

The Magazine of the American Federation of State, County and M



**Strengthening
our union,
one member
at a time**

Are you AFSCME Strong?

Becoming AFSCME Strong

This issue reports on how we are fighting back against an unprecedented attack on public workers and the services we provide. We are AFSCME Strong.

You will hear a lot this year about AFSCME Strong, the campaign that seeks to expand our reach and our commitment to help us overcome political and judicial attacks like the one in Wisconsin. AFSCME members in Wisconsin, coming together in a new Council 32, are fighting back against Gov. Scott Walker and the legacy of Act 10, which stripped us of our collective bargaining rights and many job protections.

Part of the Rebuilding Process

As Katy Krumm, a corrections officer and AFSCME member from Thorp, Wisconsin, says, "I have the hope that there's a rebuilding process coming in, and I would like to be a part of it."

The union is also central in the lives of Jeff Birttner and Christy Main, a Minnesota retiree and Next Wave union leader respectively, who sat down to compare notes recently in a conversation at Council 5 headquarters in St. Paul.

"We thank them every morning for protecting our pensions," Main said, "because in 35 years, I want to retire!" We're all in this together, and that's the basic truth behind AFSCME Strong.



On the cover: Katy Krumm and Matt Kaczmarek, fighting for their family and our union in Wisconsin.

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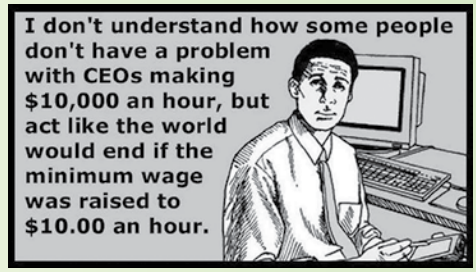
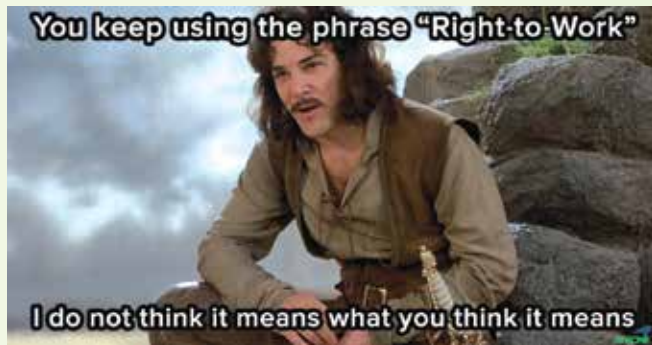
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*DATA AND MESSAGE RATES MAY APPLY.

Correction: Maria Johnson, a CSEA Local 1000 member who was featured in a 24/7 photo in the Winter 2015 issue, was incorrectly identified. She is a mental health aide at the Buffalo Psychiatric Center.

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Committing to Strengthen Our Union



“The movement to strengthen our union is knocking at your door, and your response will determine just how AFSCME Strong we will be.”

This spring, we are launching a new initiative called AFSCME Strong. What is that? It's a full-scale effort that's focused on revamping our union to be a more united, more effective voice for our members – and all working people.

Together, we can be an even stronger force, supporting public services and the valuable work AFSCME members do in communities across the nation, day in and day out. To accomplish our goals, we must strengthen our union in the workplace and at the local, council and national levels.

We must sign up new members to join our union, especially those within our workplace who are not full members. That's a huge deal, particularly at a time when the labor movement overall is facing tremendous challenges from those who don't want us to exist at all.

Our threats come from governors and legislators who pass laws designed to make it harder for us to sign up new members and bargain collectively. Yet, by pulling together, 135,000 new members have joined your union since January 2014, strengthening our locals and councils.

Reaching Out

Having the strength to achieve fairness for working families means fortifying our union. So while it's always important to sign up new members, it is equally important to reach out to those who are our fellow members already, but not involved.

With more of us active, we can bargain good contracts and protect public services, retirement security and our jobs. And we can fight for a society in which prosperity is broadly shared instead of controlled by the super-wealthy.

The hard work of organizing AFSCME Strong rests with our locals and councils. Training is underway to create more member-to-member conversations to help us build up our union. I'm asking you to be a part of that effort.

Member-to-Member

Achieving the things we care about takes all of us working together. So here's the deal: Our goal is to reach out to as many members as possible and ask them to recommit to our union.

Getting that commitment will take a member-to-member movement – lots of conversations about why a union of members united together makes the difference for us, and our families and in the broader struggle for an economy that is fair to all hard-working people.

When so much of what we've achieved is at stake, it's time for us to become even more united and strong. The movement to strengthen our union is knocking at your door, and your response will determine just how AFSCME Strong we will be.

Lee Saunders
President

Coming Together: The Power of Unity

Our union is being transformed as we prepare for the greatest challenges in our history. You'll be hearing a lot about AFSCME Strong throughout this year as we intensify our organizing, sharpen our political focus and broaden our communications to members and the general public alike.

Because we have been the target of attacks by anti-union governors, and even the Supreme Court, we must prepare for the worst. The worst may be what happened in Wisconsin, where our union was born. But signs of rebirth are here, too.

Fighting Back

It started in 2011, when Gov. Scott Walker snatched away our collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin, and continued through this year, when Walker signed the "right-to-work" scam. That law will pull down the Wisconsin economy and strip workers of their power to organize and negotiate for better wages and working conditions.

In March, President Obama said he was "deeply disappointed that a new anti-worker law in Wisconsin will weaken, rather than strengthen workers in the new economy." Amen.

AFSCME members in Wisconsin, proud of their union heritage, are not taking these attacks lying down. They're standing up and fighting back.

Getting Streamlined

The first step on the road back came in April, when Wisconsin's three AFSCME councils came together into one — Council 32. The number is significant: AFSCME was founded in 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, when public service workers realized they would have to join forces if they were going to pull themselves out of poverty.

Necessity is the mother of invention, and that is as true today as it was in 1932. Faced with an all-out assault by Governor Walker, who is unofficially running for president on his anti-union platform, AFSCME Wisconsin is getting streamlined to better fit our members for the battles ahead.

Without the power to bargain, Council 32 will turn to old-fashioned activism, rallying workers with calls to action, building coalitions with like-minded organizations and stepping up our political actions to change the character and the tenor of the Legislature.

We are coming together, in Wisconsin and across the country, to fight for our rights as public service workers. And we will keep fighting until we win back the right to bargain collectively across the country. Long after Scott Walker is gone, AFSCME will be here.



“Necessity is the mother of invention, and that is as true today as it was in 1932.”

Laura Reyes
Secretary-Treasurer



“Everyone deserves
good wages
and that’s why
I’m union.”

Get involved.

Learn more at AFSCMEstrong.org

AFSCME
STRONG

AFSCME Advantage Mortgage Program: A Family Benefit

As an attorney, Valerie Sumner-Yerry of Mooresville, North Carolina, knows a thing or two about making deals. But when it came time to choose a mortgage, she heeded the advice of one very important advisor — her mother, Iris Sumner, a retired member of AFSCME Local 1199.

Sumner, who retired in 1995 after 30 years as a social worker, told her daughter that as the child of a union member, she was eligible to apply for a union mortgage. “I knew that with a union product they’d be cared for like family, because my union really cares about people,” she says.

Sumner-Yerry chose the protection and peace of mind that comes with the AFSCME Advantage Mortgage Assistance program, which provides interest-free loans and grants to help make mortgage payments in case of disability, unemployment, lockout or strike. So far, the program has provided more than \$10.6 million in assistance to union members and their families.

Do you have a union mortgage? The AFSCME Advantage Mortgage program has helped more than 200,000 union members and their families buy or refinance a home. It is packed with unique benefits tailored to meet the needs of active or retired union members, as well as their parents and children. Union members who are first-time buyers even have the opportunity to receive a \$500 First-Time Home Award from Union Plus.

Some of the other benefits of the AFSCME Advantage Mortgage program include:

Hardship Assistance – AFSCME Advantage Mortgage Assistance helps members and their families make mortgage payments with interest-free loans and grants if they are unemployed, recently disabled, on strike or locked out. Mortgage Assistance has provided more than \$10 million to help members keep their loans current and stay in their homes.

\$500 Award – Union members and their families may receive a \$500 Wells Fargo My Mortgage GiftSM award after closing on a purchase or refinance loan.

Incentive for First-Time Home Buyers – Union members who are first-time buyers can apply for a \$500 First-Time Home Award from Union Plus. Active or retired union members who used the AFSCME Advantage Mortgage program to purchase their first home are eligible to apply. They simply need to fill out an application



Valerie Sumner-Yerry made the right choice for her family with an AFSCME Advantage home mortgage.

and provide a short, written description of their AFSCME Advantage Mortgage program experience and why home ownership matters.

