crucial in AFSCME's fight to keep staff safe on the job and prevent future incidents.

"We'll never stop fighting for our safety," Fitzjarrald said. "Ever."



IDOC employees staged statewide pickets over safety concerns in 2024.



outside hospital and eventually, surgery to repair the damage.

In June, a juvenile justice specialist just two weeks out from academy graduation was assaulted in the back of a security van, causing them to fall from the van and suffer



Raising staffing levels is the most impactful way to reduce danger to correctional employees.

BOOTS ON THE GROUND: VOLUNTEERS ESSENTIAL IN 2026 ELECTION

As AFSCME members, we’re part of a powerful union that fights for our rights at work.

But when it comes to the broader initiatives—fixing Tier 2, securing more funding for the services we provide, passing pro-worker legislation—we also need elected officials at the state level on our side.

Electing pro-worker candidates on the local level is just as important. AFSCME members who work for local government bodies like cities and counties need people in office whom we can count on to have our backs.

Wealthy corporations and ultra-rich donors have millions to spend on politics—and those big-money donors rarely have the best interests of working people in mind. As the saying goes, “Organized people can defeat organized money.” But that’s only true if we are very well organized and prepared to do the work.

AFSCME members know that it takes direct action to move the needle. When we fight for a fair contract, it’s our willingness to hit the streets and picket that puts pressure on management to do the right thing.

The same is true in the political arena. When AFSCME members put boots on the ground, we’re able to put workers’ rights issues in focus for voters in our state—and that enables us to keep winning in Springfield, and at county boards and city councils throughout the state.

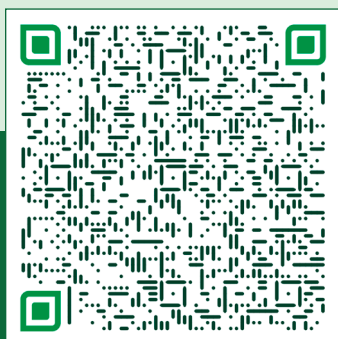
This 2026 general election, we all have the opportunity to make a difference in crucial races that will impact the outcomes of so many of our union’s priorities. Grab a union brother or sister and become an AFSCME volunteer!

How it works

1. Sign up to be an AFSCME volunteer and Council 31’s political team will pair you with a pro-worker candidate near where you live.
2. If you’re looking at the bigger picture, you can join up with the brigades Council 31 will be sending to neighboring states where there are hotly contested Congressional races.
3. Hit the doors! You’ll have conversations with voters about the important issues in the election and help them understand why our candidate is the best choice.
4. A typical canvassing shift is just four hours. Then you can head home knowing you’ve made a difference!

Get involved!

Make a difference!



John Day
AFSCME Local 1048
Marion

“Volunteering is just about having a conversation with someone. As union members, we may not have as much money to spend on politics as some of the rich, but we do have time we can spend talking to people about what’s important.

“We shouldn’t let our politics get dictated by well-moneyed interests.”



Sara Christensen
AFSCME Local 692
Rockford

“Volunteering is actually super fun. You make a day of it, bring a few friends. Most of the people you meet are super nice and almost all of the conversations you’ll have are very positive. You get talking points from the campaign, you get your list of doors and you just stick to the script. Most people are curious and are interested in having a conversation with you.

“We have priorities—whether it could be winning a contract or passing summer unemployment for school employees—and we need to elect people who can get those things done. As union members, we need to do our part.”



Craig Linne
AFSCME Local 2073
Lincoln

“As public employees, we’re always under attack. Whether it’s through pension bills, budget cuts—there’s always legislation that could affect how we do our jobs.

“If we’re not out there participating in the political process we could get seriously harmed. Working in the Department of Corrections, there are many bills each year that could impact us. Some are good, some bad, some neutral. But as public employees it’s important for us to have a voice in those bills—and that comes from getting politically active.”



Jennifer Howard
AFSCME Local 2081
Chicago

“Most people whose doors we knock on are quite friendly. If you’re nervous, a lot of the time you can go with someone who can help you along the way. Sometimes, you’ll only be going to the homes of other union members, and you know you can form that connection with them right away.

“I’ve always felt like I’ve been able to make a difference. Sometimes, voters feel like they’ve been left behind. But we can talk to them about workers’ rights issues that they generally agree with.”

Scan the QR code to register for volunteering opportunities and a member of the AFSCME political team will reach out.

AFSCME ILLINOIS PEOPLE RECOMMENDATIONS: 2026 GENERAL ELECTION

What’s on the ballot in the Nov. 3 election? Workers’ rights. Public services. An economy that works for all working people, not just the rich.

The following recommendations are based on the work of the Illinois PEOPLE Conference and Area PEOPLE committees comprised of local union leaders, who arrived at their conclusions after examining voting records, reviewing questionnaires and conducting interviews to determine where the candidates stand on the issues that matter to AFSCME members.

- **Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 3**
- **Early voting begins Sept. 24**
- **Go to AFSCME31.org/Vote for more information**

AFSCME does not typically endorse in uncontested elections. Candidates’ AFSCME voting records are denoted by a percentage following their names.

