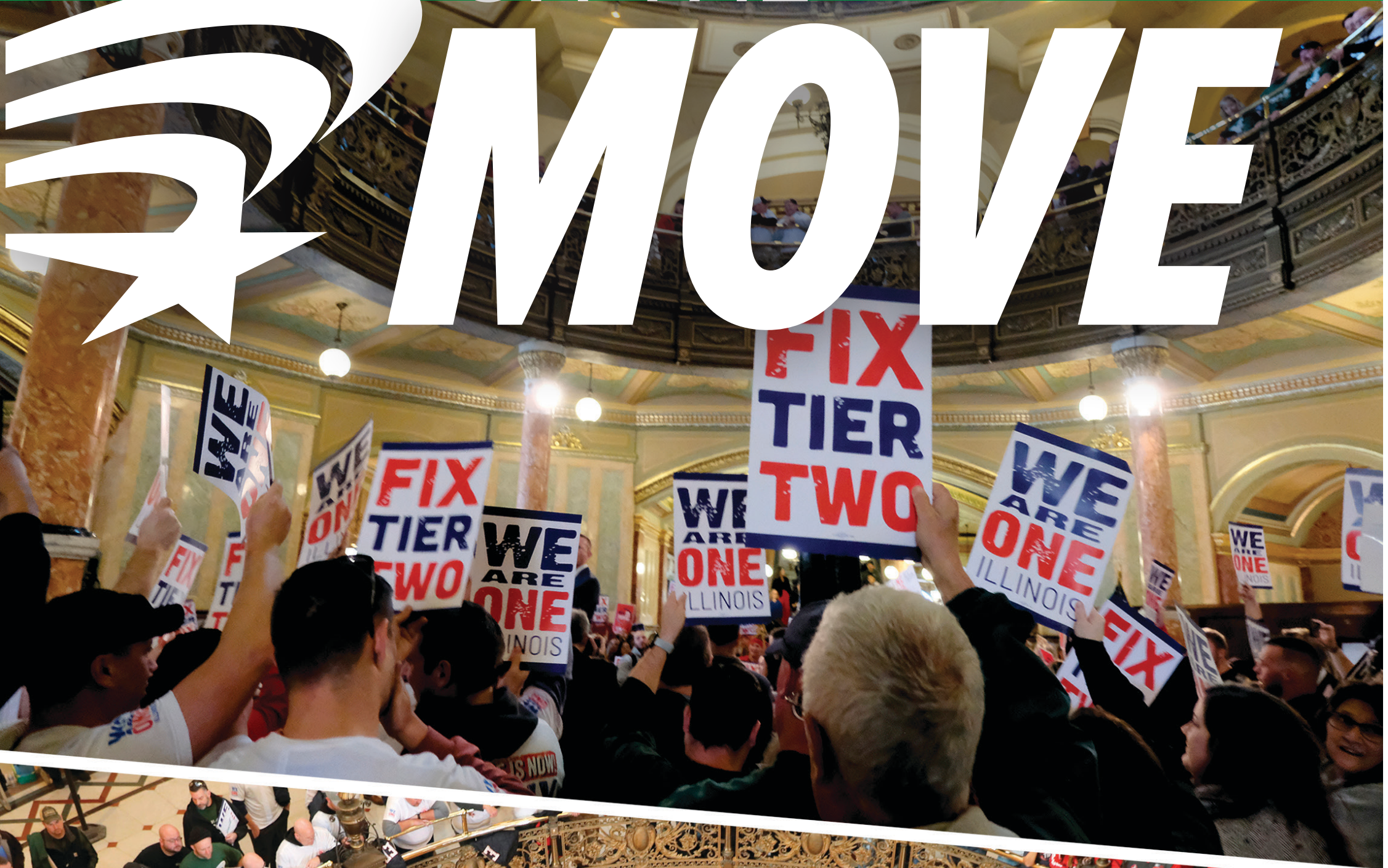


# ON THE MOVE



Public employees come together  
to say "Fix Tier 2!"

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**ON THE MOVE**

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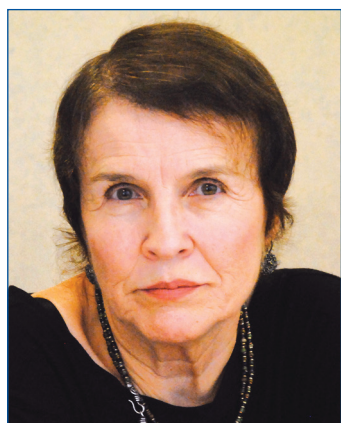
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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**Our power is in our unity**

*Only together can we create progress*



BY ROBERTA LYNCH

**UNION IS WHO WE ARE. UNITY IS WHAT WE DO.**

There's been a lot of talk lately about the divisions in our country, how we are increasingly split—red vs. blue, old vs. young, even men vs. women.

Undoubtedly there's some truth to that national portrait. But one thing most of us can agree on is that division is not the American way. The preamble to our country's Constitution defines its fundamental purpose as forming a "more perfect union." And we are a nation that fought a civil war in order to preserve that union.

So if there is a divide, we need to try to bridge it, not deepen it.

That's why the American labor movement is so essential to this moment. Union is who we are. Unity is what built us and what keeps us strong.

That fundamental truth was brought home to me most powerfully when thousands of union members gathered in Springfield just eight days after the national elections. We were there to advance a shared cause essential to our shared humanity: Achieving dignity and security in our retirement years.

We came to make the case for fixing Tier 2—the diminished pension benefit that irresponsible politicians forced upon all public employees in our state hired after January 1, 2011. "Benefit" is hardly the right word for an accrual that some employees essentially pay for themselves—contributing more out of each paycheck than they will eventually receive in retirement.

We had a powerful case to make to state officials that day: Tier 2 pensions are fundamentally unfair

and urgently need to be improved to provide a benefit comparable to Tier 1.

Equally important, we had a powerful means to make that case—our steadfast unity. Yes, we came from AFSCME, but also from both teachers' unions, the nurses' association, the firefighters' union, the teamsters, the service employees, the laborers, and three police unions. As I looked around the crowded State Capitol, I saw red shirts and blue shirts and white shirts and, of course, green shirts. We embodied the slogan on our signs: "We Are One."

Many said it was the largest rally ever held in the Capitol rotunda. It called to my mind another massive rally in Springfield—so large it couldn't even fit inside the Capitol building—the labor movement's 2016 protest against then-Gov. Bruce Rauner.

Then too we refused to accept injustice. And then too we knew beyond any doubt that our unity—almost every union in the state of Illinois standing up together—was our strongest weapon in that pitched battle to protect the rights and standard of living of working people.

All of us in AFSCME have found that truth again and again in battle after battle. We have traveled across the state to support each other's contract fights. Those of us in local government have rallied to protest the planned closures of state facilities.

We have risen up together in anger from Chicago to Anna when our bargaining rights are threatened. We have seen our retired members come out to join us on picket lines.

We know what union is. We live it every day. And we know why it matters so much. It is the foundation on which all of our progress rests, on which all of the gains that have improved working people's lives are built.

And, of course, that is why the forces of division are so unrelenting. We see it in groups like the Illinois Policy Institute and the Freedom Foundation—funded by dark-money elites—who bombard us with their disinformation campaigns, trying to pit us against each other, to convince us to abandon our union and go it alone.

We see it in the forces that seek to lay the blame for our problems on one group or another, to foment animus, to belittle and isolate rather than inspire and elevate.

We know it is those who sow division who stand firmly against our efforts to build a better country with good-paying jobs, safety at work, access to high-quality health care, affordable housing and a secure retirement.

But we won't be deterred. Union is who we are. Unity is what we do. Year after year we have worked together to improve our lives. We have seen the progress that we've made—and we are keenly aware of how much more yet needs to be done.

