

ACROSS THE NATION

ORGANIZING FOR POWER

GEORGIA

As part of a membership drive to make their union stronger, more than 429 workers have joined Atlanta Local 1644 since September, including city employees at the departments of public works, parks and aviation; health care workers at Grady Health System, the largest public hospital-based health system in the Southeast; and 47 COs employed by Atlanta's Department of Corrections.

ILLINOIS

More than 800 employees from several state and local government agencies have joined Council 31 over the past few months, including 657 clerical and technical employees from virtually every state agency, and 80 Cook County Sheriff's Office corrections lieutenants.

INDIANA

Thirty Richmond City Park employees voted to join Council 62. The unit includes outdoor recreation

From state to state, workers are organizing with AFSCME for a voice on the job.

Here are some recent victories:

and fitness coordinators, mechanics, bookkeepers, and maintenance, clerical and building support personnel.

NEW YORK

Nearly 60 Westchester Medical Center couriers employed by Crothall Services Group have formed a union with Civil Service Employees Association/AFSCME Local 1000. Joining DC 1707 are 24 child care providers employed by Hunts Point Day Care and 10 employees of Tenants and Neighbors, an AIDS advocacy housing group.

OHIO

Nineteen employees of Boardman Township in Mahoning County — including police and fire department clerks, city inspectors and maintenance workers — voted unanimously to form a union with Council 8. In Stark County, nine workers — electrical and building inspectors, clerks and a plans examiner — joined the council through voluntarily recognition.

PENNSYLVANIA

About 160 employees recently joined Council 13, including 95 certified nursing assistants at St. Luke's Village, a retirement home in Hazleton; 50 employees of the Somerset County Area Agency on Aging; and 14 Somerset County sheriff deputies.

RHODE ISLAND

Forty-five employees of the town of New Shoreham voted recently to join Council 94. They work at the town hall, library, harbor master's office, public works department, police dispatch office and the school department.

WISCONSIN

More than 100 courthouse workers in Oneida County voted to form a union with Council 40. Twenty-one Crawford County Sheriff's officers have chosen to leave another union and become Council 40 members.

NEW YORK CITY

Long Struggle Pays Off for Public Health Nurses

Nearly a decade of demanding better working conditions and three years of negotiations have paid off for the United Federation of Nurses and Epidemiologists, Local 436 of DC 37.

Thanks to a new economic agreement with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, nearly 850 public health nurses working in the city's public schools will now have full-time union health fund benefits, year-round health insurance and paid holidays.

"Nurses in the schools put in 35

hours a week. But they often work more. As part of the emergency response system, they are told to stay on standby. Nonetheless, the city treated them as part-time people and only gave them part-time benefits," says Local 436 Vice Pres. Judith Arroyo.

The nurses' salaries will now be paid out over 12 months instead of 10 but their annual earnings will increase thanks to their gains, including 12 paid holidays, increment payments, health insurance for the whole year and bereavement leave.

The agreement came as part of negotiations held over the last three years between the city and Local 436 and the United Federation of Teachers. "We'd been fighting for these benefits for over 10 years. The city refused to give them to us because nurses don't work over the summer," adds Arroyo. "But some of us do work summer school and respond to emergencies during that time. Our feeling was: 'If we have to be available to you for the whole year then compensate us appropriately.'"

NEW YORK CITY

Lifespire Workers Win First Contract With CSEA

Twelve-hundred employees of Lifespire Inc., a New York City human services agency that provides services to the developmentally disabled, overwhelmingly approved their first contract last December with the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000.

After a months-long campaign to build support from community groups and elected officials throughout the city, Lifespire's employees successfully reached a card check and neutrality agreement with management in early December 2005. In February 2006, the employees became the largest private-sector group of workers ever to join AFSCME's biggest affiliate. Their decision to join CSEA through a card-check campaign paid off: Under their new contract, the members —

mostly direct care workers — will see their paychecks rise quickly over the three-year agreement with cost-of-living increases, totaling 10 percent, retroactive to last July, and pension and health insurance coverage for employees who work more than 20 hours a week.

