



MOVE

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



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On the Move

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It's no secret: Working families can't afford Bill Brady

The senator has a record we can't ignore



BY HENRY BAYER

BRADY VOTED TO CUT THE PENSIONS OF ALL NEW HIRES, (STATE, UNIVERSITY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SCHOOL BOARD) AND HE SUPPORTS CUTTING THEM FOR CURRENT EMPLOYEES AS WELL.

Bill Brady, the Republican candidate for governor, spent a lot of time denouncing the agreement AFSCME reached with the Quinn administration, which would extend a no-layoff guarantee for state employees that expires on June 30, 2011, if the union and the employer can save the state at least \$50 million.

ONE MIGHT THINK THAT MR. BRADY WOULD APPLAUD AN AGREEMENT THAT WILL:

- Lead to saving taxpayer dollars in a budget that's \$13 billion out of whack;
- Maintain health care, child protection, public safety and other vital services at a time of heavy demand; and
- Keep from adding to the ranks of the unemployed.

Instead, Brady attacked the union and the Quinn administration for entering into a "secret deal" which would "tie his hands" should he become the governor.

The "secret," according to Republicans was that there was a quid pro quo: The union would endorse Quinn and in return he would agree to no layoffs.

Not so. The decision to endorse Gov. Quinn came only after a spirited debate before approximately 500 local union delegates from not only state, but university, local government and private sector locals, who are the only ones empowered to make endorsement decisions.

You'd think that a man who has been in the legislature for seventeen years and has been called upon to cast thousands of votes on important policy and budget issues and now wants to be governor would do a little homework before shooting from the hip.

Equally troublesome is Brady's complaint that this no-layoff agreement would tie his hands. It's safe to presume that he's not opposed to the cost-sav-

ings that would be generated by the agreement, since he says he will cut every budget – state agencies, universities, aid to schools and local governments, and non-profit agency funding.

No, Bill Brady's concern is that he would be prevented from laying off state employees and closing state facilities. And there's ample evidence in his long record as a state senator that Brady has a penchant for doing just that. It was this open record, not a secret deal, that led to the union's decision to recommend Quinn.

When the election season started, there were more than a few AFSCME members who were mad at Pat Quinn. Even though he had reversed his predecessor's decision to close the Pontiac Correctional Center, restored jobs in state parks and historic sites, forced Heartland Human Services to settle a two year strike and lockout, and resumed hiring in state agencies whose ranks had been decimated by his predecessor, he had also signed legislation reducing pensions for new hires, tried to layoff hundreds of members and closed the Thomson Correctional Center and Howe Developmental Center.

But then local union leaders had a chance to hear and question Brady directly.

Brady reiterated his determination to cut the state budget by 10 percent across the board. He said he thought the state should be run like a business and that he would look at privatizing state

operations. And after having voted to cut the pensions of all new hires, (state, university, local governments and school board), he supports cutting them for current employees as well.

If there was a secret, it was Bill Brady's voting record. And when it was revealed, AFSCME members found it included votes to eliminate 2,500 state jobs; cut university budgets by \$38 million; wipe out a modest 2 percent COLA for community disability agencies; close the Zeller Mental Center in Peoria; shutter the Sheridan Correctional Center and mothball prison work camps in Paris, Greene County and Hanna City. Brady had sealed the deal – an overwhelming endorsement of Pat Quinn.

That's the "secret." No one was more responsible for spurring the Quinn endorsement than Bill Brady himself. And for anyone who doubts Sen. Brady's intentions, I invite you to view his TV ads blasting the no-layoff agreement and criticizing the governor for agreeing to maintain services and to keep facilities open.

The union has made its recommendation. Every member is of course entitled to his or her own opinion, but you should root your decision in the facts of the respective records.

On Nov. 2 either Pat Quinn or Bill Brady will be elected governor. One candidate has a mixed record and promises to improve. The other has a virtually unblemished record of opposition to the interests of working families and promises to keep it that way.

If anyone wants to defend Bill Brady's record of cutting jobs, closing facilities and voting against the rights of workers, I'd like to hear from you.

And I'd like to hear from those who agree with me as you march to the polls with members from scores of other unions, to speak with one voice as we cast our votes for Pat Quinn.

Tentative agreement would extend ban on state employee layoffs for another year

With an overwhelming vote of support by presidents of locals that represent state employees, AFSCME entered into an agreement with the Quinn administration on Sept. 13 that could extend until June 30, 2012, the guarantee that no AFSCME-represented state employees will be laid off and no state facilities closed.

"IT'S GREAT FOR ALL OUR MEMBERS," SAID TOM BROWN, PRESIDENT OF LOCAL 203 AT CENTRALIA CORRECTIONAL CENTER. "IT WILL PROVIDE STABILITY FOR NEW HIRES AND THE VETERANS WILL KNOW THEY AREN'T GOING TO HAVE TO PICK UP THEIR FAMILIES AND MOVE BECAUSE OF A FACILITY CLOSURE. MEMBERS I TALKED TO SEE THIS AS PROGRESS FOR OUR UNION. THEY SEE MANAGEMENT IS TRYING TO WORK WITH US."

The extension is contingent on AFSCME and the state working together to identify at least \$50 million in cost savings through a combination of some or all of the following means:

- Reduced reliance on mandatory overtime;
- Greater efficiencies in state agency operations;
- An expanded voluntary furlough program;
- Additional efficiencies in group health insurance;
- Insourcing of privatized work; and
- Changes in employee compensation.

While the extension depends on finding \$50 million in savings, the goal is \$100 million.

"If we can get the extension, it will be wonderful for our members in uncertain times," said Jason Johnston, president of Local 1019, EPA. "It's a testament to our collective bargaining power – a reasonable agreement to extend protection to our families."

No renegotiations on health care

IN A SEPARATE MEMORANDUM, management agreed to waive the provision in the current Master Agreement that allowed the state to reopen the contract this year for negotiations on employee health insurance costs.

That provision was modified last year when the union and the administration worked with a mediator to settle several grievances arising from attempts to lay off state employees.

That mediated resolution resulted in a bar to any layoffs and facility closures through June 30, 2011. It also included a commitment for Council 31 to work with the state to develop greater efficiencies in the group health insurance program. If at least \$70 million in annual savings could be found, the state agreed to waive its option to reopen the contract.

After months of intensive effort by Council 31 benefits expert Hank Scheff and the state's benefits administration staff, those efficiencies have been identified.

No premium increases

THERE WILL BE NO INCREASES IN premiums or deductibles, nor are there any general increases in co-payments for pre-

'It's a testament to our collective bargaining power – a reasonable agreement to extend protection to our families.'

—Local 1019 President Jason Johnston

scription drugs or for HMO members.

Co-insurance payments could rise to 30 percent for the small percentage of employees and retirees in the Quality Care Health Plan who use out-of-network physicians, which is the rate specified in the master agreement. In addition, other service providers, such as medical-supply houses, will be added to the QCHP. Members who use these new PPO providers will pay 10 percent of the cost, rather than the 20 percent they pay now, but members who use non-PPO providers will pay 30 percent.

QCHP participants will be encouraged to use less-expensive prescription drugs under the state's pharmacy-benefit program.

They would only encounter higher prescrip-

'AFSCME is firmly committed to fighting against layoffs by all means possible.'

—Henry Bayer

tion co-payments if they fail to show that they tried lower-cost-generic and brand-name alternatives to certain high-cost, brand-name medications, and that those alternatives weren't effective. Patients taking these higher cost medications will be able to request exceptions based on medical necessity. The shift to equally effective, lower-cost medications will result in cost savings for both participants and the state.

A dental preferred-provider network will be developed, which will also save money for both covered individuals and the state.

Members will vote on any pay restructuring

EMPLOYEES ARE SCHEDULED FOR 8.5 percent in wage increases in a one-year period that begins Jan. 1. Reaching \$50 million in savings to kick in the one-year extension may require some wage-increase deferrals, union leaders caution.

"Any proposal for pay restructuring needed to meet the \$50 million in cost savings that is required to effectuate the 'no-layoff, no-closure' agreement will be submitted to the full membership for a vote before any agreement is finalized," Council 31 Director Henry Bayer said. "If the proposal is not approved, the agreement would not be effective, and the employer would not be prohibited from laying off employees or closing facilities beyond June 30, 2011.

"Layoffs in these dire economic times present a grave danger to the economic security of state employees and their families," Bayer said. "AFSCME is firmly committed to fighting against layoffs by all means possible. The state local union presidents overwhelmingly voted in support of this agreement because they recognize that the best defense against layoffs is a legally binding agreement that prevents them from occurring."

