AFSCME members nationwide are coming together to fight for jobs and justice in the workplace.
READ THESE ACTIVISTS' STORIES ON PAGE 6.
AFSCME members nationwide are resisting efforts to strip away collective bargaining and other basic worker rights. See how they are fighting privatization, supporting essential public services and pushing back against other corporate-backed assaults on working families and their unions.

**A Personal Battle on Main Street**

DERIED AS A “UNION THUG” by her detractors, 67-year-old Nancy Gray refuses to be intimidated. “I don’t care what they call me,” she says. “But if it means looking after my people so they don’t lose their jobs, yes, I can be firm and feisty!”

Gray recently retired but not before completing a battle she had vowed to win. When the smoke cleared, Gov. Jan Brewer (R) had vetoed a measure that would have privatized vital city services.

Relentless in fighting what she calls the “anti-union animus here in Phoenix and across the United States,” Gray strongly believes that “an injury to one is an injury to all. That’s why I’ll never give up the fight.”

**On the Cover**

Photo: KINETIK

**Members Take a Stand**

**Phoenix, Ariz.**

‘Thug?’ We Don’t Think So

**NANCY GRAY**

FORMER MUNICIPAL COURT FINANCE ASST.
CITY OF PHOENIX, AZ.
PAST PRESIDENT,
LOCAL 2960

DERIED AS A “UNION THUG” by her detractors, 67-year-old Nancy Gray refuses to be intimidated. “I don’t care what they call me,” she says. “But if it means looking after my people so they don’t lose their jobs, yes, I can be firm and feisty!”

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Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
AFSCME’s 75th anniversary, observed this year, is cause for more than celebration. It’s also a time to reflect on the key accomplishments of the Green Machine’s 1.6 million members.

16
“Crossroads” Puts American Dream in Crosshairs
Super-rich Wall Street and Big Business tycoons are bankrolling right-wing attacks on the middle class. To advance their agenda, they contribute lavishly to groups created by former Pres. George W. Bush’s crafty political advisor, Karl Rove. Find out what the Middle Class is up against.

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‘Next Wavers’ Meet to Discuss Challenges
Three groups of AFSCME members — young activists, nurses and public safety officers — met in separate conferences recently to learn about the challenges facing the union and to gain the skills to confront them.

Des Moines, Iowa
Heart and Resolve in the Heartland
DEALING WITH DANGEROUS CRIMINALS is something Candace Accord is used to, but not speaking before state legislators. In March, she found herself doing just that, demanding that conservative lawmakers back off plans to take away workers’ rights.

“I’m a lot more passionate about politics now, about decisions affecting family, friends, co-workers and especially retirees,” Accord admits. “I feel great engaging more people about our governor’s policies and how they impact our lives here in America’s heartland.”

Photo: Charlie Wishman
AFSCME MEMBERS ARE COMMITTED to public service. All of us share a core value, one that was held by the men and women who created our union during the most challenging days of the Great Depression. It’s an understanding that each of us has to take personal responsibility for making life better for those with whom we share our communities and country. Whether you work in a hospital or court house, whether you work on the road or in a prison, the work you do is special. It requires women and men with special talents to do it. And it shows in the willingness you demonstrate to get involved, to be active and to make a difference in big ways and small.

Get America Working
Across the country this year, our members are leading the fight against the unprecedented attacks that anti-worker legislators and governors have directed toward public employees. In more than a dozen states, our right to collective bargaining came under assault, as if public employees were responsible for the economic crisis created by Wall Street greed and hands-off regulators in Washington, DC. Scapegoating will not turn the nation’s economy around. Jobs will do that. That is why we urge Congress to swiftly pass President Obama’s American Jobs Act (see Page 14), to get America working again.

Main Street Movement
In state after state, AFSCME members have pulled together to find real solutions to our problems. You can read about several of them in this issue cover story (see Pages 6 through 10). Our members are leading a new Main Street Movement that is standing up to the Wall Street financiers and the billionaires who think the economy should only work for them. We’re fighting for an economy that works for everyone.

That’s why in Wisconsin this August, Next Wavers were out with retirees mobilizing the votes to remove two anti-worker state senators. They also successfully protected three pro-worker senators who were targeted by the Wall Street forces for standing up for collective bargaining. Now, in Ohio, our members are engaged in the historic fight to overturn Senate Bill 5 on the ballot. The legislation they are voting on is part of a national effort to destroy the middle class by eliminating the right of workers to bargain for fair pay, benefits and working conditions. That’s why AFSCME members are mobilizing to get record numbers to the polls on Nov. 8. We need everyone in Ohio who cares about protecting the middle class to vote ‘NO’ on Issue 2.

Telling Our Side
AFSCME members are on the frontlines in every corner of the country, telling our side of the story to the media, canvassing neighbors, organizing rallies, speaking up in the community, and signing up co-workers for PEOPLE. You are lobbying, writing letters, tweeting and posting stories of our commitment on Facebook. You are doing what you have always done, standing up, proud and powerful, and making our union stronger in the struggle.

Fifty years ago, Pres. John F. Kennedy inspired Americans in all walks of life to become more active in public life. He created programs like the Peace Corps and VISTA to provide new avenues where Americans could serve. President Kennedy noted that “one person can make a difference and every person should try.” Just as it was true a half century ago, it remains true today. Every AFSCME member has the ability to make a difference during these challenging times. And it’s up to each of us to try.
ENERGIZED
FOR THE FIGHT

SINCE THE ATTACKS on AFSCME members began, I’ve
taveled coast to coast to stand with the social workers, correc-
tions officers, nurses and school bus drivers of our union. I’ve
seen us respond with energy, determination and, above all, the
optimism that comes from believing that together, we can win.

We understand how difficult these battles are. Yet
even in the face of the short-term defeats that have come our
way, we have been resilient. Our sisters’ and brothers’ strength
has inspired not just members of our union, and not just other
labor movement activists, but also workers throughout our
nation who, until now, have felt ignored and demoralized.

Concern About the Future
Everywhere I’ve gone, I’ve seen members of our AFSCME
family get angry — but anger has stoked activism and made us
want to fight back. It also inspired members to get their
friends and neighbors involved and to bring other activists
and organizations onto the frontlines. We’ve built strong
coalitions in every place we’re under attack, because people
now understand that it’s not just union members or workers in
state and local governments whose security is threatened; the
American dream itself is at risk.

I was in New York City this past spring to protest the
mayor’s drastic proposal for child care cuts. During the rally, a
District Council 1707 member said to me, “This is not about
our jobs. This is about what happens to these children. If we
don’t take care of our kids, what does that say about us?” It
was a simple statement — but it spoke volumes about this sis-
ter’s concern for the future.

Outpouring of Support
When I was in Madison, Wis., I was astounded by the out-
pouring of support for our members, who are the backbone
of every community. Union members, of course, came out in
droves — including police officers and firefighters who were
exempted from the worst parts of the governor’s anti-union
law, but stood with us nonetheless. Even more remarkable,
however, were the students, retirees, farmers and environ-
mentalists who joined us.

In this tough year, AFSCME has actually grown
stronger. These fights focused us on what we do well, and
what we can do better. For instance, we have partnered with
affiliates, not only sending financial help, but developing
plans of action and committing other resources to help exe-
cute those plans.

Here are a few other examples:
■ We’ve also created new tools, such as legislative
hotlines through which AFSCME members placed
nearly 100,000 calls.
■ We invested in an aggressive Facebook campaign
to defeat a paycheck deception bill. More than 850,000
people saw the campaign, and whether they were
Democrats, Republicans or Independents, many
of them liked what we had to say.
■ Through the new Faces and Voices program, rank-
and-file members are trained as spokespersons,
using their personal stories and facts from their
home states to speak up for public services and
workers’ rights. Paul Brewer, a Council 79 member,
said the training helped him get a letter-to-the-
editor published and deliver a clear, succinct
message in a television interview.

“EVEN IN THE FACE OF THE SHORT-TERM
DEFEATS THAT HAVE COME OUR WAY, AFSCME
SISTERS AND BROTHERS HAVE BEEN RESILIENT.”

Pull Together
There’s no doubt these are challenging times. And it looks
as though things will not get easier anytime soon. But in
these kinds of times, you face a choice: Hope that the same
old tactics will result in victory, or pull together and fight
back with new energy and new strategies. Our union has
made the right decision.
Laura Peterson slept overnight on a cold stone floor in the Wisconsin Capitol to ensure she would be heard in the morning by lawmakers. Lenny Allen became the voice of hundreds of New Yorkers losing their jobs and their benefits, even as cancer sapped his strength. Elena Blackman and Tracy Wiggins overcame shyness, picking up microphones to speak out at rallies for their fellow public employees and public services.

Across the country, AFSCME members — outraged by right-wing attacks on collective bargaining and the American middle class, and tired of seeing jobs lost in their communities — are shouldering unprecedented roles as activists. They’re tired of watching politicians placate the same corporations that ship American jobs overseas and dodge taxes on their multi-billion-dollar profits.

Aided and sustained by AFSCME’s resources, their efforts and personal sacrifices form the backbone of what we call the Main Street Movement.

But the Main Street Movement cannot rely solely on the contributions of a dedicated few. You can play a vital role, by volunteering, attending rallies and staying informed. Read on for the stories of your fellow AFSCME members doing just that.

GET INSPIRED. GET INVOLVED.

Join the Main Street Movement. Go to AFSCME.org/jobs to sign our petition and get involved.
Richwood, Ohio

Armed with Clipboard, He Joins the Battle

James Adkins

AFTER DRIVING MORE THAN 3,000 MILES and collecting nearly 2,000 signatures on the petition against SB 5, James Adkins feels empowered. Maybe that’s because he only set out to collect half that many.

A member of OCSEA Chapter 4710, the 50-year-old corrections officer from Richwood initially planned to collect 1,000 signatures. “But I was encouraged to get more when just as many Republicans as Democrats were telling me that SB 5 went too far.”

On the last day of the petition drive, Adkins learned that OCSEA needed 50 more signatures to put them over the top. “There were thunderstorms,” he recalls. “But they didn’t stop me and my wife from going out to sign up folks. We were at it from dawn to dusk, with clipboards in one hand and umbrellas in the other. And we made it happen.”

What didn’t happen was the vacation Adkins had been looking forward to last May. “I was going turkey hunting in Delaware,” he says. “But that was a small sacrifice for a much bigger prize — getting SB 5 supporters to change their minds.”

And to make sure Ohioans vote in November, Adkins swore off deer hunting in October. “The turkeys and the deer will always be there,” he says. “But our union may not be if we don’t do something this year.”

