That Union Feeling

What’s it mean to be a member of AFSCME? “I know someone is going to back me up, that I am not alone,” says Armando Quintana, who is happy he took a job in the auto parts unit of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department. Quintana is one of many members profiled in this issue of WORKS who value our union for how it empowers them at work and gives them a sense of belonging. Robin Demas, a librarian in Concord, Massachusetts, talks about her long battle to form a union at her workplace and the pride that came with a first contract.

“We accomplished a big thing, and it’s made the difference in how we see our role, day to day,” she said. “Here’s a lot of people who don’t quite get what’s at stake.”

Show Your Union Pride

Other members featured in this issue are having one-on-one conversations with their co-workers about issues critical to working families (pages 6-7).

Also in this issue we’re providing some ready-made art for your workspace — a centerfold poster fit for any proud union member (pages 16-17).

Let everybody know that you’re AFSCME Strong and proud of it!

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The Funniest, Most Helpful Video You’ll See All Year

You and your friends head out to dinner. One friend votes for Sizzler. But your friends choose Applebee’s and you all enjoy a great meal. One buddy doesn’t want to pay up because he voted for Sizzler. That’s not fair. It’s the same with unions. Everyone votes on whether to join. And if a majority of workers vote yes, we’re all covered by the benefits like healthcare, retirement security, and safe working conditions.

Watch this video and learn more about what fair share fees really mean: strongunionstrongamerica.com

Actress Reese Witherspoon Declared May 15th Municipal Worker Appreciation Day!

Reese knows public workers are cool. Just what we’ve said all along!

Tell us why you are proud of your work. Tweet your photos and stories to @AFSCME on Twitter.
Across the country, AFSCME members are getting up to speed on how we work together to overcome challenges greater than any we’ve faced at any time in our history. Confronting us today are governors determined to balance budgets on our backs, legislators taking aim at retirement security, and shadowy groups attacking our bargaining rights. And we face a Supreme Court that has been less than sympathetic to workers.

But our members are ready to fight back, thanks to AFSCME Strong. Our grassroots campaign is helping us build capacity to advocate more effectively for the issues that matter to us and our families. Members across the nation are learning how to get co-workers involved, engaging in meaningful conversations about everything from wages to on-the-job safety, and explaining how we can win through solidarity and activism.

Value of Membership

Having those conversations is a great reminder of the power we have when we stand together — and about how being a part of AFSCME has sustained our families. Workers who are represented by unions are more likely to have a medical plan and retirement benefits, thanks to the contracts we negotiate, and that makes life for those we love a lot better.

But there’s a spillover effect of our union membership and activism. Unions are good for America because we benefit all workers, make workplaces safer and improve communities. In essence, the gains we make through collective bargaining raise the floor for everybody else.

The labor movement has been fighting for rights and protections for workers for more than a century. Many of the laws protecting workers and setting standards in the workplace were created because unions advocated for those rights with policymakers at every level of government.

True, union members earn on average $207 more each week than nonunion workers, to the tune of nearly $11,000 a year. That’s equivalent to the average cost of tuition and fees for one year at a public four-year college. But there is a residual effect for other workers.

Your friends and relatives who aren’t in unionized workplaces, but live in areas or work in industries with a strong union presence, also get some of the benefits. For instance, if they work in an industry that is 25 percent unionized, their pay is 5 percent higher than it is for workers in less unionized industries.

Advocating for Working Families

Incomes are higher in states where employees have the right to organize and join a union. These higher incomes mean local economies are better off because workers have more to spend.

AFSCME Strong means getting the word out about all the ways in which we make a difference in our neighborhoods and communities as union members. We are advocating for working families.

With AFSCME Strong, we have the tools to lift our voices.

Lee Saunders
President

“Unions are good for America because we benefit all workers, make workplaces safer and improve communities.”
Given their delicate economic situation, it’s no wonder millennials view unions more favorably than any other age group. They need unions more than any generation since the Great Depression.

Not only are many saddled with student loan debt, but they also are forced to take lower-paying jobs than their parents did when they were young. That means getting a loan to buy a home is not in their immediate future, and the American Dream keeps sliding further away.

The Power of Conversation

When workers band together, they have more leverage to negotiate for better wages and benefits, to improve health and safety and other working conditions, and millennials certainly understand this dynamic.

Something else, too: Because they are working together in a union to achieve a better life, they develop a sense of community with their sisters and brothers on the job, and a common purpose that brings out the best in the workers and their union. This is a generation that believes in societal change, and unions provide a vehicle for achieving it.

It also means ordinary people are stepping up and having conversations in worksites and at kitchen tables about why unions are the best way for workers to raise their wages and bargain for fairness in the workplace. And it is imperative that we, as parents, have these same conversations with our children.

I know how powerful talking with young people about unions can be. I had this exact conversation a few months ago with my own daughter, a rising senior in high school. She just started her first job, as a hostess at a restaurant, and she asked me about unions. As a union organizer mom, I was happy to oblige, and we talked about fair pay and treatment on the job, as well as workplace safety. She deserves to hear that information.

The Next Generation

It’s the type of conversation that decades prior wouldn’t have been unusual. As American manufacturing was on the upswing and unionization rates were high, families had those conversations in plenty of households as children considered their options after high school. Now, when our older children are rolling their eyes in disgust at what awaits them in the job market, we need to let them know that there is a solution, but only if they become a part of it.

That is why it’s so important to connect with young people while we have their attention. This is the next generation of union leaders, our Next Wave. They come to the table with eyes and ears open, ready to hear how they can get ahead, how unions work. There is a new appreciation for unions that is bubbling up from where young people live and work. No matter how hard right-wing politicians work to vilify unions, they can’t tamp down this spirit.

“There is a new appreciation for unions that is bubbling up from where young people live and work.”

Laura Reyes
Secretary-Treasurer
Across the nation, AFSCME-represented public service workers are sitting down with their colleagues and talking about the importance of unions, helping us to become strong enough to deliver good pay, benefits and working conditions.

We call this bold new program AFSCME Strong. Our goal: train AFSCME members nationwide to have one-on-one conversations with their fellow workers on issues critical to working families — wages, job security, safe staffing levels, retirement security and more.

They, in turn, will reach out to broaden our AFSCME family, asking them to recommit to our union.

Through AFSCME Strong, we will increase our power in the workplace, at the bargaining table and with state legislatures and county and city councils.

Let’s meet two members having those conversations.

**A Personal Fight**

In his job as a psychiatric security attendant at Western State Hospital in Lakewood, Washington, Patrick McDonough works with potentially dangerous people.