LOCAL UNION PRESIDENTS REACT TO THE AGREEMENT

MIKE OESER, PRESIDENT OF LOCAL 3567 AT WESTERN ILLINOIS CC

"Given the current climate and uncertainty of the upcoming elections, we'd be foolhardy not to go for an extension. Our contract expires in June of 2012 and it would be a nightmare to try and negotiate a new contract while fighting closures and layoffs."

He said very few of his members would be opposed to deferring some of the upcoming wage increases.

"Brady is still of a mind that cuts and closures are a way out of the budget crisis. The plan sells itself when people look at the damage that could be done."

SUMMER DOXIE, PRESIDENT OF LOCAL 386 AT MADDEN MHC

"This agreement shows the state and the union can work together on the budget. Our members realize this is a great insurance policy to have. You have to see the big picture – we're already so short on staff. At least now we can keep the staff we have and have a chance to get our work done. This was a great step for Council 31."

TOM BROWN, PRESIDENT OF LOCAL 203 AT CENTRALIA CC

"People see the agreement as progress for the union. They see management trying to work with us. It's the start of a good relationship to work on the budget. Pat Quinn would be the best for Illinois. But if Brady wins, he'll have to negotiate with us for our next contract and he won't be able to use laid off employees as a bargaining chip."

LYNNETTE ROACH, PRESIDENT OF LOCAL 172 AT MABLEY DC

"The ideas we presented to management to save money were well thought out and creative. A lot of people dug really deeply. Management seemed open and non-confrontational. They worked with us."

In discussing the agreement with her members, she said, "A majority understand that we have to do things we may not want to, but weighed against thousands of layoffs and facility closures, it's really a small piece of the pie. We want to protect the services we provide to the public and we can't do that if there are layoffs and closures."

JASON JOHNSTON, PRESIDENT OF LOCAL 1019, SPRINGFIELD EPA AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

"This will give our members a sense of breathing room, but we still need to keep the pressure on legislators to quit trying to use us to balance the budget and do their jobs instead. If you fire all of us it will only save \$3 billion and the deficit is \$13 billion. We're just a convenient scapegoat. It doesn't make sense to berate the people you need in order to get the job done, then tell them to do more with less. I wish we could break the perception that we are the problem."



Public employees, government under attack

"California's public sector is stealing the rest of us blind"

— headline in the *Victorville Daily Press*.

"Taxpayers victimized by city, unions"

— letter to *The Commercial Appeal of Memphis*.

Public employees have become a strategic punching bag for big business and the media outlets it dominates, who are orchestrating an unprecedented assault on public workers — and on government itself.

THESE ATTACKS ARE PART OF A CYNICAL EFFORT TO REDIRECT THE ANGER OF PRIVATE SECTOR workers who increasingly face the steady erosion of wages, a disappearing dream of retirement security and an evermore tenuous grasp on the promise of home ownership.

Today the American middle class is endangered. With the advent of a global economy, big multi-national corporations are driving ever harder to increase their profits no matter what the human cost. Since the only real opposition to their dominance comes from the labor movement, the big guns are pointed at public employees, the sector where unions remain strongest.

Unrelenting media attacks

WITNESS THE BARRAGE OF MEDIA attacks:

- "Lower taxes and slash budgets," said New York University professor Richard Epstein in *Forbes*. "Deep cuts must be made today, not in a generation."

- He railed against "bloated union contracts," and called for "a frontal assault on the protected status of public unions," including a "cut (in) pension benefits for present and future union retirees. ... the ultimate objective is to reduce pensions for public employees to the levels received by their peers in private industry."

- The *Washington Post* reported that "Rush Limbaugh denounced public employees as 'leftist' and 'socialist': 'They

want you to pay more taxes so they can continue in their free-loader gigs."

- "Out of work? Behind on your bills? Defaulting on your mortgage, maybe? If so, you no doubt did not hold a government job before getting canned," said a *New York Post* columnist. "Fact is, private workers are being taxed to death so they can pay their federal counterparts more than twice what they themselves earn."

His attack was filled with snarky remarks, like: "Government workers don't really produce anything; they just 'govern.' (Ever wear any clothes made by a government worker? Eat any food grown by a government farmer?)" and "every five private-sector workers chip in to cover the costs of one government worker. (Maybe taxpayers should get cards with the name and picture of the government worker they're sponsoring.)"

• In the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* a columnist bemoaned, "the dictatorial power of public employee unions," who are "driving taxing bodies toward bankruptcy and crowding out better uses for the money. Bridges crumble and libraries close, but public pensions can't be touched."

- The same column quotes two Northwestern University law professors who assert that "state and local governments could experiment and innovate better, were it not for the dead hand of unionism in public employment, where workers aren't exploited in the first place."

They call teachers unions "the single greatest obstacle to improving education in this country," and urge governors to view current bad times and budget woes as a "political opening to abolish the right of public employee unions to strike, collectively bargain, seek binding arbitration and collect dues."

A few voices of reason

FORTUNATELY, THERE ARE A FEW voices of reason seeking to counter the public employee bashing that has become rampant. In a *New York Post* opinion piece, Daniel Morris pointed out that companies are "exploiting the desperation of the unemployed," to drive down wages. Politicians aren't far behind, he noted, "by claiming that public-sector employees must sacrifice more and act like private sector employees who supposedly feel blessed and thankful to get a paycheck, any paycheck."

He argues that this new race to the bottom is "doing terrible harm to many Americans." And the line that "teachers, firefighters, cops and sanitation workers ... recklessly pursue financial gain and swindle taxpayers," is "really, really absurd."

He points out that "every 100 public-sector layoffs result in around 30 private-sector layoffs," according to the Economic Policy Institute, "because the subsequent loss of income dampens consumer spending and thus weakens the economy."

He concludes, "If the march against the unions and the public sector continues, the recession could hang around like an unwelcome guest, costing businesses and government more over time through vanishing growth, productivity and

demand. The ranks of the working poor will swell and public assistance rolls will expand.

"Upward mobility and shared prosperity cannot be created this way. In earlier eras, a robust middle class was built and sustained not by making jobs worse for more people but by making them better."

Public Services 'essential'

COUNCIL 31 DIRECTOR HENRY Bayer said it's essential that public-sector workers take every opportunity to remind their friends and neighbors, as well as their local newspapers, of the vital services they provide and the role they play in maintaining the public good.

"These guys like Rush Limbaugh say public employees don't produce anything because we don't manufacture clothing? First of all, almost nobody in America manufactures clothing anymore because big business has already shipped all those jobs overseas. And second of all, I will bet that most Americans would much rather be sure that criminals are kept off their streets by the police who catch them, the court system that prosecutes them, and the correctional facilities that incarcerate them, than go buy an extra pair of blue jeans. And that's true of hundreds of other essential services that public employees provide to their fellow citizens everyday."





Privatization - the ultimate weapon against public employees

Though the idea that private, for-profit companies do a better, more efficient job at providing public services has many adherents, there isn't much evidence that this widely repeated proposition is actually true.

STILL, IT OFFERS DISTINCT ADVANTAGES FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY ONES WITH friends who stand to gain from securing contracts:

- Contractors often make generous contributions to politicians who can direct contracts their way.
- Accountability for poor service gets deflected away from the public official.
- Non-union, private workforces get lower pay and fewer benefits, saving the government money in the short run.
- Public employee unions are weakened.

At the state level, the Illinois Lottery is being turned over to a private management firm. Fortunately AFSCME was able to insert language into the authorizing legislation that protects Lottery employees' job rights, wages and benefits.

But the possible election of state Sen. Bill Brady would put

state employees on high alert. Brady has stated his intention to explore privatization of any and all state services, with the exception of Corrections. (Though it should be noted that he has voted to end the current ban on the privatization on most prison services.)

Even with bad news, more privatization schemes

GIVEN THE RECENT NEGATIVE experience of Indiana, where the state had to terminate the contract of a company hired to determine eligibility for public assistance, and Texas, which has spent more than \$100 million to rehire state workers for screening applicants for Food Stamps and other assistance, it isn't clear why privatization continues to have a good name.

But the continuing bad news about privatization, and the lack of any evidence that it saves money in any way except by lowering wages and cutting benefits, doesn't seem to faze politicians.

For example, AFSCME members and their allies in the community have fought Mayor Richard Daley to a standstill in his administration's efforts to shutter Chicago's city mental health clinics and privatize the services.