San Jose, Calif.

In the Trenches for the First Time

Elena Blackman

ELENA BLACKMAN HAS A CONFESSION. “I’ve never been any kind of activist in my life,” she says. “But when the city tried to take away our bargaining rights, I knew I had to stand up and fight.”

A workers-compensation adjuster for 23 years, Blackman didn’t need any prompting to step out of her comfort zone and speak up for the first time when she learned a ballot measure posed by the city would gut city workers’ pensions and outsource crucial public services.

“Losing our rights would be devastating to my family, my co-workers and to everything I have worked hard for all my life,” she says.

Blackman learned what it meant to be mistreated when her mother, an immigrant from Nicaragua, endured racial slurs while working as a seamstress. “She fought back,” Blackman says. “She taught me to hold my head high and be proud of who I am. It’s that memory that woke me up. I feel like I’ve been asleep for 20 years.”

So the 56-year-old grandmother who’d never held a microphone and considered herself extremely shy took to a stage in San Jose and began exhorting anyone who would listen to fight city hall. Sacrificing precious family time on evenings and weekends, she went out with Local 101 (Council 57) co-workers, knocking on doors and collecting signatures against the devastating ballot measure. To stave off the outsourcing of her department’s work, she even addressed the city council at a meeting.

“We saved our jobs,” she says proudly. “I know what it means to be mistreated. This is a wake-up call. I’ve only just begun to fight.”
Lansing, Mich.
Ready to Run for Office
Rick Price

RICK PRICE, 61, IS SO FED UP with right-wing politicians’ war on the middle class that he is poised to run for elected office himself.

An elevator inspector for the state’s Department of Consumer and Industry Services and a member of the Michigan State Employees Association (MSEA), Price wants to stop Gov. Rick Snyder (R) and his arch-conservative allies.

“They are taking everything away from the working middle class and making this a society of rich and poor,” he says. “Now they want to cut our wages. That isn’t right.”

Price writes to elected officials, petitions for the recall of the governor and attends protest rallies, including one calling for the repeal of the so-called local dictator law, which installs emergency managers who can disband elected boards and revoke collective bargaining agreements.

“I’ve been living a normal, common life like the guy that I am,” says Price. “It’s been only recently that I’ve felt the need to stand up and speak out.”

He has his sights set on a seat in the State Assembly. “When that happens,” Price declares, “I’ll be out there standing up for the common guy.”

Boston, Mass.
Turning a Page in Local Labor History
Tracy Wiggins

THEY HAD DONE IT. After a heated battle, news came this summer that four Boston public libraries targeted for closing would at least temporarily remain open thanks to the activism of Tracy Wiggins and her colleagues.

Wiggins was more than just relieved. “This means that my co-workers still have jobs,” says the 43-year-old library assistant. “It means these facilities will remain open to our community.”

A member of Local 1526 (Council 93), Wiggins became a leading spokesperson against a city council plan to shut down the branches and lay off 75 employees. “If we didn’t cry out, we could have lost,” she says.

Shy and reserved, Wiggins — moved by the plight of her co-workers and the potential loss to the community — summoned the courage to speak in public for the first time at a hearing before the libraries’ board of trustees. “No one else could do it on that day, so I was chosen,” she recalls. “I was really petrified and I developed laryngitis. But I kept thinking of my coworkers who were going to lose their jobs.”

Fortunately, she recovered her voice shortly before the hearing and became the voice of those whose jobs were on the line.

Having worked in libraries for 22 years, Wiggins knows many of the elderly and the children from low-income neighborhoods who come to her branch regularly. “Because of them,” she vows, “I’m ready to jump in anytime to fight the fight.”

New York City
The Ultimate Fighting Champion
Lenny Allen

ALL AT ONCE, LENNY ALLEN found himself fightign for his job, his union brothers and sisters, and his life.

When the New York City Off-Track Betting Corporation shut down last December, Allen and nearly 1,000 members of Local 2021 (DC 37) lost their jobs. Another 800 of the agency’s retirees lost their health insurance and supplemental benefits.

Outraged by the closure, DC 37 members marched on the State Capitol in Albany demanding that legislators save the jobs and benefits of Off-Track Betting employees. Allen marched with them, even though he was undergoing chemotherapy that sapped his energy. Following the rally, he made several trips to Albany and, along with other labor leaders and rank-and-file members, lobbied Democratic and Republican leaders to reverse their decision.

Allen’s voice and presence were loud and visible at press conferences and public events. The bills that would reestablish Off-Track Betting were unsuccessful.

“I am determined to hang in there and fight until our members get their jobs back and our retirees are made whole again,” says the 31-year AFSCME veteran. “I’m not one who gives up.”
Memphis, Tenn.
Keeping a Legacy of Justice Alive
Cynthia Hart

CYNTHIA HART WAS ONLY 10 YEARS OLD when the Memphis sanitation workers of Local 1733 marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during the 1968 garbage workers’ strike. Forty-three years later, Hart is now a sanitation worker and member of that same local, fighting a similar battle.

“I’m proud of their legacy,” says Hart of her predecessors in 1733. “But years later, we’re still fighting it.” Why? “Because the people in charge don’t care about King’s legacy and the struggle our members went through to gain dignity and respect. We have to keep their spirit alive.”

Despite a grueling schedule at the garbage dumps, Hart helped organize her coworkers in a rally against a city council plan to privatize solid-waste collection. Although the workers prevailed, the privatization proposal could come forward again. If it does, “We’ll be ready with our placards and bullhorns.”

Hart’s dream is to build community gardens and transform blighted neighborhoods, one block at a time. “Seeing things grow can lift up the spirit of this hurting city,” she says. “I’d rather be tilling soil than having to waive protest signs.”

Bartow, Fla.
Switching Parties, Stopping Scott
Tony Blair

A LIFELONG REPUBLICAN, TONY BLAIR had had enough with politicians attacking retirees and working, middle-class families. So he switched parties.

He voted against Republican Gov. Rick Scott in 2010 and lately has been confronting conservative-led, anti-union actions in his state.

As president of Local 2227 (Council 79), the 57-year-old cabinet maker is also mobilizing the 400 members of his union — mostly rural white-and blue-collar employees of the Polk County school board — to be more politically involved.

In March, he rented a bus and took 55 of his members to Tallahassee to lobby their representatives. It was first-time activism for most of them. They were upset with the governor for targeting their pensions and health insurance subsidies.

“We beat back that Scott attack,” Blair says. “But the war’s not over.”

Preparing for the next battle — a get-out-the-vote campaign to replace two school board members — Blair has undergone a knee-replacement surgery, which he had delayed twice. “I’m worn out for working too hard and running around too much,” he says. “But my members come first. We will not be used by politicians who win our votes, then turn a deaf ear.”

Gracedale, Pa.
Taking a Swing at the Privateers
Jim Irwin

UNTIL LAST AUGUST, JIM IRWIN’S COMMITMENT to playing softball most nights meant he had no time for just about any other activity that didn’t involve a bat, ball and glove. Now, for the center fielder who is president of Local 1435 (Pennsylvania District Council 88), the feel of the glove is all but a distant memory.

Irwin has temporarily abandoned his leisure-hours love to help stop the privatization of Gracedale, a nursing home with approximately 700 low-income patients. When Northampton County proposed privatizing the facility, Irwin, a housekeeper there, realized he couldn’t sit on the bench. Together with his wife, a nurse at Gracedale, he joined his union’s fight to save it. Working with a coalition of families of Alzheimer’s patients, they launched a ballot initiative to postpone the privatization plan.

Irwin phone-banked and went to residences and grocery stores, asking voters to sign petitions. The measure got on the ballot despite two court challenges. Irvin campaigned nearly every day including weekends, starting at 6 a.m. Through the efforts of Local 1435 and its coalition partners, voters rejected the county’s scheme by a 3-to-1 margin.

The outfielder is philosophical about his lost softball games. “This was a lot more important,” he says. “Sometimes, you’ve got to make some sacrifices to achieve what you want to achieve.”
Fairbanks, Alaska
Police Officer Wins Bipartisan Agreement

**Eric Jewkes**

AFTER NEARLY FOUR YEARS WITHOUT A CONTRACT, in an environment of strong anti-collective bargaining sentiment, members of the Public Safety Employees Association (PSEA) /AFSCME Local 803 cultivated a relationship with a conservative councilwoman in order to get an agreement passed.

As president of his local chapter, police officer Eric Jewkes, 40, played an active role in this effort to bridge a divide in the local political community, testifying before city council members and enlisting the support of Fairbanks residents.

“We all realized that we need to work together to find the right solutions to our problems,” says Jewkes. He describes himself as “pretty conservative on things like crime, the death penalty and welfare,” but adds, “I also believe in having a level playing field in terms of employment.”

An officer for more than 16 years, Jewkes is also active in the community. He coaches youth baseball and participates in an annual 550-mile adventure relay of running, biking and rafting to raise funds for a charity that fulfills wishes for children with life-threatening illnesses.

Atlanta, Ga.
A Rookie Activist Finds Veteran Success

**Karen Shropshire**

EVEN THOUGH KAREN SHROPSHIRE, 54, had been an AFSCME member for only 10 months, she shed a newcomer’s natural reluctance to jump into activism.

Shropshire joined an effort to boost the ranks of Local 3. Her contribution paid off in stunning fashion: membership rose more than five times. Spurring the drive was an historic ordinance Fulton County, Ga., commissioners passed last year to give 4,000 county employees representation rights.

But it took individual commitment and initiative to achieve that result. A legal specialist in the public defender’s office, Shropshire organized meet-and-greet sessions, using the issue of salary increases as a topic of conversation. She also mapped out a petition drive against a budget plan that denied raises to county workers earning less than $40,000 a year. Testifying before the board of commissioners, she argued how public service workers are vital to the community. Members fanned out and knocked on doors for weeks, collecting 1,500 signatures. The result: lower-paid workers got their raises.

“Although it was a close vote, we made our point,” Shropshire says. “We’re all here to serve and make this county a better place to live, so we should all be treated fairly.”

Washington, DC
Fighting for Jobs, Justice

**Ralph Randall**

RALPH RANDALL WAS ONE of 4,000 Federal Aviation Administration employees who were furloughed for two weeks when Congress failed to approve a stopgap funding measure this year. He decided to speak out — for the first time ever — against elected officials.

They are “looking out only for the super-rich, instead of you and me,” said Randall, a member of Local 1653 (Council 26), at a Capitol Hill rally this summer. “Radical politicians are waging a war on working families and public services. We will not let these politicians destroy the American dream.”