STATEWIDE

U.S. Senate

Juliana Stratton (D)

Attorney General

Kwame Raoul (D)

Secretary of State

Alexi Giannoulas (D)

Comptroller

Margaret Croke (D)

Treasurer

Michael Frerichs (D)

JUDICIAL

3rd Appellate Court District

(McDade) Margaret “Peggy” O’Connell (D)

CONGRESS

1st District: Jonathan Jackson (100%) (D)

2nd District: Donna Miller (D)

3rd District: Delia Ramirez (100%) (D)

4th District: Patty García (D)

6th District: Sean Casten (100%) (D)

7th District: LaShawn Ford (D)

8th District: Melissa Bean (D)

9th District: Daniel Biss (D)

10th District: Brad Schneider (100%) (D)

11th District: Bill Foster (100%) (D)

12th District: Julie Fortier (D)

13th District: Nikki Budzinski (100%) (D)

14th District: Lauren Underwood (100%) (D)

15th District: Jennifer Todd (D)

16th District: Paul Nolley (D)

17th District: Eric Sorensen (100%) (D)

ILLINOIS SENATE

8th District: Ram Villivalam (100%) (D)

9th District: Patrick Hanley (D)

12th District: Celina Villanueva (100%) (D)

14th District: Emil Jones, III (93%) (D)

17th District: Elgie R. Sims, Jr. (100%) (D)

18th District: Frances Ann Hurley (D)

21st District: Laura Ellman (100%) (D)

23rd District: Suzanne “Suzy” Glowiak
Hilton (88%) (D)

26th District: Nabeela Syed (100%) (D)

27th District: Carina Santa Maria (D)

29th District: Julie Morrison (100%) (D)

32nd District: Craig Wilcox (76%) (R)

33rd District: Michele Clark (D)

36th District: Michael Halpin (100%) (D)

38th District: Sue Rezin (64%) (R)

42nd District: Jared Ploger (D)

48th District: Doris Turner (100%) (D)

56th District: Erica Harriss (76%) (R)

57th District: Christopher Belt (93%) (D)

ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2nd District: Elizabeth “Lisa” Hernandez (100%) (D)

9th District: Yolanda Morris (100%) (D)

12th District: Paul Kendrick (D)

13th District: Demerike “Demi” Palecek (D)

17th District: Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz (95%) (D)

18th District: Robyn Gabel (100%) (D)

19th District: Lindsey LaPointe (100%) (D)

21st District: Abdelnasser Rashid (100%) (D)

25th District: Curtis Tarver, II (95%) (D)

35th District: Mary Gill (100%) (D)

36th District: Rick Ryan (100%) (D)

39th District: Will Guzzardi (100%) (D)

41st District: Janet Yang Rohr (100%) (D)

42nd District: Margaret DeLaRosa (100%) (D)

44th District: Fred Crespo (95%) (D)

45th District: Martha “Marty” Deuter (100%) (D)

46th District: Diane Blair-Sherlock (100%) (D)

47th District: Erica Bray-Parker (D)

49th District: Maura Hirschauer (100%) (D)

51st District: Jenny Levin (D)

52nd District: Maria Peterson (D)

53rd District: Nicolle Grasse (100%) (D)

54th District: Mary Beth Canty (100%) (D)

55th District: Justin Cochran (D)

56th District: Michelle Mussman (100%) (D)

57th District: Tracy Katz Muhl (100%) (D)

61st District: Joyce Mason (100%) (D)

65th District: Ricky Rivard (D)

66th District: Suzanne Ness (100%) (D)

68th District: Dave Vella (95%) (D)

70th District: Veronica Garcia-Martinez (D)

76th District: Amy “Murri” Briel (100%) (D)

77th District: Norma Hernandez (100%) (D)

78th District: Camille Lilly (100%) (D)

80th District: Anthony DeLuca (95%) (D)

81st District: Anne Stava (100%) (D)

83rd District: Matt Hanson (100%) (D)

84th District: Saba Haider (D)

85th District: Dagmara “Dee” Avelar (100%) (D)

97th District: Jessica Dixon Heitman (D)

98th District: Natalie Manley (100%) (D)

104th District: Brandun Schweizer (95%) (R)

112th District: Katie Stuart (100%) (D)

114th District: Kevin Schmidt (95%) (R)

118th District: Homer “Chip” Markel (D)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Champaign County

Sheriff: Dustin Heuerman (D)

Christian County

County Board, District 1: Linda Curtin (D)

Cook County

President: Toni Preckwinkle (D)

Assessor: Pat Hynes (D)

County Board, District 5: Kisha E McCaskill (D)

County Board, District 8: Jessica Vásquez (D)

County Board, District 9: Maggie Trevor (D)

County Board, District 11: John Daley (D)

County Board, District 12: Elizabeth

Granato (D)

County Board, District 13: Josina Morita (D)

County Board, District 15: Ted Mason (D)

County Board, District 17: Elyse Hoffenberg (D)

DuPage County

Sheriff: Peter Joseph Coolidge (D)

County Board Chair: Deb Conroy (D)

County Board, District 1: Melissa Villanueva (D)

County Board, District 2: Mary Rada

Walters (D)

County Board, District 4: Mary FitzGerald

Ozog (D)

County Board, District 5: Dawn DeSart (D)

Jackson County

County Clerk: Frank Bryd (D)

Sheriff: Bob Burns (D)

Kane County

County Board, District 21: Deborah Chabi (D)

County Board, District 23: Christopher W.

