Now more than ever, workers' rights are in danger by so-called right-to-work laws, but we’ve got a plan. Now’s the time to get AFSCME Strong.  

AFSCME ENDORSES OUR NEXT U.S. PRESIDENT  

page 8
On the Hook

It feels harder and harder to get by, doesn’t it? Keeping our families afloat is getting more difficult every day. Our wages, our pensions, Social Security, Medicare – they’re all on the hook. There’s a lot on the line. But you’re holding the answer in your hands. This issue of WORKS tells you everything you need to know about what’s to come. Here’s the good thing: We’ve got a plan called AFSCME Strong. And it’s working.

We all work hard and time is short, so now it’s easier to find everything you need to know at a glance. Because we need to be ready to join together for our families and our communities.
Our Campaign Efforts: 2016

Kids still say the darnedest things — and they ring true when it comes to figuring out those crazy ideas we hear Presidential candidates say. Check out this and other fun videos at AFSCME.org/video.

The AFSCME 2016 campaign got underway over the Labor Day weekend in Iowa with town hall meetings with Presidential candidates. Learn how you can get involved in the upcoming election campaign at wevotewewin.org, where you’ll also find resources you can use, information about how you can host house parties, and more.

10 Reasons We’re “Against” Unions

Working people who say they don’t like unions only hurt themselves. Unions are the answer to balancing our economy. Find out more about what you can do to spread the good news at www.AFSCMEmstrong.org.
Our Test for the Candidates: Solutions for Working Families

The American economy has gotten so out of balance that more than half of all workers earn less than $30,000 a year, according to statistics from the Social Security Administration. Considering that the federal poverty level is $28,410, it’s easy to see why so many families are struggling.

The middle class has shrunk and sagged in an economy that doesn’t value work. Those at the very top, with plenty of money to invest, are sitting pretty. The rest of us are getting a raw deal, and we have every reason to be angry about how the American Dream has gone missing.

The Reasons Why

We know the many reasons for this sad state of affairs. They include:

• An economy manipulated by politicians who serve the interests of the richest 1 percent instead of people like us.
• Attacks on workers’ rights that make it harder to bargain good contracts that benefit our families and raise the floor for other working people.
• Politicians giving away public money to private corporations, which promise jobs here, then take those jobs to countries with cheaper labor and few worker protections.
• Policies that promote outsourcing public-sector jobs to companies that treat workers like “cost centers” rather than human beings.

In 2016, a huge election year, we can’t get caught up in party labels or promises.

The candidates we support must demand that wealthy Americans pay their fair share in taxes.

Similarly, candidates must commit to funding budgets that would rebuild the services we deliver and pay for infrastructure projects, from fixing bridges and water systems to upgrading broadband.

The leaders we stand with must support increasing the minimum wage, reforming overtime rules and protecting the rights of workers to form and join a union. They must believe in collective bargaining and understand that it is essential to raising wages and living standards.

Fulfilling the Promise

They must also defend the idea that after a lifetime of work and sacrifice, we have earned the right to retire in comfort. That means strengthening Social Security and public-sector pensions and not forcing workers into 401(k) savings plans and individual retirement accounts that shift all the risk to them.

The AFSCME constitution promises that members will “exert ourselves...to fulfill the promise of American life.” That means demanding that the candidates we fight for share our vision for the nation and will fight for working families. They must commit to revive the American Dream for everyone.

What We Want

The wealthiest people in America have used tax breaks during the past 50 years to push their income to unprecedented levels.

In 2016, a huge election year, we can’t get caught up in party labels or promises. We have to judge the candidates for each and every office — from President to town council — by the same measure: What’s your plan for working families?

Lee Saunders
President
The U.S. Supreme Court has decided to take up a case in January called *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* that could open the door to a full-fledged attack on workers’ rights. If the court curtails the ability of public-service workers to join together in strong unions to bargain for living wages and quality services, our communities and public services both will suffer. It also could undermine the economic recovery by crimping the wages of average Americans.

Every public service worker would be affected by an adverse ruling in *Friedrichs*, not just teachers. AFSCME members have dedicated their lives to making our cities, counties and states run, and to keeping our communities safe. But now we’re being unfairly targeted by corporate interests that have pushed their agenda through politicians, and now the Supreme Court.

### Unions Targeted Because We Work

Unions fight to improve wages, health care and retirement security — a better deal for all workers. That’s why we are a target for these attacks.

But we’re not running from this latest threat. The corporate interests behind this attack on workers have been chipping away at our rights since workers won the right to bargain 80 years ago. But they have not been able to overcome the determination of workers to join together to better their lives at work and in their communities.

Members like Kelly Druskis-Abreu, an AFSCME member who works for the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, will tell you how strong unions give workers a voice in preserving the integrity and quality of public services — in her case, calling for higher standards and improved policies to help patients.