AFSCME Advantage Mortgage Veterans Grant – Active or retired union members who are veterans of the United States Armed Forces may qualify for a \$1,000 grant that never needs to be repaid to help offset expenses associated with a new home.

To learn more about the AFSCME Advantage Mortgage program, please visit unionplus.org/mortgage.

This Summer's Blockbusters Are on Us!

The price of a movie ticket just keeps going up, but with Union Plus you can still afford to treat your family to a night in front of the big screen. Union members can get discounts up to 48 percent when ordering movie tickets online. Tickets are good at local and national chains including AMC, Regal, National Amusements and Cinemark. Just visit unionplus.org/entertainment-discounts/movie-tickets/ for more details about ordering.

Spreading the Word Regionally

By Clyde Weiss

The employees of three nursing and care providers in and near the northern Illinois town of Rockford have more than the similarity of their jobs in common. Today, they all have power on the job through AFSCME.

They accomplished their goals by working closely with Illinois Council 31, which leveraged the closeness of their employers in a series of loosely connected campaigns to help the workers achieve their successes.

This strategy – helping workers organize with AFSCME by linking one successful campaign with those at other employers within a specific area – has a proven track record. Council 31 boasts several of our latest success stories, all based on this strategy, as well as the engagement of the council's activists in the area.

It works because people who work for one employer tend to know people doing the same kind of work at other, nearby employers. Volunteer Member Organizers (VMOs) helped to spread the word of successful campaigns, building momentum for even more victories.

The Rockford-area workers faced daunting challenges in their efforts to join Council 31. But proximity to one another turned out to be one key to success, and for AFSCME's experience, nationally.

A Spark Is Lit

Council 31's first organizing campaign among the care facilities of the Rockford area was one of the fastest campaigns in memory.

Many of the 120 nursing assistants, maintenance workers, housekeepers and laundry staff who work at Stephenson County Nursing Center in Freeport (approximately 28 miles west of Rockford) were so poorly paid they qualified for public aid. The average annual salary of a nurse assistant working at the center is \$15,915.

Hoping that standing together would not only boost their wages but bring them benefits such as better health care,

more sick time and vacation, and a means to reach a comfortable retirement, the employees began meeting discretely in May 2013 at a local fast food restaurant. "We feared for our jobs," said Certified Nursing Assistant Cheri Galor.

They quietly prepared for their campaign over a three-week period, with leaders of the effort meeting at co-workers' homes to discuss organizing. Then the organizing committee announced its intent to join AFSCME. The next day, they turned in signed cards demonstrating they had majority support among the staff. Since Illinois public-sector labor law provides that unions must be recognized when a majority of workers sign cards, the employer did not have sufficient time to put together an opposition campaign.

Local 2399 was born. Last fall, after months of tough negotiations, the local won its first contract. "We finally got a raise, back pay, set schedules and eight-hour shifts," said Galor, a single mother of two who is now her local's first treasurer. "I am happy with our union. I am proud that we did it."

The 'Fire' Spreads

Employees of Milestone Inc., in nearby Rockford, heard about the victory in Stephenson County and wanted to form a union with AFSCME too.

Milestone is a private, non-profit facility for adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It's huge, with multiple facilities and more than 500 direct-care professionals, housekeepers and other employees.

Like the Stephenson campaign, the Milestone organizing drive began stealthily in the spring of 2013. Once they were ready to go public, Council 31 VMOs blitzed the area, meeting with employees to explain what organizing their union could mean to them.

Concerns over unfair promotions and demotions helped to spark their interest in organizing for workplace fairness. "There was nothing you could say for yourself," said Nicole Henson, a caregiver who has worked at Milestone nearly 10 years.

Low wages were another sore point.

AFSCME VMOs explained the benefits of organizing and informed the workers of their rights, "which was something a lot of us weren't aware of," said Henson.

Once aware of the campaign, Milestone's management hired a union-busting firm. They brought in staff and held



Cheri Galor, certified nurse assistant at Stephenson County Nursing Center



Nicole Henson, caregiver at Milestone Inc.

captive-audience meetings and one-on-ones around the clock where they bad-mouth unions. But Henson and other activists were prepped and ready — they refused to let them run the show.

At one of the first meetings, Henson recalled, one of the hired guns responded to their complaints about low wages by asking, “Then why do you work here?”

Offended, Henson shot back that the union busters didn’t understand that her clients’ lives would be worse off if she *wasn’t* working there. The meeting, which was supposed to last two hours, ended in 20 minutes and the company quickly fired the union busters, said Henson. After several weeks of similar meetings, she added, Milestone “stopped the fight.”

Management remained neutral during the vote that October, encouraged to do so by a community

coalition Council 31 had built with clergy and others. Employees voted overwhelmingly in favor to form their union, and management quickly responded with a new attitude. Henson said “they started to change policies prior to even negotiating with us” for a first contract they won last December on behalf of 500 employees.

“I am happy,” said Henson, now president of Local 2515. “I feel we have a great contract” that has everything from better wages to college tuition reimbursement to birthday holidays.

Embers Fly

When 90 employees of a private-sector, faith-based community disability services agency called Mosaic heard of the Milestone victory, they too wanted to build a union with Council 31.

Several Milestone employees knew people who worked at Mosaic. They spread the union message. The campaign built quietly, like the two before it. When it went public, workers were already strong supporters. But management held mandatory anti-union meetings to quash their efforts.

“We finally got a raise, back pay, set schedules and eight-hour shifts,” said Galor.

Once again, Council 31 had built a community coalition that helped dissuade the company from fighting its workers. Theirs was a quick campaign, leading to an overwhelming vote to organize with AFSCME in April 2014.

The secret to Council 31’s success: geographic proximity. It facilitated efforts of workers at one Rockford area care institution to spread the word to another. Ultimately, Council 31 grew stronger by approximately 720 new members in the Rockford area, and the employees gained a stronger voice on the job.

Workers are also organizing with AFSCME in other states. Here is a list of some recent victories:

CALIFORNIA
1,406 pharmacists working for Kaiser Permanente throughout Southern California overwhelmingly voted to join United Nurses Association of California/Union of Health Care Professionals (UNAC/UHCP) in a National Labor Relations Board-conducted election.

MINNESOTA
80 group home workers employed by At Home Living Facilities in Duluth joined Council 5. Also joining the council were 28 workers at Hennepin County Medical Center, through majority sign-up.

NEW JERSEY
301 part-time employees of the Jersey City School District joined Local 2262 (Council 52) through voluntary recognition. The council signed up 65 percent of the part-timers through one-on-one conversations.

To read more, visit
AFSCMEstrong.org

Tulsa Members Rush In to Clean Up after Tornado

By Clyde Weiss

When a devastating tornado hit Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 25, AFSCME members were on the front lines of the response, helping the community with the cleanup and raising money to assist the victims.

Members of AFSCME Local 1180 are city workers who maintain streets, sewers, drive heavy equipment trucks and perform a myriad of other administrative and labor trade functions. They helped clean up debris, downed trees, and performed other critical tasks as part of their daily jobs.

On Friday, April 3, Local 1180 volunteers met at their union hall and then headed out to clean up debris that the city had not picked up. "We want to give back to our family, friends, and community," the union said on its Facebook page. Local 1180 also set up a fund for tornado victims.

Local 1180 Pres. Vincent McGee, who drives a heavy equipment vehicle for the city, said city workers were cleaning up streets and helping citizens who needed it within hours of the disaster. But many neighborhoods still required assistance, especially those with elderly residents who were unable to handle the cleanup of their own properties, or could not afford to hire someone to do it for them.

"Our goal is to get in those areas and to talk to local businesses and see if they will help us out as far as getting dumpsters in the area," he said. "This is a long-term goal. It's not something we'll do in one day and not do again."

McGee, who lives in nearby Okmulgee, did not personally experience the tornado, which registered EF-2 on the Fujita scale (top winds estimated at 135 mph), according to the National Weather Service in Tulsa. The Tulsa-area tornado killed one person, while other tornados and storms

"Our goal is to get in those areas and to talk to local businesses and see if they will help us out as far as getting dumpsters in the area. This is a long-term goal. It's not something we'll do in one day and not do again."

—Vincent McGee, Local 1180 President

that same day left three others dead.

Destiny Huddleston, Local 1180's chief steward, barely escaped the tornado that passed by her neighborhood. A treasury revenue processor in the city's Finance Department, she was home in the west end of Tulsa when the storm hit.

She had just started to prepare dinner when a neighbor knocked on her door to make sure she had heard the storm siren. "As any Oklahoman would do," she said, "I went outside to watch. You don't always go hide." But she also prepared her hall linen closet, which would be her safe room, just in case.

"I walked back outside a few minutes later because the sirens had stopped a moment." She recalled. "I could see clouds starting to funnel."