Kious (D)

Knox County

Treasurer: Robin Davis (D)

Lake County

Treasurer: Sandy Hart (D)

County Board, District 1: Jose S. Martinez (D)

County Board, District 10: Nikki Sullivan D)

County Board, District 16: Esiah A. Campos (D)

County Board, District 17: Mary Mesa (D)

County Board, District 19: Marah Altenberg (D)

Peoria County

County Clerk: Rachel Parker (D)

Treasurer: Randy Stevens (D)

Rock Island County

County Clerk: Maggie Crouch (D)

Sheriff: Marcus Herbert (D)

Will County

County Clerk: Annette Parker (R)

Sheriff: Patrick Jones (D)

County Board, District 1: Joe Van Duyne (D)

County Board, District 3: Sherry Newquist (D)

County Board, District 5: Sherry Williams (D)

County Board, District 8: Mica Freeman (D)

County Board, District 8: Michael Crowner (D)

County Board, District 9: Alex Zapien (D)

County Board, District 11: Jacqueline L.

Traynere (D)

Winnebago County

Sheriff: Dom Barcellona (I)

Moultrie County Beacon employees to join ranks of AFSCME-represented DSPs

More than 75 employees at Moultrie County Beacon, Inc. (MCB), a nonprofit organization that provides services and support for individuals with intellectual disabilities in central Illinois, are forming a union with AFSCME Council 31.

MCB employees have filed for a union election with the National Labor Relations Board, which they expect to win overwhelmingly. Once their union is certified, they will join some 5,000 other direct support professionals who are already represented by AFSCME across the state.

In a public letter released June 18, Moultrie County Beacon employees on the union organizing committee say, “We take pride in the important work we do, but too often our experience, dedication, and contributions are overlooked. We believe that the people who provide the care should have a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect our workplace and the quality of services we deliver.”

Allison Taylor, a DSP at MCB and a member of the

organizing committee, was drawn to the work for the same reasons so many other DSPs are: She wanted to make a difference in peoples’ lives and be there for those in need.

“I never thought I could be a person who could care for people like this, but I fell in love with the job right away,” Taylor said. “I love taking care of the individuals—it gives me a sense that I’m doing good in the world, and that I’m important to somebody.”

Despite her passion for the work, Taylor said she and her coworkers have long been frustrated by management’s refusal to listen to their concerns about workplace policies.

They wanted a voice—and they knew they could claim theirs by forming a union.



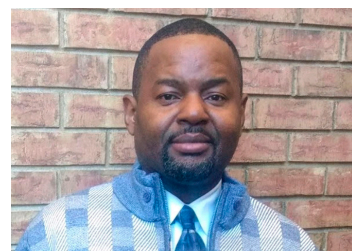
MCB employees are joining together in a union to make their voices heard on important workplace issues.

“We often feel like we’re in a dark closet, and the decisions get made behind our back,” Taylor said. “With	our union and having a seat at the table to make these decisions, I feel like we’ll be able to win better treatment	for us and our individuals. As long as you have your coworkers with you, you can overcome anything.”
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Two members of the AFSCME family win national Union Plus scholarships

Since 1991, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$6.2 million to students of working families.

This year, two members of the AFSCME Council 31 family are among the winners. Each applicant is asked to write an essay about their relationship to AFSCME. You’ll find an excerpt from each winner’s essay at right.



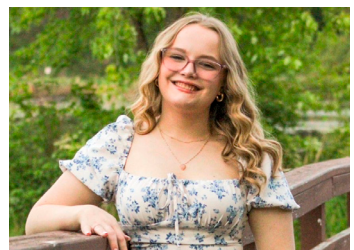
Keith Morehead
Active member of AFSCME Local 1805, Department of Children and Family Services
Attending Southern Illinois University for a master’s degree in social work

“My wife and I have proudly been active members of AFSCME for more than 20

years. Our longterm involvement with the union has been both a professional commitment and a personal value. The principles of fairness, respect, and solidarity that AFSCME represents have profoundly influenced our lives and shaped our understanding of public service.

“The benefits of union membership extend far beyond the workplace. Because of AFSCME’s commitment to protecting public employees, our family has enjoyed fair wages, quality health care, and job stability. These protections have allowed us to raise our family with confidence and contribute meaningfully to our communities. During times of uncertainty—such as budget reductions or contract

disputes—the union has provided reassurance, unity, and a collective voice that ensures workers are heard and respected.”