“When my coworkers and I come together and have a collective voice on the job, we can advocate for better patient care, better training and equipment, and safe staffing levels,” she says. “This is about all of us.”

### Fighting for What’s Right

The sense of community that Druskis-Abreu exhibits is what we’re finding in AFSCME councils and locals across the country — a determination to fight for what’s right no matter what challenges politicians and courts may throw at us. In fact, AFSCME members are not just weathering the attacks but going on the offensive to defend our jobs and services.

Renewed activism in our union already is creating results: AFSCME organized more than 195,000 new members since last year. That’s how our members will overcome these unprecedented attacks and protect our ability to advocate for our communities moving forward.

Still, we hope the Supreme Court will uphold more than 35 years of precedent and labor peace, and do the right thing. It would be a travesty to let politics stand between American workers and their right to a free and fair shot at the American Dream.

“Unions fight for a better deal for all workers. That’s why we are a target for these attacks.”

Laura Reyes
Secretary-Treasurer
Here’s How We’re Growing Stronger

By David Kreisman & Clyde Weiss

Chicago’s cab drivers are making history, and in the process making themselves AFSCME Strong. For the first time in more than 30 years, they have a union — a driver-led AFSCME local chartered with the goal of solving tough problems that range from burdensome revenue-raising regulations to police harassment.

It’s quite an accomplishment, especially since it was just early last year that more than 3,500 city cab drivers began organizing themselves into Cab Drivers United, part of Illinois Council 31. Then, in July 2014, delegates to the 41st AFSCME International Union Convention in Chicago rallied near City Hall, demonstrating solidarity with the drivers’ campaign to win a voice in the regulatory process that controls their livelihood.

Now the drivers have that voice. Their new union, Cab Drivers United/AFSCME Local 2500, received its charter on Aug. 1, with hundreds signing up to become full dues-paying members of our AFSCME family.

“We have a saying, ‘AFSCME Strong.’ Sisters and brothers, you are the strength in AFSCME,” Council 31 Exec. Dir. Roberta Lynch told the new members. Lynch, also an AFSCME International vice president, added, “You are what will make Cab Drivers United/AFSCME Local 2500 grow and thrive. Every union, every local, has been built by workers who said ‘we’ve had enough, we’re going to make a change, and we’re going to stand up for ourselves.’

Fair treatment, equal justice, a voice in decisions that affect the drivers’ profession, and the right to earn a decent living are the goals — these are goals that can be accomplished if we are AFSCME Strong. and the members of Local 2500 are already racking up accomplishments.

Advocating for Change

It’s been an empowering journey for cab driver Ezz Abdelmagid. Standing before AFSCME delegates at last summer’s Convention, he called on them to “march with us and tell Mayor Emanuel that Chicago cab drivers deserve better working conditions and a living wage!”

This March, Abdelmagid was learning how to advocate for his profession and to help other drivers stand up to a system designed to confuse and intimidate, using a variation of Council 31’s traditional steward training called the Driver Advocate training program.

The drivers also have taken to the streets to demand the city address unfair operations in the “rideshare” industry, dominated by UberX and Lyft. In April, they delivered a petition to the mayor with the signatures of more than 3,300 cab drivers urging the city to apply the same safety rules and regulations to Uber and other transportation network providers as are already applied to cabs.

This fall, Local 2500 members conducted work stoppages at Chicago’s two major airports and McCormick Place convention center to protest the mayor’s proposal to allow Uber and Lyft access to public facilities without having to follow rules governing taxi drivers. “Uber provides the exact same service as licensed cab drivers, but nothing in the mayor’s proposal makes them play by the same rules we do,” said Local 2500 member Cheryl Miller.

3 THINGS TO KNOW:

1. Chicago’s cab drivers come together in our union.
2. The drivers have forced the city to end police harassment.
3. Local 2500 is on the path to growing stronger with each new membership.
Professional drivers “count on our earnings to support our families, yet we are facing economic devastation because of the out-of-control number of non-professional drivers on the road,” said driver Ghazi Abutaa, also a Local 2500 member. “The city limits the number of cabs on the road to relieve congestion. But with UberX, there’s no limit. Some say there are 15,000 vehicles, many from out of state, on the road, just to drive UberX for a couple hours a week.”

Getting Results
As a result of having their own union, the drivers are being heard and it’s making a difference in their lives.

In July, the city dismissed more than half the tickets unjustly issued against the drivers — a direct result of the union’s new Driver Advocate program. In fact, more than half of the tickets defended by a Driver Advocate have been dismissed outright, while others were amended so that fines were reduced, all thanks to AFSCME’s Driver Advocate program.

The union’s review of police ticketing practices against cab drivers also led to a departmental “cease and desist” order to officers who had made a habit of targeting the drivers.