Most recently AFSCME members from Local 505 and community activists joined forces to sidetrack an ordinance that would have opened the door to privatization of the mental health clinics and other

Chicago Department of Public Health services. Under the pressure they mounted, the city backed off.

And in Kane County, the Health Department is turning over a long list of public health programs to private agencies, despite an AFSCME-led campaign against the move and warnings that those who desperately need services would be the losers.

Burning the furniture to heat the house

THE LATEST FORM OF PRIVATIZATION has an even more lucrative, and very tempting, benefit for elected officials in these times of tight budgets: Companies bid to operate revenue-producing public assets. The city or other government entity gets a big chunk of money up front and the winning bidder gets to collect the fees, tolls or other revenues it charges the public to use the asset.

The advantages are obvious:

- The user fees can be raised without the government taking the heat.
- The upfront payment relieves budget pressures, if only in the short term.
- And of course, the workers lose union representation.

Daley has been king of this ploy, leasing the Chicago Skyway and the city's parking meters to private companies. His efforts to pull the same trick with Midway Airport have thus far been unsuccessful, thanks to a depressed economy, but he

keeps trying.

The problem is that once the upfront payment has been spent, the city will have to look elsewhere for revenue. The bridge tolls, parking meter fees, etc. are filling some CEOs' or shareholders' pockets.

Still, other government units are following suit. Indiana has leased out operation of its toll road system. And the mayor of Indianapolis has won city and county approval to sell the city's water and sewer system. It is also poised to enter into a 50-year lease of its parking meters in exchange for cash and a piece of the annual parking revenue.

Placing limits on contracting out

GIVEN THE WAVES PRIVATIZATION has caused in Chicago, some opposition has developed.

Alderman Scott Waguespack has introduced an ordinance requiring that City Council members be notified of a potential sale or lease of a public asset and provided with the objectives of the project, the type of assets under consideration and a time line of key events. It would also mandate that before the sale or lease of any public asset worth more than \$1 million, the city hold a public hearing, make the exact language of the lease agreement and any pertinent documents relating to the plan public record, and permit an independent third party to evaluate the deal. Finally, the ordinance would only allow a maximum of 30-year lease

agreements.

Council 31 has already succeeded in getting state legislation enacted that would set similarly stringent conditions before any school district could privatize services, including protections for workers, so that contracting out cannot be used to erode the conditions of employment. The Union is now pushing to pass the same kind of measure to cover all state government services.

Many AFSCME contracts also have provisions that restrict contracting out. Council 31 and the state of Illinois are currently engaged in a project to root out contractors who are doing work that rightfully belongs to AFSCME-represented state employees.

"The state has been using these vendor contracts for a long time, even when it's more expensive than hiring state employees to do the work," said collective bargaining administrator Erin Gorman, who is taking the lead for Council 31 in enforcing the state contracting-out language. "Part of that has been due to previous administrations wanting to cut the number of state employees for political reasons. And they also were squeezing campaign contributions out of contractors, so they wanted to have a lot of them."

"The process that we've undertaken now with the Quinn Administration to actually look at 'insourcing' this work could become a model for combating privatization in other jurisdictions as well," she said.

Council 31 backs Shoop and Piechocinski for IMRF trustee

Don't let management hijack the IMRF



John Piechocinski

AFSCME members who work for suburban and downstate municipalities, counties, school districts, park districts and other units of local government (except the city of Chicago and Cook County) will be receiving Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund trustee election ballots in the mail the week of Nov. 1.

AFSCME strongly recommends IMRF members vote for AFSCME member Marvin R. Shoop Jr., and for Illinois Education Association member John Piechocinski.

The other candidate in the election is the Director of Finance and Treasurer for the City of Crystal Lake. Employers, by law, already have four IMRF trustees. Don't help them get a fifth!



Marvin R. Shoop Jr.

**Vote to preserve your retirement benefits.
Vote for a fully funded pension system.
Vote for Marvin Shoop and John Piechocinski.**



Major fight looming to preserve retirement security

Public employee pensions on corporate hit list

The rich and powerful have much to gain from eliminating public employees' defined-benefit pensions, and to look at their recent media blitz, they have every intention of doing so.

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ARE AMONG THE FEW WORKERS WHO STILL HAVE SECURE RETIREMENT BENEFITS. So eliminating them would relieve potential pressure on corporate chieftains to provide pensions to their own employees. More importantly, they wouldn't have to worry about paying taxes to fund the pensions. Plus, Wall Street would reap a huge

windfall of fees for servicing private retirement accounts.

The corporate campaign to achieve this goal is fierce and unrelenting:

"The haves are retirees who were once state or municipal workers," said columnist Ron Lieber in the New York Times. "Their seemingly guaranteed and ever-escalating monthly pension benefits are breaking budgets nationwide. The have-nots are taxpayers who don't have generous pensions. Their 401(k)s or individual retirement accounts have taken a real beating in recent years and are not guaranteed. And soon, many of those people will be paying higher taxes or getting fewer state services as their states put more money aside to cover those pension checks."

A Forbes columnist demanded that we "Cut pension benefits for present and

future union retirees."

The same columnist noted that lawmakers in Colorado, Minnesota and South Dakota have voted to end cost-of-living increases for present and future pensioners.

The Chicago Tribune has run an unending series of articles and editorials demanding that public employee pensions be reduced, despite a provision of the Illinois Constitution that prohibits such action.

The Tribune is serving as the mouthpiece for Chicago's big-business community, which is leading the anti-pension campaign in Illinois.

"Pension funds crowd out every other priority in the state of Illinois," said an opinion piece by Lawrence Msall, president of The Civic Federation, an association of Chicago's wealthy business honchos.

"If the pension funds go

bust, the state has no obligation to step in to pay the benefits," wrote Tribune columnist Dennis Byrne.

With all this hype, it shouldn't have been surprising that the Illinois General Assembly whisked through a bill that cut benefits for public employees hired after Jan. 1, 2011, and raised their retirement age to 67. Despite a furious AFSCME lobbying blitz, it went through both chambers and was signed into law in less than 48 hours.

But the Tribune and the bigwigs it represents weren't the least bit appeased. The day after they were demanding that similar cuts be implemented for current employees on all benefits they earn from now on.

Now the issue has worked its way into a prominent place in the campaign for governor. State Sen. Bill Brady, the Republican candidate, has

said the state should eventually stop contributing to employee pensions. And he told a meeting of AFSCME leaders that he would sign a bill cutting pension benefits earned by current employees going forward.

Although Gov. Pat Quinn did sign the bill cutting pensions for future employees, he pledged to strongly oppose any cuts to the pension benefits of current employees.

"Retirement security is under attack by corporate America," Council 31 Deputy Director Roberta Lynch said at the union's recent political conference, urging AFSCME members to get involved in the upcoming election campaign. "They have largely succeeded in wiping out pension plans in non-unionized workplaces. If we sit on our hands and do nothing, there won't be retirement security in this country."

Opposition to health care reform based on misinformation

Death panels, implanted microchips, new taxes — the creepy stories about what health care reform will bring are whizzing around the Internet and being spread at political rallies.

MEANWHILE THE REAL NEWS ABOUT THE NEW LAW IS OVERWHELMINGLY GOOD NEWS.

An estimated 13.6 million additional workers will have the option to buy affordable health plans once health insurance exchanges are up and running, according to a study by the Rand Corporation published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Most of that bump is likely to come from smaller businesses with 50 or fewer employees. Only 60 percent of these employees can get health insurance through

their jobs now. Once the exchanges are functioning, the Rand researchers forecast that 86 percent of small-business employees will have the option of buying health plans at work — an increase of 10.5 million workers.

Part of the reason for that growth is that the policies that will be offered through the exchanges will be less expensive. Small companies will be able to band together to pool their risk, giving them more leverage to bargain with insurance companies. It also means their premiums should be more stable from year to year.

Confusion still widespread

DESPITE DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENTS already realized, like the ability to cover young people under 26 on their parents' insurance plans, and with more coming, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 remains very controversial.

The Kaiser Health Tracking Poll for August found that 45 percent of Americans surveyed said they have a "some-

what unfavorable" or "very unfavorable" view of the law, compared with 43 percent who like it.

Much of the negativity comes from a concerted effort by Republicans to discredit everything the Obama administration and the Democratic majority in Congress do.

There's big money behind the machinery that is propagating the misinformation and outright lies being told about health care reform.