I saw it this month in the Capitol rotunda, as the chanting reached a crescendo—*We Are One! We Are One!* Honestly, that just about said it all. 🦋

# Thousands rally in Springfield to say “Fix Tier 2!”

*The time is now for lawmakers to improve pensions*

**T**housands of public service workers—members of AFSCME and our allied unions in the We Are One Illinois coalition—gathered in Springfield on Nov. 13 to demand lawmakers fix the broken and unfair Tier 2 pension system.

The rally was the culmination of months of direct action in which public sector union members called and emailed their elected officials and attended town halls to share their stories directly with lawmakers. These actions have compelled lawmakers to confront the inadequacy of Tier 2 pension benefits.

AFSCME members rallied alongside teachers, firefighters and nurses, among others, during the legislature’s fall veto session. In the Capitol rotunda, public service workers shook

the building with their chants of “Fix Tier 2” and “We Are One.”

“We are here today to tell our legislators it is not too late to demonstrate respect and appreciation for the vital work that public employees do every single day,” Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said from the rally stage. “It is not too late to stop the exodus of workers from public sector jobs. It is not too late to restore dignity and security in retirement. It’s not too late to fix Tier 2! The time is now!”

AFSCME members from local unions in every part of the state traveled to Springfield on chartered buses or carpooled with their coworkers to attend.

The creation of Tier 2 stems from decades of mismanagement of the pension system by politicians, who routinely shorted the state’s contributions to the pension funds and created a multi-billion-dollar shortfall. Rather than addressing the problem head-on by funding the pension systems, in 2010 lawmakers rammed through legislation in the dead of the night that created what is now known as Tier 2.

Public employees hired after Jan. 1, 2011 are on Tier 2. They do the same work as Tier 1 employees but have to work longer and receive a lower benefit with a lesser annual COLA when they retire.

The inadequacy of Tier 2 pensions is a major contributor to the recruitment, hiring and retention crisis in the public sector. Improving Tier 2 will motivate workers to return to public service jobs, strengthening services that Illinoisans rely on.

“Equal pay and equal rights, that’s fair to everyone,” said Rachel Overstreet, a Cook County probation officer and the vice president of AFSCME Local 3696. “We give our all to our communities. It’s only fair for us to receive that same fairness back.”



## Lawmakers must pass the Fair Retirement and Recruitment Act

Union members at the Capitol urged lawmakers to support HB 5909 (introduced by Rep. Stephanie Kifowit) and SB 3988 (introduced by Sen. Robert Martwick), legislation dubbed the Fair Retirement and Recruitment Act.

The bill would make several important improvements to Tier 2 pensions, including:

- Aligning Tier 2 retirement age requirements with Tier 1.
- Implementing an across-the-board 3% cost-of-living adjustment for all Tier 2 retirees.
- Bringing the final average

salary calculation in line with Tier 1.

- Adjusting the pension salary cap to match the Social Security Wage Base, addressing the so-called “Safe Harbor” problem.

“What we’re asking for is a retirement that is fair and reasonable,” said Patrick Sheridan, president of AFSCME Local 963 at Northern Illinois University. “Working in a physically demanding and emotionally taxing job until you’re 67 just isn’t reasonable.”

AFSCME’s legislative team, along with lobbyists for the other unions in the We Are One Illinois coalition, are pressing lawmakers to advance the legislation in the upcoming “lame duck” legislative session in January.



## TOWN HALL MEETINGS LAY GROUNDWORK FOR RALLY

At eight “Fix Tier 2” town hall meetings throughout September, AFSCME members joined other public sector workers to convey in personal and powerful terms the effects that the Tier 2 pension has on their daily working lives, their outlooks on the future, and why change is urgently needed.



# 2024: The Year in Action

When our rights are threatened, AFSCME members don't lie down—we stand up.  
When management doesn't think we're worth the wages we demand, we don't sit back—we fight back.

Throughout 2024, AFSCME members from all corners of the state stepped up and spoke out.  
We took to the picket line to demand safer workplaces. We rallied together for fair contracts with fair wages.



Members of AFSCME Local 141 at Choate Developmental Center are working critically short-staffed, with many employees working 16-hour days to care for the center's vulnerable residents. Management wasn't doing enough to turn the problem around. In October, members of Local 141 picketed in downtown Anna to demand DHS hire more staff.



After experiencing a sharp uptick in the number of on-the-job injuries and violations of their union contract, members of AFSCME Local 1891 in the Evanston Public Works Department went public to express their frustration—and netted their union an agreement that would end those violations.



From January to March alone, members of AFSCME Local 1175 at Menard Correctional Center suffered a shocking string of assaults on staff. During that period there were more than 30 such assaults, some requiring hospitalization. All the while, vacant security positions were left unfilled. On July 8, union members demonstrated with a clear message for management: "Our safety matters; IDOC must hire more staff."



Fed up with delays at the bargaining table, non-tenure-track faculty at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago rallied outside the school to show management that members support their bargaining committee every step of the way.



AFSCME members at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville were fighting for a fair contract when they saw a perfect opportunity to hammer their message home with the university's top leaders. The university president was hosting a big-money gala for donors, and union members decided those donors needed to learn who really makes SIUE work by taking their voices to the picket line. The action worked: Weeks later, they had an agreement that raised wages by an average of 15.5% over 4 years.



Members of AFSCME Local 1787 at Quincy Veterans Home had been pressing the Illinois Department of Central Management Services to post available, vacant jobs online so they could bring in more staff. When CMS failed to respond, they took their fight to the picket line and made their struggles visible to the community. Within two days, the jobs had been posted and received more than 60 applicants.

# City of Chicago on the clock to pass budget by Dec. 31

**T**he City of Chicago is in a difficult financial position. It faces a nearly \$1 billion budget shortfall for Fiscal Year 2025, forcing Mayor Brandon Johnson's administration to find a way to keep the city running while filling the fiscal gap.

On Oct. 30, Mayor Johnson proposed a \$17.3 billion budget for the coming year that wouldn't lay off city employees or cut city services. It would partially fill the shortfall with a \$300 million property tax increase.

AFSCME supports raising revenue to avoid cuts to jobs and services. But a property tax hike of that size was deemed "dead on arrival" by the City Council. On Nov. 14, the council unanimously voted down the \$300 million increase, sending the mayor and alders back to the drawing board to find a solution before the Dec. 31 deadline to pass a budget.

Part of the gap will likely be filled by eliminating a large number of vacant positions in several departments. AFSCME's legislative team remains in active discussions with lawmakers to make sure that no jobs or services are cut in addition to these vacancies.

According to city Budget Director Annette Guzman, avoiding the \$300 million property tax increase by instead slashing personnel costs would require a 17% staff reduction if police officers and firefighters are included and a more than 55% reduction if public safety departments are not included. Such cuts would be devastating and are clearly unacceptable.



AFSCME has insisted that there be no layoffs or service cuts in the final budget.

Instead, AFSCME is working with alders to find a package of revenue-raising measures that can pass muster and avoid cuts to services and jobs. Options currently being discussed include a smaller property tax increase, higher personal property

lease taxes on cloud computing, an increased amusement tax on streaming services, and higher residential garbage collection fees. Most of these taxes have not kept pace with inflation or the cost of providing the services they support.

As *On the Move* goes to print, the City Council is continuing to hold hearings on the budget. Council 31 remains steadfast in its opposition to any cuts to the jobs of city employees or the services that AFSCME members provide to Chicago residents. 🦋

## Meet the big rig-driving librarians of AFSCME Local 699

**B**rittany Adams sticks out among the long-haul truckers at the DMV when she goes to renew her Class B Commercial Driver's License. That's because she's not an over-the-road trucker; she works at the Bloomington Public Library, and she drives the library's 32-foot-long Bookmobile.