McDonough is a steward of Local 793 (Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE)/AFSCME Council 28). Over nearly a decade working at the hospital, he’s had his share of job-related injuries, including two that required major surgery. Six screws in his foot are a constant reminder of one attack by a patient.

Such attacks might be anticipated in a hospital for the mentally ill. But anti-union attacks from right-wing forces bent on taking away his rights at work are something McDonough never gave much thought to until he became active in AFSCME.

That’s why McDonough participated in our first AFSCME Strong training session in Seattle in March. “Training gave me an opportunity to be better able to approach people, to have the conversations we need to have about threats to workers’ rights, and how to maintain our benefits and our union,” he said.

Over two days, McDonough engaged fellow hospital workers in discussions about union priorities, and how they could achieve and maintain power in the workplace through AFSCME. The training gave him the confidence to do it, and a better understanding of why such conversations are important.

“I wish we could get everybody through something like this,” he said. “If they really understood what is at stake, they would be a lot more vested in this. They would make this a personal fight, like I have.”

**What’s at Stake: Jobs and Pay**

Anissa Pierce-Sessoms, a fiscal accounts clerk with the state of Maryland, said her participation in the AFSCME Strong Coaches training near Baltimore in May was “very helpful. It’s given me the ability to help lead us in the next steps of what we need to do in Maryland.”

**Patrick McDonough, Local 793 (WFSE Council 28)**

To read more, visit afscmestrong.org
The greatest challenge to all state workers, Pierce-Sessoms said, is "having a governor that wants to balance the state budget on our backs."

Gov. Larry Hogan's budget plan slashes all state agency spending by 2 percent. AFSCME members got Hogan to back off his plan to cut the already-negotiated 2 percent pay increase the state and university employees had.

Although the governor denied there will be furloughs or layoffs, some fear that could be his next step. That’s why it was so important that Pierce-Sessoms talk to her fellow state public service workers to inform them about the threats.

“Our jobs and pay are at stake,” she said.

“There’s a lot of people who don’t quite get what’s at stake. I hope that, through this training, we’ll be able to get more people actively involved in the union.”

— Anissa Pierce-Sessoms, Local 1081, Council 3

AFSCME activists Anissa Pierce-Sessoms, Local 1081 (Council 3), and David Basler, president of Local 434 (Council 67), knocked on members’ doors in Baltimore, Maryland.

Contest Winners

These members/retirees won an AFSCME sweatshirt or T-shirt as part of an email contest that appeared in the Winter 2015 issue of WORKS. Congratulations, and thanks to everyone who entered.

Stay in the know and be the first to learn about upcoming contests by sharing your email address at AFSCME.org/updates.

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It was unexpected, it was exciting, it was ... love! Most of the benefits unions offer are explicit: higher wages, better health care and retirement security, safer working conditions, etc.

But every once in a while, you join a union and something unexpected happens. You find a new passion in life, strike new friendships or fall in love.

We asked AFSCME members if they could say: “I found love in my union.” And many replied, “Yes!”

Meet a few of our sisters and brothers whose (love) union grew out of their (labor) union.

They met at their AFSCME local’s Christmas party. Ron asked a mutual friend to introduce them. He asked her out. But the road to matrimony wasn’t a straight one. “We dated for a little while and then parted ways,” Ron says.

“The age difference got in the way,” Karyn recalls. Less than a year later, they got back together for good. They dated for a year and married on Sept. 18, 2004.

Since then, lots has changed. Karyn moved on to a new job in Springfield, where she is an office coordinator in the state Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, and a new AFSCME local — Local 2224, where she is a steward. Ron transferred to Taylorville Correctional Center and AFSCME Local 3653, where he serves as a steward. They started a family and today have two children — Garrett, 9, and Isabella, 5.

But their love for each other has remained constant. And so has their involvement in their labor union.

“You have to be active in your union,” Karyn says. “Because if you don’t have the passion to change things or to cause change, future generations will not benefit from strong unions. We can’t let AFSCME die out; we can’t let it weaken. It takes people like us to keep it alive for future generations. It’s important to keep it alive for our kids.”
Margaret & Frank Muñoz
Phoenix, Arizona

Before Frank Muñoz became Margaret’s husband, he was her boss for three weeks.

Not long after Margaret joined the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport general maintenance crew in 2002, her supervisor went on vacation. One of her co-workers, Frank, was put in charge.

“He was a really hard boss!” Margaret recalls laughingly. “He even yelled at me! Frank takes his job very seriously.”

But little by little, Frank and Margaret got to know each other better. And soon Frank was asking Margaret if she had any plans for the weekend.

“He didn’t know how to ask me out,” Margaret says. “So one day I just said, ‘Why are you asking me if I have plans for the weekend? Are you planning to ask me out?’”

Today, Frank works as an HVAC technician in the mechanical maintenance section of the airport and Margaret works as an airport security guard in the operations section. They have three children — Angelica, 11; Frank, Jr., 10; and Vanessa, 4.

Frank says he never thought he’d meet his future wife at work, much less in the same labor union, but he’s glad it turned out that way.

“It’s exciting,” says Frank, an executive board member and shop steward of AFSCME Local 2384. “We’re able to understand each other and help each other in different situations because we’re part of the same union. We help each other out with different issues that come up.”

Margaret says Frank motivated her to become more active in her union. She, too, is a shop steward of AFSCME Local 2384.

“He said, ‘You need to speak up for your department. Somebody needs to speak up, and you need to be a leader,’” Margaret recalls. “He was right. I’m glad I stood up for my department. Now some of my co-workers also speak up.”

Kristina Beale & John Bilek
Glen Burnie, Maryland

John Bilek remembers when he first saw Kristina Beale. It was at a meeting of AFSCME Local 2563 (Council 67), which represents clerical, technical and administrative employees of Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

“I saw her and it was love at first sight,” he says.

It took him a while, he says, to work up the courage to find out more about her from a colleague. Once he did, he was both shocked and encouraged to realize she was available.

John works for the county’s planning and zoning agency; Kristina is a crime scene technician.

“He started coming to our union meetings,” recalls Kristina, who is treasurer of Local 2563. “And I started to wonder why he kept coming to our meetings.”

Was it to see her? Or did he have a genuine interest in union matters?

“It was both,” John says.

Appropriately enough, they went out for the first time after one of their monthly union meetings.

A year after they started dating, John and Kristina were engaged. On their wedding website, he wrote, “We met in a union and are now forming our own union.”

At their wedding in 2012, an entire table was reserved for their AFSCME friends of Local 2563. Today, the two are expecting their first child — a boy who will inherit his father’s name — due Labor Day weekend.

Their son will also inherit something else.

“We’re definitely going to dress him up in AFSCME green,” John says. ■

Did you find love in your (labor) union? If so, we’d like to hear your story. Contact Pablo Ros at pros@afscme.org.
AFSCME members consider life before and after.