Some myths and facts about health care reform

MYTH: TO GET HEALTH CARE, you will have to have a microchip implanted into you. Yes, this really is being said — and believed.

FACT: When the House passed its version of the health bill last year, they put in a requirement for the Food and Drug Administration to develop a registry of implantable medical devices, like heart pacemakers and artificial hips and artificial knees. These devices sometimes have to be

recalled, and idea is that the government would be able to locate the patients and make sure they were notified.

Coincidentally there was news floating around on the web about the first implantable microchip that can have your medical records put on it. These are microchips that you can voluntarily have, similar to the microchip you can put in your pets that carry the owner's name and address. Of course these microchips for humans are voluntary, but they are now approved by the FDA.

So people saw these microchips for humans and they saw this FDA implantable device registry, and they jumped to the conclusion that in order to be part of the public option to get insurance through the government you are going to have to have one of these microchips. In the end, there was no public option in the bill and, in fact, the implantable device registry didn't make it into the final bill either, so none of these things came to pass. Source: Kaiser Health News.

No new taxes

MYTH: PEOPLE WILL HAVE TO pay taxes on their employer-provided health insurance beginning next year.

FACT: Not true. What does happen next year: There will be a line on employees' W2 form at the end of the year that shows how much their employer spent for their health insurance. They will not be asked to pay taxes on this. It is an informational line, so that they can actually start to see how much the employer paid toward their health insurance.

In later years, there is a tax on higher-cost plans, but no AFSCME members in Illinois are participating in such high-end plans. And the tax is on the employer, not the employee. For now the entire amount that your employer pays for your health insurance is still exempt from taxes. Source: Kaiser Health News.

Misplaced blame

MYTH: THE LAW HAS MADE

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Push for new revenues resumes in November veto session

Legislators who want to continue shirking their duty to deal with the state's overwhelming budget crisis won't find it easy to hide from members of the Responsible Budget Coalition during the fall veto session.

SESSION DATES INCLUDE NOV. 16-18 AND NOV. 30-DEC. 2, AND THE RBC, MADE UP OF MORE THAN 200 UNIONS, COMMUNITY, ADVOCACY AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS, PLANS TO ESTABLISH A HIGHLY VISIBLE PRESENCE, OUTSIDE THE HOUSE AND SENATE CHAMBERS.

"It's an opportunity to make our point that raising taxes is the only alternative to devastating cuts that will leave our state and many of its citizens far behind," Council 31 political and community relations director John Cameron said. "And we want to make sure that legislators don't think that they can come to Springfield and ignore the most pressing business before our state."

Leaders of the coalition groups met on Sept. 20 in Chicago to discuss strategy and to make sure they would present a solid front when dealing with legislators.

"We are not going to settle for anything less than what the Senate passed last year," Cameron said.

An essential tax-reform measure

HE WAS REFERRING TO HB 174, A TAX REFORM MEASURE THAT WOULD:

- Raise \$6.4 billion a year in new revenue;
- Increase the individual income tax rate to 5 percent from 3 percent, while reforming the Illinois tax code for middle-class and low-income families, many of whom would not see an increase in their total tax bill;
- Increase the corporate income tax rate to 5 percent from 4.8 percent;
- Expand the sales tax to include 39 different consumer services that previously were untaxed, such as travel agent services and scenic and



Lobbyists and constituents line up "on the rail" outside the House chamber to speak with their representatives.

sightseeing transportation. All of these services are commonly taxed in many states and already taxed by one or more neighboring states;

- Double the property tax credit homeowners now claim on their Illinois tax return, from the current 5 percent of property taxes, to 10 percent;
- Increase the current \$2,000 personal exemption for Illinois income taxes to \$3,000;
- Triple the amount of the earned income tax credit for

low-income earners, from 5 percent to 15 percent of the federal EITC they claim;

- Provide dedicated revenue to local school districts; and
- Sharply increase the amount distributed to cities, towns, and counties through the Local Government Distributive Fund.

Keeping personnel records private

THE VETO SESSION WILL ALSO

provide a chance to override an amendatory veto by Gov. Pat Quinn that would allow any citizen access to public-employee performance evaluations.

The union initiated HB 5154 to counter action last year, when the freedom of information law was revised to make the performance evaluation of any public employee

working for any jurisdiction in the state of Illinois, except for teachers and school officials, available to any citizen who requests it. It would have nullified that provision and kept public-employee performance evaluations confidential. But Quinn's amendatory veto left most AFSCME members in the public sector still vulnerable. The union will lobby for an override motion in both chambers.

Red Cross workers choose AFSCME

Impounded ballots finally counted

After three years of waiting, Red Cross employees who run blood drives in a three-state area had their votes counted and by a more than 2-1 margin chose AFSCME to represent them.

THE ELECTION FOR UNION REPRESENTATION TOOK PLACE SOME THREE YEARS AGO. BUT THE EMPLOYER, PEORIA-BASED HEART OF AMERICA BLOOD SERVICES, WHICH HAD FOUGHT THE UNION EFFORT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, FILED AN APPEAL ON WHO SHOULD

be included in the bargaining unit. The National Labor Relations Board impounded the ballots until this issue was settled.

Earlier this month, the Obama administration's newly appointed NLRB denied the appeal and ordered the count to go ahead.

"I'm really stoked," said an excited union supporter, Keith Steele, who has worked for the Red-Cross affiliate for nearly 10 years and has been involved in two of the four previous union drives that fell short. "It's been a long battle and it's time for a change. Now they are going to have to treat everyone equally. No more favoritism."

The 170 blood services workers are now ready to move to bargaining for their

first contract, which promises to be another pitched battle. However, in an attempt to further delay bargaining, Red Cross has again filed objections to the election.

A number of unions are currently embroiled in contract fights with Red Cross affiliates, including 1,000 workers nationwide who walked off the job on June 2, in a one-day strike to protest the employer's unfair labor practices.

Ten unions are working under expired contracts with the American Red Cross and some of these contracts have been expired for 14 months.

Between 1996 and 2007, American Red Cross employees, through their unions, filed 212 unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board, for

actions they believed were violations of federal labor law, most arising from collective bargaining negotiations. The NLRB has issued a number of complaints stemming from these charges.

This pattern emerged in Peoria as well. During the time the employees were working to form their union, the Red Cross modified the health insurance and retirement plans and changed job descriptions and duties.

AFSCME filed unfair labor practice charges, which, with the votes now counted, the NLRB will consider.

In the places where existing contracts have expired, Red



Cross has refused to negotiate over health care and retirement benefits, maintaining it has the right to change these benefits at any time, without

bargaining.

Back in Peoria, the workers who run blood drives are celebrating their long-sought victory. Steele, who draws platelets for cancer patients, said he is looking forward to a fairer workplace.

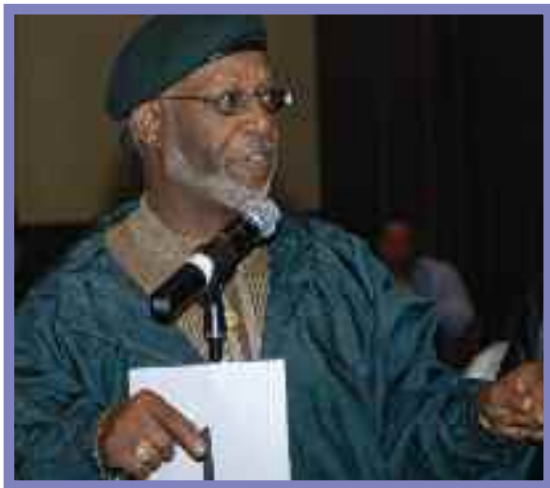
"We haven't had a raise in three years," he said. "We don't get overtime for working weekends, like some of the other regions get. We need fairness in our workplace."



Delegates make recommendations for Election 2010



PEOPLE CONFERENCE: *Quinn for governor*



After an exhaustive examination of the debate, delegates to the 2010 PEOPLE overwhelmingly to recommend Gov. Pat Quinn for AFSCME members in the 2010 election.

“Our decision didn’t have anything to do with party politics,” said Randy Hellmann, president of Local 943 at Pinckneyville Correctional Center. “We endorsed Pat Quinn because there was a fundamental philosophical difference between him and his opponent. Quinn understands that working with the union is an essential part of running the state. Brady blames the union and sees state employees as the problem. This election will determine the direction of our state for a long time to come.”

AFSCME leaders got a chance to listen to and ask questions of Quinn and state Sen. Bill Brady, before the Sept. 11 PEOPLE conference. Local union members who make up the Council 31 executive board, along with members of the PEOPLE executive committee, met separately with the two major-party candidates and Green Party candidate Rich Whitney.