"Some of the big burly guys at the DMV see me coming in, and here I am, a 5'2" library worker," Adams said. "It's a huge point of pride, and it's so cool to drive a giant vehicle like this for the library."

The Bookmobile is a library on wheels, and the duties of driving it fall to seven different library workers represented by AFSCME Local 699. Together they make 50 stops over a three-week period, delivering books and building relationships with the Bloomington community.

The program is designed to instill a love of reading in Bloomington's youth and meet the

library's patrons where they are. But its secondary purpose is to provide a safe space for kids who may not have one at home.

"The idea behind this type of outreach is that the Bookmobile is like a traveling branch of the library," said Meredith DeLong, a technical library assistant and a second-generation Bookmobile driver. "We try to reach different people who don't typically make it into the library, whether it's because they're socioeconomically marginalized, or disabled folks who physically can't come into the library."

The Bookmobile and its drivers are local celebrities in

Bloomington. Out on their routes, kids have been known to chase after them down the street. Other drivers gawk when the big vehicle pulls up to a stoplight. Kids roll down the windows in the back of their minivans to shout.

"We develop relationships with our patrons that are so strong," Adams said. "When we travel in the Bookmobile, we're going into their neighborhoods. It's more personal. We have regulars that track us down at every single stop. We have regulars that tell us about their lives, their hardships, their bright moments. We make real connections with people."

All of their CDL training is done in-house by their fellow Bookmobile drivers. There's plenty of studying needed to pass the exam: They need to learn how to do pre-trip inspections, understand how air brakes work, and get to know their truck, top to bottom.

Because of all this training and other unique challenges, their union contract makes sure that the drivers are compensated for their extra effort and protected



Members of AFSCME Local 699 with the Bookmobile.

from safety risks. When they're on the road, their union contract provides for a \$2 pay differential. It also has a safety provision requiring that two employees be sent out together whenever there is a late-night route.

All the extra effort that Local 699 members put into the Bookmobile has a great payoff:

The satisfaction of knowing they've built positive, meaningful relationships with their community.

"When kids come on the Bookmobile, you get to see them grow up," Adams said. "I've had kids come on that were barely walking. Now they're picking out books on their own." 🦋

# AFSCME members keep Chicagoland's water running

*Largest water treatment plant in the world doesn't work without AFSCME members*

If you live in the Chicago area, the twist of your faucet yields some of the cleanest, purest drinking water in the world—and you have AFSCME members to thank for it.

The process that purifies and distributes that water is often taken for granted, but behind the scenes at Jardine Water Purification Plant, members of AFSCME Local 2946 are working day and night to keep the water flowing for millions of Chicago-area residents.

They're chemists who monitor water quality levels. They're engineers who staff the all-important control center and ensure critical filtration and treatment equipment is functioning properly.

"There's a lot of work in between when we bring the water in and when it goes out to the public," said Karma Ashley, a water chemist at Jardine and a Local 2946 steward. "There's a lot of hands involved in making sure that your water is safe to drink and take a bath in."

Located on a sprawling campus just north of Navy Pier, Jardine is the world's largest water filtration plant. From there, AFSCME members supply millions of people with clean drinking water, 24 hours a day.

Its capabilities are staggering. At full capacity, Jardine can filter and distribute 1 billion gallons of water a day—enough to fill the Sears Tower two and a half times. It can treat enough water to fill

two Olympic swimming pools per minute. On average, it produces around 500 million gallons a day.

For employees, working at Jardine comes with enormous responsibility. Guided by Environmental Protection Agency standards, safe drinking water for millions of Chicagoland residents is in their hands.

"When we leave at the end of the day, I know that when my family drinks the water, they're not going to get sick," said Miguel Guzman, a filtration engineer IV. "It's a good feeling to know that we're doing everything we can, every day, to keep people safe."

The process begins in the control center, where AFSCME members draw water into the plant from Lake Michigan, carefully monitoring demand throughout the Chicago area to make sure enough water is being pumped in and treated.

The water is pumped into massive filtration basins, where engineers treat it with chlorine to kill bacteria and fluoride to prevent childhood cavities. The engineers are responsible for ensuring the proper amounts of chemicals are applied and that the levels of those chemicals remain within federal standards.



AFSCME members work in Jardine's chemistry lab, performing 600,000 water tests per year.

Next, the water is filtered through layers of carbon to remove larger impurities. Now ready to drink, the water is piped to the city's pumping stations to be delivered to homes and businesses.

The whole time, filtration engineers monitor water levels, chemical treatments, and critical equipment to make sure everything is functioning smoothly.

"The process of water going through a filter is not complicated, but the analytics are no joke," Guzman said. "We're constantly monitoring the water from beginning to end, all the time."

The AFSCME members who work in the plant's two

chemistry labs run tests on water at various stages of the treatment process, and on the final product, to ensure it's safe for public consumption. Each year, chemists perform 600,000 separate water tests to ensure water quality remains consistently high.

"We take this responsibility very seriously," Ashley said. "People may not think about it this way, but what we do in the chemistry lab is really a form of public safety. We make sure that the public's water is up to standards."

Jardine isn't Chicago's only water purification plant. AFSCME members also work at the Sawyer plant that serves the city's south side

and south suburbs. Before Jardine was built in 1968, Sawyer held the title of the world's largest.

In total, nearly 150 members of AFSCME Local 2946 work for the Chicago Department of Water Management in administrative support, accounting, payment services, engineering and chemistry roles. AFSCME members in the water department also work in the field, taking water samples and assessing infrastructure.

"Operating this plant takes teamwork," Guzman said. "It's a round-the-clock operation and we have to rely on each other to get through the day." 🦋



The Jardine Water Purification Plant sits on Chicago's lakefront. Much of the sprawling campus—nearly twice the size of Navy Pier—is underground.

# AFSCME mourns labor giant Bill Lucy

**W**illiam “Bill” Lucy, who served as secretary-treasurer of AFSCME for nearly four decades and was one of the most respected and revered Black labor leaders in the world, died at his home in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 25. He was 90 years old.

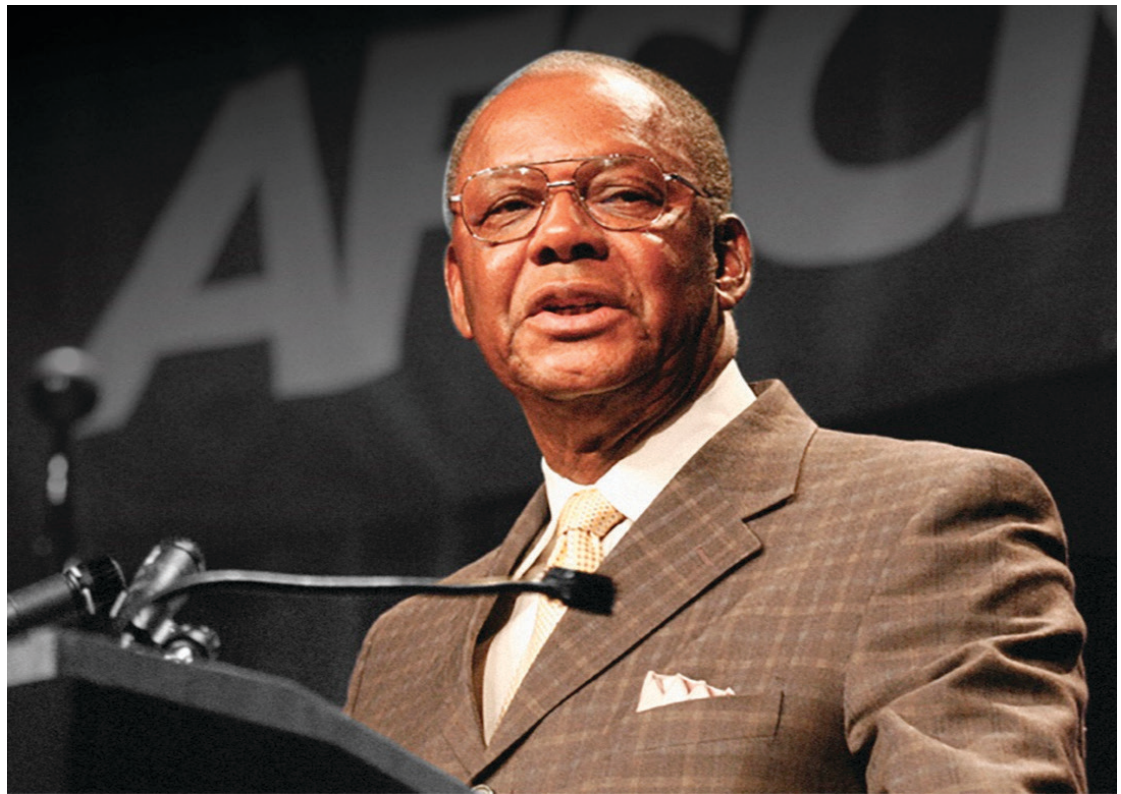
Lucy was a heavyweight of the American labor movement in the second half of the 20th century and a fierce defender of civil and human rights. He was the co-founder and long-time leader of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and a co-founder of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) that launched the successful anti-apartheid campaign in the United States.