BY CLYDE WEISS
It might seem crazy what we’re about to say, but union members are happier, by the way. With apologies to Pharrell Williams, and his opening lyric to “Happy” it’s a fact that being union members makes us happy. Two researchers found that “union members are more satisfied with their lives than those who are not members.” It gets better: the substantive effect of union membership on life satisfaction is large and rivals other common predictors of quality of life.

AFSCME members don’t need to read a study to know the truth of that statement. They live it every day. Here’s what three of them say.

Different Vision of Hope

As an unemployment compensation examiner protected by the union, Damon Neal says he is much happier knowing he has job security.

“I was happy to have peace of mind, knowing I couldn’t be mistreated just for my personality.”

— Damon Neal, OCSEA Local 11

Neal is happy — not just because he has a better job, but because his union “has become a part of my life.”

A decade later, Neal is an unemployment compensation examiner for the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. While he still performs a variety of tasks, there is a big difference in his working conditions.

“I notice the vast difference in how I’m treated, as opposed to how I was treated when I was not in a unionized position,” Neal said. “I can’t be forced to work outside my position, or above or below my expertise level.”

That’s because he is now represented by Ohio Civil Service Employees Association (OCSEA)/AFSCME Local 11. So, he also no longer has to work on federal holidays, and his hours don’t fluctuate as they did before. Also, his rights on the job are protected in ways they were not, before.

Neal is happy — not just because he has a better job, but because his union “has become a part of my life.”

As acting chief steward of Chapter 2599 (one of OCSEA’s largest chapters), he recently served on the contract bargaining team for his agency, helping to make improvements.
in the lives of all his fellow workers.

Neal acknowledges he didn’t have to take this route. When he became a permanent employee at his current job, he said, “I could have opted to be a fair share employee. But no thank you,” he said. “I was happy to have peace of mind, knowing I couldn’t be mistreated just for my personality.”

Until he joined OCSEA, Neal didn’t understand “the struggle that labor has endured in this country,” he said. Now, he’s made the labor movement’s struggle his own struggle, and is happier for it.

“I think, long term, hope comes to mind,” he explained. “I have an entirely different vision of what it represents. ‘I’m Not Alone’

Armando Quintana says he “had a pretty good job” in the private sector before accepting his current job working in the auto parts unit of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department. It also was a job working with auto parts, but there was one significant difference.

The private company’s workers were not represented by a union. At his current job, they are.

Quintana was hired in 2011 as a part-time employee, lured by more money and better perks. At first, he wasn’t going to sign up with the union, AFSCME Local 199 (Council 79). Other co-workers who had been there longer persuaded him it wasn’t a good idea.

Then something happened.

The union started getting stronger and all the workers noticed the changes. More signed on. About a year ago, he did too.

“Now I see people actually caring about going out to vote (for their contract). I’ve gone out to vote myself. You actually feel there’s something there for you.”

As a union member, Quintana realized that “I’ve got to vote for something that’s going to be in my favor,” like contract grievance provisions that ensure fair treatment.

“I know someone is going to back me up, that I’m not alone,” he said. “There’s a process that has to be followed” before management can discipline or dismiss an employee.

Security is another factor. While his former, non-union job wasn’t a terrible workplace, management had a hard-nosed attitude toward workers. Today, his union contract protects him from any unfair treatment.

Is he happier now, in a union, than he was before?

“Definitely.”

“Being in a union has given us this sense of security. It’s allowed us to know that if something goes terribly wrong again, we have this group behind us who are there to help us out.”

– Robin Demas, Local 1703 (Council 93)
‘It’s All About Respect’

For Robin Demas and her colleagues at the historic Concord Free Public Library in Massachusetts, work is more than a job. It is a matter of pride. And that was just the problem.

Founded by Concord native William Munroe and dedicated in 1873, the library has been a source of pride for the entire community. Before AFSCME entered their lives, however, Demas and her co-workers felt their pride at work was overshadowed by intimidation from management.

Demas has worked at the library for nearly three decades and has been its circulation department supervisor since 1999. About six years ago, she said, a change in management left the staff feeling embattled. The new director ran the library with a heavy hand, occasionally resulting in disciplinary actions “that appeared unfair to us.”

The director accepted feedback, but “she had her mind made up already” when it came to discipline, Demas said. “We weren’t right, no matter what we did.”

Morale began to whither. “We were feeling intimidated, feeling anxious about threats of insubordination,” Demas said. “One person just up and quit.”

By 2011, they had enough. Some staff began to discuss joining a union. “We needed to have a voice,” Demas said. “When we decided to take action, everybody quickly became very enthusiastic.”

A friend at the Boston Public Library told them about her union, AFSCME. They contacted a representative to learn more, and soon a majority of staff had signed cards indicating their desire to join AFSCME. The state Department of Labor Relations certified their petition in February 2012 and the unit became part of Local 1703 (Council 93).

More than two years passed while they negotiated their first contract, but their efforts paid off in July 2014. Demas said their key demands were “not at all about money. This is all about having a voice, it’s all about respect, about improving communications and having a say when it comes to control over our own work environment.”

Demas, now steward and chapter chair for the library’s supervisory unit, said she and her colleagues are happier now because “forming our union enables us to demand security. If something goes terribly wrong again, we bargained our contract to ensure fairness.

“It just gives you this feeling of pride,” Demas added. “We accomplished a big thing, and it’s made the difference in how we see our role, day to day.”

Get happy. Go to: AFSCME.org/happy

Tales of Terrible Non-Union Jobs

“I worked a non-union job. When I got married and put my husband and his kids on my insurance my paycheck went from $300 a week to $50 a week. My employer would only cover me.”

Beth Glasgow,
Local 1598, Pennsylvania District Council 88

“My spouse and I were so happy I had found steady work. Day three I get up excited to hit the streets when I get a call, 7 in the morning. ‘Sorry son, you are fired, you didn’t catch on to the job.’ I said, ‘You only took me [on the road, driving a truck] for one day. Didn’t matter. Gone.”

David A Nipper,
Illinois Council 31

“We worked 14-hour days with only a half hour lunch break. …Likewise for bathroom breaks, I was never able to get anyone to cover for me so I had to call over the area supervisor, who acted like I was the worst person in the world for having to use the bathroom and asking him to stand there for two minutes while I ran to the nearest porta potty. … Half the time our supervisors tried to clock us out before we were done cleaning.