Union leaders began to form a pretty good picture of what a Gov. Bill Brady would look like after those interviews plus a review of his public comments and a look at his paltry 36 percent AFSCME voting record as a state senator.

They recognized Brady as someone who plans to slash the state budget, fiercely opposes raising the revenues needed to get the state out of its fiscal mess, has a long record of support for privatization and a willingness to cut the pensions of all current public employees.

“He wants to run the state like a business,” noted Mike Hamil president of Local 2887 at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. “But the state isn’t meant to run like a business. We’re there to help people. For example, DCFS can’t be turned into a business. If it were then you’d have kids getting beat up and no one to take care of them.”

PENSIONS WOULD BE IN DANGER

One of the main differences the leaders ferreted out from talking with Brady and Quinn was on pensions.



In a spirited debate on who the union should back for governor, not a single delegate who took the floor to speak was in support of state Sen. Bill Brady. Some who could not overlook the mistakes that Pat Quinn has made wanted the union to remain neutral in the gubernatorial race. Others felt that Green Party candidate, Rich Whitney, who has great positions on the issues but no chance of winning, still was more deserving of AFSCME's backing. The great majority of those who spoke, however, were of one mind: AFSCME members, no matter where they work, would pay a very steep price if Brady becomes the state's next governor.



Candidates and a spirited AFSCME conference voted for Pat Quinn as the best choice for governor.

Though Quinn went against AFSCME on establishing a lower tier of pension benefits for new hires, he pledged in the meeting to oppose any changes in benefits for current employees.

Brady, who voted yes on the two-tier pension system, said he would support lower benefits for all current public employees, state and local government and educational, on their future earnings.

"I was there for the interview, and I'm afraid he's going to push to lower our pensions," Hamil said.

"I don't think people realize our pensions are in jeopardy," said Bernice Powe, president of Local 2912, city of Chicago. She pointed out that, if the two-tiered bill is any indication, local government pensions would be cut along with state and university employees.

"We can't afford to let that happen," said Trudy Williams, president of Local 3433, Fulton County. "We can't afford to have someone in there who feels that way about public employees."

BRADY WOULD LOOK TO PRIVATIZE

Though Brady voted to repeal the existing ban on prison privatization, he told the AFSCME leaders that he regretted his vote and no longer believes the state's prisons should be privatized. But he would not rule out privatizing any other state services.

"We stand a better chance of keeping our jobs with Quinn," said Peter Chapman, PEOPLE chair of Local 1767, Cook County investigators. "Privatization would spread from the state to the county. We have to stick together."

BRADY PUSHES TO LOWER MINIMUM WAGE

Brady told the AFSCME leaders he's in favor of lowering the state's minimum wage, cutting

wages of minimum-wage workers by \$1 and putting downward pressure on all wages.

He also wants to cut workers' compensation benefits for on-the-job injuries.

"When he talked about lowering the minimum wage, that was enough for me," Powe said. "Brady showed he's for the rich people. He doesn't care about us."

Quinn assured the leadership group that he will not reduce state aid to local governments, and he will not renew his attempt to increase retiree health care premiums.

DEMOCRATIC PROCESS LEADS TO ENDORSEMENT DECISIONS

The conference was the culmination of a long process that began this summer to decide which candidates would be most likely to advance the interests of AFSCME members and all working families.

Delegates to regional meetings heard presentations that compared the records and positions of Quinn and Brady.

Then there were the meetings with the three gubernatorial candidates. Then came the statewide PEOPLE executive committee meeting, where a recommendation was made for consideration by the statewide conference.

"I was proud to be a part of the process," Hellmann said. "Our union has an open, democratic process that serves our members well. It was a terrific opportunity for us to hear what the candidates had to say from their own mouths, to debate the issues and vote on our final decision. We came out of it with a lot of unity."

Now that unity must lead to action, if the endorsement is to have any weight.

"I'll do whatever is needed," Powe said. "We have to all pull together, knock on doors, make phone calls. We can't afford to have Brady."



Much at stake for AFSCME members in November election



PEOPLE delegates debate and vote on endorsements.

A democratic process that winds its way through 11 regions around the state and ends at the Council 31 PEOPLE conference has resulted in a list of candidates union members are urged to consider when they enter polling places for the Nov. 2 general election.

PEOPLE IS THE NAME OF THE AFSCME POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE. THE STATE IS DIVIDED into 11 PEOPLE regions. Local union presidents and PEOPLE chairs attend first their own regional and then a statewide meeting to vote on which candidates the union will support. They review candidate questionnaires and the records of incumbents and even conduct candidate interviews.

The regional committees decide on endorsements for county and other local gov-

ernment positions. They also make recommendations on General Assembly races in their regions. They elect a chair from their ranks who serves on the statewide PEOPLE executive committee.

That committee makes the final decision on state legislative races and makes recommendations on the U.S. Senate, U.S. House, statewide office holders and judicial elections. The statewide PEOPLE conference, composed of delegates from locals across the state, then makes the final decisions on those races.

"We endorse candidates because we want to provide union members with the information they need to be able to make the best choices," Council 31 political action director Jason Kay said. "When we pool our knowl-

edge and make decisions as a group, we all do better. And when we vote together, we build our unity and we build strength for our union."

Decisions on endorsements for the U.S. Senate seat and for U.S. Representatives were primarily based on AFSCME voting records.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk eliminated himself from getting the endorsement for the Senate by compiling a measly 20 percent lifetime AFSCME voting record in his five terms in the House. His opponent state treasurer, Alexi Giannoulas got the union's nod in large measure because he



State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulas told AFSCME delegates that he's "not running for the U.S. Senate to be something. I'm running because I want to do something — fight for working families."

was one of the first statewide officials to come out strongly for reforming the state tax system to raise adequate revenues.

Every incumbent U.S. Representative who won the union's backing had an AFSCME voting record of 89 percent or higher.

For statewide office, Republican Judy Baar Topinka earned Council 31 backing by her public support of protecting public employee pensions. Her opponent, state Rep. David Miller, voted in



favor of a two-tiered pension system for newly hired public employees.

In General Assembly races,

regional committees focused on two issues: reforming the tax system to raise new revenues and pensions.

"We endorsed a lot fewer state legislators than usual this year because so many did not stand with us on those two key issues," Kay said. "And that meant that some people who have long enjoyed our endorsements came away empty handed this time. It's about holding people accountable."

AFSCME recommendations in 2010 general election



Maripat Oliver



Robin Kelly



Pat Quinn



Alexi Giannoulas



Toni Preckwinkle



Tom Kilbride



Toi Hutchinson



Judy Baar Topinka



Bill Foster



Phil Hare



Debbie Halvorson



Wayne Rosenthal



Dan Biss

U.S. Senate

Alexi Giannoulas D

Governor

Pat Quinn D

Lieutenant Governor

Sheila Simon D

Attorney General

Lisa Madigan D

Secretary of State

Jesse White D

Comptroller

Judy Baar Topinka R

Treasurer

Robin Kelly D

US House of Representatives

1st District Bobby Rush D (100%)
 2nd District Jesse Jackson Jr. D (100%)
 3rd District Daniel Lipinski D (100%)
 4th District Luis Gutierrez D (100%)
 5th District Mike Quigley D (100%)
 7th District Danny Davis D (100%)
 8th District Melissa Bean D (89%)
 9th District Jan Schakowsky D (100%)
 10th District Dan Seals D
 11th District Debbie Halvorson D (100%)
 12th District Jerry Costello D (100%)
 14th District Bill Foster D (89%)
 17th District Phil Hare D (100%)

(AFSCME voting record)

Illinois Senate

7th District Heather Steans D (73%)
 10th District John Mulroe D
 19th District Maggie Crotty D (63%)
 22nd District Mike Noland D (77%)
 28th District John Millner R (65%)
 40th District Toi Hutchinson D (77%)
 43rd District AJ Wilhelmi D (63%)
 49th District Deanna Demuzio D (86%)
 51st District Tim Dudley D
 52nd District Mike Frerichs D (88%)
 58th District Dave Luechtefeld R (65%)