Says Norma de Guzman, a senior developmental aide at Lifespire who helped lead the effort, "We love our consumers and the work we do, and this contract will allow us to continue providing the kind of care they deserve."

In addition to improved wages, the contract provides longevity pay and commits CSEA and Lifespire to work together to improve the quality of the state's developmental disabilities system through additional resources.



Lifespire workers and their family members held numerous events and rallies — like this one in Brooklyn — until they successfully joined CSEA.

David Galarza

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

AFSCME Member, Daughter Win Hearts & Award

Some Minnesota children have benefited from the hard work of two warm-hearted women — Dianne Mitzuk, a file manager for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and member of Local 2829 (Council 5), and her daughter Becky, a teacher of special-needs preschoolers in St. Paul.

For their efforts to collect donated winter clothing for needy children, the two were selected as joint winners of Minnesota AFL-CIO's 2006 Terrel Merriman Community Services Award, named after a Salvation Army volunteer. Council 5's nominating letter described how the Mitzuks' personal desire to help those with limited resources grew so popular that "AFSCME members throughout the state were

cleaning out their closets and donating to Dianne's 'little ones.'"

Hundreds of St. Paul children — many from countries scattered across the globe — have benefited from the clothing drive in the two years since the campaign's inception.

Becky got the idea for a used winter clothing bank after watching youngsters come to school without jackets, sweaters or even mittens — even as temperatures plummeted below freezing. "She called me up and said, 'Mom, I need your help,'" Dianne recalls.

Posting a sign in her workplace requesting donations is "all it took," Dianne says. Bags of items soon began piling up in her home.



Don Dimdorf

HELPING OUT — Minnesota AFSCME member Dianne Mitzuk and her daughter Becky won last year's Minnesota AFL-CIO's Terrel Merriman Community Services Award.

By the second year of their efforts, students at seven schools had winter clothes.

"We're not doing this for an award," says Dianne. "We're doing this because these kids need to be warm. But it was a huge honor — very humbling. It is the kindness of many people that make this possible."

ACROSS THE NATION

OKLAHOMA & WASHINGTON, D.C.

Workers Win with AFSCME

OKLAHOMA

More than 800 municipal employees in three cities joined AFSCME last year under a state law granting them collective bargaining rights for the first time.

“We look forward to making our hometown a better place to live,” says Karolyn Anders, a senior adult coordinator for the city of Lawton’s Parks and Recreation Department, following last October’s ruling by the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) to certify AFSCME as the exclusive representative for 450 municipal employees.

Their victory was the culmination of a battle that began in 2004 with the passage of a statute — championed by AFSCME — requiring cities of 35,000 people or more to recognize the freedom of non-uniformed employees to join unions. Some 9,000 workers across the state were affected. In November of that year, employees of the city of Enid were the first to petition PERB to recognize their AFSCME union. But city officials quickly filed suit to block the measure.

In July 2005, the Oklahoma Supreme Court sided with Enid and ruled the law unconstitutional. AFSCME appealed, pointing out that the court’s decision conflicted with 80 years of legal precedent on population-based laws. In a historic reversal, the court declared the law constitutional in March 2006 — then reaffirmed its decision six months later on an appeal from the city of Lawton.

Finally, PERB could formally verify that a majority of Enid’s 280



THEY DID IT! Lawton city employees celebrate their achievement.

Mark Cavenah

employees — and those employed by Lawton — had designated AFSCME as their union. “The certification was a long time coming, but it will mean that we can now work in partnership with city management to make Enid a safer and healthier place to live,” says Eldon Stephens, a 17-year veteran city employee who works for the solid waste department.

About 100 employees in the city of Moore also have won union recognition, and thousands of city employees throughout the state have also been motivated to organize with AFSCME.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Elevator mechanics, plumbers, sheet metal workers, groundskeepers and others responsible for maintaining the Library of Congress are feeling more empowered these days. Last October, they voted overwhelmingly for union representation. The 84 workers — who are employed by the Architect of the Capitol — join 180 other AOC

laborers and custodial workers of Council 26’s Local 626.

“This is a landmark election,” says Local 626 Pres. Wally Reed. “The employees of AOC showed tremendous courage in stepping forward and demanding a voice in the workplace. The union looks forward to working with management to resolve issues affecting this group.”