Kristin Inman-Koval,
Local 34, Minnesota Council 5

“When I worked for [a department store] our time clock worked in tenths of an hour. We were required by the store manager to clock in at five ‘til our shift (five free minutes) and he worked us until five minutes after the hour (another five free minutes). Over the course of a week, that was 50 minutes of free labor times six employees…

Jennifer Nolen,
Local 3360, Ohio Council 8
Do you have a pile of old AFSCME T-shirts in the back of your closet? It turns out there's a market for those! We noticed this shirt (featured on the right) for sale in a trendy vintage shop on etsy.com, where it sold for $15. There are old AFSCME jackets going for as much as $100 on eBay!

The union movement is getting a lot of renewed attention these days, and not just because we’re fighting back against unprecedented assaults on working people. Young people show strong support for unions. Fifty-five percent of people age 18-29 view unions favorably, compared with only 29 percent who view them unfavorably, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center.

Overall among all age groups, 48 percent view unions favorably, compared with 39 who don’t. The strongest supporters for unions are people under 30 years of age. There’s something retro-cool about the labor movement. And for those who might want to join a union, we can promise a whole lot more than vintage T-shirts. To name a few:

- When you finally need prescription lenses in those horn-rimmed glasses, you’ll be glad you bargained for optical insurance in your contract.
- Some of your favorite things are union-made. You can find the union label on every can of PBR — and dozens of other fine beverages.
- There’s nothing more normcore than job stability.
- The average union member makes $207 more per week than her non-union counterpart and is more likely to have paid vacation time. You’ll totally be able to do Coachella next year.
- And of course, we were into it before it was cool.

But there are serious reasons that young people could use a union. This may be the first generation of Americans that ends up worse-off than our parents, and it’s all because our economy has been twisted to favor wealthy business owners over working people.

Maybe you’re saddled with student debt and the interest just keeps piling up. Maybe you’re working an unpaid internship that seems to be adding more to the company’s bottom line than to your resume. Maybe you’re working a part time or temp job doing something that could have been a career back in your parents’ day — but you’re barely staying afloat.

It doesn’t have to be this way. The McJob economy wasn’t inevitable. It was carefully planned by the people at the top who are making big profits from low wages and poor working conditions. But when ordinary people talk back and advocate for a better system, we can rebuild an economy that works for everyone. We know it’s possible because we’ve done it before. Let’s bring it back into style.

The Season’s Hottest Accessories: Tattoos, Cool Shades…and a Union Card

By Olivia Sandbothe

Vintage AFSCME apparel and accessories like the ones featured above are selling for top dollar on websites like Etsy and eBay!
Digital Media Goes Union

By Omar Tewfik

Unions are alive and well among millennials, if a historic pro-union vote at Gawker Media is an indication of things to come, and many believe it is. Employees of Gawker, a popular digital media outlet known for its snarky commentary on celebrity gossip and the media industry, voted overwhelmingly June 3 to form a union and join the Writer’s Guild of America, East.

The vote culminated the first-ever unionization drive of a major online-only media company. Driven exclusively by Gawker writers, including those from Gawker’s sister blogs Deadspin, Jezebel and Gizmodo, the decision to organize is significant for the thriving field of digital journalism, and for labor as a whole.

Recent research shows that young Americans, regardless of party affiliation, have a positive view of unions, and the Gawker vote is evidence that young, educated workers involved in cutting edge fields not only support unions, but see union membership as vital to securing a better future.

“Young people are looking for stability, no matter what field they work in,” said Anissa Pierce-Sessoms, a member of the AFSCME Next Wave Advisory Committee. “I didn’t come from a union family, but like Gawker employees I realized how being in a union would benefit my career and my family, not just for the future but in the present.

“That’s the point of a union,” she said, “to enable people to go out and secure a better future, and it’s a relevant concept for any job, field or sector.”
As a member of AFSCME, you have a voice at work, which translates to better pay and benefits than workers without a union.

AFSCME STRONG?

UNION MEMBERS MAKE 77% more per year on average than non-union employees.

AFSCME STRONG?

RETIREMENT PLAN PENSION PLAN

UNION MEMBERS MAKE 88% MORE

UNION MEMBERS MAKE 85% MORE

UNION MEMBERS MAKE $10,764 MORE

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AFSCMEstrong.org
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85% have HEALTH INSURANCE

88% have a RETIREMENT PLAN

$10,764 MORE
What has the union done for you lately? Members of AFSCME Iowa Council 61 have a clear answer to that question thanks to an arbitration victory that saved their health plans.

This year, state and judicial employees started their second round of contract negotiations since Gov. Terry Branstad returned to office in 2011. Two years ago, workers agreed to hold off on a wage increase in order to keep their affordable health plan. But this year, the governor was on the attack again. His proposal would have cost state workers thousands of dollars each year in new insurance premiums.

Thankfully, the union won in arbitration. Workers will be paying a minimum of $20 per month toward the health plan — just a fraction of what was initially feared.

Throughout the arbitration process, members of AFSCME Iowa Council 61 were standing strong for a good contract. Deb Duncan, a custodian at Iowa State University and a member of the bargaining team, says that the team worked hard to stay connected to the membership.

“We have some 80 members on the team, and we represent workers from all across the state and all job classifications. We know that we are negotiating for the whole state, not just members of our own units,” she says. “It was clear that the important thing for members was health insurance.”

A Contract with Consequences

The proposed plan would have been most devastating for those who are the primary policy holder for their families. That’s the case for Shelly Hill, a clerk at the University of Northern Iowa who has spent the past few months worrying as the arbitration unfolded. “For one, my son (Jim) would have been dropped from my insurance because I wouldn’t have been able to afford a family plan,” she says. “Two, that’s a lot of money coming out of my check every month. It would really change my way of life. I might have to cut back to minimum payments on my mortgage, and I wouldn’t have money to do anything extra, like go out to eat with my family.”

Affordable health coverage can mean the difference between a middle-class lifestyle and poverty. Don Kerns is a custodian at the University of Iowa and a steward with Local 12. When he fights for a good union contract, he’s literally fighting for his life — and that of his daughter.
“She was diagnosed with epilepsy 12 years ago. I use my insurance for her care at the University Hospital. I wholeheartedly believe in our health care system here at the University but it isn’t fair when they ask people like me to come up with higher and higher percentages to pay for it.”

Kerns has his own health concerns, too. He’s on a medication that costs $1,000 per day. He was worried it wouldn’t be covered under a different health plan. “To afford something like that my wife and I would probably have to get rid of one of our two cars, which we need to get to work,” he says.

Many of the people covered by this contract live within modest budgets that couldn’t accommodate a major hike in insurance payments. State workers went without a raise in the last contract, but this time the negotiating team was able to secure a 6 percent wage increase over two years.