That's when a next-door neighbor stepped outside to get her husband into their storm cellar. Seeing Huddleston, she shouted at her to grab her 9-year-old son and her 4-year-old nephew and take refuge in their cellar, too. Luckily, she did. "I could hear loud winds," she said. "Tree limbs hitting, the whistle of the wind. It was loud and it was fast and it was raining really hard."

Without a radio, they all waited about two hours before venturing outside, where they found the neighborhood survived without significant damage. "Just some downed tree limbs," she said – and a plastic child's swimming pool lying in the middle of the street.

Huddleston later ventured out to help clean up the debris. She also made a donation through the local Red Cross. The union donated 15 cases of water to a church that housed victims.



Members of Tulsa Local 1180 volunteered to clean up debris in the wake of a March 25 tornado that struck the area, leaving one person dead and much damage to a trailer park and homes.



Cleaning Up After Storm – Steve Beck Sr., vice president of AFSCME Local 1180, helped clean up Tulsa after the tornado. With him on the truck are Lisa Andrews of Laborers Local 107 and Timber Hammond, daughter of Cassie and Reno Hammond, also of Laborers Local 107.

'Without the Union People Have

No Chance'

By Pablo Ros

THORP, Wis. — Food options in Thorp, off Highway 29, include McDonald's, Subway and the pun-inspired Thorpedo Family Restaurant. Starbucks has yet to claim a parcel of land in this city home to 393 families, where a welcome sign proudly announces its place on the cultural map: "State Football Champs 1993-94." Most people who pull over to eat at Thorpedo, according to its owner, are on their way to somewhere else.

That's not true for Katy Krumm and her family. A corrections officer and AFSCME member, Krumm moved to Thorp 12 years ago from her hometown of Racine, in the state's southeast corner, after her first son, Mason, was born. She was looking for a better place to raise a family.

"Up here it's 20 years behind the rest of the state," she says.

Drug violence, gangs and vandal-

ism have yet to find Thorp on the map. And it's possible they never will.

That's because Thorp has done a remarkably good job of defying the test of time. Its population has yet to double since it was established as a village in 1893. People greet each other on the street and pause for conversation. They help each other out in small ways. The guy who bags your groceries at the store also carries them to your car. It's the kind of place Krumm says, half-jokingly, she didn't know existed outside of "The Andy Griffith Show."

"I would never consider going back to a heavily populated area," she adds.

Krumm and her husband, Matt Kaczmarek, live in a modest one-story house with a basement on a quiet residential street. Together, they have a blended family of four kids – Mason, 12; Jake, 9; Ayden, 6; and Piper, the princess, who just turned 1 this May. By

four o'clock in the morning every day, they are up and ready to start their day. Day care opens at 5:30, giving them just enough time to make it to their posts inside Stanley Correctional Institution, where they are sergeants, by 6 o'clock.

Theirs is a dedicated life demanding careful coordination of all moving parts. Parents are off work at 2:30, children get home by 3:25, and then it's homework and dinner before the evening's activities and commitments, which include Boy Scouts for Mason, wrestling for Ayden and volunteer meetings for the adults. Both are active in the National Wild Turkey Federation. Kaczmarek is on the board of directors of Rock Creek Disabled Outdoors, a group that organizes hunts for individuals with disabilities. Krumm is president of AFSCME Local 122.

Theirs is also a luxury-free life. They

don't have cable or satellite TV. They hardly go out to the movies or restaurants. To save on groceries, every six weeks they drive 45 minutes each way to Eau Claire, where they find lower prices. They reserve most of their fun and entertainment to outdoor activities in the months when the weather chooses to cooperate.

"We literally live paycheck to paycheck," Krumm says. "We have everything accounted for. I know exactly how much my bills are, and how much

"We literally live paycheck to paycheck," Krumm says. "We have everything accounted for. I know exactly how much my bills are, and how much to pay out of each check so all of my bills get paid and daycare gets paid, and we obviously have a food budget."

to pay out of each check so all of my bills get paid and daycare gets paid, and we obviously have a food budget."

It's hard to reconcile Krumm and her family with the Gov. Scott Walker image of public employees as overcompensated and spoiled. Many fellow Wisconsinites swallowed the governor's lie as he pushed through Act 10, the law that took away collective bargaining rights from most public workers in the state.

"They believe we have a million dollars and a Cadillac health insurance program and we get everything handed to us, and it's just not the truth," Krumm says. "It's not even close."

Walker's Act 10 campaign was waged against an imaginary enemy,

a public employee boogeyman he conjured up for his own political ends. Krumm and Kaczmarek just wanted a chance to serve, and the means to raise a family in a safe and quiet corner of the state where traditional values endure.

Instead, since its passage four years ago, Act 10's standout achievement has been to chip away at the stability that Krumm and her family, and thousands of public workers across the state, managed to erect in their lives. In the last few years, the once-unthinkable idea of quitting her state job and leaving Thorp resurfaces periodically in Krumm's mind.

"I always liked my job," says Krumm, who followed in her parents' footsteps, both of whom were cor-



Sgts. Katy Krumm and Matt Kaczmarek with son Mason, 12; Ayden, 6; and daughter Piper.



AFSCME Strong training is underway around the country, including in Washington state, where these activists are ready to make our union stronger.

rections officers. “But it’s not so good anymore, it’s just not.”

The loss of her collective bargaining rights has left her vulnerable to the whims and hostilities of her employer. At times she feels like a punching bag. It’s one blow after another, and another, and another....

The Rebuilding Has Begun

More than 80 years ago and 180 miles southeast of Thorp, in Madison, a group of public workers laid the foundations for what would become AFSCME, the largest public employee union in the nation.

Until 2011, Wisconsin public workers and government agencies relied on collective bargaining agreements to provide order and structure in their workplaces. Like the roof and walls of a house that depend on its frame for support, the contracts were the underlying structure of employee-management relations. Before Act 10 became effective on June 29, 2011, it wasn’t clear what, if anything, would replace the negotiated agreements. The answer, in the short term, turned out to be nothing. Anticipating the new law was like preparing for a natural disaster in

a category of its own, and little could meteorologists guess at the extent of the damage. Returning to the workplace the morning after, the structure seemed intact but had been gutted from inside.

“What took us 80 years to build took him one day to destroy,” says Krumm, referring to Walker.

As it collapsed, the structure fell by parts. Public workers experienced it as a series of blows. These included significant increases in health and pension costs, and drastic limitations on collective bargaining. Local unions

were strapped further as they lost dues deduction, and unity fell by the wayside.

But the rebuilding has begun. Councils and affiliates throughout the nation are discussing ways to work together more closely, including unifying. In Wisconsin, AFSCME now has a single council, Council 32, instead of three. The streamlining will help public workers become stronger and more nimble; it will allow us to refocus our mission, strategy and goals.

The new council is named after our union’s founding year, 1932. It’s

A New Beginning

In a historic move to combine strengths and resources, AFSCME Councils 24, 40 and 48 officially unified to become AFSCME Wisconsin Council 32 in April.

Delegates to the founding convention adopted a constitution, elected new officials and a new executive board.

The new council includes state, county and municipal employees, as well as school employees and private-sector workers.

“The real work starts now,” said Paul Spink, Council 32’s newly elected president.

a reminder of our origins, but also of the fact that the founders of AFSCME came together at a difficult time for the entire nation, in the midst of the Great Depression.

We've come a long way, in Wisconsin and across the nation. And today, we're AFSCME Strong.

The AFSCME Strong Campaign

Through the AFSCME Strong campaign, our entire union is being transformed as we face the greatest challenge in our history.

The new campaign will build on the success we've had during the past year, engaging activists and signing up more than 140,000 new members.

Organizing is job one. In the next year, AFSCME Strong seeks to engage 80 percent of our members in the struggle, one conversation at a time.

To achieve this ambitious goal, we will need to recruit and train 5 percent of the membership to become AFSCME Strong activists. Like the successful Volunteer Member Organizers of the 50,000 Stronger campaign, these activists will initiate those one-on-one conversations with coworkers.

The goal is to have an army of AFSCME activists engaged for the 2016 election, focusing on issues of greatest concern to members. To be AFSCME Strong politically, to fend off the attacks of extremist politicians and to elect candidates who care

about the middle class, we are seeking to enlist 10 percent of the membership to become PEOPLE MVPs.

In addition, the union will celebrate AFSCME members and the public services we provide, seeking to change the public perception of employees who have been vilified by politicians like Walker. What we do makes a difference in communities across the nation, and AFSCME will make that case in every forum.

We Have Each Other for Support

Act 10's tough-luck, you're-on-your-own bias is hard to reconcile with the culture in Thorp, where neighbors and even strangers help each other out.

AFSCME Local 44, Council 67 Vice Pres. Dorothy Bryant prepares her walk list before knocking on members' doors in Baltimore, Maryland, during AFSCME Strong training.