Early last year, Council 26 brought to the attention of Congress health and safety issues affecting workers on Capitol Hill. At a hearing in May, senators were outraged to learn that utility workers for six years have been exposed to carcinogenic asbestos and falling concrete from dilapidated ceilings and walls.

As a result of AFSCME’s encouragement and public pressure, the U.S. Senate appropriated \$100 million to fix the problems. “Now that AOC workers have a union, they’ll have a stronger voice in advocating for their issues,” says Carl Goldman, Council 26 executive director.

LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO



Dave Paladino

POWER IN NUMBERS — New Mexico State University workers rally at the Las Cruces campus after delivering a petition to NMSU's president demanding wages comparable to workers at similar universities.

University Workers Build Union, Seek Pay Equity

Carrying a 12-foot-wide banner and petitions bearing signatures of hundreds of supporters, more than 100 custodians, librarians, housekeepers, groundskeepers and office support staff employed by New Mexico State University/Las Cruces delivered a simple message to university Pres. Michael Martin last November: They want a “first class pay raise.”

After falling behind other state and university workers in wages and benefits, the workers organized for power

last year. In June, 1,300 NMSU employees, mostly based in Las Cruces, joined Council 18 after a hard-fought campaign. Now, as members of Local 2393, they are battling for a decent wage on par with workers at comparable universities.

In addition to petitions, the workers delivered to Martin a letter calling on his administration “to work with our union now — at the bargaining table — so that we may go together to [the

Legislature in] Santa Fe to fight for real pay raises for staff and a brighter future for our students.”

The administration, however, has refused to address NMSU workers' concerns about wages or the cost of health insurance premiums. “It looks like we're going to have to fight for everything in this contract,” says Local 2393 member Melinda Caskey, an NMSU clerical employee. “We're all one unit and we're all in this together.”

AFSCME'S POLITICAL REBATE PROCEDURE

AFSCME's Constitution includes a rebate procedure to protect the rights of members. This is a procedure for members who object to how the union spends money for partisan political or ideological purposes. It is not open to those who are members under a union shop or similar provision — or to non-members who pay agency shop or similar fees to the union.

The timing of the steps in the procedure is tied to the International's fiscal year. The procedures, including the requirements for submitting a proper rebate request, are spelled out in Article IX, Section 14, of the International Constitution. **THESE REQUIREMENTS WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED.**

Here's how it works: Members who object to the expenditure of a portion of their dues for partisan political or ideological purposes and want to request a rebate must do so **individually** in writing **between April 1 and April 16, 2007.**

A request must be timely filed by registered or certified mail with **BOTH** the International Secretary-

Treasurer AND the council with which the member's local is affiliated, if any, OR the member's local. The request must contain the following information: the member's name, Social Security number, home address and the AFSCME local and council number to which dues were paid during the preceding year. This information must be typed or legibly printed. The individual request must be signed by the member and sent by the individual member to: William Lucy, International Secretary-Treasurer, AFSCME, 1625 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-5687, by registered or certified mail. Requests from more than one person may not be sent in the same envelope. Each request must be sent individually. Requests must be submitted in writing each year.

Upon receipt of a valid rebate request, an application for partisan political or ideological rebate will be sent to the objecting member. The objecting member will be required to complete and return the application in a timely manner. **The application will require the objecting member to identify those partisan political**

or ideological activities to which objection is being made, and no rebate will be made to any member who fails to complete that portion of the application. In determining the amount of the rebate to be paid to any member, the International Union and each subordinate body shall have the option of limiting the rebate to the member's pro-rata share of the expenses for those activities specifically identified in the application.

Any member who is dissatisfied with the amount of the rebate paid by the International Union or any subordinate body may object by filing a written appeal with the AFSCME Judicial Panel within 15 days after the rebate check has been received. Appeals should be sent to the Judicial Panel Chairperson at the AFSCME International Headquarters at the address listed above. The Judicial Panel will conduct a hearing and issue a written decision on such appeals, subject to an appeal to the full Judicial Panel. If dissatisfied with the Judicial Panel's ruling, a member can appeal to the next International Convention.