As drivers discover the power of AFSCME Strong, Cab Drivers United/AFSCME Local 2500 will continue to grow more powerful with each new membership.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
U.S. Supreme Court to Decide Anti-Worker Case

America’s economy is out of balance, with an economic recovery that’s creating record wealth for the top 1 percent while leaving working people behind. Corporate CEOs and the wealthy benefit from rules skewed in their favor, and the U.S. Supreme Court will decide a case next year that could make it even harder for average Americans. This case could undermine the right of workers to negotiate together for better wages and benefits to sustain their families.

Here is a brief Q & A to explain why.

Q: What is this case really about?
A: This case, called Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association, is really all about corporate CEOs and wealthy special interests working through the court system to make it harder for teachers, firefighters and other public service workers to come together through a union to have a voice on the job to sustain their families and get ahead.

Q: What’s at stake for working people?
A: Our union is required by law to negotiate for everyone in a workplace, and employees who don’t want to belong to our union contribute to the cost of that representation through fair share fees, instead of dues. It’s only fair that all workers help pay for the cost of securing those benefits and protections. But this case threatens to eliminate fair-share fees. Everyone can choose whether or not to join a union at work, and nothing in this case will change that. What it could change is our ability to improve the services we provide, and improve our wages and benefits, through a negotiated contract.

Q: How do we fight back?
A: As public service workers who are passionate about our work and want to get ahead, we must continue to express our voices in the workplace through our unions. By working hard and banding together with others to win better wages and benefits, we can sustain our families, win improvements on the job to make our work more effective, and fight for advancements that leave our communities better off than we found them. We must make our union AFSCME Strong.

WHAT IS AFSCME STRONG?
We’re rebuilding our union, so that we can have safer workplaces, better benefits and wages, and retirement security.

What can you do? It’s simple: Talk to your co-workers. Talk about what you want to fix in your workplace. Ask your steward what you can do. You can help make your workplace safer, so that you are safer working for your community.

And consider becoming a PEOPLE donor. Let’s elect the lawmakers whose choices affect our jobs. For more information, visit AFSCMEStrong.org
What It Takes

To Win Our Vote

Beyond the Presidential race, AFSCME members are looking for leaders who will balance our economy, invest in public services and defend workers’ rights.

By Michael Byrne
The decision by the AFSCME International Executive Board to endorse Hillary Clinton for President came after an exhaustive six-month process focused on members — their concerns and opinions. The overwhelming vote by the Board reflected polling of AFSCME members, two-thirds of whom supported Secretary Clinton in the Democratic primary.

AFSCME also looked closely at the candidates — what they were saying, their public records, and their potential for winning the 2016 campaign. With the livelihoods of working families on the line, 2016 promises to be one of the most important elections in years. AFSCME members are looking for leaders who will stand with working people against the extremists who are manipulating the rules to benefit only the wealthy.

“People are working harder than ever, but basics like groceries and rent are eating up more and more of our paychecks every month,” said Paula Martinez, an Iowa member and mother. She was one of the AFSCME members participating in a series of Presidential town halls during the Labor Day weekend.

“We asked the candidates how we can help our children achieve a better life if we can’t afford quality child care, let alone college,” Martinez said.

Secretary Clinton participated in the town halls, along with former Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders. They were the three candidates who responded to an AFSCME questionnaire asking about issues critical to working families.

After years of right-wing regression, it appears that we may be riding a tide of change. Americans are tired of dividers like Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, who was forced to drop out of the Presidential race after plummeting in the polls.

Unions Making Comeback

“This was a clear rebuke of the anti-worker platform on which Governor Walker based his entire Presidential campaign,” AFSCME Pres. Lee Saunders said. “Governor Walker found nearly zero support for his policies that would have tipped the scales even further against working families.”

Walker abandoned his campaign just one week after announcing a plan to attack unions on a national scale similar to how he undermined collective bargaining in Wisconsin. “At a time when Americans of both parties are frustrated with an unbalanced economy manipulated by CEOs and corporations — the very people who backed Governor Walker — it’s no surprise that nearly six in 10 Americans support labor unions and resoundingly reject his approach,” President Saunders said.
Those numbers are from the most recent Gallup Poll, which shows support for unions at the highest level in seven years. Unions are favored particularly by people age 18-34 (66 percent) and women (63 percent), which bodes well for the future of labor. Even politically conservative millennials voice support for unions, seen as the best way for young people to get a foothold in the unbalanced U.S. economy.

Combined with the defeat of right-to-work legislation in states across the country, the revival of union popularity gives AFSCME members the opportunity to demand that elected leaders work to balance the economy and make sure that economic policies reward hard work.