Activists at the AFSCME Strong training in Maryland get ready to go out and knock on doors. From left to right: Debbie Williams, president of AFSCME Local 3478 (Council 3); Corey Upchurch, vice president of Local 1959 (Council 20); and Aaron Dixon, of Local 1772 (Council 3).



“Things like seniority, things like just-cause standards of discipline, these are all gone,” Turner says. “There’s been no movement on the salary schedule, people haven’t received longevity steps, and basically negotiations are kind of a joke these days.”

It’s hard to know what to expect now that Walker’s strain of divisive politics has found its way up here. But Krumm remains hopeful.

She recalls a day not too long ago when a fellow union member called her at five o’clock in the morning. The weather had shut down the school, Kaczmarek was out of town, and she was in a bind.

“He’s up at five o’clock in the morning on his day off to get in touch with me and make sure I know that school is closed,” she says. “And then he volunteers to pick up my kids from daycare and take them to the union hall to meet me at the union hall, because I had to work. He didn’t have to do any of that, and I didn’t ask him to. He did it all on his own, and that was the biggest help ever.”

That kind of friendship and support is hard to find. It’s why Krumm cherishes her life in Thorp, and it’s also why she joined a union. Her union was dealt a thousand blows, but

the rebuilding has begun.

“I have the hope that we’re going to be able to start rebuilding what was demolished,” she says. “I mean, it’s going to take years. I’ll probably be retired before it’s complete. But I have the hope that there’s a rebuilding process coming in, and I would like to be a part of it.”

So does Mike Turner. Turner is a custodian for the Eau Claire Area School District Buildings and Grounds Department and the president of AFSCME Local 560. When asked about Wisconsin post-Act 10, what hurts is the memory of what is now gone.

“Things like seniority, things like just-cause standards of discipline, these are all gone,” he says. “There’s been no movement on the salary schedule, people haven’t received longevity steps, and basically negotiations are kind of a joke these days.”

Management may still be sitting down at the table with union reps, but they’re no longer negotiating.

“They’re just telling me what I’m going to get,” Turner says. “It’s more like an informative session. ‘Here’s what we’ve budgeted for you.’”

But what keeps Turner in the fight are his ties to the community and his responsibility to the workers he represents. He knows that no matter how tough the struggle, he can rely on his colleagues, his community and his union sisters and brothers for support.

“I went to these schools,” he says. “The teachers that work in these schools were my teachers, this is my home. And these workers are my members, and I very much have a feeling of responsibility to the community and responsibility to the future, to my children, and to Eau Claire to stick it out.”

Despite the Attacks, We Stay Strong

On April 16, 2012, peanut butter was at the center of an inmate-on-officer attack that, according to a former warden, “forever changed the future for all employees of the Stanley Correctional Institution, in addition to the futures of their families and friends.”

In fact, the future of most public workers in Wisconsin had already changed the year before, when Governor Walker signed Act 10 into law. But the outcome of the attack would have been a lot worse if not for the local officers’ union.

On the day in question, Carrie Seichter, a sergeant at Stanley and member of AFSCME Local 122, was asked to search the cell of Paul Golden, an inmate serving a sentence for burglary, sexual assault and kidnapping. Golden, who worked in the kitchen, was suspected of stealing peanut butter and hiding it in his room.

As Seichter recalls, she came by early in the morning, on the second floor of a housing unit. At first Golden wouldn’t respond, but soon he came out and went downstairs to the dayroom, where Seichter told him to wait. Golden soon created a commotion, and as soon as Seichter stepped outside the cell, he ran up the stairs charging at her.

“He came at me running and punching and I was holding my arms out,” she recalls. “I think I got, maybe, one swing off. I got knocked unconscious on the floor, on the cement. And then I don’t remember.”

Seichter suffered a concussion, frontal lobe damage and a broken nose. Subsequently, she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression.

And yet, instead of offering support, management at the Stanley Correctional Institution took advantage of the post-Act 10 environment to

further try to break her and her union. After the attack, they tried to push her off workers’ compensation, cancel her prescription medicines and block payment of her medical bills. They even tried to pass off her injuries as a pre-existing condition.

But they did not succeed. And they never will.

Seichter still sounds incredulous when recounting her struggle with her employer. After a 13-year career, how could they do this to her?

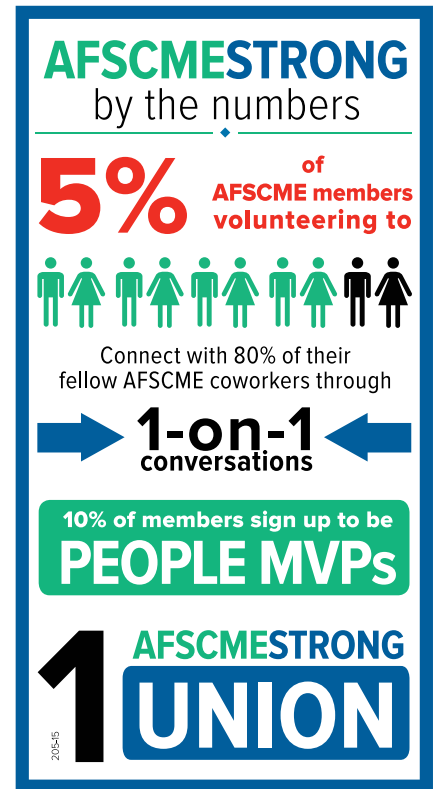
“They would have let me go with nothing,” she says. “Absolutely nothing.”

But thanks to her union, Seichter survived all these attacks. Because her AFSCME sisters and brothers stood up for her, she’s doing alright.

“If I didn’t have the union I wouldn’t have anything,” she says. “The union has done so much for me that I could never repay them for everything they’ve done. I mean, without the union people have no chance.”

“If I didn’t have the union I wouldn’t have anything,” Seichter says. “The union has done so much for me that I could never repay them for everything they’ve done. I mean, without the union people have no chance.”

Carrie Seichter says she’s grateful to her union for standing up for her after the attack.



Let's Talk: We Have So Much In Common

Solidarity
Across
Generations



By Olivia Sandbothe

Retirees and young workers are two of AFSCME's secret weapons. AFSCME's Next Wave and Retiree chapters allow members to zero in on the issues that most affect their own generations, although they are learning they have much in common. While one group grew up with vinyl and the other prefers mp3s, they're all on the same page when it comes to the important stuff like fair pay and retirement security. In Minnesota, members of the Council 5 Retiree and Next Wave chapters are finding out just how much they can accomplish by joining forces. Retiree Jeff Birttnen and Next Waver Christy Main both live in Washington County, where they are working together to keep the union strong into the next generation.

Birttnen grew up in a union family and first signed a union card when he was only 15. He joined AFSCME as soon as he started working for Washington County in 1988 and quickly became an active member. He's now chair of his retiree chapter. Main, on the other hand, knew next to nothing about unions when she joined AFSCME in 2008. A trip to AFSCME's young workers conference — Next Wave — in Chicago convinced her to get involved and she now serves as president of Local 517.

How are young people going to carry on the work of previous generations?

CHRISTY: A lot of young people come along and they don't even know what a contract is. I had no idea when I started! I remember hearing the union presentation in my new employee orientation and it just meant nothing to me. People aren't growing up in union households and they don't even know what the words mean.

We've made some changes to that presentation. Now we go through very basic Union 101, explaining what union representation means and what we get with our contracts. And it's working. Before, we had maybe one person out of 15 signing up at orientation. Now we're getting eight out of 10.

JEFF: It's starting to become a much younger workforce. And people always start out thinking that they won't be here for long because it's just a stepping stone to the next job. And then 10 years later they're still here, because they realize they've got something good. My own daughter is now working for the county.

When I talk to young workers I tell them that we are here to help you, to guide you if you want. But sometimes things need to be done differently now. So when we do our work together with the Next Wave, we as retirees say, 'what is it that you guys want to talk about?'

Can you tell me about the work that Next Wave and Retirees are doing together?

CHRISTY: We want to make sure young people can talk to people that have been in the union for 10 years, 20 years, who can tell them what we've gone through in the past and what we could potentially lose. We've held a couple of different forums. Sometimes we talk about current issues, but my favorite was one where we discussed the history of the council and how we got to where we are now.

JEFF: I go to every one of the council's board meetings. And I report at every meeting about what we are doing to protect their pensions.

CHRISTY: And we thank them at every meeting for protecting our pensions, because in 35 years, I want to retire! We also do volunteer work with the community. We work with a program where grocery stores donate food and it gets sold in the community for a discounted price. We help bag the groceries, ring them up, and carry bags to people's cars.

JEFF: And just have conversations with the people.

CHRISTY: Yeah, it's a way of letting people know that we are here to help them out. Then in the spring we help with the postal workers' food drive.

What do you gain from working so closely together?

CHRISTY: When I have an issue with management that I don't know how to handle, I ask a retiree like Jeff. The retirees can provide a lot of background information about what goes into union work. There is no book that tells you what to do in all these situations. So Jeff is my textbook.