Grace Dennison
Daughter of Mary Dennison, AFSCME Local 1748, McHenry County employees
Attending Saint Mary’s College

“One of my favorite things about [my high school] is our theatre department. Last year, we performed the musical Newsies. Although I was

familiar with a couple songs, I did not know the story. Seeing young people stand up and fight for what they believed in was empowering and eye opening.

“Newsies brought unions to the forefront of my mind. While I knew my mom was part of a union, the show inspired me to learn what unions truly do. I came to understand that unions are not simply about contracts, but about advocating for fairness, dignity, and equality. Though my mom’s experience differs from that of the newsboys, unions brought both families, literal and chosen, together. Because of unions, my family has access to education, health-care, and financial stability, something I am deeply grateful for and will value for the rest of my life.”

Meet 2026’s Marquardt Scholarship winners

Each year, AFSCME Council 31 awards college scholarships to three AFSCME members or their children based on school grades, family need, and a written essay.

The \$2,000 scholarships honor Larry Marquardt, the first executive director of Council 31 and a tireless union organizer who dedicated his life to improving the lives of working people.

Each applicant is asked to write an essay on why the labor movement is relevant and needed more than ever today. Their moving essays illustrate how their relationships to their union or the unions of their parents have changed their lives.

You’ll find an excerpt from each winner’s essay at right.



Meghan McKnight
Daughter of Merlen McKnight, AFSCME Local 1866, Stateville Correctional Center
Attending Drexel University this fall

“The labor movement remains essential today because it protects workers from instability, exploitation, and unsafe conditions. My own family experienced this firsthand when the State of Illinois planned to shut down Stateville Correctional Center; many non-union employees were forced to relocate 2 hours from Stateville, or, worse, were laid off. AFSCME fought to ensure that my dad—a loyal 19-year employee—would have a safe, local job.

“That stability meant our mortgage, insurance and all utility bills were paid, and our family was intact. Even though we didn’t know for certain what could happen, we didn’t have to worry immediately about drastic life changes.”



Kaitlin Taylor
Active member of AFSCME Local 1787, Quincy Veterans Home
Attending Johnwood Community College this fall

“The labor movement is important because it helps protect the rights, safety and well-being of workers. Throughout history, many workers faced long hours, low pay and dangerous working conditions. The labor movement formed when workers came together to demand fair treatment and better conditions in the workplace. By organizing and speaking with a united voice, workers were able to push for important changes that benefit society today.

“In addition, the labor movement promotes equality and fairness. It has played a role in fighting discrimination and giving workers from different backgrounds a stronger voice in the workplace.”



Murana Musso
Daughter of Jill Musso, AFSCME Local 805, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Attending Illinois State University this fall

“I am studying Exercise Science at Illinois State University next year, with the hope of working with students and student athletes. Working at a school, I would hope to be able to be part of a union.

“While I feel that it would be a fulfilling job and I can make a difference, I have had people discourage me from doing this because of the low pay, difficulty and risk. It seems that the hardest jobs in this country are often the ones where employees make the least amount of money, are very challenging, and are very dangerous. [...] Protection in these positions from low wages and extra compensation for high-risk jobs is why unions are needed now more than ever.”

Family Scholarship winner: “AFSCME offers protection for my dad”

Each year, AFSCME International awards 10 Family Scholarships to children of AFSCME members throughout the nation.

One of this year’s winners is Henry Karduck, the son of John Karduck of AFSCME Local 1960 in Champaign.

Part of the scholarship process includes writing an essay about what AFSCME has meant to their family. Below is an excerpt of Henry’s winning essay.

“MY FATHER IS A MUNICIPAL employee for the City of Champaign Public Works Department. I admire and am inspired by his passion for public service. My dad is passionate about trees, and his

position as a municipal arborist has enabled him to pursue a storied career. He helps the City of Champaign regulate the removal of storm-damaged or dead trees, prunes healthy trees, plants new trees and works to make the city more sustainable.

“I am very proud of my father being a public servant, but I now realize that this has come with great sacrifice. His work is technical and it can be stressful at times. He is also responsible for working overtime and on call, which includes, weekends, holidays,

and night shifts. Being on call has challenged our family because he has missed some of my baseball/basketball games, religious events, Scouting activities, and major holidays.

“While he receives additional training and continuing education for his job, several risks are associated with being a municipal arborist, including operating aerial lift trucks, climbing trees and running chainsaws. I try not to think about the hazards and stresses he is under. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, ‘falls from height, contact with power lines, being struck by falling branches, and injuries from chainsaws’ make tree-trimming and pruning one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States. I frequently include him in my



Henry Karduck

prayers for his safe return home without injury.

“Despite all the demands and risks, I am comforted knowing that AFSCME offers protection for my dad. This includes contractual rights for fair wages, continued training, benefits and safer

working conditions. Union workers also have protection against unfair labor practices and workplace discrimination. AFSCME has allowed my dad to provide a modest middle-class lifestyle for our family of four, and I am truly grateful for that.”

ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

CGH Medical Center employees ratify first union contract after five-year struggle

EMPLOYEES OF CGH MEDICAL Center in the Sauk Valley region represented by AFSCME Council 31 have ratified their first union contract after five years of disputes with hospital management. A tentative agreement was reached on June 29 and overwhelmingly ratified by union members during voting held July 13-15. In the final contract ratified by members, the wins stack up.

Members won wage increases of at least 9.75% over the three-year contract, with higher wages due for many employees through a new semi-annual process for market-based wage adjustments. They held the line on health insurance premiums in 2026 and won strong protections against future cost-shifting. They also won two additional days of paid time off per year and limits on the use of temporary, out-of-town workers when regular employees are available to do the work.

CGH employees first organized their union in 2019 and were certified by the Illinois Labor Relations Board (ILRB) in 2021. Throughout the following five years, CGH management stalled and drew out negotiations year after year, spending at least \$1.9 million on anti-union attorneys in an effort to silence workers' voices. During that time, the state labor board twice found that CGH broke the law, including for a letter issued by hospital management that pressured employees to abandon their union. In response to an intensive AFSCME lobbying effort, in 2025, the Illinois General Assembly voted to amend the Illinois Public Labor Relations Act to allow an independent arbitrator to decide first union contracts when the parties can't reach an agreement. The change was prompted in part by the



Employees of CGH Medical Center were forced to fight for their first contract for five years due to management's anti-union hostility.

unnecessary years-long roadblocks CGH used to delay an agreement. The prospect of allowing an outside arbitrator to make final determinations about its employment policies finally compelled management to make a serious commitment to reaching a settlement, paving the way for the contract members voted to approve. "Despite going up against an employer that was hostile to their union from the very start, CGH workers never wavered," said AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch. "They

organized, they spoke out, and they stood together through years of delay. This agreement is a testament to their determination to make CGH a better place to work and a better place for patients." AFSCME represents workers at CGH's main medical center and its network of nearly 20 satellite clinics. CGH is one of the few large medical providers in the Sterling/Rock Falls region of northern Illinois. "We organized our union because we wanted a real voice in the decisions that

affect our patients and our families—safe staffing, fair pay and a say in our working conditions," said Shelly Houzenga, a medical technologist at the hospital and a member of the union bargaining committee. "For five years, we fought for that voice, and we've won it with this contract." The bargaining committee included Houzenga, Britney Zemke, Nicole Dornes, Shelly Lewis, Matthew Mach, Kami Shank, Koren Volz and Andrea Day. The committee was led by Council 31 Regional Director Carla

Gillespie and Staff Representative Audie Schmidt.

ISU employees ratify new contract, ending 4-week strike

ENDING THEIR FOUR-WEEK strike at Illinois State University in Normal, an overwhelming majority of the more than 300 building services, grounds, dining services and other ISU employees



The 300 members of AFSCME Local 1110 stayed united and determined through the four-week strike.

represented by AFSCME Local 1110 voted to ratify their new union contract. More than 95% of votes cast were Yes.

“This struggle was about fair pay, and we won that. Even more importantly, it was about respect, and we earned it,” said Chuck Carver, a building service worker and president of AFSCME Local 1110.

Pay provisions in the contract include an immediate 3.5% wage increase and a \$1,500 lump-sum payment upon ratification. Annual wage increases of 3% will follow on July 1 of 2026, 2027, 2028 and 2029—in all, a 16.5% compounded increase over the life of the five-year agreement, which runs through June 30, 2030.

ISU top administrators provoked the strike by insisting on two takeaway demands—no pay increase retroactive to last July 1 and no assurance that union members will receive at least the same annual percentage increase as university administrators—known as a “me-too” clause.

In the end, the lump-sum ratification payment in this agreement is greater than the value of a retroactive pay increase for the average member of Local 1110, and even more valuable for lower-paid workers. Meanwhile, the union preserved the contract’s me-too provision as of July 2028 and going forward.

“The terms of this agreement were available to ISU management on February 10, when union members voted down the university’s takeaway demands, and on April 7, when we met with the mediator before our strike deadline,” AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said. “Instead, management chose a path of conflict and division that brought hardship to workers, disruption to students and a stain on ISU’s name.”

“In an inspiring display of courage and solidarity—and with the support of students, faculty, staff and alumni, members and leaders of other unions, elected officials and countless others—ISU employees stood up, stayed strong and prevailed.”

The bargaining committee included Carver, Andrew Klapp, Tia Reece, Jon Fears,

Cody Key and Matt Moore. The committee was led by Council 31 Staff Representative Renee Nestler.

Local 1479 secures new contract and the respect members deserve

THE PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS in the city of Jerseyville in southern Illinois work hard and sometimes dangerous jobs. Through hailstorms, snow, limited visibility, and other challenging conditions, Jerseyville public works employees are always out keeping the streets and public areas safe for fellow residents.

Yet, these vital employ-

proposal to five years, before dropping the expanded discipline proposal entirely.

In the end, Local 1479’s solidarity won the day. The new four-year contract includes a strong 3% yearly wage increase, along with a \$1,250 yearly training and proficiency bonus, a ratification bonus to be paid out in two installments this year, as well as a stronger, more employee-friendly clothing allowance.