Illinois House of Representatives

7th District Karen Yarbrough D (70%)
 11th District Ann Williams D
 17th District Dan Biss D
 18th District Robyn Gabel D (Incomplete)
 26th District Will Burns D (70%)
 29th District Thaddeus Jones D
 35th District Bill Cunningham D
 39th District Toni Berrios D (70%)
 54th District Matt Flamm D
 67th District Chuck Jefferson D (70%)
 69th District Ray Pendszinski D
 72nd District Pat Verschoore D (85%)
 74th District Don Moffitt R (70%)
 85th District Maripat Oliver R
 94th District Rich Myers R (75%)
 98th District Wayne Rosenthal R
 99th District Raymond Poe R (80%)
 103rd District Naomi Jakobsson D (74%)
 107th District John Cavaletto R (70%)
 109th District Roger Eddy R (74%)
 112th District Jay Hoffman D (72%)
 114th District Dan Reitz D (70%)

Judicial Candidates

For Retention to the Illinois Supreme Court

1st District Charles Freeman
 3rd District Tom Kilbride

For Retention to the Illinois State Appellate Court

1st District Joseph Gordon, Shelvin Hall
 3rd District Mary McDade
 5th District Thomas Welch

Illinois State Appellate Court

1st District James Epstein (D)
 Aurelia Marie Pucinski (D)
 Mary Katherine Rochford (D)

Governor Recall Constitutional Amendment

Vote YES

County government

Cook County County Board President

Toni Preckwinkle D

Clerk

David Orr D

Assessor

Joseph Berrios D

Board of Review

Brendan Houlihan D

County Board

1st District Jerry Butler D
 5th District Deborah Sims D
 6th District Joan Murphy D
 7th District Jesus Garcia D
 13th District Larry Suffredin D
 14th District Jennifer Jenkins D
 17th District Patrick Maher D

Grundy County

Judge, 13th Judicial Circuit
 Lance Peterson D

Henry County Sheriff

Tim Wise D

Jefferson County Board

9th District John Keele R

Kane County Board

3rd District Juan Reyna D
 7th District Monica Silva I
 13th District Stephen Brusewitz D
 15th District Barbara Wojnicki R
 19th District Jim Shales D
 21st District Joseph Haiman D

Kankakee County Treasurer

Mark Frechette D

Knox County Recorder of Deeds

Carol Hallam R
Judge, 9th Judicial Circuit
 Steve Bordner R

Lake County Board

4th District Beverly Ann Mull D
 7th District David Weinstein D

Madison County Treasurer

Frank Miles D

Peoria County Recorder of Deeds

Yvonne Fleming D

Randolph County Commissioner

Ken Slavens D

Will County Clerk

Nancy Voots R

Treasurer

Pat McGuire D

Sheriff

Paul Kaupas R

County Board

3rd District Suzanne Hart R

Laurie McPhillips R

Ann Dralle R

5th District Tim Reilly D

8th District Denise Winfrey D

9th District Stephen Wilhelmi D

Joseph Babich D

Walter Adamic D

Superintendent of Schools

Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant D

Judge, 12th Judicial Circuit

Michael Powers R

3rd Subcircuit Ray Nash R

4th Subcircuit Carmen Goodman D

5th Subcircuit Brian Barrett D

Winnebago County Clerk

Margie Mullins D

Treasurer

Susan Goral D

County Board

1st District Wendy Schneider R

2nd District Jim Webster R

3rd District Doug Aurand R

6th District Pearl Hawks D

8th District Mel Paris D

12th District Georgeanne Duckett D

SHORT REPORTS



Local 1989 Vice President John Yaou at his job as an NEIU telecommunicator.

Membership increasing at NEIU

A LOCAL THAT HAS LONG STRUGGLED to get half of its bargaining unit signed up as full members is now at 70 percent and growing.

It's little wonder. Local 1989 at Northeastern Illinois University has recruited and trained an enthusiastic group of union stewards, making the union and the grievance procedure more accessible to the members. It has become active in the Council 31 PEOPLE program and is building a member action team.

It has also begun to look around and find unrepresented employees who are joining AFSCME as a way to gain a voice on the job and some security in tough times.

John Yaou, the local's vice president who recently went through AFSCME's certified steward training, is a telecommunicator at NEIU.

"We had complained for several years about the fact that campus police were being paid to fill in on the one shift a week the regular telecommunicators don't cover," he explained.

There are four of them, who each work five shifts a

week. But the 21st shift was their work, too, Yaou said. "We tried to settle it by working it out with supervisors. That didn't work. We finally tried the grievance procedure, and that worked."

It worked well. The four are now offered the extra shift as overtime before the police officers get to take it, and they got a cash settlement for the overtime hours they had

missed.

The local also recently organized parking attendants and people who work in the financial aid office.

"They believed they would benefit from being represented," said Ellen Larrimore, the local's president. "We think they will, and so will our union."

Public defenders get thumbs up

A NEW STUDY FOCUSING ON Cook County public defenders concludes that they are "as effective as private attorneys," in defending clients accused of criminal wrongdoing.

"Results suggest that there is little difference in the 'quality' of legal defense provided to defendants by private attorneys and public defenders," the authors

conclude.

The study, "Do you get what you pay for? Type of counsel and its effect on criminal court outcomes," was authored by University of Texas at San Antonio professors Richard D. Hartley and Holly Ventura Miller along with Cassia Spohn from Arizona State University.

Local 2600 scholarships go to five students

LOCAL 2600 HAS AWARDED FIVE, \$1,000 college scholarships in the first year of its new scholarship program.

"We are proud to help

our members and their families to better themselves through higher education," said Melanie Hoyle-Thompson, a member of the local's executive board. "This program helps educate the next generation of workers and Local 2600 is honored to play a part in that process." Winners for 2010-2011 school year include Andrew Webb, a freshman at Lincoln Land Community College; Megan Werner, a sophomore at University of Evansville; Alyssa Constantinides, a freshman at Southern Illinois University; Sean Coady, a sophomore

at Western Illinois University; and Matthew Merreighn, a sophomore at Monmouth College.

AFSCME members running for judicial seats

TWO AFSCME MEMBERS WHO work in the Cook County Public Defender's office and are members of Local 3315 are running for judicial positions.

Mark Levitt – is running for the 4th Subcircuit of the 19th Judicial Circuit, in Lake County. He is "highly recommended" by the Lake County Bar Association. He is active in his community of Deerfield and teaches law.

Daniel J. Gallagher is running for the countywide vacancy of Pearce McCarthy in the Cook County Circuit Court. He was found "qualified" or "recommended" by all bar associations that rated him.

He is active in the community of Oak Park.

Local 2600 Communication Chair Melanie Hoyle-Thompson (left), with scholarship winners Andrew Webb, Megan Werner, Sean Coady and Alyssa Constantinides.



U. of I. unions focus coalition on action

WHEN NEW STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES ROLLED INTO CHAMPAIGN on the Aug. 19 move-in day, they were greeted by picketers from the Campus Labor Coalition.

The group, which includes AFSCME locals 3700 and 698, SEIU, instructors and other campus unions, has also built alliances with student groups.

"We're supposed to be recognized as helping make the university run," said Local 698 Secretary Margaret Lewis. "But it's a matter of priorities, and we are not a priority. Frontline workers are disadvantaged as the university turns to corporations for support."

The state budget crisis has meant fewer tax dollars going into higher education. Tuition is skyrocketing at the U. of I. And the struggle to make ends meet is at least part of the reason why the university administration has stepped up its emphasis on catering to existing and potential corporate contributors.

"There's a growing awareness that the problems we are facing with the university in negotiations are moving to a different level," Lewis said. "We decided we all need an action-oriented group to give each other direct support. Now we are thinking in

broader terms, too. We're trying to see if we can do anything to change the priorities.

"The university's motto is 'Learning and Labor,' but they are taking the labor part out of it."





AFSCME members help make Labor Day festivities happen

Parades and picnics were the order of Labor Day in cities and towns across Illinois. Pictured here are some of the activities AFSCME members enjoyed on the end-of-summer holiday that celebrates people who work for a living.

Labor Day became a federal holiday in 1894 as President Grover Cleveland was making reconciliation with the labor movement a top political priority. "Following the deaths of a number of workers at the hands of the U.S. military and U.S. Marshals during the Pullman Strike," and "fearing further conflict, legislation making

Labor Day a national holiday was rushed through Congress unanimously and signed into law a mere six days after the end of the strike," according to a Wikipedia entry.

The September date was selected rather than May 1, International Workers' Day, which is celebrated around the world to commemorate the Haymarket Affair (in Chicago). Cleveland was apparently concerned that observing May Day would stir up negative emotions, because of Haymarket's legacy of violence against workers.