A program and management analyst for 30 years, Randall called on politicians “to stop playing games while millions still suffer without jobs.”
**“Like” AFSCME On Facebook**

We have the largest and fastest-growing community of any union on Facebook! So connecting with AFSCME there is a great way to stay involved and help fight our battles. We post news as it breaks, along with links to videos, events and more. Be among the first to learn about the union’s new campaigns. You can also connect with other AFSCME members in your state, and all across the country, when you join our Facebook community. What’s more, by joining us on Facebook, you’ll help build our Main Street Movement to stand up against the ongoing attacks on public services and the middle class.

Join by visiting facebook.com/AFSCME and clicking the “like” button; or find the link at the top of the AFSCME.org homepage. If you’re already connected to AFSCME in this manner, please share the link to our Facebook page with your friends and co-workers.

You can also join AFSCME on your favorite social networks:

- twitter.com/AFSCME
- youtube.com/AFSCME
- flickr.com/AFSCME

**Make Your Voice Heard**

Speak up! Tell your state or local representatives that cutting public services is the wrong solution to a budget crisis — that raising revenue to fund them is the right way. Remind the politicians that you pay taxes and contribute to your communities in many ways. Let them know that collective bargaining and other workers’ rights must not be taken away or compromised.

**Give to AFSCME PEOPLE**

In so doing, you make an important contribution to your union. We’ll use your generous support to elect leaders who share our values, and will stand up for hard-working AFSCME members as well as for vital public services and middle-class working families. To see the positive impact we can have when we pull together, just look at Wisconsin, where in August we unseated two of Gov. Scott Walker’s anti-worker allies in the state Senate. Now we must repeal Ohio’s anti-union bill, SB 5, in the November election. Your support of AFSCME PEOPLE will help ensure we do just that!

Just go to AFSCME.org/win to make a safe and secure online donation, or send a check, payable to AFSCME PEOPLE, to AFSCME PEOPLE at 1625 L Street, Washington DC 20036.

**Check Out MyAFSCME**

In an effort to strengthen communication with our members, AFSCME has created a new service, MyAFSCME. This new tool will allow you to directly update your contact information online. Want to receive mailings electronically? Want to know how you can join the fight for America’s working middle class? Check it out! Log onto AFSCME.org and visit our members’ section. Stay connected with MyAFSCME!

AFSCME is fighting for passage of the American Jobs Act with a campaign that includes television ads and mobilization events around the country. To learn more and take action, head to afscme.org/jobs. While you’re there, check out AFSCME’s television ad campaign calling on Congress to pass the Jobs Act.
From October 2011 to October 2012, AFSCME will celebrate its 75th anniversary. *AFSCME WORKS* will pay tribute to the union’s history with special features about the people who are key to AFSCME’s past, present and future.

**Our Beginning** In September 1936, delegates (shown here) met at Detroit’s Book-Cadillac Hotel for AFSCME’s first biennial convention. At the time, the nation was in the midst of the Great Depression. On Oct. 16 of that year, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) chartered a new international union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL. But AFSCME was actually born four years earlier, in 1932, in Wisconsin. Out of concern that the state’s civil service system might be weakened following elections that year, Wisconsin personnel director Col. A. E. Garey suggested to Gov. Phillip LaFollette (who led the Progressive Party) that a state employee union should be created. With LaFollette’s blessing, Garey began recruiting members. His first recruit was state personnel examiner Arnold S. Zander, who was later elected financial secretary of the fledgling Wisconsin Administrative, Clerical, Fiscal and Technical Employees Association. The AFL chartered the new union in May 1932 as Federal Labor Union 18213. AFSCME International was then formed in 1936, with Zander elected as its president. The Wisconsin union was then renamed the Wisconsin State Employees Association, AFSCME Local 1. Photo: AFSCME

AFSCME International was born in 1936 in Madison, Wis., at a time when the country was struggling to emerge from the Great Depression and unions held a vital key to rebuilding the middle class. By the end of that year, AFSCME had just 10,000 members. But public service workers then — as they do now — understood the power of collective bargaining. So AFSCME steadily grew — reaching 73,000 in 10 years. As it grew stronger, so did the middle class.

The Green Machine is now the largest union in the AFL-CIO. To express our pride in our accomplishments through the years, AFSCME will spend the next year recognizing past, present and future contributions that our members have made — and will make to America. We’ll honor the activists who are on the frontlines of our Main Street Movement to respond to attacks against public service workers, their rights and their unions.

In addition to publishing photos of AFSCME’s history, *AFSCME WORKS* will engage in a number of other activities to celebrate our legacy. Although some of those events have not yet been announced, they will include a traveling exhibit to commemorate the union’s critical role in key historic moments, such as the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike, and its contribution to victories on the issues of pay equity and national health reform.

Members who have made contributions to their communities will be honored. We will mount a social-networking campaign, and we’ll post historic content on our website, www.AFSCME.org.

That is just a preview of what’s to come. Meanwhile, take a look at these images reflecting our past accomplishments, and join with us as we create new ones.
In 1968, 1,300 Memphis sanitation workers went on a successful strike for union recognition, better wages and benefits and something more fundamental — respect in the workplace. The African-American workers — members of AFSCME Local 1733 — became enraged after two sanitation workers were killed in an accident involving a city trash truck. They went on strike 11 days later, holding their iconic signs, “I Am A Man,” for the entire nation to see. It sent a message that more was at stake than a raise. “We felt we should be treated like human beings,” Robert Beasley, the local’s first recording secretary, recalled in a 1998 interview with AFSCME WORKS. “We had the right to be recognized by the city of Memphis. So we decided we would go on strike, change some of that.” In April 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (meeting at left with then-AFSCME Pres. Jerome “Jerry” Wurf), traveled to Memphis to support sanitation workers. On the evening of April 3, he delivered his famous “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech to a packed room of supporters. The next day, he was killed by an assassin while standing on the balcony of his motel room. Dr. King had been planning to lead a protest march for the strikers. Dr. King “didn’t die in vain,” says Alvin Turner, one of the striking sanitation workers who participated this year in a U.S. Department of Labor ceremony where all 1,300 strikers were inducted into the Labor Hall of Fame. “If it hadn’t been for Dr. King coming to Memphis,” he explained, “we wouldn’t have won the strike.”

Making History | One of the most significant strikes in AFSCME history, involving members of Philadelphia’s Amalgamated Local 222, lasted just four days. But it ranks among the first strikes in a major American city. It began in 1938 after management laid off 264 workers, and proposed cutting the wages of remaining employees by 30 percent. Some 3,000 workers took their fight for justice to the streets. “While all of the strikers were out there in front, the strikebreakers were escorted out in the streets by cops,” recalled the late William J. McEntee, Local 222’s first business agent (and AFSCME Pres. Gerald W. McEntee’s father) in an oral history. The strikebreakers’ efforts proved futile. City officials quickly abandoned their proposed pay cut, the laid-off workers were rehired and just eight days after the strike began, the two groups crafted the first collective bargaining agreement between AFSCME and a major city. District Council 33 grew out of that dispute and, in 1943, William McEntee became its first president. The council hired Gerald W. McEntee as an organizer and negotiator. The young McEntee went on to lead a historic drive that brought union rights to 75,000 state workers in Pennsylvania Council 13, and he was elected executive director at Council 13’s founding convention in 1973. A year later, he became an AFSCME International vice president and, in 1981, was elected president of the national union — a post he has held ever since. Photo: AFSCME
THE PICTURE IS GRIM. Nearly one in six Americans lives in poverty. More than 14 million American construction workers, engineers, maintenance staff, electrical workers, school employees and others are out of work. The nation’s roads, bridges and schools are crumbling. And our nation’s economy is stagnant.

There is a way forward: job creation.

President Obama’s American Jobs Act would put people back to work, put more money in the pockets of working Americans, provide more customers for businesses and reduce the deficit. The plan focuses spending on areas of the economy that will produce jobs immediately and level the playing field.

It provides $30 billion to prevent teacher layoffs and create jobs in early childhood, elementary and secondary education. It contains $5 billion for rehiring, hiring or retaining law enforcement officers and firefighters. It invests $25 billion to modernize at least 35,000 public schools. And it holds even more funding for critical renovations.

Let’s take a closer look at how the Jobs Act gets America working:

→ It will put hundreds of thousands of workers back on the job as they modernize and repair 35,000 crumbling schools, roads, railroads, airports and waterways.
→ It will reinstate 280,000 teachers laid off by state budget cuts, as well as first responders and veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan.
→ It will expand job opportunities with innovative new job training programs to connect low-income workers to jobs quickly, and provides incentive for employers to hire disadvantaged workers.
→ It will help out-of-work Americans by extending unemployment benefits. It funds training programs that build real skills and helps the unemployed find jobs.
→ It will end tax breaks for those who can most afford it — wealthy Americans and corporations — to invest in job creation and economic growth.

Investing in the working middle class is the surest path to an economic recovery that works for everyone, not just CEOs and huge corporations.

Before the plan can create its first job, Congress has to do its job. “We need jobs and we need them now,” says AFSCME Pres. Gerald W. McEntee. “The time for petty political posturing is over, and Congress needs to pass this jobs bill and pass it right away. For far too long we have witnessed the working middle class suffer and corporate CEOs profit. Closing the Texas-sized tax loopholes to make Wall Street fat-cats pay their fair share is better than laying off nurses, teachers and firefighters.”

The President’s plan recognizes that we have a jobs problem and a revenue problem (not surprising with an unfair tax system that lets major corporations dodge taxes and that finds millionaires paying lower percentages on their incomes than some of their employees.)

Congress has spent the past year arguing over the budget and the debt ceiling while doing nothing to create jobs. In August, the economy created exactly zero jobs. Without major action, the economy could be headed toward a “double-dip” recession.

AFSCME is waging a fight for the American Jobs Act’s passage, which includes television ads and mobilization events around the country. We will fight alongside our friends in Congress and with President Obama to ensure that Congress focuses on creating jobs and preserving vital programs, such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, while raising revenues that require the wealthy and corporations to pay their fair share. We urge you to participate in this fight at afscme.org/jobs.
A tax system skewed towards benefiting the wealthy and corporations is robbing the nation of revenue needed to provide vital public services.

Wall Street CEOs, tea party ideologues and corporate-backed lawmakers contend that taxes on the wealthy should remain at their historic lows in order to grow the nation’s feeble economy. The reality? Just the opposite. Spending cuts won't improve the economy, but they will diminish the quality of life in our communities — by hurting those most economically vulnerable.

