ORGANIZE!

We’re strengthening our union, one member at a time. SEE PAGE 12
The Urgency of Now

In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke about the “fierce urgency of now,” adding, “there is such a thing as being too late.” That guides us today as we face urgent needs on many fronts.

We are marching on Capitol Hill and in cities across the country, demanding comprehensive immigration reform (p. 18). We must ensure our country’s economic recovery is no longer undercut by businesses dodging their tax responsibilities and exploiting voiceless immigrant labor.

We are fighting privatization (p. 24), undaunted by corporations with far deeper pockets than our own seeking to buy public services and line their own pockets. It’s our responsibility to help protect taxpayers’ interests – our interests.

With workers organizing from California (p. 8) to Vermont (p. 12) to Memphis (p. 31), volunteer member organizers and our leaders are hitting the doors and talking about the value of AFSCME as a voice for all working people.

And we are fearless in the face of urgency. When bombs detonated during the Boston Marathon, we ran with our sisters and brothers in public service toward danger. We rescued victims, cleared debris and comforted the wounded and frightened. (Back page) We were there for the ensuing manhunt, keeping streets clear and citizens safe.

The urgency of now doesn’t shake us. We rise to meet every challenge, every day, in every city and state.

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It Is Our Mission to Restore Balance

Our economy is dangerously imbalanced. The stock market is reaching new heights and corporate profits are in great shape. But incomes have fallen far behind for workers even as the economic recovery is under way. For working families, the recovery is a myth: They’ve heard of it, but nothing in their own experience proves that it really is true.

The AFL-CIO’s Executive Pay Watch revealed that American CEOs of the largest companies made 354 times the average rank-and-file worker in 2012. CEOs received on average $12.3 million in pay last year, while the average worker made less than $35,000. That is the widest pay gap in the entire world.

A video shared on social media indicates the extent to which the middle class and poor are marginalized. While the richest 1 percent of Americans has 40 percent of our nation’s wealth, the bottom 80 percent has about 7 percent of the wealth. While the video shows many Americans are aware of wealth inequality, the reality is even worse than our perception.

Multi-Pronged Onslaught

In a 2012 survey of 1,000 adults by Rasmussen Reports, only 14 percent of those polled expect their children to be better off than they were – an all-time low.

These data show how the decline in unionization resulted in job losses, salary and benefit erosion, and dwindling retirement security for all Americans. If action is not taken now to create more good-paying jobs, raise the minimum wage, strengthen the right to organize and bolster retirement security, our families will suffer for many decades to come.

Politicians have been coming after our wages, benefits and rights in the workplace for several years. We’ve experienced a multi-pronged onslaught of right-to-work-for-less and paycheck deception laws, protracted contract fights, attempts to privatize our work, and pension bills that aim to end defined benefit plans. They have taken a toll on AFSCME members and our entire nation.

Role We Must Play

In this environment, there is a role that we must play. We are the ones who can come forward in every community, at city and county council meetings, in legislative bodies, at rallies, in press conferences and in social media to connect the dots. We must continue to focus on strengthening our union by organizing new members, fighting anti-worker legislation and engaging in the political process to elect leaders who stand with us. But at the same time, we’ve got to look beyond our union – not only for support in our fights, but to build coalitions with other activists who share our goals.

We must also make it our mission to fight for genuine economic balance, because the future of our nation is at stake. This is not about redistributing wealth; it’s about ensuring that the people who have helped to create wealth are able to share in it. We must do our part so that the recovery that is now an urban myth for many working families becomes a reality for all of us.

“...we must play...”

Lee Saunders
President
For more than a year, home care workers in Vermont have been mobilizing, lobbying and building a union (see p. 12). Their hard work paid off recently when the state finally passed legislation recognizing their right to collective bargaining.

Carol Delage, a volunteer organizer for Vermont Homecare United/AFSCME, says that she and other home care workers organized for the same reason workers around the country organize. “We deserve quality working conditions, good salaries and benefits, dignity and respect for the valuable work we do. With AFSCME, we will get it. ”

Create Change

The collective strength of Vermont providers will create change for them and their clients. It gives them a more powerful voice as they work to protect funding during these difficult times. Just as importantly, these new union members will add to the collective voice of AFSCME in all our battles to make sure that the middle class survives in the United States.

Home-bound seniors and people living with disabilities need our help and support to keep the funding that allows them to continue living independently at home. To fight for that funding, we need a strong voice in our local communities and on Capitol Hill.

That’s why Vermont’s home care workers have been spending long hours criss-crossing their state and contacting their colleagues. “We’re fighting for funding for the people we work with and we’re getting results,” says Janelle Blake, another volunteer organizer in Vermont. “Being with a union will give us the added power we need when we are fighting funding cuts in the Legislature.”

AFSCME members from across the country understand the importance of building strong unions to represent those who provide public services. That’s why volunteer member organizers traveled to the Green Mountain state during the current campaign. They came to pitch in and help build our union.