Rain doesn't dampen Will County locals' picnic

It wasn't the prettiest day when members and their families from eight locals and the retiree sub-chapter in the greater Will County area gathered on Sept. 18 at Ingalls Park Athletic Club for their annual picnic. The Will County retiree sub-chapter also plays a key role in organizing the picnic, and its members were there, too, many pitching in to help with the food and other jobs that keep everything running smoothly.

"There was lightning and thunderstorms all morning," Local 2794 President Gloria Arse-

neau said. "But people still came out and the weather got better as the day went along, though we didn't get to have all the kids' games we usually have."

The event, which is in its seventh year, is a great opportunity for members and leaders from different locals to get to know each other better.

"We have fun together," Arseneau said. "Then it's easier when we need to work together."

RETIREE NOTES

Retiree leaders vote on endorsements at the Council 31 PEOPLE conference.



Quinn rejects increases in retiree health-care costs

GOV. PAT QUINN HAS PLEDGED that he will not renew his attempt to increase retiree health-care premiums. In a face-to-face interview with AFSCME leaders, Quinn said that retiree health insurance premiums are a matter for collective bargaining, and he had decided not to raise the issue while a contract is in force.

State Sen. Bill Brady, Quinn's opponent in the governor's race, has made no such promise.

In his initial budget proposal for the current fiscal year, Quinn was pushing to increase the premiums retirees pay to participate in the popular Quality Care Health Plan. This triggered a fierce grassroots lobbying campaign by Chapter 31 that squelched the initiative, which was dropped from the final budget. The governor obviously got the message.

Pension scare built on misinformation

ANOTHER CHAPTER WAS WRITTEN in the ongoing attempt to undercut the benefits of public-sector retirees when the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago's president, Eden Martin, teamed up with Chicago Tribune columnist Dennis Byrne.

In an article called "Pension check may not be in the mail," Byrne, using Martin as his principal source, erroneously argues that the state cannot keep up with payments needed to cover the "ballooning benefits" of retirees. The pension funds will soon run dry, he argued, and the state would not be legally bound to guarantee them.

But the pension debt was caused not by ballooning benefits. Rather it was the work of politicians who, time after time, decided not to pay the state's modest share of pension costs,

so they could pay for state operations without raising new revenues. Nor does the \$22,000 a year pension for the average state employee who retired with a standard-formula benefit look anything like a balloon.

The assertion that the state would not be responsible if the pension funds went bankrupt is also contrary to any reasonable reading of the law. The Illinois statute says pension payments are "obligations of the State." (40 ILCS 5/16-158(c)). Many respected judges and legal analysts have also stated that it would be unconstitutional to cut the benefits of current public employees.

Martin was previously a partner in the law firm that Byrne used to back his legal arguments. We wonder how big a balloon his retirement package could fill.

"It's clear that this was just scare tactics and nothing more," AFSCME Chapter 31 Retiree Coordinator Maria Britton said.

Cook County tax break for seniors

GOV. PAT QUINN SIGNED A BILL in August that extends the Cook County property-tax-assessment freeze. However the law has a new requirement, slipped in by House Speaker Mike Madigan — that seniors must reapply for their tax break every year.

Administered by the Cook County assessor's office, the provision allows qualified seniors to apply for a freeze on the assessed value of their property. This has become the most valuable Homeowner Exemption program, giving 150,000 senior-led households tax breaks ranging from \$157 to \$823.

Health care reform aids early retirees with reinsurance

THE EARLY RETIREE REINSURANCE program, created in the new health care reform law,

provides \$5 billion in temporary financial assistance to employers to help them maintain coverage for early retirees age 55 and older who are not yet eligible for Medicare.

Employers that participate receive reimbursements for early retirees and their spouses, surviving spouses, and dependents that equal 80 percent of the costs for medical claims that are more than \$15,000, up to \$90,000. The savings can be used to reduce employer health-care costs, provide premium relief to workers and families or both.

National commission moving in wrong direction

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON Fiscal Responsibility and Reform was created in February 2010 to recommend ways of reducing the annual federal budget deficit. The goal was to get the annual deficit down to 3 percent of the nation's total economic output.

The final report due no later than Dec. 1 must have recommendations on how to achieve that goal by 2015. It requires the approval of at least 14 of the Commission's 18 members. But a number of the commission members are trying to turn it into a vehicle for attacking Social Security and Medicare.

So far, the Commission's considerations include raising the retirement age to qualify for Social Security and Medicare, trimming the annual cost of living adjustments, reducing or eliminating Medigap policies, increasing Medicare deductibles and coinsurance and using vouchers that would establish financial incentives to choose more private plans.

Alan Simpson, the commission co-chair, has antagonized seniors with offensive remarks. He recently coined the term "greedy geezers." He supported 2005 efforts to privatize Social Security. Had he succeeded in forcing millions of individuals into private investment accounts then, they would have lost 20 percent of their value by now.

The commission is on the wrong track. Social Security does not contribute to the deficit because it is self-funded, with 99 percent of the contributions returned in benefits and only 1 percent going to administrative costs. Its long-term solvency can be

Chapter supporting Sharon Thompson for IMRF trustee

Chapter 31 is endorsing AFSCME retiree member Sharon Thompson for re-election to another five-year term on the IMRF Board of Trustees as the representative of current retirees.

"She has the knowledge and experience necessary to best represent the interests of IMRF retirees," Chapter 31 President Virginia Yates said.

In her 12 years on the board, Thompson has received education and training regarding investing and laws relevant to public pensions. She has 20 years of experience as the Lee County Treasurer, where she served as the county's chief fiscal officer.

Thompson is presently the chair of the IMRF board's Legislative Committee and supports legislation to increase the death benefit from \$3,000 to \$5,000. She supports measures to reestablish the 100 percent funding status of the IMRF, invest cautiously and stabilize the 13th check.

During her tenure in office, legislation was passed that gave the Annuitant (retiree) trustee the same voting rights as other members of the IMRF Board. Thompson said that this was a historic event and an important moment for the 92,000 retirees who are receiving pension checks every month.

The IMRF has assets in excess of \$23 billion. The Board of Trustees is the governing body of the IMRF, responsible for selecting the executive director, investment consultants, actuaries and an independent auditor. They also set the overall policy for the administration, member services and legislation. Their support can be crucial when lobbying to improve your pension benefits. Therefore, it is important for AFSCME retirees to participate in this election.

Ballots will be sent out Oct. 29 for the election.



resolved by relatively modest adjustments and without cutting benefits.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, health-care reform will cut the nation's deficit by \$138 billion over the next 10 years, and will save Medicare about \$475 billion over 10 years, extending the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund for an additional nine years.

"Please take time to talk to your members of Congress today," Britton urged. "Let them know that you support Social Security and Medicare and request that the commission host open field hearings that will encourage debate and input from constituents like you!"

Chester sub-chapter honors a veteran

WALTER ROWOLD tries to place

POW/MIA flags wherever he can so people won't forget that there are still many veterans missing. His work, and his wartime heroism is appreciated and was remembered by his fellow AFSCME retirees.

"Around Veterans Day, we like to show our respect for the men and women who risked their lives for our country" Chester Sub-chapter 56 President Larry Brown said. "This month we wanted to honor Walter Rowold who not only served during World War II and earned two Bronze Stars, but continues his service by bringing attention to the many soldiers who are missing."

Rowold recently declared that it was time for him to tell others about what it was like to fight in the trenches. By sharing his experience he hopes to encourage others to do



ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

the same. He believes it is not only cathartic for veterans but another way to remember those soldiers who did not come home.

Rowold was trained in 1942 and sent to New Guinea, where he was assigned to disperse cargo up and down the coast using landing craft tanks, or LCTs. On Dec. 16, 1944, he and his unit were preparing to unload some trucks and jeeps when he was tapped on the shoulder by another soldier. He was happy to find it was a guy he new from home.

"I still remember that we both wouldn't allow ourselves to be separated until we had to be, an hour later when we hit the beach," Rowold said. "Henry and I were still together when we heard a loud Japanese bomber. Its wing span looked to be the width of a football field. It was flying low, nearly hitting coconut trees. It was strafing...bullets were hitting the water alongside the LCT. What a scare."

Henry had to replenish the troops supply, driving to them from the LCT in a jeep loaded with ammo and gasoline.

"He was a very, very brave soldier, and delivering that cargo took guts," Rowold said.

Fortunately, both he and Henry made it back alive.

"I was not a POW or a MIA, but Henry (now deceased) and I could have been missing in action as we were transporting ammo and gasoline."