In 1968, as a member of the International Union staff, Lucy was sent to Memphis to investigate an impasse between the city and its sanitation workers, who were seeking recognition of their AFSCME local union. The workers earned poverty wages and lacked access to safe equipment. After two workers—Echol Cole and

Robert Walker—were crushed to death by a malfunctioning garbage truck, the other sanitation workers went on strike for more than two months.

Lucy played a key role in gaining wider public acceptance of the strike, gathering community support for the workers, and eventually helping to secure a settlement that made major improvements in working conditions.

In 1972, Lucy was elected AFSCME secretary-treasurer. Over the ensuing years, he could always be counted on to be on the frontlines of battles that AFSCME members anywhere in the country were fighting. He had started his work in the labor movement as an AFSCME local union president and he never lost his strong commitment to



Former AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Bill Lucy was a champion of human, civil and labor rights.

building AFSCME’s strength at the local level.

Lucy also served on the Executive Board of the AFL-CIO and as president of Public Services International. He was widely respected throughout the American labor movement—and by trade union leaders around the world.

Bill Lucy retired as AFSCME secretary-treasurer in 2010 after 38 years in the position. At the International Convention held in Boston that year, he urged AFSCME delegates to continue the fight for social justice.

“We’ve always known that there’s a crisis,” he said. “It may be more intense now, but

there’s always been a crisis for millions of people not as lucky as we are in this room. There’s a daily crisis in their lives, as they struggle to put bread on their tables, to put clothes on their backs, to have a roof on their heads. We have a responsibility to help them out.”

## 2025 Cook County budget promises no layoffs

**I**n October 2024, Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle released the county’s projected budget for Fiscal Year 2025. The budget contains good news: No layoffs are projected.

The proposed \$9.9 billion budget also includes increased investment in the county’s health services, with appropriations to the Health Enterprise Fund up 20.9% from \$4.26 billion in FY24 to \$5.14 billion in FY25. The increase comes as membership in the CountyCare health plan is strong and demand for Cook County Health’s (CCH) services remains high.

The budget also promises to expand Cook County’s

public mental health services. To meet the growing behavioral health needs of Cook County residents, CCH will transform its behavioral health footprint with \$74 million in funding to offer a robust menu of mental and behavioral health services and ensure accessibility to residents, including the creation of a new Department of Mental Health Services.

The budget is also good news for the county’s

finances. While projections indicated that the county would face a budget gap of \$218.2 million, it was able to use available reserves, higher-than-expected revenue collections and efficiency measures to present a balanced budget that adds no new debt. The county also projects to meet its pension obligations.

One sour note: The budget plan is balanced in part due to some 3,000 vacant positions, leading to staff shortages felt most acutely in the Health Department. AFSCME local unions representing county employees are pressing management in their respective departments to put greater emphasis on hiring, including converting contractors into full-time



The Cook County budget does not include layoffs or service cuts.

county employees. AFSCME is working with the county to finalize a plan to reduce the county’s reliance on outside

contractors.

The board approved the budget plan on Nov. 21. It takes effect Dec. 1.

# OUR SAFETY MATTERS!

## IDOC EMPLOYEES TURN UP HEAT FOR SAFER WORKING CONDITIONS

### AFSCME report details scope of drug problem

A new report published by AFSCME Council 31 confirms what IDOC employees have long been saying: Drugs have increasingly become a massive problem in Illinois prisons, and management's inaction has had serious consequences for staff and individuals in custody alike.

The report, "The Growing Plague of Drugs in Prisons," analyzes two-plus years of data regarding drug-related incidents at IDOC facilities across the state and includes interviews with more than a dozen AFSCME members.

The findings make clear that nearly every day, at every security level, IDOC employees are smelling or seeing burning smoke, being exposed to dangerous substances in cells and in mail, and facing dangerous encounters with incarcerated individuals under the influence.

One particularly disturbing trend is the explosion in the smoking of paper covered in wasp spray, which many incarcerated individuals smuggle into the prison as legal mail. This increase in drug use has correlated with a rise in assaults on employees that in some cases has left correctional officers with life-threatening injuries from which they are still recovering.

The state's response to the growing problem has lagged. In a letter to IDOC Acting Director LaToya Hughes, Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch emphasized that "the reality is that drug use continues to grow throughout the prison system while IDOC management has been alarmingly slow to respond to this blatant rule violation and to the serious threat that it poses."

The report includes recommendations to tackle the problem: Increased transparency around the issue, stronger measures to prevent drug

smuggling through the mail, more clearly defined consequences for drug use, more in-depth training for staff on how to deal with drug exposures, and expanded drug counseling programs for incarcerated individuals committed to rehabilitation.

Council 31 lobbyists have distributed the report to state legislators, urging them to join in calling on the department to take action.

Visit [AFSCME31.org/Drugs-Report](http://AFSCME31.org/Drugs-Report) to read the full report.

### A wake-up call for IDOC

For more than a year, AFSCME has been pressing IDOC to tackle the problem of prison drug use head on. After seeing very little progress made, AFSCME locals took to the picket line to make the public aware of the serious safety issues that correctional employees are facing across the state. On October 17, AFSCME local unions at IDOC facilities all across the state joined together to hold informational pickets aimed at drawing the public's—and management's—attention to the increasing threat posed by drug use in state prisons.

Our message emphasized that exposure to these substances has resulted in a growing number of IDOC employees suffering an array of disturbing symptoms, often requiring emergency treatment. Drugs are also believed to contribute to the increase in offender assaults on staff.

"It looks like [management] doesn't care about staff, in my opinion. Because this isn't something that just happened. This has been going on for two, three years," Lance Bedar, president of AFSCME Local 943 at Pickneyville Correctional Center told *The Southern Illinoisan*. "Nobody likes to see their fellow workers go out in an ambulance."

The problems are further compounded by staff shortages at most correctional centers, where in some cases, posts are either closed or only worked by one person when there should be two or three.

The AFSCME-IDOC Standing Committee has pounded on these concerns at meeting after meeting—especially focusing on revamping the offender mail system, which is the main route for drug entry.

But even when potential solutions are identified, IDOC management has been far too slow to implement them. And even though the department has improved hiring in recent months, it has failed to act on a number of the recommendations AFSCME made to speed up the process, leaving staff at risk.

"They constantly come up with excuses," Eric McCubbin, president of AFSCME Local 817 at Dixon Correctional Center, told the *Dixon Telegraph*. "Whether it's funding or saying we don't have a contract for the copiers—every time we make a suggestion, they come up with an excuse."