Leadership That Works
The three Presidential candidates participating in the Iowa town hall meetings all vowed to strengthen workers’ rights to bargain together for wages and benefits, to support working families and the ability to retire with dignity. Secretary Clinton was seen by members as the candidate best able to win the election and make change work for working people. But she will need a Congress committed to solving problems, as well.

AFSCME is pointing to leadership that works – in Minnesota, for example. Because Gov. Mark Dayton and the Legislature sought to balance the economy and invested in public services, Minnesota is rated by CNBC as the top state for business in 2015.

With his re-election last year, Governor Dayton decided to raise the minimum wage, call on the wealthy to pay their fair share in taxes and expand Medicaid to provide more health care coverage. As a result, he turned a $5 billion deficit into a $1 billion surplus. The unemployment rate is at 4 percent, well below the 5.1 percent national average.

Working with Dayton, the Minnesota Legislature also passed laws to expand unionization, freeze state college tuition, require equal pay for women, boost primary education spending, establish all-day kindergarten and ease voter restrictions.

What America Needs
AFSCME is looking for the same kind of progressive leadership among candidates at all levels of government. Just as in the race for President, members are looking at candidates through a prism of working family concerns. Key issues include:

Tax Fairness
While the wealthy have been using tax breaks to feather their nests, working families have had to shoulder more of the tax burden. It’s time for the richest Americans – including corporations and corporate CEOs — to pay their fair share.

Improving Infrastructure
Investing in infrastructure projects not only improves our communities, but it also fuels the economy with new jobs. We need leaders who will invest in public projects like fixing bridges and water systems, and upgrading broadband services.

Raising Wages, Voices
Candidates must support increasing the minimum wage and strengthening the rights of workers to form unions and bargaining for better wages and working conditions. We need leaders who are not afraid to utter the word “union.”

Work-Life Policies
The increase in two-income families makes it harder to balance work and home. Candidates must support paid sick leave and other policies that make it easier for breadwinners to juggle responsibilities.

College Funding
The cost of attending a public four-year college increased by 21 percent in the last seven years, while state funding for public colleges dropped by 10 percent. Candidates must have a plan for increasing investment in education at all levels. Candidates must also have a plan for helping students get out from under the massive weight of student loan debt.

Retirement Security
Our leaders should be strengthening Social Security and Medicare, not talking about cutting or undermining these critical programs. They should also encourage a revival of real pensions, as well as savings plans, to ensure that a lifetime of hard work is rewarded with secure retirement.
When we asked members which candidate they wanted us to support in the 2016 Presidential election, they selected Clinton by an overwhelming two-thirds majority.

Clinton shares our values and will tackle the issues that affect our quality of life, including paid family and sick leave, and protecting retirement security for all hardworking Americans.

Hillary Clinton is committed to working for equal pay and affordable child care, among other important family issues.

We can count on Clinton to stand up for the rights of workers to join together in strong unions and to promote collective bargaining to improve wages, benefits and working conditions for every worker.

Clinton is committed to raising the minimum wage and to strengthening overtime rules and other labor standards.

Get Involved at WeVoteWeWin.org

‘It Wasn’t Politics. It Was Down-to-Earth.’

Todd Copley, president of AFSCME Local 1868 in Polk County, wasn’t committed to any candidate before getting the chance to sit down and talk to Hillary Clinton during Iowa Council 61’s Convention. Copley and his wife Lorie made a connection that went beyond politics. Telling Clinton that he spent many Thanksgivings in Stuttgart, Arkansas – and had won the world duck-calling championship there in 2003 – opened a door between the two as Clinton revealed that she knew of the contest and had gone duck hunting herself.

“It wasn’t politics. It was down-to-earth,” he said. “We were talking about duck hunting. Yes, that sold me, right then and there. She wasn’t a politician. She wasn’t trying to get my vote. She was trying to find out who I was. She could have asked me a million questions – but she asked me about my experiences in Arkansas. She’s human. It was just an honor to get to meet her for the person she is.”
From dark, hot and cramped spaces, to moldy, muddy, musty places. Our dedicated members work hard, clearing trash from our neighborhoods, unclogging blocked sewers, and keeping our communities clean.

Do you perform messy work? Send us a picture and you may be featured in the next WORKS magazine. Visit: AFSCMEdirtyworks.tumblr.com/

It’s not often Richard Suhr has to climb into sewers. Technology takes care of most problems. But he doesn’t mind squeezing in when the job’s tough.

“I love what I do. I’ve been doing this for 25 years.”

By Tiffanie Bright
It gets real messy when the equipment breaks down. Debbie Noriega jumps in, scraping away the worst gunk imaginable.

“It’s what evil smells like. But the water comes out cleaner than river water.”

Despite the smell and furious heat, Antonio Flint doesn’t flinch. Retrieving roadkill, setting traps for wild animals — this member is certainly AFSCME brave.