Mary Jones was one of them. A home care worker from Pennsylvania, she spent a week organizing in Vermont. “What’s happening to home care workers in Vermont is similar to what we went through,” she says.

AFSCME represents approximately 125,000 home care providers nationwide. More than 90 percent of home care workers are women. And even though many work as much as 70 hours a week, the pay is less than $10 an hour with no overtime. That’s just wrong. Thanks to the hard work of members who are helping in Vermont, we are fighting to lift those workers up.

Passionate Commitment

Home care workers have a passionate commitment to the people they serve. As a home care provider in California, I saw how effective we became when we joined together to fight for dignity and respect on the job. That’s why I am inspired by the organizing done by home care providers in Vermont.

“The collective strength of Vermont providers will create change for them and their clients. It gives them a more powerful voice.”

Laura Reyes
Secretary-Treasurer
U.S. Multinational Corporations Don’t Pay Their Fair Share

Overseas tax havens are no secret. But how much money are U.S. corporations stashing in them to avoid paying their fair share in taxes? In a report from Citizens for Tax Justice, we learn companies reported earning 43 percent of their $940 billion in overseas profits in 2008 in just five tax-haven countries, including Bermuda. But those profits weren’t really earned there. Just 4 percent of their foreign workforce were even actually located in those countries. Notes Citizens for Tax Justice:

“If the profits from those companies were accurately reported and taxed in the United States, it could make a significant dent in the budget deficit.”

Who Are the Working Poor?

It’s shameful. Approximately 10 million families – 47 million Americans in all, half of whom are children – currently live in poverty. That’s according to a report by The Working Poor Project, using the most recent data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau. Their findings mean nearly a third of all working families are struggling – up from 28 percent in 2007, at the start of the Great Recession. A family of four is considered to be living below the poverty line if they make less than $22,811. The top 20 percent of families took home nearly half of all income, while those in the bottom 20 percent received less than 5 percent.

State Taxes Bite Low-Income Earners the Most

That’s the conclusion of a recent study by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. Check out the numbers, which are calculated by combining all state and local income, property, sales and certain taxes on goods such as gasoline and tobacco that state residents pay.

According to the institute, the 10 states with the highest taxes on the poor are Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington.
“I need this bill passed so we can get rid of public sector unions.”

Eric Stafford, a senior official with the Kansas Chamber of Commerce, explaining why he supported a bill signed into law in April that prohibits public service workers from making voluntary contributions to their unions for political activity via their paychecks.

The Rich Get Richer, Not the Rest of Us

$25.4 trillion. That’s the eye-popping wealth held by the top 7 percent of American families in 2011 – an increase of nearly $20 trillion from 2009. What of the remaining 93 percent of us? Our combined net worth was just under $15 trillion, and we lost some ground, according to the Pew Research Center. So much for the economic recovery lifting all boats: only 8 million U.S. households got richer while 111 million American households got poorer.

Pensions Are Threatened

When it comes to retirement security, pensions are an endangered species. Just 10 percent of all private sector jobs offered pension plans (known as “defined benefit plans”) in 2011, covering 18 percent of private industry employees, according to a report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). That compares to 35 percent who were covered by pensions in the early 1990s. This steady decline in private pensions is the consequence of employers switching their workers into 401(k)-style accounts that place all the risk of investments – and the burden of saving for retirement – on their employees. The story is better for public service workers: 78 percent of all state and local government employees had pension coverage in 2011.

Defined Benefit Versus Defined Contribution Plans – No Contest

Those who have defined contribution plans such as 401(k) accounts and IRAs don’t have much invested in them – only enough for about $7,000 annually, reports The Washington Post. In contrast, the average AFSCME retiree’s pension – also called a “defined benefit plan” – is approximately $19,000 per year. And while defined benefit plans are under attack nationwide, they are a better deal as there’s no risk that your pension check will diminish if the stock market does poorly.

To read these reports and stats, visit AFSCME.org/fyi
From state to state, workers are joining AFSCME for a stronger voice on the job

CALIFORNIA

Two hospitals, two very different organizing campaigns – yet the recent success of each are linked to a commitment by United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals (AFSCME-UNAC/UHCP) to develop leadership committees of workers determined to gain a voice on the job through a union.

This February, approximately 800 medical professionals, employed by Kaiser Permanente in Southern California, gained a voice with UNAC/UHCP, the largest nurses’ union in Southern California, with more than 20,000 members. They include occupational therapists, physical therapists, recreational therapists and nurse educators.

Their successful organizing campaign concluded months of dedicated work by volunteers who formed an organizing committee to win strong majority support for the union. After a neutral arbitrator confirmed a majority had signed union authorization cards, Kaiser – which remained neutral during the campaign – agreed to recognize the new union.

It was a much different story for some 300 registered nurses who work at Southern California’s Corona Regional Medical Center. To win their campaign to join UNAC/UHCP, the nurses had to overcome a far more difficult hurdle than their sisters and brothers at Kaiser.