In taking to the picket line, AFSCME locals demonstrated the depth of the frustration with management's slow response and made sure the wider community understands the scope of the problem. The pickets served a vital role in getting this message out, with more than 100 media hits—TV, radio, print and social media—from Chicago to Chester covering the union's "Safety Matters" message. Locals were able to show the problem's widespread nature, while explaining the threats that drug use, assaults, and understaffing pose to IDOC employees.







**Following pickets, IDOC signs mail-scanning contract**

AFSCME put the mail issue on the bargaining table during the last round of contract negotiations in 2023, and the parties agreed to the establishment of a joint labor-management working group tasked with coming up with a plan for handling mail.

After much deliberation, an agreement was reached that the best course of action would be transitioning to a new technology that digitally scans all offender mail and then sends it to the offender electronically to be viewed on a screen. A vendor was identified and IDOC took responsibility for working out specific details with the company. Then the department informed the union that an implementation plan had been developed and would begin soon.

That was many months ago. But still, IDOC dragged its feet. According to the department, they could not get final approval from the CMS Procurement Office, and thus could not actually sign off on the contract.

The “Safety Matters” pickets changed everything. That very day there were statements from IDOC in media reports across the state that they recognized the problem and were working to solve it—including working with the union.

Then, less than two weeks after the pickets, AFSCME got the word from IDOC: The vendor contract was signed and the department prepared to move forward with implementation!

“We still don’t have any specifics as to where or when the new system will become operational,” said Chuck Stout, AFSCME IDOC liaison. “That’s what’s needed now.”



# Shedd Aquarium employees win union election

*Workers overcome management's relentless anti-union campaign*

**T**here's yet another crest in the historic wave of workers forming unions at Chicago cultural institutions: Employees at Chicago's Shedd Aquarium have formed their union with AFSCME Council 31.

The National Labor Relations Board announced Nov. 2 that employees of Shedd Aquarium won their union by a wide margin, overcoming management's anti-union misinformation campaign.

Elections results were certified on Nov. 12. Shedd Workers United/AFSCME now represents about 180 employees, marking nine straight victories for the AFSCME Cultural Workers United (CWU) campaign in Chicago.

"Shedd is an institution focused on sustainability for marine life. Together in our union, we can ensure an equal focus on making it a sustainable place to work," the Shedd Workers United organizing committee said.

Chronically low wages were forcing many dedicated employees to leave the aquarium because they couldn't afford to work there without a secondary income. Now in their union, they intend to bargain for wage increases that will keep dedicated employees at the Shedd.

"Really great and talented people were leaving," said Carlee Reber, a learning facilitator and a member of the organizing committee. "They needed resources to take care of themselves, and they needed more flexibility so they weren't burning out."

Shedd management retained two costly anti-union law firms and was charged with violating federal labor law for



Shedd Aquarium employees after announcing they've reached a strong majority of support for their union on September 30.

its efforts to prevent workers from exercising their right to organize.


But the election results show that workers soundly rejected management's relentless campaign of misinformation.

"The future is exciting," Reber said. "Now we have the tools and the leverage to make the changes we've sought for years and years. The union is

there now and they'll have to listen to us."

Since 2021, AFSCME has helped workers form unions at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Museum of Science & Industry, the Newberry Library, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (staff and

non-tenure-track faculty).

Workers at libraries, museums and zoos are joining together through the CWU campaign to negotiate for better pay and working conditions, demand equity and fight for transparency in their workplaces. Across the country, AFSCME represents more cultural workers than any other union, including 10,000 workers at 91 museums. 

# Urbana Free Library workers organize with AFSCME

**T**he 60 employees of the Urbana Free Library (UFL) voted unanimously to form their union, which was certified by the Illinois Labor Relations Board on Nov. 6.

The UFL has been Urbana-Champaign's public library since 1874.

Library employees were motivated to organize by a pattern of unfair and unequal treatment from management.

"We were all frustrated, trying to understand why the people who actually make this library run were being treated like dirt," said Callie Ferencak, a library assistant II and member of the organizing committee.

Workers felt that decisions made by upper management were undermining the work that rank-and-file employees were doing every day.

"Our staff love the library. We care about that place. We care about our patrons," said Carol Inskip, a librarian who has worked for the library for

30 years. "That's why it's so disheartening when you see decisions get made that result in turnover, or demoralize us so much that we lose the most committed people. We know if we have a stronger voice, we'll be able to make better decisions for our library and our patrons."

Unbeknownst to each other, Ferencak and Inskip had been having separate conversations with different groups of employees about unionizing. They discovered they were both having the same conversations, so the two groups united, and set off down the path towards organizing their coworkers.

In early meetings, Ferencak and other members of the organizing committee educated coworkers in the way that library workers know best: by sharing reading lists of books



Urbana Free Library employees celebrate their union victory.

on the importance and history of the labor movement, as well as statistics showing how unionized libraries can serve their communities better.


The library's patrons were squarely on their side. At a Labor Day celebration in Champaign, UFL workers rode on AFSCME's float while their patrons, watching from the sidewalk, cheered them on.

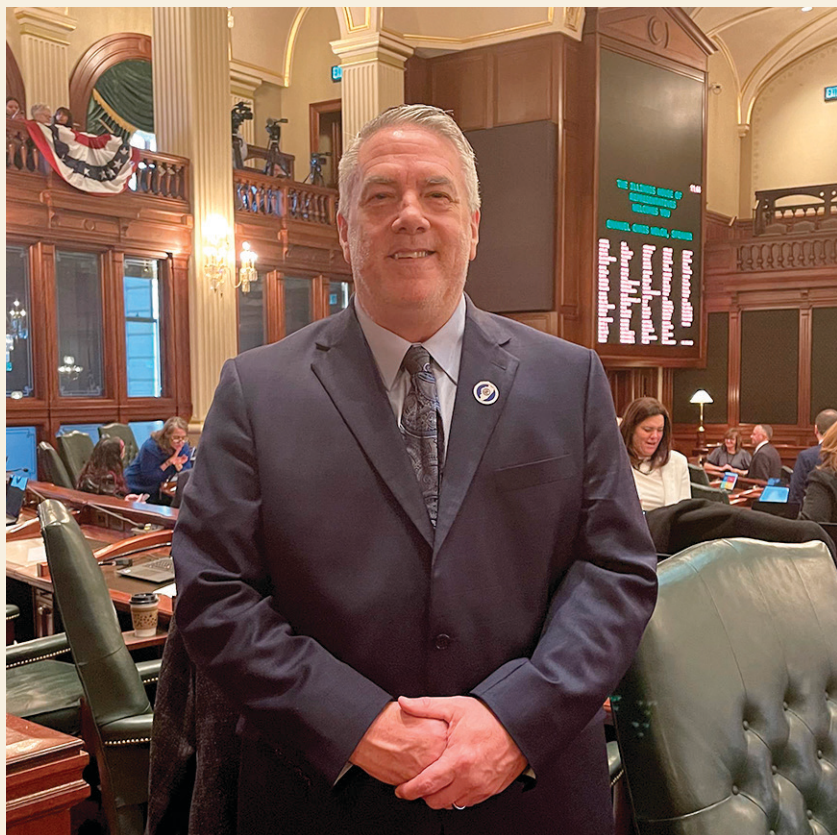
"Our patrons were shouting, 'We love you,'" Ferencak said. "It was one of the most heartwarming things I've ever seen."

Now that their union is officially certified, employees are looking forward to building the next chapter of the library—a chapter in which workers have a stronger voice in how their workplace serves

their community and are treated with respect and paid fairly.

"The future looks bright for us," Ferencak said.

More and more library workers are claiming a seat at the table—and they're doing so with AFSCME. Across the nation, AFSCME represents 25,000 workers at 275 libraries. 