JEFF: I had the same kind of mentors. When I first started, the president of my local had been there since before we had a union. So I got the history of what that had been like. Now I'm the one explaining to younger members about some of the things that are in the contract and some of the grievances we've already fought. There's a grievance going on now about using sick time, and we already fought and won

on that issue three times while I was with the county. But now there's a new HR director and they're trying to do it again.

CHRISTY: So thanks to Jeff, I can go and talk to management knowing the history to back me up.

What does the union need to do differently these days?

CHRISTY: It really is just having that basic Union 101 conversation. We have to tell people who we are and what we can do together. Going on strike is probably the only thing that new employees know about unions. But they don't realize, for example, that the bargaining team really needs to be preparing months before the negotiations start.

JEFF: Back in my day, everyone let us know what they wanted us to do in negotiations, and we had people signing up for everything, because they had that union background. Now people don't know that stuff as much. So we have to start with really basic education.

How do you get others involved in your chapters?

JEFF: With the retirees, we talk a lot about the risk of losing our retirement benefits. But we also talk about the AFSCME advantage benefits. People are on a fixed income, but if you're a retired member you can cut down on things like your phone plan. Those two things get a lot of people. They may not have been anything but a dues-paying member when they were working, but once they see that we are all in this together to save our pensions, they start getting involved. They don't have to do everything, but we ask that everyone does one thing.

CHRISTY: It's the same way when talking to younger members.

JEFF: Earlier I was talking to a member who mentioned she wants to hand out drink tickets again at one of our annual events. That's the one thing we asked her to do because she likes to chat with people. She's been doing it every year since then. And now she's a chief steward. But it all started with the drink tickets.

CHRISTY: And with younger members, people really do want to be involved in something that makes a difference, but they don't always have a way to do that. With the union you can work on something that has a real impact.

Eyes Wide Shut:

When Governments Outsource with No Accountability

By Pablo Ros

Imagine you hire a home improvement company to remodel your house. Would you sign on the dotted line unless it was absolutely clear to both you and the contractor what the work entailed and how much it would cost?

Unfortunately, that's what many states and localities do, signing contracts with private companies and committing millions in taxpayer money without setting clear expectations of the contractor regarding the work to be done and the time frame for completing it.

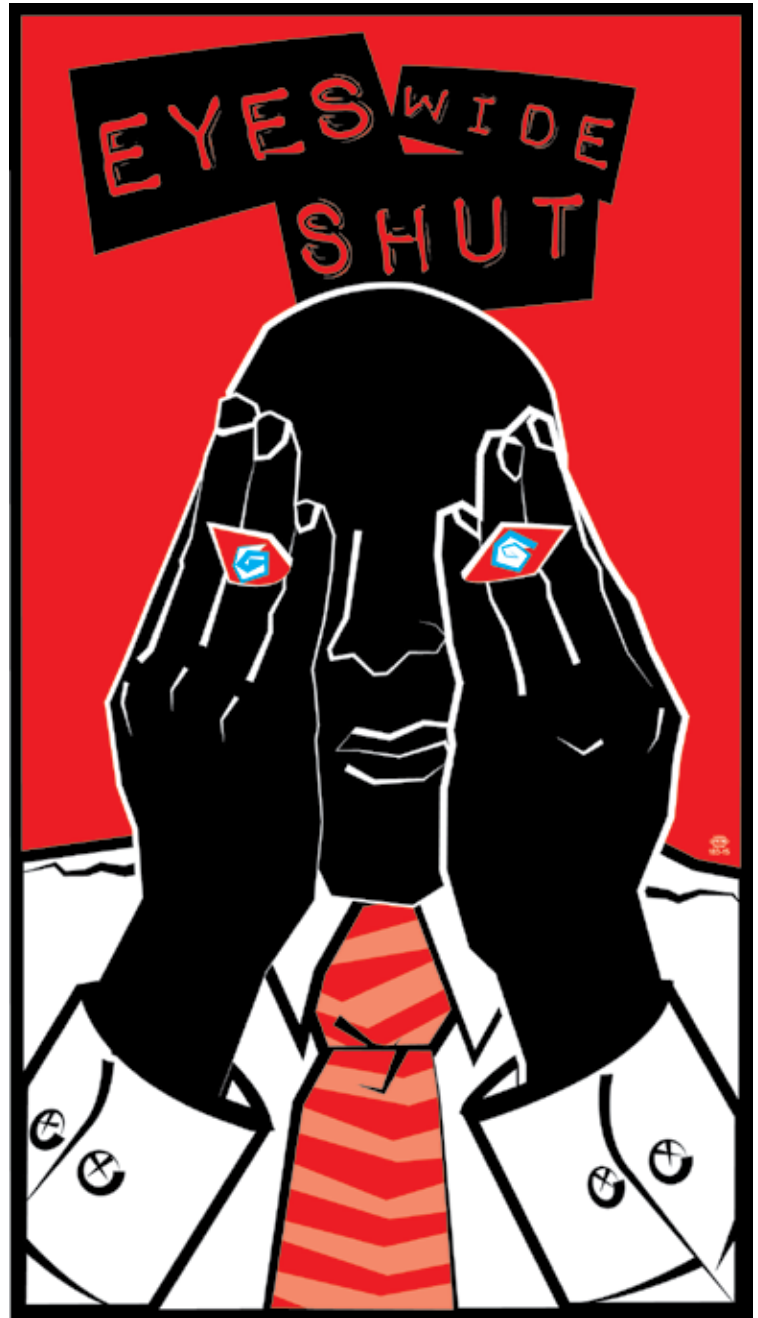
Examples abound, according to a new report by In the Public Interest, a comprehensive resource center on outsourcing and responsible contracting.

\$134 Million Wasted

In one case, Oregon hired the IT company Oracle to create the state's health exchange website, in compliance with the Affordable Care Act. The price tag on the outsourced contract was \$134 million. As months passed beyond the delivery deadline for the website, it became clear that despite its huge cost, the company couldn't deliver. In the end, the project was scrapped.

"Problems with contract oversight are pervasive," the report states. "These problems occur in cities and states across the country and across all sectors of government, including health and human services, criminal justice, information technology, education, public works, and more."

The best bang for a taxpayer's buck is still in the public sector, where dedicated public workers serve their communities with pride. But if a local or state government decides it must outsource, then the contracting must be done responsibly. The ITPI report offers useful guidelines for outsourcing in a responsible way.



To prevent such problems and improve contract oversight, ITPI suggests:

- Incorporate oversight costs into any decision to outsource.
- Include clear performance standards and penalties for noncompliance in the request for proposals and contract.
- Establish formal contract monitoring and oversight rules.
- Provide adequate resources, including staff, training and funding, to oversee every contract.
- Do not outsource contract oversight.

Right-to-Work Scam Defeated in Kentucky, New Mexico

Activists Deal ALEC Agenda a Blow in Legislative Committees

Fighting back a corporate-driven campaign to pass anti-worker “right-to-work” laws, activists in Kentucky and New Mexico convinced allies to bottle up the harmful legislation in committees, effectively ending the threat in those states.

The confusing legislation, a top priority for the anti-worker American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), would drive down wages in the states, enriching millionaires and billionaires by increasing corporate

profits but hurting working families.

Kentucky, in particular, was a major target. The state is the only state below the Mason-Dixon Line that has resisted the anti-union law since it was authorized in 1947. In February, a House committee voted down the measure as allies from around the state packed the state Capitol in Frankfort, raising cheers from onlookers as they stood up to ALEC’s corporate-backed agenda.

Myra Pugh, a family

support and Medicaid eligibility specialist for the state of Kentucky and member of Local 2259 (Organizing Council 962) was thrilled. “I know firsthand what it’s like to work without strong unions,” she said. “I came from the mortgage industry where there is no union and no one to stand up or fight for your rights.”

In New Mexico, a pro-worker majority in a Senate panel also voted down the right-to-work scam this year, giving labor and community activists a resounding victory after months of testimony and rallies against the destructive legislation.

New Mexico legislators also saw the bill for what it is — an attack on the middle class. After hearing more than two hours of public testimony from concerned citizens, the eight-member

committee tabled the bill by a party-line vote, 5-3.

“We are so grateful to the senators who helped to ensure the prosperity of New Mexico’s economy tonight by voting down this terrible right-to-work legislation,” said Brenda Watson, a librarian and member of Local 477 (Council 18). “We look forward to all our elected officials working together toward solutions to benefit all of our state now that this distraction has been put to rest.”

In the end, both states had rejected the prospects for fewer and poorer-paying jobs, diminished worker safety and fewer on-the-job protections.

Below: Working families packed the Kentucky state Capitol and cheered legislators for standing up to the corporate-backed drive to undermine unions.



AFSCME's Got Skills!