All the while, the wealthiest, as well as corporations, avoid paying their fair share of those services that remain. General Electric, the nation’s largest company, is a prime example of this tax inequity. The multi-national company made $14.2 billion in profits in 2010, yet paid no U.S. taxes on that amount! Instead, G.E. was able to claim a $3.2 billion credit, because tax breaks and accounting tricks allowed it to keep most of its profits offshore.

The giants of Wall Street and Big Business benefit from lower federal rates on capital gains, lower estate-tax rates and other tax breaks beyond the reach of the middle class. Federal tax revenue is now at its lowest share of the economy since 1950.

For essentially the same reasons, state and local revenues, needed to pay for critical public services, are also on the decline. Solving this very serious situation should be easy, but pro-corporate lawmakers have been willing to shut down their governments, or threaten equally dire measures, rather than raise $1 more in taxes from their wealthiest constituents. In July, the shutdown scenario played out dramatically in Minnesota, where more than 20,000 state public employees there were laid off for 20 days during a budget battle. This longest and largest layoff of public service workers in the state’s history could have been avoided if lawmakers had agreed to create a tax system that deals fairly with corporations and the working middle class.

In an attempt to avoid the Minnesota debacle, Gov. Mark Dayton (D) offered a plan that hiked the tax rate for filers whose net income is more than $1 million per year — just 7,700 Minnesotans in all (0.3 percent of the state’s population). But Republican lawmakers rejected it. The deal that ultimately ended the shutdown failed to solve the state’s long-term problems.

“We don’t have an expenditure problem — we have a revenue problem,” says Mike Lindholt, a state transportation department maintenance worker from St. Paul and a member of Local 221 (Council 5). In Lindholt’s view, tax fairness is “a basic principle of the United States.” But the principle has been abandoned in the interest of “protecting the wealthiest.”

Minnesota’s tax system — and that of other states — places the greatest burden on the backs of those who can least afford to pay. Yet dismaying numbers of lawmakers support the tea party’s small-government philosophy: cut public services rather than ask the wealthiest Americans to pay their fair share of essential government operating costs, like trash collection and public safety.

There are more logical, more equitable, all-around-better solutions: increase revenue to expand the middle class and create jobs; and raise tax rates on the millionaires and billionaires who have gamed the system for their own benefit. This will not cost jobs — our economy was stronger when tax rates were higher.

Even the world’s third-wealthiest person, billionaire Warren Buffett, has called for making the rich pay their fair share. “My friends and I have been coddled long enough by a billionaire-friendly Congress,” he said in a recent column in The New York Times. “It’s time for our government to get serious about shared sacrifice.”

We must demand that the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share. After all, fairness is a cornerstone of democracy.

The threat they pose can be seen clearly in the outright lies and distortions of national television ads their money buys. Under a mantra of reducing “runaway government spending and debt,” they propagandize in an unsubtle attempt to undermine support for the progressive policies and programs that built and maintained the middle class: Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, health care for all, and other social safety net programs.

Moreover, the two organizations seek to cut or eliminate many public services that AFSCME members provide in their communities every day.

Especially worrisome is American Crossroads’ ability to receive and spend unlimited donations from wealthy persons and corporations to influence local and national elections. American Crossroads’ twin sister, Crossroads GPS, was created separately as a nonprofit so it could raise money without having to disclose the donors’ names. They operate out of the same office in Washington, DC.

Karl Rove, whose job as chief political strategist to Pres. George W. Bush earned him the nickname “Bush’s brain,” has emerged as one of the two main operatives behind the Crossroads entities. The other is Ed Gillespie, former chairman of the Republican National Committee (RNC) who served as Counselor to the President during Bush’s administration. The two men are now referred to as Crossroads’ “advisors.”

Deep Pockets

“There’s not too much money in politics,” Mike Duncan, chairman of American Crossroads and former chairman of the RNC has been quoted saying. That assessment appears to be the group’s guiding philosophy, and the deep pockets of the right have fully embraced it.

Between the founding of Crossroads in early 2010 and the general elections that November, it pulled

The wealthiest extremists from Wall Street and corporate America are financing American Crossroads and its secretive sister organization, Crossroads GPS. With Karl Rove’s help, these groups have become the most formidable independent political fundraisers on the far right.
PUTS AMERICAN DREAM IN CROSSHAIRS

in an astounding $71 million. The bulk of it, $43 million, came from donors who remain anonymous, thanks to Crossroads GPS's nonprofit status. Combined, that made them the largest independent source of right-wing spending during that election cycle.

Established as “an independent, national grassroots political organization,” Crossroads is anything but grassroots. Through June of this year, the two Crossroads groups have raised $3.8 million, of which more than 90 percent came from just three billionaires! (See the accompanying box.)

Swinging From The Right
With all of that money at its disposal, the Crossroads duo is poised to carry out its primary goal: installing anti-union politicians into office at the national and state levels, and also defeating Pres. Barack Obama’s bid for re-election next year.

Crossroads also wants to take control of the U.S. Senate from the Democrats and advance a corporate agenda that includes repealing the new health care law, privatizing public services and reducing federal spending on programs vital to working families.

The Crossroads groups spent a total $38 million on negative TV ads against lawmakers who support working Americans. That makes them, together, the No. 1 spender on the right, exceeding the former top spender — the U.S. Chamber of Commerce — by nearly $6 million.

Still, that accomplishment amounted only to Crossroads’ “opening act,” boasted Steven Law, who left his previous job as general counsel of the Chamber of Commerce to become president of both groups. Crossroads’ fundraising goal for the 2012 elections is much more ambitious: $240 million. They’re well on their way to achieving it.

Unions themselves are squarely in the bullseye. Earlier this year, during the battle in Wisconsin over collective bargaining rights, Crossroads spent $750,000 for a nationwide cable-TV ad campaign that attacked public service workers and their unions. During the summer, Crossroads backed U.S. Rep. John Boehner’s (R) job-killing debt-limit proposal, which included cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Spreading Lies
Crossroads’ ads not only distort the truth, they also lie outright. Take, for example, July’s $7 million ad campaign attacking President Obama, five Democratic senators and 10 representatives for their alleged responsibility for the nation’s debt. The ad criticized those lawmakers for backing “billions in new taxes.” Evaluating its truthfulness, FactCheck.org noted that the ad did not acknowledge a key point: Those same members of Congress supported tax cuts — worth nearly $858 billion — that were contained in a 2010 agreement extending President Bush’s tax cuts.

In addition, Crossroads’ ads refer to a “failed stimulus” that promised to “create more jobs.” But the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office noted that the unemployment rate would be even higher today without the stimulus money. The pitches also suggested that “Medicare will be cut.” FactCheck.org calls that misleading, noting that “the law actually expands traditional Medicare benefits, such as adding more prescription drug coverage.”

The ad attacking collective bargaining rights for public service workers in Wisconsin claims that lawmakers want to “protect a system that pays unionized government workers 42 percent more than non-union workers…” The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel refuted that false assertion, noting that the 42 percent figure has not been adjusted for significant differences between states. Although a Crossroads spokesman cited a report by the libertarian Cato Institute to support its claim, the newspaper says the study cited contained no such figure.

Ironically, American Crossroads declares in its online “values” statement that, “First of all, we believe that setting a new direction for America starts with you — not with clever political ads, consultants and slick fundraising pitches.” But the values statement is as misleading as the ads.

BY CLYDE WEISS

A DEEP POCKETED TEAM

Bradley Hughes
Founder of Public Storage, Hughes is Crossroads’ first reported donor, providing at least $3.5 million in 2010. Reportedly worth $1.8 billion, Hughes is listed by OpenSecrets.org as the second largest disclosed contributor to elections in 2010.

Trevor Rees-Jones
President and CEO of Dallas-based Chief Oil and Gas, Rees-Jones in 2010 gave Crossroads at least $2 million from his $3.3 billion fortune.

Jerrold “Jerry” Perenchio
Former chairman of the Spanish-language television network Univision, Perenchio gave the largest identified donation ($2 million) during the first six months of this year. Perenchio was the ninth-largest disclosed contributor to elections in 2010.

Bob Perry
The Texas home builder (Perry Homes) donated $7 million to Crossroads in 2010 and $500,000 so far this year. He is infamous as the top funder of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which spread lies about John Kerry’s military service in Vietnam during the 2004 Presidential election. Perry was the largest disclosed contributor to candidates in 2010.

Robert Rowling
The Dallas investor gave a total $5 million in 2010 and $1 million year this through his company, TRT Holdings, which owns the Gold’s Gym fitness chain, the luxury Omni hotel chain, and the oil and gas firm Tana Exploration.

Harold Simmons
Owner of Dallas-based Waste Control Specialists, Simmons contributed $2 million to Crossroads last year. He was a major fundraiser for Republican Sen. John McCain’s 2008 Presidential campaign and a financial backer of such right-wing enterprises as the Swift Boat cabal.
Four AFSCME members have assumed leadership roles at a trio of national organizations, broadening the union’s outreach to and involvement in the Latino-American, Asian Pacific American, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities.

The Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) has chosen as its national president Johanna Hester, director of organizing and field services for UDW Homecare Providers Union (UDW)/AFSCME Local 3930. A union member for more than 20 years, Hester helped organize Filipino nurses in San Jose in the 1990s. She is now championing the home care cause, and has become one of the most respected labor leaders throughout California.

This July, during its national convention in Oakland, Calif., APALA also honored UDW with the Vincent Foo Award, named after a labor pioneer who won collective bargaining rights for thousands of Maryland school employees 40 years ago.

Yolanda Pumarejo, executive vice president of New York Social Service Employees Union Local 371 (District Council 37), has been appointed to the national executive board of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement. The AFL-CIO established that organization in 1973 to promote participation of workers of Latino descent in the organized labor movement.

A longtime activist and delegate, Pumarejo co-chairs AFSCME’s Latino Heritage Committee as well as the Committee of Concerned Social Workers. She belongs to the National Association of Social Workers, Coalition of Labor Union Women and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists.

Bess Watts, president of Monroe County, N.Y., Local 828 of Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000, was elected this summer to represent small LGBT community chapters throughout the country on the national executive board of Pride at Work (PAW).

Watts, who works in the Monroe Community College library, led a successful campaign to get her union to support LGBT causes, beginning with getting domestic partner benefits included in her union’s contract. She was ultimately instrumental in garnering broad labor support in Rochester for the successful New York Marriage Equality bill.