## Rep. Gregg Johnson on building political power through people power

*State Rep. Gregg Johnson is an AFSCME retiree and the former president of AFSCME Local 46 at East Moline Correctional Center. On Nov. 5, he won re-election to his seat as state representative from Illinois' 87th District in the Quad Cities area. In his first term, he established himself as a strong advocate for organized labor and a defender of workers' rights.*

### How do AFSCME's grassroots efforts help you and other pro-worker candidates like you win your races?

The PEOPLE program is very important. The Green Machine always does a great job on the ground.

By the time I had started knocking doors for myself a few years ago, I had 25, 30 years of experience at knocking doors for other candidates [as an AFSCME member]. Going out there really affects races at the grassroots level.

I've turned that into a real strategy here locally. I've worked to help elect 12 school board members and two new AFSCME-endorsed mayors who are still currently in office. If you really want to build the lasting structure of an organization that can eventually lead you to the statehouse as it did for myself, it's by building those relationships at that grassroots level.

But more than anything, having validators out in the community—having people saying, I saw 15 AFSCME members, or I saw 45 union members knocking doors for this individual—it speaks volumes about that candidate's merits. You reach voters at their doors.

### How do your years of service as an AFSCME local president inform the decisions you make as a lawmaker?

[As a local president,] the first thing you do is make sure that one person is not the only one heard. I've always said the best executive board I've served under was during my first term, when we had a lot of close decisions. I learned that the important thing is, when you come out of these rooms, you come out as one unified voice. You learn a lot about how to lead, and at times, how to follow. It's all about the team. It's all about getting things done.

### What are some pro-worker policies you'd like to advance in your next term?

Everybody gets really excited when they hear about workers organizing. But the most important thing is they have to get that first contract. We see a lot of very bad-faith bargaining. For AFSCME in particular, look at CGH Hospital in Sterling. For over three years now, they've not had that first contract. And it's very clear to me that CGH will spend millions and millions of dollars to avoid that first contract and that structured union. I think we need legislation in Springfield that at some point forces some sort of arbitration, some sort of last-best-final offer, so these workers can then go forward with their collective bargaining rights.

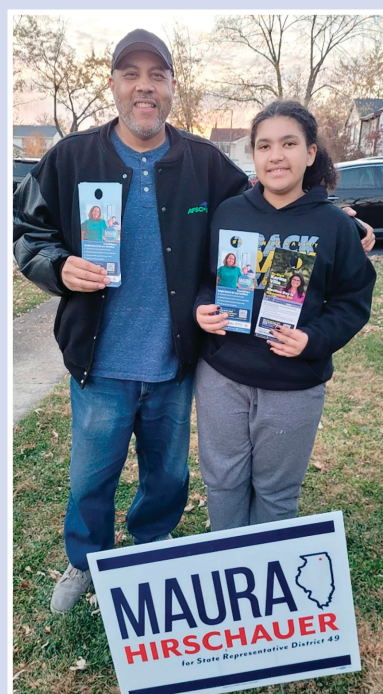
We also have the two-tier pension system, which we know is inherently unfair. We've got to fix that.

### Do you see any potential issues on the horizon that AFSCME members should be vigilant against?

We're a week out from a recent election and I have some major concerns about organized labor, both private and public sector, with the incoming [Trump] administration. And I think that our members need to really become more vigilant than ever in looking at what people are doing out there.

More than anything, our members really need to understand that we are now in the fever-pitch battle, and we absolutely can't sit on the sidelines. We should not be sitting out municipal elections. If you're a state employee and you've got municipals coming up, you need to find out who is running that's going to support your brothers and sisters in organized labor in these municipal elections. We should not take a cycle off. You can rest here and there, but when it's election time, it's go time. And we need to go every single year and get labor-friendly candidates elected all across the board. 🚀

### HITTING THE STREETS FOR PRO-UNION CANDIDATES



AFSCME members didn't sit on the sidelines during the 2024 general elections. In communities throughout the state, AFSCME members knocked doors and phone-banked for candidates who will stand up for workers up and down the ballot. Members traveling to Wisconsin were joined by AFSCME International Secretary-Treasurer Elissa McBride as she rallied union members in Milwaukee before they hit the streets.

# ON THE LOCAL LEVEL



The AFSCME Local 1216 bargaining committee defeated proposals which would have compromised patient care and staff safety.

## Local 1216 RNs defeat management's dangerous staffing proposals

REGISTERED NURSES (RNS) at Loretto Hospital in Chicago have won a new contract, defeating management's proposals that would have compromised staff safety and worsened the quality of care for patients at the hospital.

AFSCME Local 1216 secured strong wage adjustments that rectified the issue of veteran staff being under-compensated as compared to their more recently hired colleagues.

Going into negotiations, mismanagement of the hospital's finances depleted resources and caused the hospital to lose patients to other facilities, which in turn drove down the patient census and brought in less revenue to the hospital. To make up for their own mishandling of the hospital's finances, management attempted to erode the nursing staff and eliminate the step plan established in their union contract.

"Every nurse at Loretto loves their job," Local 1216 President Jessica Bell said. "We do this job for the patients. But management was trying to take the only pay incentive away from us. That was not going to fly."

Management's

disastrous proposals included dramatically increasing patient ratios for RNs, making charge nurses responsible for entire floors rather than just a single

unit, taking charge-nurse duties away from staff nurses and assigning them to often-absent managers, and cutting out charge nurses from the hospital's

staffing standards.

When management refused to budge from these proposals, Local 1216 members prepared to strike. Members made clear on

social media their reasons for and willingness to strike. Additionally, the Member Action Team did one-on-one outreach to the entire bargaining unit to make sure each member knew exactly what was at stake, convincing them to sign a pledge to strike for safe staffing if it became necessary.

"Management didn't come off a lot of the unfair, unsafe things they were pushing until they saw we were ready to strike," Bell said. "We were serious, and they knew it."

Local 1216 also took the issue to the community. The local's efforts culminated in a delegation of West Side religious, elected and community leaders delivering a letter to the CEO during negotiations demanding a fair contract.

Their efforts worked. Management's dangerous staffing proposals were defeated, and Local 1216

## UNION WINS JOB BACK FOR BARGAINING COMMITTEE MEMBER FIRED FOR ACTIVISM

Mafa Jean-Louis served on her Local 1216 bargaining committee diligently as they fought hard for safe staffing levels.

Under their union contract, Loretto employees who serve on the bargaining committee are allowed to bargain on work time without pay after being relieved of their duties. So when it came time for a bargaining session in February, Jean-Louis notified her supervisor that she was going to finish up her work and go to bargaining.

But management baselessly accused her of never finishing her work. For a dedicated nurse like Jean-Louis, that's a heavy charge—one that was designed to intimidate the rest of the staff. Management first gave her written discipline and later fired her.

Jean-Louis and the union firmly believed that not only had she been targeted for her union activism, but that management had violated her rights by not allowing her to be relieved from her duties for bargaining, and by disciplining her twice for the same charge.



Jean-Louis (left) and local President Jessica Bell after winning Jean-Louis' job back.

Management tried to keep her out of the building. But she fought back for her union, and even though she wasn't employed at the hospital, she showed up to every bargaining session to fight with her coworkers.

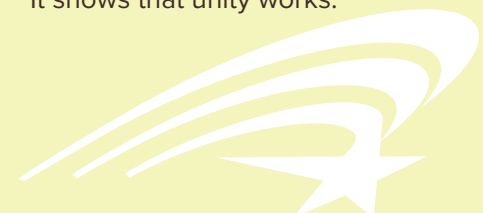
"Even if I never got my job back, I was going to keep showing up," Jean-Louis said. "It felt good to be able to fight for patient care, no matter the cost."

Management had tried to intimidate union members, but soon learned it had the opposite effect.

"What it actually did was create the fire that drove us to fight even harder," Local 1216 President Jessica Bell said.