Workers like Deanna Gorman know that having their union is what makes the difference. She works in the Glenwood Resource Center providing services to people with intellectual disabilities. She got into state employment hoping for a better life than she could find with minimum wage jobs in the private sector. “I wouldn’t have any of the things I have if I didn’t have a union to fight for me and help me get where I am today. It’s the union between me and poverty as far as I’m concerned.”

The Security of a Union
Deb Duncan says that in the end, the arbitration process went smoothly. “You never get everything you want, but it’s a wonderful process and it’s worked for us for many years,” says Duncan, who has been part of the negotiating team since 1993.

It’s just one example of the stability that only comes with fair collective bargaining rights. In neighboring Wisconsin, where public workers cannot bargain, the governor can simply impose a bad contract without any input from the people who are affected by it. But for now, Iowa workers can weather these proposals and come out on top.

Duncan looks forward to camping with her family this summer, knowing that she will have the money to do it. And she’s also optimistic about the next round of contract negotiations in two years. “It’s a great way to learn what’s in your contract and get to know other people in the union,” she says. “Participation is the key. I would urge anyone to get involved.”

“Without our union we would not have our benefits.”
— Maureen Kimmerle, Local 2987 (AFSCME Iowa Council 61)
Nevada

The state Legislature wrapped up its session by passing a budget that includes a modest raise for state employees, and Gov. Brian Sandoval signed it into law. The last time Nevada state workers saw a raise was in 2007, when wages were increased to offset an increase in insurance premiums. Now they will see an additional 3 percent during the next two years. “The increase may be small, but it’s going to make a drastic difference for state employees,” says Kevin Ranft, Local 4041 legislative representative.

Missouri

Missouri’s state Legislature passed a right-to-work law by a narrow majority this session. The good news, however, is that Gov. Jay Nixon vetoed the union-busting legislation, and a bipartisan coalition of legislators vowed to uphold the veto during a special session in September.

A number of Missouri Republicans made it clear they will stand on the side of their constituents, who oppose the legislation. But some of the hurdles will be harder to clear. The Legislature passed massive cuts to important state programs, and the new budget does nothing to address the fact that Missouri’s state workers have the lowest average wages in the nation.

Louisiana

Another “paycheck deception” bill was defeated in Baton Rouge. The bill, which was designed to create inconveniences for union members, was pulled from the calendar after it became clear that few legislators supported the measure.

AFSCME collaborated with a coalition of allies to take down this rotten legislation. Our public outreach on the issue, combined with the activism of Louisiana’s workers, built a bipartisan opposition to the bill.

Texas

The Texas Legislature only meets for a few weeks every other year, but AFSCME members made a big splash in this short time. The state passed a budget that includes a 10.5 percent raise for correctional officers and other correctional employees, and restores funding for the Texas Employees Retirement System. This sets up the state pension fund to be actuarially sound for the first time in years, by placing the state on the path to fully fund the pension plan. Other state employees would receive a 2.5 percent raise.

For the newly organized correctional officers, the raise was long overdue. Texas state correctional employees are currently the lowest-paid in the nation, with high vacancies and a 25 percent turnover rate.

We also managed to fend off some bad bills, including a “paycheck deception” bill that passed the Senate but died in the House.
Thanks to an energized and organized labor community in Illinois, politicians in big towns and small have taken heed that local right-to-work zones proposed by Gov. Bruce Rauner are not a popular idea. Legislators in the Illinois House let Rauner know the same, when a vote on the measure yielded zero “yes” votes of support and 72 “nos.”

This smackdown of one of the key components of the new governor’s self-dubbed “turnaround” agenda is a stinging rebuke to his anti-labor crusade. Speeches on the House floor clearly exposed the governor’s real goal in promoting right-to-work scam measures: trying to weaken workers’ voices.

“What right-to-work does, this is the only thing it does, is it gives somebody the ability to freeload,” said Rep. Larry Walsh Jr., a 20-year machinists’ union member from Joliet. “That’s what it does. They get the same benefits, the same wages, the same protections as that of a union member. And what that does is destroy the inner-functions of organized labor.”

Illegal Action

In addition to pushing the right-to-work scam on local communities, Rauner illegally stopped fair share fees paid by state employees who choose not to join the union but benefit from its gains. He would also like to outlaw political contributions from labor unions, while allowing corporate donations.

“This governor has no respect for unions or the working people who choose to join them,” said Roberta Lynch, executive director of AFSCME Illinois Council 31 and an AFSCME International vice president. “The House of Representatives’ vote of ‘no support’ for his policies should make it clear to him that his anti-union plans are not popular with the people of Illinois.”

Right-to-Work Smack Down in Illinois

What happens when union members fight back!

By Dave Patterson

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“Everyone deserves safe working conditions and that’s why I’m union.”

Patrick Guernsey, Local 552, Council 5

Get involved.
Learn more at AFSCMEstrong.org
Recovering from Financial Hurt

*After Injury, Being in a Union Makes a Difference*

When nursing home worker Cynthia Bobbitt suffered a torn tendon, it was hard for her to imagine that anything could rival the pain that shot through her hand. But in the ensuing weeks and months, Bobbitt, an AFSCME Local 429 (DC 37) chapter chairperson, learned that the financial loss of work and pay could also hurt deeply.

Fortunately, as an AFSCME Advantage Credit Card holder, Bobbitt was eligible to apply for a Union Plus Disability Grant to help her through the tough times. And the grant came at the perfect time for Bobbitt, who received the check on the same day that her gas had been cut off.

**Union Solidarity**

“After I paid the bill that same day, I had little left in my account. When I opened my mail, I almost cried because it was really nice knowing that Union Plus had my back,” Bobbitt says.

It’s that belief in union solidarity that inspired Bobbitt to become an AFSCME activist more than two decades ago. “When there is no one else, you can always count on your union’s support. I learned that years ago, and now I’m dedicated to helping other AFSCME members,” she says.

Now Bobbitt is committed to letting other AFSCME members know about the financial assistance available to eligible AFSCME Advantage Credit Card holders.

Union Plus Assistance provides a range of programs to help eligible AFSCME Advantage Credit Card holders who are facing hardship. Disability Grants of $1,600 to $2,700 are available to AFSCME Advantage Credit Card holders who have had the card for three months or more and who meet the eligibility requirements.

Do you carry an AFSCME Advantage Credit Card? In addition to Disability Grants, Union Plus offers Job Loss Assistance and Hospital Grants for eligible cardholders, plus a competitive rate and all customer service calls are answered in the United States. You can learn more by visiting [AFSCMEcard.com](http://AFSCMEcard.com).