Part D open enrollment: Nov. 15 to Dec. 31

PEOPLE WITH MEDICARE CAN add, drop or change their prescription drug coverage during the Medicare Part D enrollment period for 2011, Nov. 15 through Dec. 31.

During this time enrollees should review all of the prescription plans available. Most will change the drugs they cover, and participants can be locked into a plan even if it does not cover their medications. Coverage will begin Jan. 1 and will continue for the entire year.

For assistance call Medicare at 1-866-754-8910.

'Back and forth' yields gains at Granite City Library

A TWO-YEAR CONTRACT BETWEEN Local 3405 and Granite City Library will raise members' pay by 4 percent in the first year, with another round of bargaining for wages in the second year.

The bereavement pay provision was improved and members will now be able to use sick time to care for grandchildren.

"We took a close look at the library's finances," said staff representative Ed Laporte, who led negotiations for the union. "The fact that they had given substantial raises to management employees gave us some leverage in the bargaining."

The local also held an "AFSCME button day" solidarity demonstration during National Library Week.

"Considering the times, the wages were good," said Denise Owens, the local's president. "We got pretty much what we asked for after some back and forth on salaries."

Paula Dauksha, John Meford and Maureen Ryan served with Owens and Laporte on the negotiating committee.

Wages jump for city of Ottawa members

A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT between Local 2819 and the city of Ottawa will raise wages 8 percent across the board over the three years that end April 30, 2012.

Several job titles were moved to a step plan that will improve wages for experienced employees. And the longevity pay that adds \$350 a year to base pay will be capped at 25 years, from 20 years previously. Health insurance provisions will remain unchanged.

"This group has been willing to work with the city in the past and their integrity is recognized by the city," staff representative Randy Dominic said. "Union members and the local contribute in many ways to the community, and the local is politically active."

When the previous contract expired in 2009, the city asked for a pay freeze, said Tim Weilgopalan, the local union president.

"We agreed to a one-year freeze, but we wanted a meetoo clause, in case any other

city groups got raises," he said. "And we wanted to freeze our health-insurance premiums."

That resulted in a one-year extension. Near the end of the extension, police got a 2 percent pay raise.

Weilgopalan said that gave the local some leverage. In addition he and the PEOPLE chair had gone to the Central Labor Council three years ago and argued against endorsing the mayor and some of the city commissioners.

"With an election coming up next year, the political pressure helped on this contract," he said. "We got a very good agreement."

Dominic led the union's negotiating team, with Tim Weilgopalan, Eddie Weilgopalan, Dave Erwin, Bill Jones and Joe Terrones.

School bus drivers freeze wages, insurance premiums

ROCKFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT bus drivers have a three-year contract that freezes what employees pay on health insurance premiums for the term of the contract. Wages will stay the same for the first year, with economic issues open for negotiations in the second and third years. All contract language remains unchanged.

"It was short and sweet," Local 1275 President Cathy Ainley said. "The other locals had been in a long battle and we learned from them. Our contract was really strong already, so there wasn't that much to change. There are budget cuts everywhere in the district, so we wanted to have a contract in place."

The insurance premium freeze will be a major plus over the three years, staff representative Jay Ferraro said. Family coverage will remain at a reasonable \$525 per year.

He led the local's bargaining team, with Ainley, Ada Williams, Sandra Forrest, Cheryl Davis, Candi Ward, Tracy Goodwin, Peggy Moseley, Deb Rogers, Sandra Steele and Cindy Biskie.

No layoffs for Jefferson County members

WAGES WENT UP 2.5 PERCENT AS a result of a one-year contract between Local 3664 and Jefferson County. The county will continue to pay 100 percent of members' health

insurance premiums.

The county was threatening layoffs, but has now said it won't have to.

"The negotiations were a long, drawn-out deal," said Jim Wray, the local union president. "They wanted to talk about layoffs. We wanted to prevent them."

Staff representative Ty Petersen led the bargaining team, with Wray, Jody Osborn, Kathy Holmes, Joan Tate, Diana Riley, Joan Pytlin-ski and Darrell Huston.

After wage freeze, LaSalle city workers get raises

WAGES GO UP 3 PERCENT IN each year of a two-year contract between Local 2823 and the city of LaSalle. The agreement increases longevity pay increments and raises the amount added to the wages of those who have earned licenses for water and wastewater

treatment. Some family members were added to the bereavement leave provision.

"Last year we took a wage freeze due to the economy," said Rick Zimmer, the local union president. "This year we went back into negotiations expecting something. It was a bit rocky at first, but we kept our members informed and they stood together and it worked out well."

The local had button days to show solidarity, has stayed active in politics and has a good relationship with the aldermen, Zimmer said. "That helped a lot. We attend council meetings and they know what we're there for."

In the last election the local didn't support the incumbent mayor, and he lost the election.

The union negotiating team was led by staff representative Randy Dominic, with Zimmer, Ryan Bibula and Tom Lijewski.

Health care reform

Continued from page 6

health care premiums go up.

FACT: The current health insurance increases are unrelated to the reform, which for the most part, hasn't yet been implemented. The major changes for individual and employer insurance don't go into effect until 2014. And the Congressional Budget Office said that once the law takes effect it expects premiums to rise less for the large-group market than they would have risen if the legislation had not been passed. Not only that, under the new law many families will get subsidies that may lower their payments, not increase them.

Medicare scare

MYTH: THE HEALTH CARE reform bill "guts" Medicare.

FACT: "That's a wild exaggeration," according to Factcheck.com, reporting on a campaign ad attacking U.S. Rep. Joe Sestack, D-Pa., who voted for health care reform. "It's true that the law calls for restraining the future growth of Medicare spending by about \$555 billion — about a 7 percent reduction spread over the next 10 years."

But a lot of that will come from savings built into the law. While some who now have private "Medicare Advantage" plans could see their extra benefits reduced, like vision care, their basic benefit package will remain the same. And the Part D Medicare prescription program will no longer have a "donut hole" by that time, a potential savings of thousands of dollars for Medicare participants.

Vote Nov 2!

SUZANNE BOUSSAARD

JO DAVIS



DEANNA STUMBAUGH

Looking ahead, UNION looks like a good move

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY SUPPORT STAFF CHOOSE AFSCME



Clerical employees at Western Illinois University have decided they want a voice at work and the protection of an AFSCME contract as the state's budget crisis continues to undermine university operations.

More than 285 support staff at WIU, in Macomb, are hoping to begin bargaining soon, after a majority signed cards authorizing AFSCME as their bargaining representative.

"We need to have a voice," said Jo Davis, an organizing committee member. "Right now we have none, so we can be taken advantage of."

Suzanne Boussaard, who took an active role in getting her co-workers on board with the union drive predicted that "It's going to be a long time, maybe five or six years, to get the state budget straight. We can't go that long without a raise. No one wants to take a step backwards. This way we are taking our future into our own hands."

Boussaard got interested in the union after an AFSCME member from the existing local, which represents the university's janitors, began talking about the possibility of secretaries organizing.

"I approached some people I was comfortable talking to," she said. "I was surprised at the amount of interest."

One of the people she talked to was Davis.

"I was hesitant," Davis said, recalling that the clericals had at one time been represented by

another union. "But the people from AFSCME treated us like we knew what we were doing, and listened to us and our ideas. I got more involved than I ever anticipated."

She visited co-workers in their homes to talk about the union and went to every meeting, she said. "Things have happened at work that shouldn't have happened and wouldn't have if we had a union. If you have a problem, you have to fight for yourself. Everybody should have the guidance of someone who knows the rules and regulations and is there to support you."

Deanna Stumbaugh also had to be convinced that a union would improve things.

"I had heard not-so-great things about unions," she said. "But things are not going so good on campus, so I thought I should find out more. I liked the idea that we will be the ones running our union. And I think it will give us a better foothold on benefits and, in the future, improving wages and benefits."

Once she decided AFSCME was the right way to go, she was willing to talk to co-workers, she said. "Civil service procedures are not always being followed. It depended on who was asking for what. There are a lot of inconsistencies. I think I got people thinking about the future."

For now, the union supporters are savoring the achievement and planning the next steps. The university is trying to obstruct the certification process, which is needed to make AFSCME the workers' legal representative. Bargaining can't begin until a final determination is made on which job titles are appropriately included in this bargaining unit.

"People are realistic about the state budget," Boussaard said. "But we need a contract in black and white. We're pretty excited. You have to do something about your own future sometime."