The union prevailed after bringing the matter to arbitration. Jean-Louis got her job back, with back pay.

"I am thankful for the union and for the members," Jean-Louis said. "It shows that unity works."



won a fair contract that protected nurse staffing, correcting step placement for veteran staff members and maintaining the step plan to raise the wages of less-senior nurses.

The bargaining team included Jessica Bell (President), Sandra Weeks (Vice President), Mafa Jean-Louis (Treasurer), Mary Ann Cawley (Membership Chair) and Executive Board Members Ola Yesufu and Twana Johnson. The committee was led by Council 31 Staff Representative Rick Surber.

## Lake Land instructors beat back low offers

MORE THAN 100 LAKE LAND Community College instructors work in 17 prisons and juvenile justice facilities throughout the state, teaching individuals in custody important career skills ranging from welding and auto-body repair to restaurant management and more.

Amy Counce is a horticultural instructor at Robinson Correctional Center. Counce said the challenges of teaching these skills in a prison are many, but the payoff is great.

**“It was a great way to show them the power we have when we stand together in solidarity.”**

“It’s certainly not your traditional educational setting,” Counce said. “Every day is a new challenge, but the work is so rewarding.”

In bargaining, management first insisted it could only offer meager wage gains. Among its early proposals was a one-year wage increase of just one percent. Management also proposed huge hikes to employees’ costs for health insurance.



The AFSCME Local 2608 bargaining committee fought hard for a fair contract. They stuck together and prevailed.

The union bargaining committee held the line, insistent on demanding wages that reflect employees’ worth and the importance of their mission. They came prepared to bargaining with survey results showing that enormous percentages of their members believed they deserved a significant wage increase.

In the final contract that members ratified, the union bargaining committee beat back management’s proposals and secured the wage increases that educators deserve: Across-the-board raises of 20% over the three-year agreement. They also held the line on health costs, with no changes from the previous contract.

They made a number of gains on other fronts as well. The union lowered the length of time needed to reach the next levels of vacation accrual, doubled the amount of bereavement leave employees can take and added a pay differential for working in a maximum-security facility.

“Several of the instructors I work with at Robinson

are newer, and being able to bring this contract to them was a very powerful demonstration of what the union can do,” Counce said. “It was a great way to show them the power we have when we stand together in solidarity.”

The bargaining committee was comprised of members from 14 different locals, including Counce, Marissa Donelson, Harry Bell, Donnie Osborne, Trese McNinch, Leon Crane, Macie Zumwalt, Sharon Mather, Ron Hiland, Todd Mason, Todd Cornaghe, Jaci Heinen, Michael Tuck and Clay Nolen. The committee was led by Council 31 Regional Director Dave Beck.

## Local 2608 bus drivers and monitors win fair new contract

SOME 250 SCHOOL BUS drivers and bus monitors serving the Unit 5 School District in Bloomington-Normal have won a fair new contract that includes strong

wage increases, guaranteed daily hours, and improved paid leave language in line with the Illinois Paid Leave for All Workers Act.

During the three months of negotiations, it was the latter point that proved the most difficult hurdle. The employer—First Student, Inc., a company contracted to operate the school buses on behalf of the school district—wanted AFSCME Local 2608 to agree to waive their rights under the law and instead follow the company’s national leave policy.

The members of Local 2608 were clear: Under no circumstances would they agree to a waiver allowing the employer to supersede state law and change its leave policy unilaterally. During the three months of negotiations, the waiver became a sticking point, and with little progress in the first few bargaining sessions and the company refusing to make any new proposals, the members stepped up to show First Student that they were united in solidarity.

Local 2608 members signed a petition demanding fair wages and no paid-leave

waiver, wore buttons, and placed signs in cars in the parking lot, making sure they were visible to management. Then on Sept. 18, some 80 local members showed up to the school board meeting where Vice President Steven Dean addressed board members to share the difficulties around the company’s waiver demands during negotiations.

After the board meeting, the parties returned to the table, where the company finally pulled the waiver from their proposal. A tentative agreement was reached on September 25. The negotiating team included Dede Bridges, Dean, Joe Schramm, Bobbie Burch, Bob Legget, Cindy Wilbur, Charita Jeffery, Tammy Schultz and Robert Blessing. It was led by Council 31 Staff Representative Renee Nestler.

“I couldn’t be prouder of this contract, and that’s because solidarity was there from our members 100% of the way. We did a great job of sticking together as a unit,” said Local President Dede Bridges. “We didn’t allow that waiver, because we have the right to deny what they wanted us to do on their behalf.”

# SHORT REPORTS

## NLRB union filings double since 2021

THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD has seen an explosion in the number of workers forming unions.

The NLRB said it had received 3,286 election petitions in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, a 27% increase from last year and more than double the 1,638 petitions filed in fiscal year 2021, when President Joe Biden took office.

The growth in cases came as the Biden Administration eased constraints on organizing and empowered workers to claim their seat at the table.

Not only are workers forming more unions, but they're also winning elections at the highest rate in decades. The NLRB in July said unions had won 79% of elections held since the end of the previous fiscal year.

The newly released data reflects an exciting new front for organized labor as workers who have not traditionally had unions—such as cultural workers, Starbucks employees, and Apple employees—have taken on increasingly public fights to form their unions.

But statistics also show that bosses are fighting back—and even breaking the law to do so. In the same period, the board received about 21,300 complaints alleging illegal labor practices, a 7% increase from 2023 and the highest total since 2016. From 2023 to 2024, unfair labor practice charge filings increased 7% (from 19,869 to 21,292 cases).

## Union film series builds solidarity

AFSCME LOCAL 35, WHICH represents staff of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), has a unique role in the city's labor tapestry: The local's members include workers at the only union movie theater in Chicago, the Gene Siskel Film Center.

In October, the Siskel showed a run of union movies it dubbed "Workers of the World, Unite!" The film series included screenings of classics like "9 to 5", "Norma Rae" and "Harlan County, USA". It also featured the debut of the new



Local 35 Steward Ursula Wagner dressed as Norma Rae.

documentary "Union", which chronicles the struggles of Amazon warehouse workers to unionize.

Members of Local 35 saw the film series as an opportunity to build solidarity within their union.

Ursula Wagner, a projectionist and Local 35 steward, said that the nature of their work at the film center means that employees don't often see one another face to face, and because the film center is blocks away from the rest of the school, they can feel disconnected from the rest of their colleagues.

To break down those barriers, the local union organized an outing for members to a screening of "Norma Rae", where Wagner dressed in full costume as the titular union organizer, complete with her trademark cardboard "UNION" sign.

"We laughed and cried together," Wagner said. "It was a great way to connect us and definitely inspired all of us to keep up the fight."

## AFSCME Local 981 gets in spirit of giving

AFSCME LOCAL UNIONS know the importance of public service, and many take the holiday season as

an opportunity to make sure their communities have the comforts and necessities they need.

AFSCME Local 981, which represents employees at Eastern Illinois University, did just that. With winter weather fast approaching, they organized a winter clothing drive, soliciting donations from employees, students and the broader community.

"The winter months are a challenging time for everybody and we feel it's important for us to contribute in a way to support each other," Local 981 President Kim Pope said. "A lot of students might not have experienced a Midwest winter before and are unprepared. Others may be struggling to make ends meet."

They papered the town of Charleston with flyers, blasted information out on social media and advertised it by word of mouth within their local. In a matter of weeks, they received 150 articles of winter clothing—hats, gloves, scarves and coats—that they donated to the university's food pantry.

"Everybody should have access to proper clothing to keep them warm," Pope said. "Something as simple as a hat and gloves can make a big difference in someone's comfort and security." 🦋



From left: Local 981 Recording Secretary Lynn Griesemer, President Kim Pope and Clerical-Technical Chief Steward Leslie McLean.