“Not everyone can do my job.”
Social Security — a fundamental U.S. institution for 80 years and a cornerstone of retirement for most Americans today — has been under attack throughout its history. Now, as many employers eliminate real pensions, Social Security is more important than ever. And so is the fight to protect it.

The Social Security Act was controversial when Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt signed it in August 1935, with opponents arguing that it would kill jobs. It also excluded many women and minorities from receiving benefits. Although it evolved into an essential resource for the elderly and Americans with disabilities, critics have never given up the campaign to destroy it.

Social Security is the major source of income for most older Americans; nine out of 10 individuals older than 65 receive Social Security benefits. In 2014, more than 59 million Americans received $863 billion in Social Security benefits, including those receiving survivor and disability benefits.

Before the program was put in place, between one-third and one-half of all seniors spent their last years in dire poverty. Today, seniors are the least likely of any age group to live in poverty. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that 44 percent of all Americans aged 65 and older, or 15 million people, would be living in poverty if not for Social Security retirement payments.

Still, poverty among seniors remains a real problem, especially for women and people of color. Women earn approximately 78 cents for every dollar a man makes during their working years, and the gap grows even wider in retirement. An average retired woman’s Social Security income is approximately $13,500 per year, which is $4,000 less than the average male retiree receives. The inequality is even starker when we compare African-American and Latino retirees with white retirees.

Unwarranted Political Attacks
Social Security has often been called a “third rail” of politics — lawmakers know that it’s dangerous to touch it. Or they did until now. The program is currently facing a broad-scale attack from politicians and corporate interests who want to see its programs dismantled or privatized. In fact, the first thing that members of the newly elected House of Representatives did when they arrived in Washington, in January, was to vote for a rule change that could cut benefits in the future.

Why are powerful people going after such a beloved program? They’ll tell you that the system is nearly out of money, and that the problem is so deeply rooted that there’s no way to fix it without reducing benefits. But that’s not true. Social Security is on track to be fully funded for the next 20 years, according to the most recent report from the agency’s trustees. And after that it will still be 75 percent funded. And we already know how to fix it.

Nothing to Fear
Right now, Social Security contributions are only collected from the first $118,500 of a person’s yearly earnings. That means that while the average American is contributing...

3 THINGS TO KNOW:

1. A simple change to the way contributions are collected would keep social security funded far into the future.
2. 14.5 million seniors would be living in poverty if it weren’t for Social Security.
3. Americans overwhelmingly support a stronger Social Security system.
Not all AFSCME members are covered by Social Security. When Social Security started in 1935, public-sector workers were excluded from the Social Security system. Amendments to the Social Security Act in the 1950s permitted some state and local public employees to be covered under Social Security. Those who are not included were covered under pension plans.

Today, some state and local employees are not part of the Social Security system and must rely solely on their retirement pensions. When politicians like Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner propose raiding state pension funds, they’re threatening the only source of retirement security for many state workers.

There is another problem facing public workers who are eligible for both a pension and Social Security. Some of these workers must give up a portion of their Social Security to compensate for also receiving a pension. For others who receive spousal or widow benefits, their Social Security payments get docked by a certain amount too.

AFSCME is fighting for the repeal of these two discriminatory laws that restrict this retirement income. One is the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the second is the Government Pension Offset (GPO). Together, the laws unfairly target the retirement benefits of more than a million retirees.

Members of the AFSCME Retiree Council gathered in Washington, DC, for the 35th Annual Meeting, in July.

Insecurity in America

Not all AFSCME members are covered by Social Security. When Social Security started in 1935, public-sector workers were excluded from the Social Security system. Amendments to the Social Security Act in the 1950s permitted some state and local public employees to be covered under Social Security. Those who are not included were covered under pension plans.

Today, some state and local employees are not part of the Social Security system and must rely solely on their retirement pensions. When politicians like Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner propose raiding state pension funds, they’re threatening the only source of retirement security for many state workers.

There is another problem facing public workers who are eligible for both a pension and Social Security. Some of these workers must give up a portion of their Social Security to compensate for also receiving a pension. For others who receive spousal or widow benefits, their Social Security payments get docked by a certain amount too.

AFSCME is fighting for the repeal of these two discriminatory laws that restrict this retirement income. One is the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the second is the Government Pension Offset (GPO). Together, the laws unfairly target the retirement benefits of more than a million retirees.

States Where Majority of Public Service Workers Won’t Get Social Security:

- Ohio: 97.5%
- Nev.: 82.4%
- Ill.: 78.5%
- La.: 72.1%
- Colo.: 56.3%
- Calif.: 52.1%
- Tex.: 72.1%
- Mass.: 95.9%
- 70.9%
- 70.9%
- 70.9%
If that sounds like the opening of a fairy tale, it’s not. More and more, it’s the story a new generation of workers is telling their children about a time when a majority of Americans had retirement pensions.