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**Moving? Renovating?**

*Union members can get it done for less*

If you need a way to store or move your stuff, make sure to take advantage of the Union Plus discount on PODS storage and shipping units. You can save 10 percent on any local move or 5 percent if you’re moving long-distance. And you can also get a 15 percent discount on cardboard boxes and packing supplies. See your options at [www.unionplus.org/home/pods-discounts](http://www.unionplus.org/home/pods-discounts).
Olympia WASHINGTON

Council 28 Members Use Unity to Win Raises, Stop State Shutdown

It took thousands of public employees rallying across Washington state at more than 100 locations in May and June to urge state legislators to agree to a sensible budget and avert a shutdown of state services on July 1.

And they won.

Just before the stroke of midnight on June 30, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed the new, biennial operating budget that funded Council 28 members’ first pay raises in seven years and holds the line on health care costs.

The budget deal averted a shutdown of state services, including the closure of all state parks, the end of most community supervision of dangerous criminals released from prison and the temporary layoff of 26,000 state employees — approximately half of the general government workforce.

Council 28 members worked all session with a wide array of activities to pressure right-wing legislators controlling the state Senate to finally do the right thing. In the end, the proposals to roll back many key collective bargaining rights — proposals written by a conservative think tank — all failed, thanks to the public heat Council 28 members generated.

That included the “Unity Breaks” and “Unity Rallies” staged simultaneously on two different days.

“Let us work!” they shouted at Unity Rallies in every corner of the state, June 18, to stop the possible furlough of half of state agency workers if there was no approved budget by June 30.

“Through our member education, our member lobby program, our coordinated statewide in-district actions, our calls, our emails, our constant pressure on the Legislature, we narrowly avoided a state government shutdown,” said April Sims, Council 28’s legislative and political action field coordinator.

“And that’s a huge victory, not just for our members who work hard in the state of Washington, but for the citizens in this state who rely heavily on the services our members provide,” added Sims.

With the budget, came the raises — 3 percent July 1 and 1.8 percent July 1, 2016. They were the first since 2008. For two of those years, state workers took 3 percent pay cuts, furloughs and layoffs.

The budget, which Council 28 members helped win, also came with no increase to the percentage of health premiums they pay and no new surcharges.

All across the state AFSCME Strong-trained coaches and activists prepared their co-workers for the Unity Breaks days in advance by passing out fliers, stickers, T-shirts and gaining commitments from members to participate.

“The Unity Rallies are important because they show we do important work serving the citizens,” said Kellie O’Hair, a gardener at the University of Washington in Seattle and a member of AFSCME Local 1488 at one Unity Rally.

“A lot of times it’s not just the pay. We just love what we do. ... Our goal is to be the best state workers we can be. But we need funding to do that,” O’Hair said.
Young AFSCME members gathered in June for the 2015 Next Wave Assembly, where they strengthened their organizing skills and connected with a network of labor leaders. “You aren’t the leaders of tomorrow,” AFSCME Pres. Lee Saunders said in his opening remarks. “We need you to lead today.”

AFSCME Strong was front and center this year, and the activists took part in an all-day training, learning the one-on-one organizing skills necessary to mobilize members. They put that training to use locally. More than 50 attendees visited state facilities to talk to workers, where they signed up new members. At the same time, 200 of the activists marched with Missouri home care workers whose contract negotiations have been stalled since January.

**Standing in the Heat**

“I have no words to describe seeing all of these people standing in the heat as we demanded respect for our contract. It gives me hope and I am resolved that we will continue fighting,” said Mary Woods, a consumer and Missouri Home Care Council member. The rally sent a message to Paraquad, the state’s largest home care agency employer, which agreed to meet the following week.

Next Wavers also learned from each other. David Bride talked about how he helped sign up more than 400 PEOPLE MVP members — 80 percent of the Indianapolis public works unit — in a three-week blitz by Local 725 (Indiana-Kentucky Organizing Council 962).

“We have 512 workers in our bargaining unit and would you believe me that we have 511 dues paying members?” Bride told the group. “And whoever that 512th guy is — well I haven’t found him yet, but don’t worry — I will.”
San Diego CALIFORNIA

AFSCME Nurses
Strong, Dedicated

More than 200 AFSCME nurse leaders throughout the country gathered in May for the 2015 United Nurses of America Nurses Congress.

Nurses attended educational workshops to discuss issues they face on the job. They also participated in rigorous AFSCME Strong training, where they learned how to mobilize members to build our union and PEOPLE program, our political action fund.

AFSCME Pres. Lee Saunders praised participants for their commitment and urged them to develop skills to support AFSCME Strong. “That means talking with other nurses about what matters to them, and showing them how standing in solidarity with UNA will improve their lives,” President Saunders said.

Sec.-Treas. Laura Reyes also emphasized the importance of one-on-one conversations, noting that nurses are particularly well suited to help. “Part of the care you deliver is the assurances and conversations you provide,” she said.

During the Congress, the nurses learned that one of their fellow AFSCME members was in her second battle with cancer. Brittany Johansen, a registered nurse for nearly two decades, has shown dedication to the union and to her profession, and continues to live her life normally. Unfortunately, her employer denied her request to return to work, allegedly in retribution for Johansen’s attempt to organize a union at her facility.

The nurses collectively donated more than $2,000 to help her access health care during this critical time.

Nurses also spent their evening packing thousands of meals for people in Uganda and Korea in partnership with the global food organization Stop Hunger Now.

Springfield ILLINOIS

State Supreme Court Rules Pension Cuts Unconstitutional

The Illinois Supreme Court unanimously ruled in May that a $105 billion pension change affecting half a million working and retired public employees is unconstitutional.

The law, passed in 2013, reduced pension benefits for active and retired state employees, including state universities and teachers outside Chicago, even though the state’s constitution explicitly provides that pension benefits cannot be diminished.

AFSCME and other public sector unions filed suit to overturn the law.

In its ruling, the court rejected claims that the state’s dire fiscal straits justified the pension reductions. “Crisis is not an excuse to abandon the rule of law,” wrote Justice Lloyd A. Karmeier, who authored the ruling. “It is a summons to defend it.”

The justices noted that lawmakers failed to keep in place a 2011 temporary income tax hike that boosted the personal tax rate to 5 percent. The increase automatically phased down to 3.75 percent for individuals at the start of the year, reducing annual revenue by $4 billion.

Most Illinois public employees are not eligible for Social Security and the average pension of $32,000 per year is their primary source of income.

“We are thankful that the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the will of the people, overturned this unfair and unconstitutional law, and protected the hard-earned life savings of correctional officers, caregivers, first responders, teachers, and other public service workers and retirees,” said Roberta Lynch, executive director of AFSCME Illinois Council 31 and an AFSCME International vice president.