The AFSCME Online Leadership Academy is offering a new webinar training series, **AFSCME's Got Skills**.

UPCOMING TOPICS

For Stewards: Duty of fair representation, Weingarten rights and just cause

For Activists: 1-on-1 communications

For New Officers: "I was just elected president — now what?"

For more information, go to AFSCME.org/learn

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CLOSE OUT SPECIAL
\$15

Appleton WISCONSIN

AFSCME Council 32 Boosts Wisconsin

In a historic decision to combine strengths and resources, and focus on rebuilding union membership, AFSCME Councils 24, 40 and 48 officially unified to become AFSCME Wisconsin Council 32, in honor of the year AFSCME was born in the state in 1932.

With intense and determined attitudes, delegates to the founding convention quickly got down to serious business at the outset of the three-day event, April 17-19. They adopted a constitution, elected new officers and a new executive board.

"We have come together as unified activists and both the newly elected officers and board members know that job one is rebuilding our union," said Paul Spink, newly elected president of Council 32. "This new council and its members will be bold, determined and action-driven to improve the lives of our members and all working people. The real work starts now."

Members, local union leaders and council leadership from each of the three former councils worked for more than a year on a plan to form the new council. They were



Delegates to the founding convention of Council 32 in Wisconsin put the finishing touches on their banner by signing their names.

careful to draft a constitution that ensures representation and a voice for members in all work sectors and geographic sections of the state. The new unified Wisconsin council membership includes state, county and municipal employees, as well as school employees and private-sector workers.

"Everything you've done is a model of dedication, and you show all of AFSCME what it means to be committed to our fight. And this moment marks a new start," AFSCME President Lee Saunders told delegates. "It is both a point of liberation from the past and a catalyst for the future."

Coeymans NEW YORK

Quick Action Saves Seven from Burning House

Seven residents of the town of Coeymans in Albany County, can thank quick action by local police dispatch, officers and firefighters for saving their lives in February.

Within 44 seconds from receiving the call, Coeymans police dispatchers David Debacco and Sue Leonardo had sent police officers Brian Rinaldi and John Favata to the scene. Officer Rinaldi,

a member of Local 2647 (Council 82) located seven people on the roof of their back porch as their house was engulfed in flames.

The two officers cleared a path through the snow and debris to allow a fire ladder to reach the residents. Firefighter Robert Domanico climbed the ladder and handed the children down to the two officers, and all three helped the adults to safety.

"As a result of the quick and selfless acts of bravery on behalf of all personnel involved in the events of Feb. 13, seven lives were saved that day," wrote Coeymans Chief of Police P.J. McKenna in a letter honoring dispatch for their quick response and the officers and

firefighters for their bravery.

"Countless women and men go to work every day with one intention: to make our communities safer," said Council 82 Exec. Dir. James Lyman. "These actions exemplify the commitment public safety officers bring to the job."

The town of Coeymans is examining transferring emergency services to the county. Police and residents together are concerned with these cuts in services. "Efforts to minimize the importance of local emergency services disregard the bravery exhibited on that day and are ill-advised," said Local 2647 Pres. Joseph Dunn.

Atlanta GEORGIA

AFSCME Members Beat Back Aramark

Faced with the loss of their negotiated wages and benefits, and even their jobs, cafeteria workers at the Atlanta Public School District persuaded school board officials in March to reject a bid by outsourcer Aramark to take over operations.

The 450 food service workers, cashiers and managers who fought Aramark are members of Local 1644, whose five-year contract with the school district was about to expire when the school board considered a bid by competitor Aramark that did not guarantee the existing cafeteria employees their jobs.

If their current employer, food service vendor Sodexo, was replaced by Aramark, the workers might even keep their jobs but lose their recently negotiated wages and benefits.

Contending that Aramark's attempt to underbid Sodexo would create a "race to the bottom," Local 1644 members built a coalition with parents, school teachers and clergy to let the community know that switching to Aramark threatened the health of the students.

"It was all done in solidarity," said cafeteria manager Deanna Evans, also a Local 1644 steward. "We all stood united — the city workers helped us with this fight. The bus drivers, the mechanics and other AFSCME members helped us."



Faced with the loss of their AFSCME-negotiated wages and benefits, and even their jobs, cafeteria workers at the Atlanta Public School District, persuaded school board officials in March to reject a bid by outsourcer Aramark to take over operations.

They spoke out at school board meetings every month for the past six months, passed out leaflets, and issued a report comparing the two companies. Local 1644 also backed its case with a white paper that detailed Aramark's alarming and scandalous record.

They also marched on Aramark's Atlanta offices — *twice* — and knocked on the door to tell them they weren't welcome. "They called the police on us," said Evans. "They said they didn't want to be bothered with us."

Local 1644's efforts were successful. The board voted unanimously to retain Sodexo.

Cincinnati OHIO

Council 8 Finds Fix for City Pensions

Thanks to proposals by Council 8, a court-mediated agreement was reached in March that protects current and future retirees and puts the pension system on long-term sustainability.

The Cincinnati Retirement System faced an \$850 million shortfall in its

ability to cover future benefits. Also, an annual 3 percent compounded cost-of-living (COLA) increase that began in 2000 was draining its coffers further, risking the viability of the entire pension system.

With these pressing issues closing in, it was finally time to find a long-term fix. The opportunity came when a judge brought the city and the union together to mediate a lasting settlement. Council 8's leadership brought the right solutions to fix the system.

Under the deal, the city will contribute \$238 million and commit to

future payments to shore up the pension fund's viability, plus drop the COLA for three years, with further changes that will make it easier on retirees.

Fixing the pension system and keeping the defined benefit intact is a huge victory for current and future retirees.

"Thanks to the hard work, resourcefulness and skill of Council 8 members, staff and our community allies, we were able to score a win that few people thought was possible," said John A. Lyall, the council's president and an AFSCME International vice president.

Olympia WASHINGTON

Retirees Out in Force for Washington State Lobby Day

With several critical issues on the front burner of the Washington state Legislature, more than 140 members of Retired Public Employees Council (RPEC) turned out during their annual Lobby Day in February.

They met with their legislators at the state Capitol to oppose a proposal to move retirees from a defined-benefit pension to a more risky 401(k) savings plan.

Retirees also lobbied in support of a study to demonstrate the need for a cost-of-living adjustment for retirees who were members before October 1977, and other matters of concern to retirees.

“It was good for Sen. Pam Roach to see retirees en masse, which will remind her that we are a powerful voting force,” said Gwen Rench, president of RPEC. “It was also great to hear from both Council 2 and Council 28.”

Some retirees had never lobbied their legislators before RPEC’s Lobby Day. After sharing their concerns with the



RPEC members of the 38th Legislative District meet with Rep. June Robinson to discuss issues of importance to retired public workers during RPEC’s Legislative Day, in February, at the state Capitol.

lawmakers, they made plans to meet with legislators even after the session ended.

“What impressed me the most was the willingness of a record number of members to take the better part of two days to exercise their collective political muscle and remind legislators across the state that we’re a force to be reckoned with,” said Mike Watson, vice president of RPEC.

Lexington KENTUCKY

Bad-Faith Bargaining Doesn’t Deter City Workers

More than two years after the 120 workers at Lexington Waste Management voted to form a union with AFSCME, they’ve won another battle to maintain their union and settle their first union agreement – no thanks to the management that sought to break up the united group of city employees.

Not content to string along

workers and refuse to negotiate in good faith, management pushed hard for another vote from its employees, hoping to decertify the union and

avoid a union agreement. Thanks to a strong organizing committee and local union officers, Local 4468 members overwhelmingly beat back those efforts, choosing to stay with AFSCME by a 3-to-1 margin.

“When we come together as one, we can accomplish anything,” said Local 4468 Pres. Dion Henry following the victory, which paved the way for a first union agreement that includes improved workplace policies, uniform and supply allowances and a new grievance procedure.

“We have worked long and hard to maintain our strength and unity over the last couple years,” said Henry.



Solidarity, June 30, 1947. The Hand That Will Rule the World—One Big Union.

Chicago ILLINOIS

Cab Drivers Fighting for Reforms

Since early spring of last year, more than 3,500 members of Cab Drivers United (CDU)/AFSCME Council 31 have been fighting City Hall to protect their livelihood, their safety on the job and the public at large. In February, frustrated by the city's failure to properly address serious issues surrounding the "rideshare" industry, more than 300 CDU members braved sub-zero wind chills to protest outside City Hall.

"After two years of operating illegally in Chicago, the city's response has been to allow Uber, a politically connected, billion-dollar corporation, to operate based on a 'promise,'" said driver Ismail Onay. "Every mom and pop restaurant in Chicago is licensed and inspected by the city, their employees are protected with workers' compensation and the public is protected by requirements to maintain commercial liability insurance," he said. "Yet Uber is allowed to evade most forms of oversight that every other business in the city is subject to."