Real pensions are still common in the public sector, even though only 18 percent of private-sector workers are covered by these “defined-benefit” plans. But ever since the Great Recession of 2008, when many state budgets were in the red, pensions in the public sector are under attack.

In cities and states across the nation, corporate-backed politicians would like nothing better than to usher in a new era of uncertainty for the middle class — and big profits for Wall Street — by doing away with real pensions and replacing them with risky “defined-contribution” savings plans, like 401(k)s.

Pensions Are Still Hip
Many employers would like us to believe that pensions are for a bygone generation. They say young people crave the flexibility of a 401(k), taking it with them as they move from job to job.

In fact, the opposite is true. Only 17 percent of workers under 40 say they like their company’s 401(k) plan, according to a 2011 survey by professional services firm Towers Watson. And in a 2013 study by the National Institute on Retirement Security, 95 percent of millennials agreed the retirement system needs repair, with 84 percent in support of a new pension system.

Even as pensions continue to disappear, younger workers increasingly favor them.

As 35-year-old Destiny Dusosky, a general maintenance worker at St. Cloud State University and vice president of AFSCME Local 753 (Council 5), puts it, “If you don’t have a pension, and you just have a pot of money, you won’t be able to draw for life.”

Dusosky, who has two daughters — Scarlet, 15, and Anastasia, 12 — says her pension makes her feel “a lot more secure.”

She says her pension is the main reason she hopes to someday be able to “retire with dignity.”

Union members are four times more likely than non-union members to have access to the retirement security provided by a real pension. But with attacks against public workers on the rise, many are losing the opportunity to have one.

3 THINGS TO KNOW:
1. Only 17 percent of workers under 40 say they like their company’s 401(k) plan.
2. When it comes to retirement security, nothing beats a real pension.
3. A majority of Americans aren’t able to save enough to retire with dignity and peace of mind.
Investing in Our Future

Pension Security Is Irreplaceable
Francis McLaughlin, a city planner and union steward with the Anchorage Municipal Employee Association/AFSCME Local 16, came to work for the city in February 2007. A year earlier, he would have been eligible to participate in a real pension plan. But in mid-2006, that option was closed for new hires, who instead were offered a defined-contribution 401(a) plan. A 401(a) is like a 401(k) for government employees. He also missed out on health insurance for future retirees.

McLaughlin, 39, and his wife of four years, Rose, have a 17-month-old daughter, Agatha, with another baby on the way.

“If I had a pension, we would know exactly how much I’m going to get when I retire,” says Francis, whose father, an electrician, also was a union member and received a defined-benefit pension.

“My father has a very nice retirement,” he adds.

Unlike most of his peers, McLaughlin was lucky to get the right kind of guidance from his parents early on and started planning for retirement at a young age. With their advice, he opened an Individual Retirement Account, or IRA, before he even went to college. He converted that to a Roth IRA when he was just 25. IRA accounts, which use compound interest, are immensely more profitable the sooner you start making deposits.

In addition to a Roth IRA and his employer-sponsored 401(a), McLaughlin and his family are covered by a 457 (a deferred compensation plan for government employees from which he can draw without penalty before he reaches retirement age), a tax-free health savings account that came in handy with the birth of their daughter, and a 529 college savings plan.

But even all these savings accounts and investments, McLaughlin says, cannot substitute for the security a real pension would provide him and his family.

As the world was reminded this past summer, any investment tied to stocks, no matter how long-term, is vulnerable to the unpredictability and volatility of the stock market. When it comes to retirement security, nothing beats a real pension.

Plus, as his family grows, McLaughlin says, it’s harder to save for the future.

“It was easier to save when I was younger,” Francis says. “It’s harder now. When I was younger there was a period I went through trying not to buy new things. I would always bargain shop and use coupons. Now that we’re a family, it’s nice to go out to dinner as a family, take family vacations, buy things for my wife. Those are things that all cost money.”

Hanging on to Your Pension
Like most public employees, Isaac Harry, 31, has a traditional pension. Harry works for the New York City Department of Social Services as a fraud investigator. He co-chairs AFSCME Local 371’s Next Wave committee, and attended a workshop on retirement security at the Next Wave Assembly in June.

“At my job I pay into a pension and a 401(a) plan,” he says. “I wanted to know where the money was going and how it was being managed, and how it will affect me when I retire.”

Harry also learned about the attacks against public pensions by those who would replace them with defined-contribution plans. John Arnold, a billionaire and former hedge fund manager, is trying to destroy public pension systems across the nation.

Harry says his parents are hard workers but will have to work beyond the age of retirement. Saving for your golden years isn’t easy, he knows, and a majority of Americans aren’t able to save enough to retire with dignity and peace of mind.