Joining Watts on the PAW national executive board, as its new diversity representative, is Octavio Velarde of Local 3299 in San Diego, Calif. Velarde, a self-described “ardent believer” in connecting the LGBT movement with working-class issues, has been involved in the labor movement since college.
Teamwork = A Life Saved | New Haven 911 dispatcher David Mancini, a member of Local 884 (Connecticut Council 4), helped save a 4-year-old boy who fell into a pool. Photo: New Haven Independent

Launching A Movement | AFSCME Sec.-Treas. Lee Saunders and home care providers represented by AFSCME Council 67 participated in the Care Congress — the start of a national campaign to improve the lives of home care providers and their clients. Photo: Luis Goméz

New Haven
CONNECTICUT
TEAMWORK SAVES DROWNING BOY

“We were all doing our job as a team,” says David Mancini, a member of Local 884 (Connecticut Council 4). Acting in concert with family members and his co-workers at New Haven’s 911 Emergency Communications Center, he saved the life of a 4-year-old boy.

One morning in July, Mancini, 43, was working at his normal post as a 911 dispatcher when he received a call concerning a child who had fallen into a swimming pool. Family members pulled the boy out of the water and immediately dialed 911. Mancini fielded the call and, over the phone, directed a 20-year-old family member in successfully performing CPR.

The key, the dispatcher points out, “was working as a team... to keep the child alive until emergency crews got to the scene.” The young lifesaver he coached “was in a panic, so I had to calmly talk him through the procedure, step by step,” says Mancini. “It was important to make him part of the team and keep him focused until the EMTs arrived.”

Mancini and his co-workers at the communications center respond to myriad emergencies every day. A 15-year veteran, he has assisted in the delivery of babies, and once helped rescue a disabled man in a wheelchair from a burning house.

Like public workers across the country, Mancini considers his job a vital service to the community. “Our members enjoy what they do and are proud to serve,” says Ronald Hobson, president of Local 884. “They work together as a team.”

Washington
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
AFSCME HELPS KICK OFF NATIONAL HOME CARE MOVEMENT

Maryland home care providers represented by Council 67 joined the launch of Caring Across Generations, a national campaign to transform home care in America by protecting and improving Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, and making sure that families have the resources they need to provide for their disabled and elderly loved ones.

The campaign officially took wing in July at ‘the Care Congress,’ a one-day town hall meeting in Washington, DC, that brought together more than 700 caregivers — and recipients of their services — from across the country. AFSCME helped create the congress in partnership with the National Domestic Workers Alliance, Jobs with Justice, and other labor unions and organizations.

AFSCME has played a historic role in the representation of home care providers. Our California affiliate, UDW Homecare Providers Union (UDW/AFSCME), is the first known union founded exclusively to represent workers who provide these services. “We’ve built on that legacy as we’ve organized home care workers across the nation,” Sec.-Treas. Lee Saunders said in his address to the congress. Approximately 125,000 home care providers nationwide have joined AFSCME, including 4,600 in Council 67.

Saunders pointed out that Maryland providers recently won a first contract that will help improve their working conditions and the critical services upon which the clients depend. In addition, the providers’ right to join a union and bargain collectively was recently codified into law.

Veronica Banks of Rockville, Md., was one of several AFSCME-represented providers at the Congress. Saunders noted in his remarks that she works more than 14 hours a day. “What gets her though the long hours is her love for her two elderly, disabled clients,” he said.

In an interview later, Banks said she joined AFSCME to “help get the message across for the many who do not talk for themselves” about the providers’ low wages and lack of benefits. “The job that we do serving elderly people is very essential” and should be acknowledged, she added. “We ought to be heard.”

In addition to preserving and expanding Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security, the goals of the Caring Across Generations movement include the creation of new funding streams to create 2 million new jobs in home care to meet the growing need and establish fair labor standards. It also seeks to improve care workers’ wages; provide access to health insurance and job training; ensure their right to organize; and provide pathways to citizenship for training and certification program participants.
Des Moines

IOWA

NO MORE CORPORATE AGENDA!

“Put People First!” That was the demand made to Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad (R) in July by approximately 500 activists — including members of AFSCME Council 61. His corporate agenda threatens to undermine programs essential to the well-being of the middle class.

Marching under a scorching sun, the protestors carried a letter to the governor’s mansion. Signed by 400 people, the document urged him to support “an economy that works for everybody, and public policy that puts communities before corporations and people before profits, politics and polluters.”

Protestors cited Branstad’s anti-worker record, including his support for a budget bill that would eliminate services, increase the age at which public employees become eligible for full retirement benefits, and impose other Draconian measures, all while trying to give corporations hundreds of millions of dollars in tax breaks.

Deb Shepherd, an advisor in Iowa’s Workforce Development office and secretary-treasurer of AFSCME Local 3450 (Council 61), was among those who addressed the rally. Concerned that the governor was trying to close 36 Workforce Development satellite offices and replace them with self-service computer terminals, she noted that lawmakers from both parties agreed to fund the program “and keep us doing our jobs.”

Shepherd said the “Branstad administration has an ‘on your own’ philosophy for governing that does not reflect our values. We’re all in this together, and we can do much better!”

“I’m proud that this union can come together with so many other people from different walks of life,” says Danny Homan, president of Council 61. “We all must stand together or our communities fall apart. Governor Branstad, we’re here to let you know that won’t happen on our watch!”

Homan, who is also an AFSCME International vice president, filed suit in August — along with four state legislative leaders — against the governor. The suit claims Branstad violated the state constitution when he vetoed a measure that would have blocked closure of the Workforce Development offices.

Springfield

ILLINOIS

COALITION BLOCKS BILL ATTACKING PENSIONS

A vast grassroots outpouring in June by the coalition We Are One Illinois — which AFSCME helped to form — blocked a bill that would have forced public employees to pay huge increases in their pension contributions.

AFSCME Council 31 members, along with teachers, police officers and firefighters led the charge against the bill, whose provisions included requiring participants in the state’s public-pension systems to pay up to 17 percent of their salaries into the retirement funds. Those who didn’t want to pay more would have been forced to take a cut in benefits or move into a 401(k)-style retirement plan.

The union coalition deluged legislators with an unprecedented number of calls and e-mails to defend the modest pensions Illinois public employees earn. In June, their hard work paid off. Acknowledging defeat, House Speaker Michael Madigan (D) and house Minority Leader Tom Cross (R) pulled the bill, deciding instead to deliberate further on how to address the state’s underfunded pension system.

The coalition contends that any funding solutions must be constitutional, must lead to the long-term stability of the retirement systems, and must go to the root of the problem: the failure of politicians over decades to make required contributions, even as public employees faithfully paid their share.

Council 31 members also beat back a plan to impose unaffordable new state health-insurance premiums on retired state and university employees. Costs for retirees affected would have typically risen by $4,000 a year.
**Lincoln**

**NEBRASKA**

**ACTIVISTS DECLARE VICTORY FOR WORKING MIDDLE CLASS**

The right to collective bargaining for Nebraska public employees survived an assault by the right wing. The victory resulted from a deal between state lawmakers and union activists led by members of Nebraska Association of Public Employees (NAPE)/AFSCME Local 61.

NAPE laid the groundwork in conjunction with other public unions in Nebraska and the state AFL-CIO. “We held joint rallies in Omaha and Lincoln — throughout the winter and spring — in solidarity with our Wisconsin brothers and sisters, and built our own fight,” says NAPE Exec. Dir. Julie Dake Abel. “We built alliances with community organizations that also held rallies in support of public employees and collective bargaining.”

The threat came from business groups that wanted to change the system determining how wages are set, which had been based on comparisons with similar jobs in other communities. The business groups threatened to launch a ballot initiative to do away with collective bargaining for public employees unless lawmakers agreed to alter the process of computing how total compensation for workers is calculated, simplify the state’s dispute resolution process and make other changes.

Determined to preserve their collective bargaining rights, activists called their state senators, volunteered at phone banks, sent e-mails, lobbied their lawmakers personally and packed legislative hearing rooms until they overflowed.

Eventually, in a compromise, the state agreed to maintain collective bargaining. And the state agency that resolves disputes over wages would be limited in how much compensation it could order, and would have to consider pensions and other benefits when setting wages.

“We don’t like it but we support it,” says Abel, since it preserved collective bargaining “in the face of a business climate that wanted it repealed if a compromise could not be reached.”

With unions leading the way, she notes, traditionally conservative Nebraska “has been able to accomplish something that other states — labor-friendly ones — have not been able to do.”

Nebraskans thus avoided the destructive and patently unfair course taken by right-wing governors in Ohio, Wisconsin and other states where basic worker rights have been revoked or imperiled.

“We fought them trying to take away our union and our collective bargaining rights,” says Abel. “We were not for the taking.”

**Detroit**

**MICHIGAN**

**WORKERS FIGHT DICTATORIAL LAW**

AFSCME and other progressive activists are well on their way toward the goal of collecting at least 160,000 valid voter signatures in their campaign to repeal a law allowing officials — unelected ones, no less — the right to void collective bargaining agreements and take other actions designed to weaken workers’ rights.

The contested law, passed earlier this year, bequeaths sweeping powers on “emergency managers” appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder (R). For example, the power to remove elected officials from office; suspend or disband elected bodies such as school boards or city councils; even void contracts — including, as noted, collective bargaining agreements.

If the petition drive achieves its goal, a repeal measure will be placed on the November 2012 ballot and the law will be put on hold pending the outcome of that vote.

“It is essential that we pursue this course of action,” says Council 25 Pres. (and International vice president) Albert Garrett. “Too many people have fought and died for our right to vote for us to allow representative government to fall by the wayside in this cavalier manner.”

In June, while the petitions were being circulated, more than 2,500 activists — including members of Council 25 — rallied throughout the state to argue forcefully that workers’ rights are fundamentally and inviolably American. “This law takes away my right to have a say in our local governments and schools,” said Jonathan Drake, a Wayne County employee of the Department of Public Services and a member of Local 101 (Council 25). Added Drake, who joined 300 other activists demonstrating in Detroit, “We can’t let unelected officials usurp our basic rights and take our democracy away.”

Stand Up for Democracy, a coalition of community groups, churches and labor organizations throughout Michigan, spearheaded the petition drive.
ACROSS AMERICA

Trenton

NEW JERSEY
PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS
COMBAT UNION-BUSTING

Thousands of public service workers and their supporters sounded off loud and clear this summer at the state Capitol. The object of their anger: legislation requiring public service workers make significantly higher contributions toward their pension and health benefits; suspending their ability to negotiate over health care; curbing public worker benefits; raising the retirement age; and restricting bargaining rights.