Another important victory in the new contract is the requirement for management to notify the union whenever the city intends to acquire any artificial intelligence (AI) system that would impact bargaining-unit employees. The contract requires notice to the union at least 180 days in advance of any public notice to outside contractors to place bids or before the employer

Council 31 staff representatives Bo Johnson and Eric Rohman, Local 1479 President Jake Noll, Vice President Robby Noll, and bargaining committee members Benjamin Bishop and Trent Long.

St. Charles Library Workers ratify contract, win equity for part-timers

MEMBERS OF AFSCME Local 76 at the St. Charles Public Library voted unanimously to ratify a new four-year contract that delivers real gains for every worker in the unit—and finally treats the library’s part-time staff like the dedicated employees they are.

members ratified unanimously—delivers real gains, with the largest being across-the-board wage increases of 19% over the agreement’s four-year term.

Now, every employee, no matter how many hours they work, will receive 11 paid holidays—including those who work under 20 hours a week who previously got none.

Those same under-20 employees will start accruing paid sick leave for the first time, and all part-time staff will now receive personal days as well.

The contract also raises paid parental leave from six to nine weeks, expands bereavement leave, adds a new wellness incentive worth up to \$400 a year, and establishes a pilot program letting some departments work from home. Members also won new contract protections



SCPL employees speak out at a library board meeting, urging management to agree to a fair contract.

ees have seen their wages and benefits lag those of other city workers. So when it came time to negotiate a new contract, public works employees represented by AFSCME Local 1479 demanded a contract that values and respects their work.

Earning that respect took diligence and solidarity at the bargaining table. Management came to the table attempting to lengthen the amount of time discipline stayed on an employee’s record from one to 10 years. Local 1479 stood firm, and management moved their

begins internal work on a system that uses AI.

None of these victories in the new contract would have been accomplished without the local’s strong solidarity with each other.

“We’re all from the same town, we’ve all known each other for a long time,” said Local 1479 Vice President Robby Noll. “We all want the same thing for each other: for everybody to get what we all deserve. We were looking out for each other in that way.”

The new contract was negotiated by AFSCME

For years, workers under 20 hours a week—many of them students and retirees—went without sick time, paid holidays, or personal days. Joe Munier, a bargaining team member and under-20-hour employee, said that inequity was one of the main issues the bargaining committee sought to address.

Wages were the toughest sticking point. Members turned out at library board meetings to make their case on pay, and Munier said the show of force moved the needle with management.

Their new contract—which

around non-disciplinary counseling and more paid release time for union training and conventions, up from six to eight days a year.

For Munier, the real win goes beyond the numbers.

“It legitimized the under-20s as actual employees, not just people who were there to make a few extra bucks,” he said.

The bargaining committee included Munier, Sutton Skowron, Kersten Wright and Sarah Slack. The committee was led by Council 31 Staff Representative Carla Williams. 

Keep Choate Working: AFSCME stands against cuts, layoffs

In a shocking about-face, the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) announced on July 23 that it intends to end most operations at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna.

DHS’s sudden decision—to downsize Choate, lay off half of its workers, disrupt the lives of the individuals who receive treatment there and disregard the advice of its own experts—is indefensible. And the ramification of the state’s actions, while concentrated in Southern Illinois, will be felt all across the state.

For the past three years, DHS has been steadily reducing available beds for individuals with developmental disabilities at Choate. While some of those impacted were placed with nonprofit disability agencies, most were moved to other state-operated developmental centers.

During this year’s budget process, AFSCME and lawmakers asked DHS directly

whether cuts were planned for the current fiscal year. The department said no.

“Had we been aware of the planned layoffs, we certainly would have opposed the budget as introduced,” said Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch.

“Our union had received several assurances that there would be no layoffs this year, so this news came as a total shock,” said Local 141 President Tina Winfield. “Choate employees show up every day and do this work with pride because we truly care about the individuals we serve. They see us as their family, and we see them the same way.”

Choate serves a vital function in DHS’s system of care for individuals with severe

developmental disabilities or mental illness, including those who have been found guilty by reason of insanity or unfit to stand trial in criminal cases.

Now the department is planning to close some 75 beds at Choate that have served to aid the transition of individuals with mental illness who are no longer subject to

court-ordered treatment back into the community. That unit would be moved to Madden Mental Health Center in the Chicago metro area, which already has difficulty recruiting and retaining staff.

Choate is a major source of union jobs in a region of Southern Illinois where such employment is limited, and

it serves individuals with significant needs, including dual diagnoses, who cannot readily be served elsewhere.

AFSCME is working to bring together concerned families, elected officials, and community leaders to press Gov. Pritzker and DHS to reverse the decision. ➤



Nearly 450 AFSCME members work at Choate.

SHORT REPORTS

Convention delegates to elect new international leadership

AFTER 50 YEARS OF SERVICE to AFSCME, including 15 years as International President, Lee Saunders has announced he is retiring in August. Secretary-Treasurer Elissa McBride, who has served AFSCME since 2017, is also stepping down.