Following the second tragic murder of a Chicago cab driver in a month, CDU hosted an informal training for area cab drivers to help them avoid similar attacks. Members also joined together to raise \$6,200 to support the widow and young son of a murdered driver, Chinedu Madu.

"We attended this training to learn more about the protections and resources that are out there, but it shouldn't fall all on our shoulders," said Cheryl Miller, a Chicago cab driver and CDU member. "The city of Chicago needs to take proactive measures to address



Chicago cab drivers rally for fair treatment.

violence against cab drivers now."

CDU members have committed to raise standards for Chicago cab drivers and keep fighting until the public and drivers are protected. In March, CDU members came together to complete a Driver Advocate training program, which adapted Council 31's traditional steward training to meet the needs of a non-standard workforce.

The training was designed to provide the tools and knowledge necessary to assist fellow drivers in standing up for their rights as they navigate the court system set up by the city of Chicago to enforce taxi regulations. "Many drivers don't understand their rights, or even simple procedures, and so they're very easily taken advantage of," said John Hilt, a veteran cab driver and CDU member.

Just days after completing the training, two driver advocates, Ezz Abdelmagid and Michael Agunloye, put their new skills in action to help a rookie cab driver prepare for his hearing and get the case against him dismissed.

Miami FLORIDA

Retiree Speaks Out for Children

Melba White, an AFSCME retiree and life-long Miami resident, made an emotional appeal this winter to a panel of state legislators to restore cuts in social programs that Florida's children desperately need.

"Simply put, I believe we are failing our children," White, a 31-year veteran employee of Jackson Memorial Hospital and a grandmother, told the Miami-Dade County lawmakers. She was referring to the cuts to state agencies like the Department of Children and Families (DCF), which runs

child protective services.

As a result of those DCF budget cuts, more than 500 children – some from Miami – "have lost their lives due to abuse or neglect," she said. "Their deaths are a scandal, and a stain on our state."

As a procurement specialist at Jackson Memorial Hospital, White knows what she's talking about. She worked with nurses and other health care professionals to make sure they had the equipment they needed best to provide quality care for their patients. She took her job very seriously because she knew that failure to procure the right equipment at a hospital could mean the difference between life and death.

Citing a recent report on harmful cuts to the state workforce, White noted that mas-

sive cuts to child protective services hurt the agency's ability to monitor at-risk children and even prevent deaths.

The issue came to light through an investigation into a horrific incident in which a man is accused of having thrown his five-year-old daughter off a bridge. The man had been previously reported to DCF's abuse hotline.

"Our society must protect people who cannot help themselves, including the elderly and those who have fallen on hard times," said White, who said she was advocating on behalf of her seven grandchildren and other kids who might be left behind. "Every child we fail to protect, for me, as a grandmother, is one too many," she said.

Weston CONNECTICUT

City Workers Donate Settlement to Senior Center

Last year, members of Local 1303-041 (Council 4) filed unfair labor practices against the city after it assigned bargaining unit work at the Weston Transfer Station to seasonal workers who were not members of the union, in violation of the contract.

All along they said the issue was never about the money.

“We believed this was work that should have been assigned to bargaining unit members,” said Local 1303-041 Pres. Al Blizzard.

Their determination paid off in January when the local members won their case. And, in the spirit in which they waged their fight, they donated all the proceeds of their settlement — \$2,780 — to the Friends of the Weston Senior Activities Center and a smaller amount to the Calvary Evangelical Church in Trumbull.

Had the members kept the money, they would each have received \$363.64. But giving is its own reward.



Members of Local 1303-041 (Council 4) with settlement check they donated to a local senior center.

“People tend to overlook the seniors when making charitable donations,” said President Blizzard. “Hopefully this will shine some light on this area of need in our society. We’re all going to be seniors someday, and we’ll need the valuable resources these centers offer.”

Seattle WASHINGTON

UW Employees, Students Rally for Safe Staffing

Upset with inadequate staffing levels and unsatisfactory maintenance conditions at the University of Washington (UW), dozens of students and members of Local 1488 (Council 28) rallied in the campus’s Red Square to call attention to a problem that puts employees,



Upset with inadequate staffing levels and unsatisfactory maintenance conditions at the University of Washington, dozens of students and AFSCME members rallied to call attention to the problem.

students and the public health and safety at risk. “Instead of hiring, administrators are trying to

intimidate current workers to keep running, running, running,” said Local 1488 Pres. Paula Lukaszek, a

UW plumber. “Custodians are now responsible for cleaning extra buildings, in addition to their assigned ones, on ‘open runs.’”

An “open run” forces employees to complete their job duties in addition to the duties of one or more employees due to unfilled vacancies.

The work has become more difficult as the university’s landscape has grown.

Local 1488 has repeatedly asked the university for more staff to ensure the safety of students and to maintain infrastructure.

Indianapolis INDIANA

Fighting to Protect Pensions

AFSCME members throughout the state are at the forefront of the effort to protect public employee pensions from being converted to a 401(k)-style savings plan.

In January, members from the Indianapolis Department of Public Works Local 725 attended a hearing of the House version of the legislation. Then, bus drivers, library workers, health care workers and others attended a Lobby Day at the Statehouse to talk to their legislators about the bills affecting their retirements.

Traditional pensions are guaranteed. For as long as a retiree lives, they will receive a monthly benefit they earned during their working years. 401(k)-style savings plans have no guarantees. If a worker retires during a down market, they may not have enough money to live on.

If passed, the legislation would create a defined contribution plan and automatically enroll new employees into it. Currently, new public employees are automatically enrolled in the Public Employee Retirement Fund pension plan, and must opt out if they want a different retirement plan.



AFSCME members from the Department of Public Works Local 725 attend a Lobby Day aimed at protecting public employee pensions.

While the proposed change to the retirement system may seem small, pension funds rely on continuous new contributions as older employees retire. The new contributions are invested to yield returns that then pay the benefits of the current workers. The lack of new participants could destabilize the whole fund, putting retirees' financial security in jeopardy and costing Hoosier taxpayers millions of dollars.

Indiana public service workers were reaching out to their legislators and the committee to make the case that Indiana's traditional defined benefit pension fund is the best deal for both retirees and taxpayers.

Northern CALIFORNIA

EMS Deal is a Big Deal

More than 1,000 California EMS professionals across 13 counties will see a pay increase and continued health care coverage under a new labor agreement with American Medical Response (AMR).

The agreement, ratified in March, concludes a two-year battle with AMR. The company tried to divide the workforce and

cut health care, but the employees stayed strong throughout. The counties covered include Contra Costa, Placer, Sacramento, San Benito, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Stanislaus, Sonoma, Tulare and Yolo.

"Solidarity opens your eyes and it opens the company's eyes," said Jamie Field, a 23-year EMT from Stanislaus County and a member of Local 4911. "It's about a fair process, protection and safety.



Jamie and Ally Field work as an EMT and a registered nurse, respectively.

It's about coming together."

Field and his wife, a registered nurse, devote their lives to providing health care. Together they have three children.

One has autism and special needs. The new agreement will allow employees like Field to continue providing health care for their families.

"As health care professionals, we shouldn't have to fight to keep our health insurance," said Field. "We should be leading the way."

Field has a message for EMS professionals struggling to make ends meet: "If you're not in a union you should be. Union means better pay, better health care and more security for the future."

Austin TEXAS

Corrections Members Fight for Pension, Pay Issues

AFSCME Texas Corrections members from Huntsville, Palestine, Gatesville and Angleton showed up in full force in February to testify before a Senate committee about the importance of addressing pension and pay raise issues facing the officers.

The department's budget request includes a 10 percent pay increase for correctional employees that will help fill vacancies. AFSCME Texas Corrections commended the department for supporting the raise, but is pushing for more than 10 percent. AFSCME Texas Corrections submitted a proposal to increase retention by putting corrections pay rates on par with the five largest counties in the state, which on average receive about \$4,500 more than the department's employees.

Sgt. Jackie Parsonage testified about the tough decisions officers in her unit have to make due to the low wages they receive. "I've had to pick officers up and drive them to work because they couldn't afford to put gas in their car," she said.

Local 3920 Pres. Catherine Wilson testified that the department is the second largest prison system in the country, "but has some of the lowest-paid correctional



AFSCME Texas Corrections members from Huntsville, Palestine, Gatesville and Angleton testified before a Senate committee in February about pension and pay raise issues.

employees. We deserve better pay to allow us to do our jobs more effectively and efficiently."

The corrections members also delivered cards, signed by more than 8,000 correctional employees, urging lawmakers to approve the raises.

Richard Salazar, laundry manager from the Powledge unit, was "able to sit down and talk in detail about the issues we face as correctional employees and at my unit specifically, he said. "It's going to take more visits and more correctional employees reaching out to their elected officials to really get the changes we deserve."