Holding up signs that read 'Negotiate, Don’t Dictate,' AFSCME members called the legislation an affront to their collective bargaining rights, pointing out that Gov. Chris Christie (R) had already entered contract negotiations with union workers.

The measure nonetheless gained lawmakers’ approval.

On another front in New Jersey, AFSCME Sec.-Treas. Lee Saunders and other AFSCME officials joined civil rights leader Rev. Al Sharpton and American Federation of Teachers Pres. Randi Weingarten in voicing opposition to Christie’s plans to close the Vineland Developmental Center. Shutting the facility would displace 350 women with developmental disabilities and would also eliminate 1,459 full- and part-time jobs held by members of Local 2215 (Council 71) and the Communications Workers of America.

“We’re not here just to collect a paycheck, we’re here because we care,” said AFSCME Council 1 Exec. Dir. Sherryl A. Gordon, also an International vice president. “This is a labor of love, from the heart. It’s time for New Jersey’s working families to stand together.”

The governor signed legislation creating a task force to examine the need for closing one or two developmental centers, overturning the budget’s call for immediate closure of the Center. This measure gives the surrounding community a fighting chance to keep the facility open.

We Won’t Be Stopped! | Employer opposition did not keep approximately 200 employees of Chicago’s Smith Retirement Village from forming a union with Council 31. Photo: Jeff Dexter

A Voice On The Job | Budget cuts motivated 400 Howard County (Maryland) employees to join Council 67. Pictured with some of the new members are Council 67 Pres. Dale Chase (second row, far left) and Exec. Dir. Glenn Middleton (third row, far left). Photo: Selena Britton
ORGANIZING FOR POWER

Despite the unprecedented attacks from corporate-backed politicians, workers continue to organize with AFSCME for a stronger voice on the job. Here are some recent victories:

California
At a time when budget cuts pose an imminent danger to home care providers, approximately 1,240 of them in Humboldt County voted to join California United Homecare Workers (CUHW) Local 4034, a joint affiliation between AFSCME and the Service Employees International Union. CUHW represents more than 15,000 providers in 25 counties, and United Domestic Workers (AFSCME Local 3930) represents another 60,000 throughout the state.

In Montebello, 270 registered nurses at Beverly Hospital voted by a nearly three-to-one margin to join United Nurses Association of California/Union of Health Care Professionals (UNAC/UHCP), a 19,000-strong AFSCME affiliate. In addition, after employer opposition caused a lengthy administrative delay, 125 nurses at Chino Valley Medical Center in the city of Chino gained representation with UNAC/UHCP. Although they voted “yes” by a strong majority last year, hospital administrators challenged the results, delaying certification of the workers’ victory until an administrative law judge dismissed the challenge. The employer appealed that decision, but it was ultimately upheld.

One hundred thirty-eight medical professionals organized with the Union of American Physicians and Dentists, (UAPD)/AFSCME Local 206. They included 78 doctors, dentists and nurse practitioners at the Northeast Valley Community Health Care Clinics in Los Angeles, and 60 doctors working in public clinics and hospitals in Kern County.

Two independent associations have affiliated with Council 36. The 700-member Association of Deputy District Attorneys in Los Angeles County — the nation’s largest prosecutors’ union — voted overwhelmingly for affiliation with AFSCME. Their action came in the wake of a two-year effort by Council 36 on behalf of the deputy DAs, who were then able to negotiate a stronger contract. Also joining Council 36: the 60-member Huntington Park City Employees Association.

Florida
One hundred seventy blue-collar employees in the city of Pensacola — including airport traffic officers, building maintenance workers, garage mechanics and groundskeepers — joined Council 79. This is one of numerous organizing campaigns AFSCME is waging in Florida despite the current anti-worker political climate there.

Georgia
In Fulton County, whose government had never before recognized unions, Local 3 has gained exclusive rights to represent approximately 1,300 county employees. Although AFSCME Local 1644 is recognized in Atlanta (the county’s major city), Local 3 was unable to meet and confer with Fulton officials over issues of wages, benefits and conditions of employment. But last year, the county passed an ordinance giving AFSCME exclusive representation rights once it achieved majority status in each department. Nine departments are now represented: Environmental and Community Development, Emergency Services, General Services, Health and Wellness, Juvenile Courts, Parks and Recreation, the Public Defender’s office, Public Works and the Sheriff’s office. AFSCME also scored a victory in Atlanta, where 95 employees of the South Side Medical Center joined Local 1644.

Illinois
Overcoming a fierce anti-worker campaign, approximately 200 employees of the Smith Retirement Village, a private nursing home in Chicago, joined Council 31.

Louisiana
Roughly 1,000 employees of the City of Shreveport are now represented by Council 17. In achieving their card-check victory, workers in the departments of Operational Services, Public Assembly and Recreation, and Property Standards overcame employer opposition, including a hired consulting firm that raised numerous roadblocks throughout the organizing campaign. Success followed passage, three months earlier, of a city resolution authorizing card check. A panel of religious leaders conducted the vote count.

Maryland
Four hundred Howard County employees voted overwhelmingly to join Council 67. They had attempted to organize for years, but the wide geographic dispersal of their workforce made it difficult. The employees, including administrative assistants, building inspectors, paralegals, crime-lab clericals and 911 call-center administrators, intensified their efforts after recent cuts hurt both their families and their ability to serve the county’s neediest citizens. A key factor in the organizing campaign’s success was the efforts of four other Howard County units already represented by Council 67 to educate the workforce about AFSCME.

Massachusetts
Racking up a very heavy majority, 400 temporary employees at multiple campuses of the University of Massachusetts voted to join Council 93.

Minnesota
More and more workers in non-traditional jobs, recognizing the need for representation, are forming a union with AFSCME. That’s why the achievement of 147 employees of the Guardian Ad Litem Board is notable. The board manages court-appointed guardians for troubled youth and looks out for the latter’s best interests during court proceedings. Court clerical workers represented by Local 3688 were instrumental in organizing this statewide unit, which voted by a large margin to join Council 5. Council 65 also had successes, organizing eight units totaling approximately 150 workers in a variety of offices in several cities.

New York
Westchester County witnessed a big victory for seasonal workers: more than 1,000 of them joined Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000.

Washington
Two hundred forty-six employees of American Behavioral Health Systems, which provides substance-abuse treatment services in Spokane, formed a union with Council 28. Their victory is significant because the workers were able to gain card check and neutrality agreements with the employer, even as corporations and right-wing ideologues fight workers’ efforts to reform the union election process to ensure a vote free from intimidation.

At Seattle’s publicly owned electric-power utility, Seattle City Light, 140 supervisors, managers and strategic advisers also made successful use of voluntary card check to join Council 2. In addition, 37 Vancouver recreation department employees formed a union with that council.
Led by AFSCME members of District Councils 1707 and 37, tens of thousands of public and private labor activists, community supporters, members of religious groups, child-protection workers and elected officials have fought City Hall in New York City this year to prevent drastic budget cuts to child care and other essential services.

Because of AFSCME’s efforts, Mayor Michael Bloomberg (I) was forced to preserve some child care money that was under threat. But at least 7,000 children of low income working families could still lose their publicly subsidized care next year. AFSCME is fighting to restore $91 million cut from the budget for these services.

“As goes child care, so goes the neighborhood,” Raglan George, executive director of DC 1707 and an AFSCME International vice president, said at a rally. The union represents 25,000 community and social agency employees, including those working in Head Start centers, home care, and social service and direct care organizations.

AFSCME activists have gathered petition signatures and urged citizens to protest the mayor’s proposal to eliminate day care services for approximately 17,000 children. “We are here to speak up for the children of New York,” Sec.-Treas. Lee Saunders declared at the rally. “We have got to stand up for them like never before, and we demand fairness.”

In addition to supporting DC 1707’s fight for child care, DC 37 is leading the battle to prevent Draconian city budget cuts that threaten public schools, parks and pools, libraries, public health and other services.

“The mayor and the governor cut taxes on the wealthy by $5 billion a year when they let the ‘millionaires’ tax’ expire, and Mayor Bloomberg is not making any effort to collect the hundreds of millions of dollars in business taxes owed to the city,” declared Exec. Dir. Lillian Roberts, who was sworn in this June as an AFSCME International vice president (see above).
North Providence

RHODE ISLAND

MEMBERS PREPARE FOR PENSION FIGHT

With the prospect of new pension cutbacks looming, Council 94 and other Rhode Island public sector unions created the Rhode Island Retirement Security Coalition to protect their members’ retirement security. The coalition will make their voices heard throughout the state by lobbying legislators and attending pension advisory board meetings and legislative sessions.

The state’s 51,000 public workers and retirees, who already have experienced three rounds of pension cuts during the past six years, are threatened by right-wing lawmakers who want to further slash their retirement benefits. The state Legislature is expected to consider pension changes during a special session this fall.

“When it comes to pensions, Rhode Island is a bellwether state. We’re the canary in the coal mine,” says Council 94 Pres. J. Michael Downey, who was appointed in June to be one of 12 members of a state pension advisory group. “Whatever the General Assembly does to state workers here will spread across the country. That’s why we must prevail in this fight.”

The unions contend the failure of the state to make two required payments into the system during the 1990s, which cost more than $100 million, and changes in actuarial assumptions, put the system on shaky ground. “Our state and municipal workers have made their pension contributions every single week, year after year,” says Downey. “We’ve already paid for them. We’ve always done what we were supposed to do and now we’re being punished.”

“The treasurer and governor are coming at this from the wrong direction,” says Council 94 Exec. Dir. Ken DeLorenzo. “They’re talking about cutting our benefits when they should be looking at increasing revenues. The top tax rates are half of what they were in 1980. We should be asking the super-rich to pay their fair share.”

Last year, Council 94 and other unions representing state workers and teachers sued the state, challenging that year’s pension changes that hurt workers’ promised retirement benefits. The suit also challenged 2008 cuts to the pension system. The state attempted to have the case thrown out before trial. In September, a Superior Court judge ruled against the state’s request, rejecting the state’s stance that it could “significantly alter or completely terminate a public employee’s pension benefits at any time, even just one day, before retirement.”

Jacksonville

FLORIDA

IN MEMORIAM: BLONDIE P. JORDAN

Blondie P. Jordan, 76, president of AFSCME Florida Council 79 from 1983 until 1996 and a former AFSCME International vice president (IVP), passed away on Aug. 29.