Saunders has been a stalwart leader through tur-



AFSCME International President Lee Saunders

bulent times. He led AFSCME through the economic recovery following the Great Recession, during which public service jobs declined rapidly and oversaw our union’s swift response to the health and safety crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most recently, he has led

AFSCME’s fight-back against the Trump administration’s sweeping attacks on public services and union rights.

At the biennial AFSCME International Convention slated for Aug. 17-21, delegates will elect new leadership who will carry our union forward.

The Council 31 Executive Board has unanimously voted to endorse Patrick Moran for president and Nicole Pollard for secretary-treasurer. Moran is currently the president of AFSCME Council 3 in Maryland. Under his 14 years of leadership, Council 3 has tripled its membership through vigorous organizing. Pollard serves as executive assistant to Saunders, a role where she provides legal counsel and support to leaders across AFSCME.

The convention, which is being hosted on Council 31’s home turf in Chicago, will bring together delegates from AFSCME locals, councils and retiree chapters from across the nation to participate in setting the union’s agenda for the coming two years, as well as a week’s worth of networking, learning, and other activities.

Through open discussion of

the issues that matter to public service workers and working families, delegates set our union’s priorities for the future, renew shared commitments and strategize to make us stronger.

Shawnee CC employees picket as radio outage entered third week

MEMBERS OF AFSCME LOCAL 3605 at Shawnee Correctional Center took to the picket line on July 10 to demand fixes to safety conditions that have made a hard job even more dangerous.

The facility had been on lockdown for more than two weeks because staff radios weren’t working—a crisis layered on top of the chronic understaffing that already strains the prison.

Local 3605 president Jon Dye said the radio failure was the immediate trigger for the picket, but it’s part of a longer pattern of equipment breakdowns, staffing shortages and safety risks that have become all too common



Shawnee members were joined on the picket line by their families.

throughout the Department of Corrections.

He said members turned out to make clear that their safety on the job has to be treated as a priority.

“[The department] knows that the old, antiquated, outdated equipment that we use on a daily basis was eventually going to be a problem,” Dye told WPSD news. “It shouldn’t be a shock to anybody that we’re in this position.”

The radio outage means staff can’t reliably communicate across long distances or between buildings, making it far harder to respond quickly

to emergencies, assaults, or medical crises.

The people in IDOC’s custody are affected too. Without working equipment, the activities and movements of incarcerated individuals are severely restricted because the facility is forced to stay locked down.

“For years, union members have raised serious concerns about aging radios to management,” said Council 31 Staff Representative Jeremy Noelle. “After all that time, it’s beyond belief that management decided to fix the system only after it crashed.” ➤

RETIREE NOTES

What’s at Stake for Seniors in This Election

DOUG PYLE FROM RURAL southern Illinois and Juliette Freeman from southern Cook County live in very different parts of the state. But as AFSCME retirees, they share the same concerns: protecting Social Security and Medicare, stabilizing the economy, and safeguarding our democracy. Those concerns are driving both of them to get engaged in this election and support candidates who take a clear stand on these issues.

“Over the last year, we’ve seen Social Security staff cut and offices closed, making it harder for many of us to update our information or fix problems with the Social Security Administration,” Freeman said. “Now the program itself is facing a shortfall that could lead to benefit cuts. Those who want to gut Social Security have fought every attempt at responsible reform, so it’s more important than ever that we elect lawmakers who will do right by hard-working Americans.”

Medicare is just as much a concern. Last year’s passage of the “One Big Beautiful Bill” cut 12 years off the solvency of the Medicare Part A Trust Fund. On top of that, the Trump Administration launched a pilot program in six states which uses artificial intelligence to approve or deny medical care, sometimes overriding doctors’ recommendations. The program has already



AFSCME Retirees Sub-chapter 67 invited a representative from Senior Services Associates to help their members understand the public benefits available to seniors.

caused weeks-long delays for seniors seeking treatment, raising serious concerns about patient safety and access to care.

“We don’t want AI deciding on our care,” Freeman said. “Seniors already have enough to worry about, living on fixed incomes while gas, groceries, and medications keep getting more expensive.”

“Elections have consequences,” Pyle said. “We hear that phrase every election cycle, but it’s never been truer than it is now. This isn’t a red or blue issue—it’s about voting for the candidate who actually has your interests in mind: your pension, your health care, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, everything a retiree worries about.”

For AFSCME’s endorsements, see pages 8–9.

Voting in Illinois: Commonly Asked Questions

Can you still vote by mail in Illinois?

Yes! The earliest you can request your mail-in ballot is Aug. 5 and the last day to request one is Oct. 29.

In order for your mail-in ballot to be counted, it has to be postmarked by Nov. 3rd. Return it by mail as early as possible or drop it off at a secure drop-box run by your local election authority to make sure it’s counted.

Do you need an ID to vote in Illinois?

In most cases, no. Registered voters in Illinois don’t need to show a photo ID or any other identification to cast a ballot. The state verifies voters by

signature rather than ID, so if you’re already registered and your information is current, you can go to your polling place, sign in, and receive your ballot without showing a driver’s license.