Though he feels he’s better off than many workers his age who only have access to a defined-contribution savings plan, Harry says he’s not going to sit back and assume everything’s going to be okay.

“I’m going to do whatever it takes to protect my pension,” he says. ■
Women’s Leadership Academy Opens Eyes, Avenues

By Mark McCullough

“Powerful.”
“A life changing experience.”
“Inspiring.”

These are just some of the ways that participants described the opening session of the AFSCME Women’s Leadership Academy. At the Academy, 30 women from across the country, ranging from seasoned local leaders to new members attending their first AFSCME training, spent the week learning how to further turn their activism and commitment into actionable power.

They listened and challenged themselves and each other to build a union ready for the challenges we face.

This is the third session of the Leadership Academy, which occurred in June in North Miami, Florida. It reflects AFSCME’s belief that, as a union whose membership is 58 percent female, fostering diversity in leadership will create opportunities for breakthrough ideas and action, and better reflect our membership.

“If you are looking to be a leader and not a follower, this is for you, this is where you need to be,” said Camilla Bradford, a Riverside, California, home care provider from United Domestic Workers of America (UDW).

Bradford, who has been an AFSCME member for just over a year, was attending her very first national event but felt that she already had so much in common with her sisters from across the country.

“Our stories are so similar because we are fighting for the same cause,” said Bradford. “This has opened my eyes to so many opportunities and has given me so many answers to questions I’ve had that I just can’t wait to implement these ideas at home.”

Over the week, participants honed their skills, learned new tactics and gained real-world experience by taking to the streets and helping AFSCME Local 199 turn out members for a regional meeting and volunteer recruitment session.

“We are all under attack and if we don’t stand up united across the country we risk losing everything those who came before us fought for and everything that those coming after us need to ensure the American Dream can survive,” said Susan Rowe, a registered nurse with Council 61, Local 2990 in Slater, Iowa. “We need leaders and too often women have lacked the tools or support to take that next step. But this is helping to change that.”

“We discovered how we are all really in the same boat and just need to get rowing in the same direction,” said Shonna Quick-Crowell,
a street maintenance crew leader in Indianapolis and member of Local 725. As the first woman to serve as a crew leader and the first female chief steward for her local, Quick-Crowell was inspired to learn how other participants have gone through similar challenges but continued to grow personally and professionally. “This really has been a life changing experience and one of the first things I’m going to do is get with my council and find out about our local women’s committees.”

A Union Full of Passionate Members
Organized by AFSCME’s Education and Leadership Training Department, the program is geared toward members from across the spectrum of work experience, union involvement and previous leadership roles. This first meeting begins a six-month project to strengthen their locals, with graduation in December.

A week of training is one thing but the participants agreed that a mentor-mentee system would sustain the energy through continued support among each other, with seasoned members providing the lessons learned and best practices from past fights and Next Wave members providing new ideas and new approaches.

So Many Similar Issues
“We share so many similar issues across the country and across our locals that knowing that someone else has gone through the same thing I’m going through, knowing not just what they did that worked but what they did that didn’t and why, that is making sure we use our resources, our time, money and people, better than we ever could have done instead of just making it up as we go it alone,” said Anne Radakovits, a revenue enforcement and collection agent from Catasauqua, Pennsylvania, with Local 1979.

3 THINGS TO KNOW:
1. Women from across the country spent a week learning how to turn activism into actionable power.
2. Continued AFSCME’s belief that fostering diversity in leadership will create better ideas and actions.
3. Geared toward members from across the spectrum of work experience, union involvement and previous leadership roles.
Headed Off to College?  
AFSCME can help

Any families are struggling with the costs of college tuition — or paying off college loans. AFSCME members and their children or dependents can apply for scholarships that could substantially reduce college costs. Here are two scholarship options currently accepting applications:

- The Gerald W. McEntee Scholarship is a one-time award of $5,000 granted to one AFSCME member each year. The scholarship is given to the member who best exemplifies the former president’s commitment to strengthening our union through organizing, building political power for working families, defending workers’ rights and supporting public services. Application deadline is Jan. 31.

- The AFSCME Family Scholarship is an award of $2,000, renewable for up to four years, granted to 10 rising high school seniors each year. Any senior whose parent or legal guardian is an active AFSCME member may apply. Application deadline is Dec. 31.

Visit AFSCME.org/members/scholarships to learn more and download application materials.

Already graduated? AFSCME is committed to helping union members navigate the student loan process. You may qualify for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program or Income-Driven Loan repayment, which can help dramatically reduce your monthly payments. You can find out more at AFSCME.org/student-debt.

JUST BECAUSE YOU’RE UNION.