Jordan, the daughter of Georgia sharecroppers, credited her struggles as a single parent raising six children for making “a real labor union person out of me… It made me determined to make America better for the oncoming generation.” Her determination to improve workers’ rights, particularly pay equity for women, began while working at Orlando’s Sunland Hospital in the mid-70s. She realized that women workers at the state-run facility for the mentally disabled were treated less favorably than their male counterparts.

“It seemed to me it was unfair to not have any say in what you are paid, but to have to depend on an arbitrary evaluation by someone who just automatically counts you out,” she said a decade later. “So I was ready when the representative from AFSCME came around, and I worked hard recruiting everyone I could to the union.”

Jordan’s co-workers rewarded her activism by electing her president and steward of newly formed Local 1967. “I guess the first time I realized what the union really could do,” she said, “was when I took an employee in to management and got their job back after they had been fired.”

At AFSCME’s 25th International Convention, in 1982, Jordan became the first African-American IVP from a southern state, representing the Caribbean region. The next year, she was elected president of Council 79. In that post, she continued to fight for women’s rights, following unassailable logic: “If we are going to be in the workforce, we want to make a dollar.” That’s the same dollar made by their male colleagues.

Commenting on her unique first name in a 1982 Public Employee interview, Jordan said, “When I was born, I was given the name ‘Blondie’ by one of my aunts. I’ve had a lot of problems with that name, and I never did find out why I got it.”
Privatization Fight

OHIO

VICTORY EARNED FOR OHIO PRISON WORKERS

In a major setback for Gov. John Kasich’s (R) plan to privatize state-run operations, the team evaluating bids for the sale of five state prisons determined that only one of those facilities will be sold.

The governor’s budget, which the Ohio Legislature passed in June, had proposed a fire sale of sorts for the facilities. But the move was widely criticized by corrections officers, legislators and civil rights advocates. They asserted that the state was gambling with public safety as well as the safety of corrections employees.

Rep. Matt Lundy (D), a strong opponent of privatization, warned that “if the sale goes through, you’re selling valuable assets during a recession, which means you’re not getting top dollar, and employees are only going to get two-thirds of their current salaries.”

Officials of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction apparently concurred and decided it was not in Ohio taxpayers’ best interest to sell additional prisons at this time. Only the Lake Erie Correctional Institution in Ashtabula County will be sold. Corrections Corporation of America, the largest private prison operator in the U.S., won that prison with its $72.7 million bid.

They also agreed that it would be more cost effective to combine two prisons — the Grafton Correctional and the North Coast Correctional Treatment Facility — and operate them as state facilities with one management staff. Corrections officers of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA)/AFSCME Local 11 had originally proposed the merger as a cost-saving measure 10 years ago. Craig Cassidy, chapter president of OCSEA Chapter 4710, hails the partial victory in the fight against prison privatization. “We’ve offered workable solutions on how government can better serve the citizens of Ohio,” he says. “We feel vindicated with the recent decision not to sell four of the five facilities to private operators.”

Officials in Arizona, Florida, Maine and Michigan have also made recent decisions to outsource state-run prisons. In Louisiana, a proposal to sell three prisons was defeated in the Legislature.

Despite months of budget cuts and layoffs, the Houston Organization of Public Employees (HOPE/AFSCME Local 123) this summer won a second four-year agreement — one that gives municipal employees new ways to improve their jobs, builds better communication with management and even includes a raise.

The union, which represents about 12,000 municipal employees, also mounted a successful campaign in August to reverse the city’s decisions affecting community inspectors and other employees who work with the police department. They identify vacant buildings where drugs are made and sold, pinpoint illegal business operations, and identify building conditions that could put firefighters in imminent danger.

According to HOPE Exec. Dir. Annika Dowling, the new agreement, which members approved overwhelmingly, “sets the stage for an improved voice on the job, where city employees will be able to advocate for changes that save money and improve public services.”

In addition to improving labor-management communication, the contract increases workplace representation through a new steward structure, and increases wages by 5 percent over the next four years.

Another HOPE victory came in response to the city’s decision to stop reimbursing Neighborhood Protective Services inspectors for the cost (at least $500) of getting a code-enforcement license. The inspectors also were ordered to get certified — a two-or three-month process — within 45 days or lose their jobs. Finally, 17 workers were laid off, including seven inspectors who were in the process of acquiring licenses, and 24 other workers were given the option of voluntary demotions.

HOPE members blasted those actions at a press conference, spoke out at a city council meeting and mounted a successful call-in campaign to get city council members to reverse the decisions. The council agreed to change the forced voluntary demotions into reclassifications, with no cut in pay. In addition, the code-enforcement license application deadline was extended to 90 days, and application costs will now be reimbursed.

HOPE, the only collective bargaining agent in Texas for non-uniformed public employees, is still fighting to restore the jobs of the 17 neighborhood-protection workers.
AFSCME MEMBERS REBUILD AFTER DEVASTATING STORMS

Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee left their mark on residents of the East Coast this summer and AFSCME workers performed tasks vital to getting people back on their feet. A few of those AFSCME members took a minute from the work they’re doing restoring their communities to share their stories from the field.

New Jersey
A Family Tradition of Aiding Others
When Irene made landfall on Aug. 28, electrician Tim Hanlon, Local 2272 (Council 52) came to work to help block off roads flooded by rising waters and restore electricity to the city’s traffic lights. Faced with the decision to report to work or stay home and care for his terminally ill father, Edward Hanlon, a 23-year AFSCME retiree. Brother Tim headed to work, with his father’s blessing. “Take care of what you need to,” said his father, who had tackled his share of emergencies during his career as a heavy equipment operator. The elder Hanlon added that he wanted to hear reports from what was happening out on the job.

New York
Aid Across the Empire State
Ken Fortier, president of Local 3718 (Council 66), described the destruction left by Lee in the Village of Johnson City, where AFSCME workers cleared the streets of debris, from downed limbs to children’s toys and even a wedding album. Fortier received a letter from a resident thanking him and his workers for doing “a good job with such a limited crew.” Speaking of the workers, Fortier added that he sees “hurt and almost tears in their eyes, but they come to work every day.” Their local has launched a toy drive to help area children get back a bit of what they lost to Irene.

Ed Russo, Local 829 of Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/AFSCME Local 1000, said that “every one of our members stepped up to the plate. We all came together and it really worked out well.” His team worked long hours without regard for losses at their own homes, cleaning up and cataloging the damage in government buildings in Fonda, N.Y.

Cornell Heyward of Local 1320 (DC 37) was stationed in Brooklyn, N.Y., at the Department of Environmental Protection, operating a vacuum truck. He volunteered for the assignment to travel upstate to Margaretville, N.Y., and provided needed assistance. “The water came so fast, it didn’t make the turn with the creek — it went straight through town,” said Heyward. “The entire town was destroyed.”

Vermont
Losing Loved Ones on the Job
The dedication of public workers was on powerful display at Irene’s last U.S. stop: Vermont. In the storm’s immediate aftermath, 11-year AFSCME member Tommy Garofano-Barone, a heavy equipment operator with Local 1201 (Council 93), suffered the drowning death of his father, former-AFSCME member and 30-year City of Rutland veteran Michael Garofano. His brother, also named Michael, accompanied his father to the reservoir and remains missing. Tommy’s father and brother headed out to close off an inlet that fed into the reservoir. The road they were walking on washed out, killing his father and carrying away his brother. “Once we recovered Mike’s body, I joined three other brothers to carry him to an awaiting ambulance,” said Tom Franzoni, president of Local 1201 (Council 93). “This family exemplifies the commitment public employees bring to the job. Even through the tragedy Tommy showed up to work. He, like his father, did what needed to be done.”

New York’s Heyward hopes his experience will instill in his sons, Chase, 6, and Kai, 11, a profound work ethic he and other AFSCME workers up and down the coast demonstrated during Hurricane Irene. “It’s easy to keep working even if you are tired, because there are others out there helping,” Heyward said. “Everybody is helping out. You cannot stand by and do nothing.”

AFSCME FALLEN HEROES FUND

Hurricane Irene ravaged the East Coast in August, killing at least 45 people and injuring scores more, and caused more than $10 billion in property damage. Many AFSCME members helped our communities recover from Hurricane Irene, working overtime to move people to safety, clear road hazards and restore water, sewer and other essential services. Now, many of our sisters and brothers need our help. Pres. Gerald McEntee and Sec.-Treas. Lee Saunders ask that you lend a hand, by contributing to AFSCME’s Fallen Heroes Fund. The fund was established in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, to provide assistance to AFSCME members and their families who suffered as result of that national tragedy. You can contribute to the fund online at AFSCME.org/fund. Or, you may send a check made payable to “AFSCME Fallen Heroes Fund,” to AFSCME Fallen Heroes Fund, c/o AFSCME, 1625 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-5687. Contributions to the AFSCME Fallen Heroes Fund are tax-deductible charitable contributions.
MORE THAN 600 new and young AFSCME activists attending the union’s second national Next Wave Conference this past July in Atlanta vowed to confront the corporate-driven, right-wing campaign against the working middle class. They also gained leadership skills necessary for the trials ahead.

“To me, Next Wave is like a family of young AFSCME members coming together to network and to learn from each other,” says Diamond Robertson, a food service worker at UC Davis Medical Center and also an executive board member of University of California Local 3299.

“I know that if I ever needed anything I could go to my AFSCME brothers and sisters and I would have support,” adds Casey L. Karns, a therapeutic activity aide at Polk Hospital in Franklin, Penn., and a member of Local 1050 (Pennsylvania Council 13). Karns is also the chair of Council 13’s Next Wave Steering Committee and AFSCME’s representative to the AFL-CIO Young Worker Advisory Council.

The Next Wave is a five-year-old network of AFSCME members 35 and under, launched at the state and local levels. This was the network’s second national conference.

Exchanging ideas in workshops and other forums, the members developed new ways to fight back, including the use of social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter. They also learned about the nature of the corporate-funded, tea party-inspired attacks on working families and their unions, and the role that young leaders must play in the fight.

During the conference, President McEntee announced the creation of AFSCME’s Next Wave Advisory Committee. Its members, nominated by the union’s International vice presidents, will “advise us on policies and issues from a young-worker perspective,” McEntee said, adding that the committee’s first meeting will convene before the end of this year.

AFSCME Sec.-Treas. Lee Saunders also addressed the Next Wavers: “We’ve been tested from coast to coast by politicians who don’t just want to break us — they want to take us out of the game completely,” he said. “Somebody’s got to stand up and fight for the future! And it’s got to be us. It’s got to be AFSCME. It’s got to be the Next Wave!”