ID is required only in a couple of specific situations:

- You registered for the first time by mail and didn’t provide a driver’s license number, state ID number, or the last four digits of your Social Security number on the registration form.
- An election judge determines that your signature doesn’t match the one on file.

Even then, Illinois accepts a wide range of documents beyond a photo ID.

For more key election dates, see pages 8–9.

Senior Services Associates is designated by the Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA) as an Area Agency on Aging. This means it is authorized and certified by the IDOA to provide certain services under federal and state programs.

This particular agency serves adults aged 60 and older in Kane, Kendall, and McHenry counties. Its staff is certified by the IDOA in areas such as care coordination and adult protective services. It administers the IDOA’s CCP to help seniors remain in their homes as long as safely manageable, offering help such as homemaker services, adult day services, emergency home response, home-delivered meals, friendly visiting, and transportation.

“There is so much confusion around nursing homes and the many other programs that we need and Senior Services can be an intermediary,” said Battaglia. “These trained individuals can provide vital assistance on many topics to make life easier for those over 65.”

Getting help navigating senior resources

NAVIGATING THE COMPLEX support systems for seniors can be a daunting task. Thankfully, there are knowledgeable people who can help.

“There are people and programs out there who can help those of us over 65 understand the ins and outs of Medicare and Medicaid, as well as other senior-based programs available in our community,” said Dee Battaglia, president of Kane County Sub-chapter 67.

Battaglia’s sub-chapter recently invited a representative from Senior Services Associates to speak at their July meeting to help members understand the resources that are available to them.

SUB-CHAPTER 74 HOSTS REP. GREGG JOHNSON



In their June meeting, AFSCME Retirees Sub-chapter 74 welcomed a special guest—only this special guest is also a dues-paying member of their sub-chapter: State Rep. Gregg Johnson (center, green shirt). Johnson, the former president of AFSCME Local 46 at East Moline Correctional Center, spoke to the members about the importance of seniors’ voices in the upcoming Nov. 3 election.

For more information on senior services in your area, you can go to the IDOA website at ILaging.Illinois.gov or call the Senior Help Line at 1-800-252-8966.

ON THE JOB



Frank Olesiak

UNDERGROUND UTILITIES CREW LEADER
VILLAGE OF LOMBARD

AFSCME Local 89

Tell us about your work.

We just finished a water main break that came in before the start of the day—that's a good example of what this job looks like. No two days are alike.

We do water main break repairs, lead service line investigations and replacements, fire hydrant inspections, and sewer work. Cold, hot, rain or shine. It's a lot of digging holes and getting dirty. But there's real satisfaction in knowing that without us, people don't have clean drinking water, and the water doesn't go away when they flush the toilet.

What does it take to do this job safely?

We're always operating heavy equipment and working in the roadway— We operate backhoes, front-end loaders, vac trucks. Having proper PPE, steel-toed boots and hearing protection are essential. Traffic is always one of our biggest concerns, so we need to make sure we set up lane closures.

What do you love about your work?

When I go to school functions with my kid and people find out I work for public works, they have questions. I take pride in that. Even during heavy flooding over the 4th of July weekend, if a resident is angry because their basement flooded, I try to defuse the situation and make them understand we're here for them. We want to make their lives easier.

How has your union made a difference on the job?

What I try to preach to newer guys is that there's no way we'd be earning the wages we earn now without a union. We've negotiated a safety and clothing allowance every year for gear like steel-toed boots and safety glasses.

Most recently, when the village implemented vehicle tracking systems, we worked out an MOU to make sure it couldn't be used for disciplinary purposes. That's exactly what union representation is for—making sure new policies are fair before they're in place.



Aaron Tipsword

UTILITIES SUPERINTENDENT
CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE

AFSCME Local 1737

Tell us about your work.

Every morning starts with testing at both the water plant and the wastewater plant—collecting samples, running tests, backwashing filters—and then it's maintenance or repairs. We have very aging infrastructure here, including a wastewater plant originally built in 1961. We're always putting Band-aids on something. When a water main breaks and you're losing thousands of gallons, you have to move fast. It's a juggling act.

What do you wish more people understood about what you do?

People turn on the tap and water comes out. They flush the toilet and it goes away. What they don't see is all the paperwork, the daily testing and documentation, and how outrageously expensive everything has gotten since COVID. I used to be able to have a fire hydrant delivered the next day. Now it's six to eight weeks, and the price has more than doubled. We have to keep a large inventory on hand just to be ready.

What's something you're proud of outside the day-to-day work?

We have a program where local high school kids tour the water plant every year. I always stress to them that not everyone needs to go to college. Blue-collar work like ours offers great pay, amazing benefits, and no student debt. It's good work and good wages, and I think more young people should know that's an option.

How has your union made a difference on the job?

We need a union to keep us safe and to get us paid what we're worth. I've known guys who went five or six years without a pay raise before we had a union. Since we've had a union, that's changed. Our guys just want to do their jobs safely and get home at the end of the day, and our union is there every step of the way to make sure that happens.