The court’s decision will likely affect a lawsuit filed by AFSCME and other unions challenging a law backed by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel that cuts pensions of city workers and retirees.
Miami FLORIDA

Union Involvement Was Key to Job Satisfaction

Eight years ago, Edgardo Marrero realized things had to change. Staff morale in Miami-Dade County’s Animal Services department was at an all-time low. The workers suffered from bad management, frequent turnover and a lack of control over their day-to-day jobs and their careers.

Marrero knew he had to do something and that something was to get involved with his union, AFSCME Local 199.

“Most of your day is spent at work,” he said. “So I figured that instead of just spending the time complaining and wishing it would get better, I would actually do something about it.”

“The shop steward at the time helped me understand how powerful we can be if we work together and stand strong for what we want. She kept me active over time and, thanks to her, I soon became shop steward myself,” said Marrero, who was born and reared in south Florida.

Soon, Marrero’s department was flourishing. Turnover levels dropped, productivity rose along with job satisfaction, and new members were joining the union after seeing what Local 199 was all about.

Marrero decided to take his new passion for supporting his co-workers to the next level by becoming a union representative. Thanks to his hard work, along with his fellow representatives and member leaders, Local 199 is now much more present in the worksite, more active in helping members achieve their goals and in ensuring that help is never far away.

The renewed focus paid off with a new contract last year that won back tens of millions of dollars in pay concessions relinquished during the economic crisis and even includes a wage increase, an end to furloughs and continued quality health coverage. And it is reflected in the more than 1,000 new members who joined Local 199 in the past year.

“Local 199 is moving in the right direction to say the least but all this success really just has us wanting more,” said Marrero. “In many departments we are reaching a super majority of membership, but I want to see 100 percent membership across the county.”

Philadelphia PENNSYLVANIA

AFSCME Helps Push Kenney to Win in Primary

AFSCME was instrumental in helping a former member to a decisive win in the Democratic primary for mayor in May. Jim Kenney, the son of a firefighter and a former AFSCME District 1199C member, trounced five other candidates in the crowded primary despite massive spending by pro-charter school hedge fund billionaires who backed another candidate.

AFSCME District Council 33, District Council 47 and National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees (NUHHCE) District 1199C mobilized citizens throughout the city. With the help of AFSCME retirees, they made more than 100,000 phone calls, knocked on nearly 23,000 doors, sent more than 114,000 pieces of mail, and reached 20,000-plus members through digital outreach.

Kenney ran on his progressive record and positions on strengthening public schools, forging new partnerships and accountability between the community and law enforcement, and fostering an economy that works for everyone.

Kenney faces competition in the November general election.
Fairbanks ALASKA

City Likely Violated Law in Rejecting Contract

There is probable cause that the city of Fairbanks committed unfair labor practices in its bargaining with Public Safety Employees Association (PSEA) Local 803, according to a recent report issued by the Alaska Labor Relations Agency (ALRA).

In June 2014, after eight months of negotiations, the city and PSEA (which represents all Fairbanks Police Department employees) tentatively agreed to a new contract for police employees.

Later that summer, the Fairbanks Police Department employees approved the contract. But last November, two months after approving the contract, a new City Council rejected the agreement, depriving Fairbanks Police employees of the benefits of the negotiated contract.

PSEA then filed an unfair labor practice against the city, seeking back pay from the effective date of the initial approved agreement.

“This report validates what many of us have been expressing for months,” said PSEA Exec. Dir. Jake Metcalfe. “The City Council, like its police officers, needs to uphold the law. The law requires the city to bargain in good faith. Fairbanks Police employees are a value to this community, and keep Fairbanks safe.”

Metcalfe pointed out that the mayor and city administration reached a fair deal with PSEA, but the City Council acted illegally. “The City Council should be ashamed for violating city and state law, treating its police employees unfairly, and of wasting taxpayer money on bad conduct and bad business decisions.”

Indianapolis INDIANA

Local 725 Signs Up Nearly 400 MVPs in One Week

Thanks to a new city ordinance championed by AFSCME, nearly 400 new PEOPLE MVPs signed up in Indianapolis Local 725 (Indiana-Kentucky Organizing Council 962).

PEOPLE is AFSCME’s political action fund. MVPs give at least $100 a year.

The members, who work for the city’s Department of Public Works, wasted no time in organizing their co-workers to contribute to AFSCME PEOPLE following an overwhelming vote in the spring by the City-County Council to allow employees to voluntarily donate money from their paychecks to their union’s political action committee.

Only AFSCME members and their families may contribute to AFSCME PEOPLE.

“The women and men of our local have seen the attacks on unions coming from across the country, so they know we need to fight back and protect our jobs, retirement and communities,” said Steve Quick, president of Local 725 and an AFSCME International vice president.

Thanks to a new Indianapolis city ordinance championed by AFSCME, nearly 400 new PEOPLE MVPs signed up with Local 725 (Indiana-Kentucky Organizing Council 962). AFSCME International Vice Pres. Steve Quick (second from left) celebrates Local 725’s hard work.
Santa Cruz County CALIFORNIA

On Flight Home, AFSCME Member Comes to the Rescue

One moment, Sami Abed, president of United EMS Workers-AFSCME Local 4911 in Santa Cruz County, was just a passenger on a United Airlines flight. The next moment he was a central figure in a medical rescue.

Thanks to Abed and an unnamed doctor also aboard that flight, a 68-year-old unidentified man who might have died was revived so that he could be taken to a hospital for treatment.

A paramedic with more than 13 years of experience in Santa Cruz County, California, Abed was returning home from New York on April 3 — Good Friday — when an intercom announcement called for anyone with medical training to help a man lying unconscious in the aisle.

Within seconds he was on his feet, along with the doctor. The two began helping the man get oxygen, and they placed an automated external defibrillator (AED) on his chest to check his heart rhythm. They also placed an IV on the passenger, who quickly revived.

Jersey City NEW JERSEY

Insourcing Wins Continue for Local 2262

Members of Jersey City Local 2262 (Council 52) have gained more than the trust of the local board of education. They gained the board’s admiration.

AFSCME members who are tradesmen for Jersey City Public Schools are renovating two school cafeterias this summer, adding to an ever-expanding list of repair and maintenance jobs that were insourced. That’s because Local 2262 members convinced the Jersey City Board of Education to allow them to do the work in-house.

The city’s business administrator, a proponent of privatization, was originally skeptical. But AFSCME members persevered, insisting at every monthly board meeting that they could do the work better, faster and cheaper than private contractors. Given the chance to prove themselves, they made the most of it.

The effort to return these jobs to the public sector began in 2013 when Local 2262 leaders participated in AFSCME International’s “Privatization Bootcamp.” They developed a plan to fight outsourcing and preserve public sector jobs.