Trenton NEW JERSEY

Judge Says Christie Broke Law on Pensions

Gov. Chris Christie's attempt to shortchange the state's pension fund by cutting the state's payment by \$1.6 billion was illegal, a judge ruled in February.

In a scathing judgment, the judge ordered Christie to make the state's portion of the payment to the state pension fund. "When a State itself enters into a contract, it cannot simply walk away from its financial obligations," the judge wrote.

Sheryl Gordon, executive director of Council 1, applauded the judge's decision. "This is a step in the right direction to make the thousands of dedicated women and men who keep

this state moving whole."

"Thousands of AFSCME members, who we represent, go to work every day to make our neighborhoods, cities and towns better," said Mattie Harrell, Council 71 executive director and also an AFSCME International vice president. "They do their part, they give their all – it's time for the state to do its part."

"By simply stepping away from the state's obligation, Chris Christie

once again sent a clear message to all New Jersey workers that he has no respect for the work they do," said Gerard Meara, Council 73 executive director.

Added Council 52 Executive Director Richard Gollin, "time and time again, this governor consistently scapegoats public employees to further his real political ambitions and hide his failures as governor."

Phoenix ARIZONA and Washington, DC

AFSCME Members Testify at President's Policing Task Force

AFSCME members were among many law enforcement officers who testified in February before a Presidential policing task force, putting a human face on critical issues that concern these public service employees nationwide.

Sgt. Aaron Danielson, with the Fairbanks, Alaska International Airport Police and Fire Department, was among those testifying before the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, then meeting in Phoenix, Ariz.

Sgt. Danielson, also president of the Public Safety Employee Association/AFSCME, testified about the importance of bringing community and police together to help broaden the public's understanding of the work and commitment officers bring to their jobs every day.

"Our experience tells us that Citizen Police Academies, an idea that's been around awhile that we adopted in 2012, could be the ideal way to bring police and citizens closer together in pursuit of our joint community public safety goals," he testified.

Also speaking to the Task Force — this time at a hearing in Washington, DC — was Sgt. David Orr, a public safety



Sgt. David Orr, a Norwalk, Conn., public safety officer and member of Local 1727 (Council 15), testified before a presidential task force to recommend extending workman's compensation to cover Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

officer in Norwalk, Conn. Citing the psychological trauma police officers suffered in aftermath of the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, he recommend extending workman's compensation to cover Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

"As cops, we all know that those outside of our profession love to hear a good war story," said Orr, a member of Local 1727 (Council 15). "But nobody wants to hear the story told by the Newtown officer who responded to Sandy Hook Elementary."

President Obama created the task force last year to bridge the gap between community and law enforcement, examining best practices. In March, the Task Force submitted its recommendations.

Albany NEW YORK

Former AFSCME Member Takes the Gavel in Albany

Carl Heastie, a former AFSCME member, is the first African-American speaker of the New York State Assembly.

Elected in February, Heastie has been a member of the state Assembly since 2000. He was a former member of Local 1407 (DC 37) in the New York City's Comptroller's office. He also was a member of Day Care Employees Local 205 (DC 1707).



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"Not only do we applaud Carl's selection as speaker, but we also commend him for his consistent and solid work as chairman of the Assembly Labor Committee, and his devotion to his constituents and his Bronx borough," said DC 1707 Exec. Dir. Victoria Mitchell, also an AFSCME International vice president.

DC 37 Exec. Dir. Henry Garrido noted that "Speaker Heastie's experience as a city employee and a union member gives him special insight into the needs of our members and our communities."

Heastie mounted a successful campaign to replace Sheldon Silver, former speaker for more than 21 years, who resigned after his indictment and arrest on federal corruption charges.

In Memoriam

AFSCME is mourning the loss of three former leaders who died in early 2015. We remember their good work for our union.

Victor H. Gotbaum

Victor H. Gotbaum, former head of New York City's largest public employees union, District Council 37, died April 5. He was 93.



Gotbaum is perhaps best remembered for his role in helping New York City avert bankruptcy in 1975. For more than two decades, starting in 1965, Gotbaum built DC 37 into a powerhouse

of more than 110,000 members, up from the 36,000 when he first became its executive director. Gotbaum also was an AFSCME International vice president and served as president of Public Services International, a global union federation that represents 20 million public service workers in 150 countries.

Larry Scanlon

Larry Scanlon, AFSCME's former political director from 1995 until his retirement in 2012, died in a car accident in South Carolina on



Feb. 27. He was 65. Scanlon began his labor career in 1974 as a field representative for New York Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000. He was appointed in 1992 as executive

director. In 1995, he was appointed to direct AFSCME's Political Action department.

Scanlon was the primary force behind the Democratic Redistricting Project (Foundation for the Future) and also served as president of Communities United to Strengthen America, dedicated to improving the financial condition of the middle class.

Vernon Watkins

Vernon R. Watkins, a labor organizer and activist during a career fighting for working families, died March 5. He was 76.



As AFSCME's area director in California, Watkins led a University of California organizing campaign that increased membership by more than 30,000.

Watkins was involved in the 1970s in AFSCME's first organizing

campaigns in the city and county of Los Angeles, and was responsible for the affiliation of what became Local 3090, Council 36's largest independent local, and the City of Los Angeles Professional Medical Employees Unit, Local 2006, among others. He was the longtime executive assistant to former Sec.-Treas. Bill Lucy.

AFSCME Executive Board Summary Report

This report summarizes the meeting of the International Executive Board held March 10-11, 2015, in Washington, D.C.

President Saunders opened the meeting by greeting newly elected International Vice Presidents Victoria E. Mitchell, executive director of District Council 1707 in New York and Michael Newman, deputy director of Illinois Council 31, who are filling vacancies, and swearing them in.

President Saunders announced a new plan, "AFSCME Strong." He described AFSCME's strategic priorities, established after the leadership summit in December, including:

1. Organizing new members and developing member leaders to train and mobilize others;
2. Fortifying AFSCME's PEOPLE program;
3. Affirming AFSCME as a leader in the fight to rebuild the middle class;
4. Lifting up the voices and stories of AFSCME members to promote the value of public services; and
5. Undertaking union-wide structural changes, including unification among affiliates where it makes sense.

President Saunders discussed recent meetings with President Obama, congressional leaders and key allies to build support for organized labor and collective bargaining rights.

The Board heard presentations on threats to AFSCME members from court litigation, legislation, executive action and contract negotiations; an overview of challenges identified during the 50,000 Stronger Campaign;

the status of collective bargaining fights and attacks on pension and health care benefits; and an update on the AFSCME Strong activist training program.

The Board discussed developing a new Associate Membership Program to allow workers who are not currently represented by AFSCME, to support the union and our priorities. President Saunders appointed a committee to shape the program and to report back to the IEB.

The Board approved a request to continue the current treatment of dues for public sector members in Wisconsin affected by Scott Walker's Act 10. The Board also discussed the ongoing work of the Wisconsin councils to establish the new statewide Council 32, with the founding convention set to occur in April. A review of the AFL-CIO's Winter Executive Council meeting was also presented to the IEB.



Two-year-old Quincy Kroner was a bit overwhelmed at the chance to meet his heroes, Cincinnati sanitation workers Mark Davis and Eric Washington, and show them his new truck.

Everyday Heroes

Emotional Show-and-Tell for Young Fan of Cincinnati Sanitation Workers

By David Patterson

Two-year-old Quincy Kroner watches his heroes from the living room window of his Cincinnati home every Friday afternoon. That's when AFSCME Local 250 (Council 8) sanitation workers Mark Davis and Eric Washington drive by in their garbage truck and collect trash from his street.

Usually Quincy and the workers just exchange waves, but in March their friendship went viral. When Quincy's parents got him a new toy garbage truck as a reward for successfully potty training, he was anxious to show off his new toy. So he and his Dad stepped out to meet his heroes face to face.

But when the big moment came, Quincy was so excited he burst into tears. "He is a pretty shy guy, he generally has to warm up around strangers," his dad, Ollie Kroner, told BuzzFeed News. "But it doesn't take long before he wants to talk trucks!"

The photo his dad snapped of that moment and posted on Facebook quickly captured the

Internet's attention. With millions of views and likes already, Quincy and his AFSCME heroes are now an online phenomenon, even catching a mention on ABC's "Good Morning America."

"I can't believe how popular the photo has been," Kroner said. "I was disappointed that I didn't catch him grinning in his big moment. But what can you do? It was a great photo in a different kind of way."

Ollie, who has another young son with his wife, Libby, said the sanitation workers already knew they had a little fan and "developed a kind of relationship through the window," honking and waving when they drove past.

Sometimes it takes a 2-year-old to remind us all what a hero really is. It's not about magic capes or superpowers. It's about hard work, dependability and doing something that makes our communities better places to live. We get it, Quincy! We think sanitation workers are a big deal too.

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