The 15% Union Plus AT&T Wireless Discount was created to help hard-working union members like you save on wireless phone services from AT&T, the only national unionized wireless provider. Make the switch to AT&T to take advantage of this union member discount.

- Save 15% on monthly AT&T voice service and select data plans
- Qualify for up to $200 in rebates when you use your Union Plus Credit Card to buy a new smartphone or switch to AT&T
- Support 45,000 union brothers and sisters working at AT&T

To start saving, visit UnionPlus.org/ATT
Discount FAN: 3508840

Credit approval and new two-year service agreement required. Offer cannot be combined with any other discounts. Other conditions and restrictions apply, visit UnionPlus.org/ATT for details.
Our AFSCME Family
AFSCME members out and about enjoying their local union

1. Local 1549 celebrated Puerto Rican Day in New York on Sunday, June 14. 2. Local 34 member Matt Seeger and family attend a picnic hosted by Council 5 in Minnesota. 3. AFSCME Council 25 and the Detroit Federation of Teachers teamed up in October to launch Council 25's first book drive. Teachers and kids alike were welcomed to build their libraries. 4. Local 372 attended the 34th Annual Dominican Day Parade on Sunday, August 9, in New York City. 5. Members helped pack meals for communities in need in partnership with Stop Hunger Now at the 2015 AFSCME Women’s Conference in Indianapolis.

Going to a football game with your union sisters and brothers? Send us your pictures and maybe you’ll see them in the next issue of WORKS! Email us at works@AFSCME.org.
California

Paid leave is now the law in California — except for home care workers. While Assembly Bill 1522 was signed last year, it took effect this July. The law allows workers to take sick leave or family leave. About six million workers will have access to paid leave for the first time as a result of the law. But home care workers, members of United Domestic Workers of America (UDW) are excluded from the law.

In recent months, Gov. Jerry Brown also signed Assembly Bill 987, which makes it easier for employees to request accommodations at work without fear of retaliation, and Senate Bill 327, which preserves good schedules for nurses in California hospitals.

Michigan

Michigan’s Supreme Court upheld two anti-worker laws that may affect AFSCME members. AFSCME and other unions fought back after the state Legislature attacked public workers’ pensions in 2011 and passed a so-called right-to-work law in 2012. Unfortunately, this summer’s rulings upheld those two laws, meaning that Michigan’s workers may see higher pension contributions and more difficult bargaining in the near future.

Massachusetts

There was some good news out of Massachusetts this summer. The Legislature passed a budget that includes paid respite days for caregivers in state home care services and full funding for the state’s kindergarten programs and university system. The Legislature, which meets year-round, is also looking to improve the rights of women in the workplace. Senate Bill 983 and House Bill 1769 would establish pay equity and require employers to accommodate the needs of pregnant employees.

Pennsylvania

This summer, Gov. Tom Wolf vetoed three major bills that would hurt public service workers. One was Senate Bill 1, which would cut pension benefits for current state employees and move new employees into 401(k) plans. “We hope legislators can begin to focus on pressing matters such as the state budget, rather than asking employees to sacrifice their retirement,” says Council 13 Exec. Dir. David Fillman, also an AFSCME International vice president. Wolf also rejected the budget that was passed, saying its methods for funding education and other state programs just won’t cut it.
Devon Curtis
Local 44, Council 67
Small Engine Mechanic,
Baltimore Parks Department

“I work hard. I deserve a day off when my child gets sick. That’s why I’m union.”

Get involved.
Learn more at AFSCMEstrong.org
Philadelphia — Public service workers, including members of AFSCME, showed their love for Pope Francis during his historic Sept. 27 visit to the “City of Brotherly love.”

Corrections officers of AFSCME Local 159 (District Council 33) were honored to meet Pope Francis during his visit to the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility — the city’s largest — where the pontiff addressed approximately 100 inmates and their families at a prison gymnasium. AFSCME members work throughout the prison, which was built to hold 2,016 prisoners yet currently houses more than 2,800 — an overcrowding condition that can lead to increased inmate violence against corrections officers, according to the Government Accountability Office.

Many AFSCME members, including those represented by District Council 47, also were involved in preparing for his visit and cleaning up afterward. The pontiff’s visit also involved members of the National Union of Hospital and Health Employees (NUHHCE)/AFSCME District Council 1199C, who were prepared for any medical eventuality at Temple University Hospital, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, and Episcopal and Hahnemann Hospitals.

Hope and Inspiration
In a local radio message, DC 33 Pres. Pete Matthews said AFSCME members were “an integral part” of the pope’s visit, “and his message of hope, inspiration, inclusion, providing for the homeless and downtrodden, poverty and the dignity of work is something that should inspire all of us. District Council 33 is proud of the part we played, along with District Council 47, the police, fire and other unions, to welcome the pope and all that came to our city.”

By Clyde Weiss