# RETIREE NOTES

## Defending Medicare and Social Security

AFSCME RETIREES NATION-wide are gearing up for what will surely be a fight to protect Medicare and Social Security as retirees worry that the Republican-led Congress may target the critical programs.

“We know their playbook—they want to slash our benefits and jack up costs. But AFSCME Retirees have seen these attempts before, and we stand ready to fight back at all costs to make sure our health care and our Social Security benefits are here to stay,” said Larry Brown, President of AFSCME Illinois Retiree Chapter 31.

Without action by Congress, the Social Security and Medicare trust funds won't be able to account for benefit payments in the long term. The next president must help find a bipartisan path forward on legislation to safeguard these vital programs.

While Kamala Harris had proposed raising what the

wealthy pay into these programs, along with lowering costs for prescription drugs through expanded negotiations with Big Pharma, Donald Trump has made no proposals to shore up their solvency.

Although Trump has repeatedly pledged not to cut Social Security or Medicare benefits, he has backed cuts to Social Security and Medicare in the past. As president, he proposed cutting \$25 billion from Social Security and \$575 billion from Medicare over a decade. His first presidential administration also submitted budgets every year that proposed cuts both to Medicare and Social Security.

“Many of us are fortunate to have pensions and not be completely reliant on Social Security, but that doesn't mean we don't count on it. Not all seniors are so lucky,” Brown said. “Retirees must organize to protect the benefits that we earned, must be ready to advocate and fight to protect the two programs that lifted so many seniors out of poverty and allow us to live with dignity in our last years.”

## What's new in Medicare in 2025?

1) Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, all Medicare plans will now include a \$2,000 cap on what you pay out of pocket for covered prescription drugs. This includes deductible and copays.

The \$2,000 out-of-pocket limit only applies to prescriptions that your Part D plan covers. If you need a prescription that's not covered under your plan, you will be responsible for paying the full cost out of pocket.

Part D enrollees who reach the catastrophic threshold will save about \$1,300 on drug costs in 2025 compared to 2024, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation review. In future years, the \$2,000 cap will rise with inflation.

2) The standard monthly Part B premium will be \$185 in 2025. This is up from \$174.70 in 2024. The annual deductible for Part B will be \$240 in 2025.

3) Medicare beneficiaries can choose to pay drug copays and coinsurance over time. In 2025, the cost of medications can be spread out over a period of months rather than paying for everything you owe every time you pick up prescriptions from the pharmacy. A new optional payment plan can ease budgeting, particularly for expensive drugs.

4) Medicare Advantage enrollees will get a new letter in the summer of 2025. A Mid-Year Enrollee Notification of Unused Supplemental Benefits letter will be sent out between June 30 and July 31, 2025, and will list any supplemental benefits such as vision or dental coverage that you haven't used in the first six months of 2025 and include: the scope of the benefit, cost-sharing for the benefit, instructions on how to access the benefit, network information, and a customer service number to call for more information. The letter attempts to address the issue of unused benefits and unspent funds being funneled back into Medicare Advantage marketing efforts rather than providing services.

## WEP/GPO Passes the House

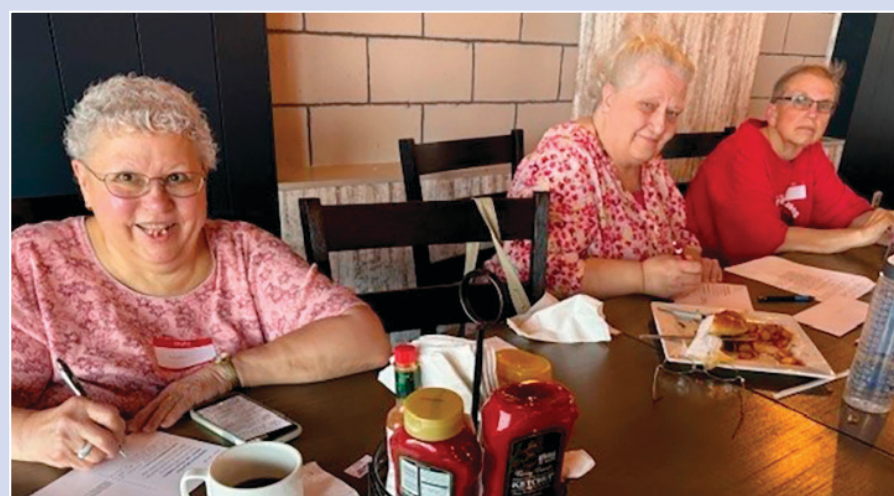
After decades of working to eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO), AFSCME is happy to announce that the House of Representatives voted to repeal GPO-WEP in mid-November. WEP & GPO unfairly robs some public service workers and their families of their Social Security benefits simply because they have a pension. Public service workers dedicate their lives to improving our communities and deserve the full retirement benefits they earned. We must now keep pressure on our Senators to support H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act.

## ★ ★ ★ ★ SENIORS STEPPED UP IN ELECTION ★ ★ ★ ★

From postcards to fellow retirees in battleground states to phone-banking and door-knocking, hundreds of AFSCME Illinois Retirees got active in this year's election. “We all felt a sense of social responsibility and concern for the direction of our country,” said Marcia Heitz, president of the Macomb area Sub-chapter 81. “We wanted to step up and help where we could.”



Clockwise from left: Sub-chapter 60 (Kankakee), Sub-chapter 60 (Chicago) and Sub-chapter 79 (McLean County).





# April Tolbert

PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATOR, SENIOR  
COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

AFSCME Local 1276

## What is your job?

I work in our community engagement and health education unit as a public health educator, senior. I work with local coalitions and community leaders to determine what suburban Cook County's community health needs are and help create policies to allocate resources to those communities accordingly.

I also serve as an advocate. I go out into communities, listen to their needs, and bring their concerns back to the department. Their voices help lead our public health strategic planning. I like to think of myself as a community connector, and I'm really proud of that.

Through the department's epidemiology department and our partnerships with the federal and state government, the Department of Public Health collects a lot of data on emerging health needs. But numbers can only tell you so much about what a community needs. Data is import-

ant, but people cannot be reduced to numbers. That's where public health educators come in—I help to balance out that data at a qualitative level. We combine that data with the community voices, and that's what we use to drive policies.

## What does the outreach you do look like in practice?

I'll give you an example. A few years ago, Proviso Township suffered a string of youth suicides. Our community partners in the area approached us, wanting more data and what the Department of Public Health is doing about this problem. I've worked with this group for 15 years now, so they trust me, and we have a great relationship.

From there, I got together with our epidemiologists and other experts in the department, and we set to work looking into this problem more closely.

We wanted to give them something that is accessible and they can use with parents and students. Now, after putting all of our heads together, our agency has created a report specifically for youth suicide prevention along with all these infographics that we are giving to this group for them to share within the community.

The result is the creation of this tool that could potentially save a life.

## Are you active in your union?

I became an active steward about 10 years ago. I was inspired to get involved by a coworker who was very active in the union who was always preaching solidarity and that message resonated with

me. I wanted to work with the administration to make sure our voices were heard and that we as employees could stand strong together.

## How does your professional and union work overlap?

To me, my union work is just a continuation of my professional work. In both my role as a public health educator and as a union steward, there's a big focus on power-building. Individually we might seem small, but we have great power because we are unified. If you don't know your rights, you don't know your powers. We make sure the members know their power and know they have us as advocates when they're unsure of their rights.

## How does your union help you do your job?

As health educators in particular, the union has really helped us to ensure that we are not taken advantage of in this role. There is a risk that the administration tries to expand our responsibility without increasing pay or without even acknowledging the good work we do. The union has been instrumental in working with our leaders to ensure that doesn't happen and that our rights are not trampled upon. The administration doesn't get to take advantage of folks like myself just because we are passionate about the work. I'm happy that we have such a strong union that isn't afraid to go toe-to-toe with the administration. 🦋