Since the first major jobs were insourced in the summer of 2014, more doors have been opened. Local 2262 established a good relationship with the board and the city’s business administrator. Mayor Steven Fulop also supported the members.

“The key is proving yourself,” said Bill Murawski, president of Local 2262. “And our members proved themselves. We did the work better and cheaper.”

Although fewer than 10 percent of the local’s members are tradesmen, their success benefited public workers in general. “It strengthens the whole bargaining unit,” said Steven Tully, associate director of Council 52.
Ohio Retirees at Forum Push to Expand Social Security

AFSCME Ohio retirees attending a White House Conference on Aging event in April, amplified the call to preserve, protect and expand Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare.

“We have to keep fighting to make sure future generations of working Americans can retire with security and dignity,” said Marian Garth Saffold, from AFSCME Retiree Chapter 1184. “Social Security works it’s necessary, and it’s popular. These are reasons to expand it, not attack it for political purposes.”

“We ought to be expanding Social Security,” said Norman Wernet, also from Chapter 1184, who facilitated a retirement security rally across the street from the event. “We ought to be financing long-term care.”

Wernet added that people who don’t necessarily have the money to save for retirement “should not have to bear the entire burden of their poverty as they age. It’s unconscionable for members of Congress to allege that Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are unearned benefits.”

New York City NEW YORK

New York ‘Insource Pool’ Will Save Millions

The City of New York and DC 37/AFSCME reached a breakthrough agreement that calls for insourcing computer work.

The agreement will help the city save millions of dollars by reining in the use of excessively paid information technology consultants.

“Previous mayors held the belief that outsourcing government work to private contractors would save the city money,” said DC 37 Exec. Dir. Henry Garrido. “They had their chance — and demonstrated that it can’t be done. Let’s get back to work to save taxpayers’ money and get city work done by city workers.

The new agreement comes after months of negotiations and includes the formation of an interagency group called the “Insource Pool,” which will have the ability to work in multiple agencies to provide IT support, a service previously provided by exorbitantly priced, for-profit contractors.

Estimates of savings range from an initial $3 million to as much as $100 million during five years.

The NY Daily News called the agreement “a big success” for DC 37 and Garrido noted: “No revolutionary concept, just common sense.”

Before becoming executive director in December 2014, Garrido was in charge of the union’s efforts to identify both wasteful contracts and ways to help the city increase revenue.

One of his accomplishments was to help expose vast corruption and waste at the CityTime automated payroll system, a system devised to increase efficiency. CityTime was marred by years of delays and more than $700 million in cost overruns before a dozen consultants were convicted on graft charges, with three consultants sentenced to 20 years in prison.

“Let’s get back to work to save taxpayers’ money and get city work done by city workers.”

– District Council 37 Exec. Dir. Henry Garrido
Atlanta GEORGIA

Atlanta School Employees Press Mayor to Release Funds

Atlanta Public School System employees have taken the fight for school children directly to Mayor Kasim Reed, calling him out for withholding millions of dollars the city owes the school system.

One day in early spring, school employees rallied outside police headquarters, holding “Wanted” posters with a picture of Mayor Reed and calling for the police chief to investigate the mayor’s “theft” of funds owed to school system.

“Mayor Reed is stealing from Atlanta’s children and we have had enough of it,” said bus operator Susan McCaskill, a member of Local 1644.

“In cases of theft, it’s up to law enforcement to investigate. Just because Kasim Reed is the mayor doesn’t mean that he should get away with thievery said McCaskill.”

The money in question represents two years of delinquent annual payments from the city to the school system — more than $13 million. The money is supposed to be paid to the system in exchange for the school system’s portion of property tax revenue generated from a green space project.

In addition to Beltline money, school system employees are also calling out the mayor to release deeds to 12 abandoned properties owned by the system that could be worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

At a rally two weeks before, local news cameras followed school system employees as they walked to City Hall to speak with the mayor.

“This rally is about what is best for our kids,” said bus operator Quentin Hutchins.

“They deserve a school system that is fully funded and a mayor that doesn’t bully his way into getting what he wants for the benefit of his corporate buddies,” Hutchins said.

Washington DC

Fallen AFSCME Brothers Honored at Law Enforcement Vigil

Law enforcement officers from around the country came together in our nation’s capital in May to honor those who fell in the line of duty in 2014.

Among those whose names were added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial this year were three AFSCME members: Alaska State Trooper Gabriel “Gabe” Rich, Alaska State Sgt. Patrick “Scott” Johnson, and Albany, New York, Police Det. Douglas H. Mayville.

The memorial saw the addition this year of 273 names of law enforcement officers killed last year. These join more than 20,000 names on the memorial walls of officers killed serving their communities, dating back to 1791.

Jim Lyman, executive director of Council 82 and a retired police detective from Albany, remembered Mayville as a “stoic figure, with a hard shell and a soft inside, as long as you were able to get through that shell; a cop’s cop.”

Mayville died April 9, 2014, after a 26-year career. He suffered from Wegener’s granulomatosis, which was caused by long-term exposure to harmful chemicals in the department’s forensics lab. He was a member of Local 2841 (Council 82).

Jim Lyman (left), executive director of Council 82, and Sgt. Aaron Danielson, president of the Public Safety Employees Association/AFSCME Local 803, at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, DC.

Sgt. Aaron Danielson of the Fairbanks International Airport Police and Fire Department, and president of the Public Safety Employees Association/AFSCME Local 803, remembered Johnson as “the trooper we all aspired to be.”

Alaska troopers Rich and Johnson were shot to death May 1, 2014, in a remote village 130 miles west of Fairbanks. AFSCME is a partner of the Memorial Fund. To donate, go to nleomf.org/AFSCME.
Perris, Calif. — In an effort to reduce the number of water-related injuries and deaths in Riverside County, a group of paramedics and EMTs spent a morning in April reading the book, “Stewie the Duck,” to children at Temple Christian School in Perris.

Members of United EMS Workers-AFSCME Local 4911 know that drowning is a leading cause of death for children under the age of 5 in Riverside and that, with education, it’s almost 100 percent preventable. So the local’s members launched Splash Medics, a nonprofit organization to promote water safety education.

Paramedic Lisa La Russo, who has provided emergency care for 25 years, said that 911 calls involving children are especially emotionally difficult for responders. After responding to a call last year involving a 9-year old who nearly drowned in a swimming pool, La Russo was inspired to reach out to her community.

“The number of drownings was higher than I’ve ever seen,” she said. “I contacted officials, and due to funding issues there wasn’t a real program in place to educate the public. That’s when we decided to do something ourselves and get those numbers down.”
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