AFSCME leaders in Wisconsin, Saunders noted, “will be the first to tell you that the group most dedicated to standing with us was students.”

Allie Gardner, a student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, was among the young activists who charged into the state Capitol last winter to defend the collective bargaining rights of teachers and other public service workers. Addressing the Next Wavers at the conference, Gardner warned that a generation “born into freedom of speech, workers’ rights and democracy” was confronted with losing those rights. “Suddenly, I woke up and made a decision that I wasn’t willing to give that up. I knew I had to fight for our voice, our rights and our democracy.”

Another crusader for democracy, a young Egyptian activist named Sarah Kamal, captivated the Next Wavers by recollecting her close-in view of Egypt’s “6th of April Youth Movement,” which helped topple the repressive Mubarak regime earlier this year. Kamal spoke about the important role young people played in that historic confrontation.

AFL-CIO Sec.-Treas. Liz Shuler called on Next Wavers “to be the tip of the spear that carries us to victory.”
13th National Nurses Congress

NURSES FIGHT FOR MEDICAID, MEDICARE

THREATS TO MEDICAID AND MEDICARE claimed the attention of more than 300 AFSCME-represented nurses at the 13th National Nurses Congress, hosted by AFSCME-United Nurses of America. Held this past spring during National Nurses Week, the meeting gave the nurses an opportunity to lobby members of Congress to prevent funding cuts to retiree programs that would endanger patients.

Under a House-passed budget authored by Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis) that was later rejected by the Senate, the federal government could no longer guarantee Medicare benefits and affordable premiums for those currently under age 55. Instead, more than 20 million Americans would be given underfunded vouchers to shop for coverage from private insurance companies.

The bill also would cut $1.4 trillion from Medicaid, which provides health care to 60 million low-income Americans, half of them children. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that by 2022, under this House budget plan, federal spending for Medicaid would be 35 percent lower than current projected federal spending.

The cuts would increase costs for states and force them to devote more state resources to health care. In most cases, states also would be forced to reduce nursing home care and other long-term services for seniors and people with disabilities.

“Nurses are on the frontline of providing care,” Pres. Gerald W. McEntee told attendees at the Congress. “They know better than anyone that cuts to Medicare or Medicaid will mean inadequate health insurance or no health insurance for many Americans. That means they won’t get the care they need when they need it.”

Also addressing the nurses was Kathy J. Sackman, RN, an AFSCME International vice president who recently retired as president of United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals.

AFSCME represents more than 360,000 health care workers (including more than 60,000 nurses) across the nation.

Public Safety Congress

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS HONOR FALLEN, PLEDGE TO MOBILIZE

MORE THAN 400 AFSCME-represented corrections and sworn law enforcement employees from across the nation gathered in Houston, Texas, in September for the third, bi-annual Public Safety Congress.

In his keynote address, Pres. Gerald W. McEntee said that despite unprecedented attacks on AFSCME members’ jobs, benefits and collective bargaining rights, the union has the opportunity to “strengthen our vital partnership and work together as never before.” He added that AFSCME International and our 130,000 members in the public safety field “are united and strong.”

A special ceremony led by Sec.-Treas. Lee Saunders featured a solemn and stirring tribute to the public safety officers who have been killed in the line of duty.

He noted the heroic contributions of AFSCME members to the 9/11 rescue and recovery effort and thanked two officers for their courage and exceptional service: Michael Whitehead, a corrections officer at Northern Correctional Institution in Somers, Conn., (Local 391, Council 4) and William Beeler of the Manchester, Conn., police department (Local 1495, Council 15).

In his keynote remarks, Saunders acknowledged the “life-and-death struggles that define the vital service you provide each day. We will continue the fight for the public safety officers on the job today, and for those who will walk in your shoes tomorrow.”

The three-day event featured speeches from City of Houston Mayor Annise D. Parker and Texas State Sen. John Whitmire, plenary sessions, roundtable discussions and workshops on a variety of issues. An honor guard composed of members of AFSCME Texas Council 7 presented the colors during the opening ceremony.
INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS attending the June meeting of the AFSCME Executive Board wrestled once again with the daunting challenges in several states to collective bargaining and other vital union interests. Special reports on the state-battle campaigns were presented by officials of Michigan Council 25 and Ohio Council 8 and Locals 4 and 11.

Ohio’s Eddie Parks, Joe Rugola and John Lyall described their impressive efforts via the We Are Ohio campaign to repeal Senate Bill 5, a law replete with anti-union and anti-worker provisions. The campaign already had more than triple the number of signatures needed to put repeal up for a vote. Voters will have a chance to weigh in on the referendum in just a few weeks on the November 2011 ballot.

Michigan’s Lawrence Roehrig reported on efforts to stop what is known in the state as the Local Dictator Law, which gives non-elected emergency managers power to revoke collective bargaining contracts. AFSCME is focusing its efforts on repealing the law in an Election Day referendum. At press time, signatures were being added to the petition at a rapid rate.

At the September IEB meeting, Pres. Gerald W. McEntee called attention to the outstanding dedication and work by East Coast members who were on the frontlines of Hurricane Irene (see Page 27), linking that to similar efforts after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. In both emergencies, he noted, “Many of our members were coping with their own losses while responding to other people’s tragedies.”

Turning to the political landscape, McEntee cited “the truly amazing effort” by AFSCME activists in the Wisconsin recall elections. Beating back a key part of that state’s anti-worker crusade, pro-worker Democrats gained two senate seats. The president then welcomed a pair of guests: Wisconsin Senators Jessica King (newly elected) and John Erpenbach.

They thanked AFSCME members for their support and vowed to take back the senate by working with the We Are Wisconsin campaign to recall Gov. Scott Walker (R).

Other speakers addressing the IEB emphasized that our union continues to stand at the forefront of labor’s counter-offensive against right-wing attacks on public services and the employees who provide them; that our headquarters departments and field staff have merged into a unified team to make that campaign even more effective; and that AFSCME has recruited to the battle not only other unions but also civil rights organizations, faith-based groups, students and other progressive elements.

Before it adjourned, the IEB formed the 75th Anniversary Planning Committee, and tasked it with preparing the union’s October 2011-2012 celebration of its proud history. W
A CONVERSATION WITH WALTHENE PRIMUS  Chairwoman of AFSCME’s National Women’s Advisory Committee

AS THE PRESIDENT of her local and a member of DC 37’s executive board, Walthene Primus has been a tireless champion of workers’ rights. As evidence, her union is now winning 90 percent of its grievance cases. “We’ve saved members’ jobs and won them thousands of dollars in back pay,” she says.

As the recently appointed chairwoman of AFSCME’s Women’s Advisory Committee, Primus has now become a strong advocate for the rights of female workers. She is committed to ensuring that all women not only get respect on the job, but are also trained to become leaders.

The advisory committee, established in 1978, works to promote women leaders within the union through training programs, conferences and networks at the local, regional and national levels.

How can AFSCME women help to develop the next group of female leaders and activists?
AFSCME women have always been fearless leaders in all the struggles we’ve been through. They’ll continue to lead in the upcoming battles. That’s why we’re invested in encouraging and honing their leadership skills and providing the resources they need through our education and training programs and annual conference. AFSCME also has a wonderful mentorship program for those who want guidance.

What practical advice do you have for women who want to assume leadership roles with AFSCME?
Take advantage of every opportunity to network with other members. If you are young, reach out to retirees for their wisdom, counsel and experience. Take advantage of scholarships and training programs, and attend conferences.

How have this year’s unprecedented attacks against working families affected women, in particular?
It’s put programs such as Head Start, child care, family planning, low-income housing and women's health services at greater risk of being cut by lawmakers. Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security are at greater risk as well. These are programs that women depend on because we are, on average, poorer, live longer and have more health care needs than men.

If these programs are cut, women will be hit the hardest. Sisters, we need to get involved and speak out against these attacks. Write or speak to your representatives. Don’t vote for politicians who don’t have our interests at heart. Let’s fight back on all fronts.

The Affordable Care Act, the new health reform law, is under attack in some states and in the courts. What are your concerns if opponents of this law succeed?
Women have a lot at stake in making sure that health reform stays on track. For example, under the new law, health insurers can no longer charge women higher premiums than they charge men of the same age. Also, the prohibition against health insurance companies denying coverage for so-called “pre-existing conditions” will greatly benefit women. Women will also benefit from the expansion of Medicaid eligibility and subsidies to help pay for insurance even more than men, because women are poorer than men on average. We can’t let the opponents of this law succeed in setting us back.

What inspired you to play an active role in AFSCME and in the labor movement?
It began when I realized that $19.50 in union dues was deducted from my first paycheck. It was not that I had a problem with paying dues; I just needed to know what it was for. That inspired me to learn about the benefits of the union. I became a shop steward. I continued on from that. 

ONE:ON:ONE

President of New York City Housing Employees Clerical Local 957 (DC 37), Walthene Primus talks about being fearless and fighting for women’s rights.

Primus became involved with the union as an employee of New York City’s Housing Authority. She rose quickly through the ranks, first as a shop steward, then head shop steward, secretary, grievance representative and, in 1999, president. Now in her fifth presidential term, Primus devotes herself to ensuring that her members are respected on the job, have good working conditions, and receive opportunities for promotion.

AFSCME WORKS asked Primus to comment on some of the key issues affecting AFSCME members today.
As the nation paused to reflect on the events of Sept. 11, 2001, AFSCME honored the many public service workers — including its dedicated members — who were at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Shanksville, Pa., on that harrowing day. Police officers, firefighters, EMTs, paramedics and other first responders led an estimated 20,000 people to safety. In the days that followed, public servants combed rubble for survivors, delivered lunches and supplies, and worked wherever necessary.

Among the AFSCME members who gave their lives were Father Mychal F. Judge, a New York Fire Department chaplain (Local 299, DC 37), paramedics Carlos Lillo and Ricardo Quinn, (DC 37), Chet Louie, an AFSCME member who worked a second job at the World Trade Center, and five members of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA)/Local 1000 — Yvette Anderson, Florence Cohen, Harry Goody, Marian Hrycak and Dorothy Temple.

AFSCME’s DC 37 — whose office sat in the shadow of the World Trade Center — faced numerous challenges, but leadership and staff persevered, keeping the union running during a critical time.

Please visit AFSCME.org/we-remember to view the video, “We Remember 9/11: A Decade Later,” honoring the workers who responded on Sept. 11, 2001 and in the aftermath.