The hospital’s management “spent a fortune on anti-union consultants, instead of putting that money into patient care,” said Ken Deitz, president of UNAC/UHCP and also an International vice president. “At Corona, management pulled RNs away from patients to watch anti-union DVDs.”

This lasted roughly five months. Corona nurses developed a strong leadership committee to resist through education and recruitment. It paid off.

“Our continued faith in our collective strength as an organizing committee helped us deal with management’s anti-union tricks,” said Marie Narisma, emergency room RN.

Leadership committees were important in both Kaiser and Corona campaigns. Working with the union’s organizing staff and volunteer member organizers, Corona’s leadership committee was able to create a cohesive majority that resisted management’s unfair tactics. In January, the nurses won their campaign to join the union.

The lesson is clear. Regardless of the type of campaign – and obstacles faced – the chances of success are greater with a disciplined leadership committee up front.

Workers are also organizing with AFSCME in other states. Here is a list of just some recent victories, big and small:

CONNECTICUT
Twelve town hall employees of the Town of Salisbury joined Council 4.

DELAWARE
Thirty-eight administrative, professional and managerial employees of the City of Dover joined Council 81 after the state Public Employees Relations Board ruled in favor of their right to seek union representation. The workers, who suffered the loss of wages and benefits over the years, accused the city of unfair treatment compared to union-represented co-workers. Overruling the employer, the labor agency allowed them to vote, choosing AFSCME.

ILLINOIS
Twenty-eight employees of the Village of Niles gained representation with Council 31. They organized to gain the same benefits as union-represented employees.

MARYLAND
One-thousand, five-hundred state workers in the state Office of the Comptroller, Department of Education, Retirement and Pension System, and Transportation Authority won a voice on the job through an overwhelming vote to join Council 3. The Maryland General Assem-
JAMES HICKS
PUBLIC HEALTH SANITARIAN, Columbus Health Department, Local 2191 (Ohio Council 8)

As a young public service worker – a Next Waver – why did you choose to go into public service?

In college, I started off as a pre-med student and ended up with a bachelor’s degree in public health. I knew that whatever I did I wanted to help others. After school, I applied for three jobs in public health, and in 2004, accepted the position in Columbus as a public health sanitarian. I’m from North Carolina, which is a right-to-work state. So, I was lucky to get a job where I could be in a union.

How does your work serve your community?

I inspect restaurants, hospitals and any institutions within the city limits that have food service. By doing my job to the best of my ability, I give people some type of security when they go out to eat. They know the restaurant has been inspected and they don’t have to worry about illness.

Recently, I started investigating dangerous animals as well. I remove dangerous animals off the street to prevent them from hurting anyone in the future.

What’s the most dangerous animal you’ve encountered?

Dogs are actually the most dangerous. They bite a lot. But one time we had an alligator in the city. That was pretty crazy.

MARGE RIGGIN
TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT SUPERVISOR, Department of Operations KOSE Local 300 AFSCME/AFT/AFL-CIO (Kansas)

How did you become a technology support supervisor?

I spent lots of long days and sleepless nights reading and studying about computers. I basically taught myself, and I was hired as a technology services supervisor. I did that job for 16 years, and last year I switched to be a technology support supervisor.

What’s unique about the work you do?

We keep the system running for all Department for Children and Families users. We fix hardware and software. We add new users. We change passwords. We push out software updates. If we weren’t there, the computer system would break down and no one would be able to fix it.

Why is it a vital service to the community?

My work supports the staff members that provide vital services to our community. The workers of the Department for Children and Families help people find jobs. They provide assistance like food stamps. They provide social services. They do child support enforcement. They are vital to our communities.
Corrections officers in Puerto Rico this spring achieved an historic victory when the commonwealth agreed to restore more than $35 million in unpaid overtime wages to nearly 4,500 workers.

The settlement was achieved by members of Alianza Correccional Unida (ACU), Servidores Públicos Unidos (SPU), AFSCME Council 95, and was the largest Fair Labor Standards Act settlement ever in Puerto Rico.

“We are very happy with this agreement,” said Juan González, president of ACU Local 3500. “We have been fighting tooth and nail to make the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation pay up the overtime hours. We couldn’t have done it without AFSCME International, which helped us bring this issue to the U.S. Labor Department. We didn’t let up and kept applying pressure, and today we can say we have achieved our goal.”

Public employees across the country this year have faced tough collective bargaining fights. But in places like Puerto Rico, New York, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa and Hawaii, they have also achieved victories by bargaining with solidarity.

How We Did It

In March, after a long struggle, Iowa Council 61 succeeded in protecting their members’ health insurance benefits in a tough fight with Gov. Terry Branstad, who had resolved to freeze wages, reduce health coverage and hike insurance premiums.

An arbitrator ruled that AFSCME’s offer of status quo health insurance benefits was the most reasonable offer. This will save employees covered by those contracts approximately $45 million. The arbitrator also preserved 4.5 percent step increases for employees who have not yet reached the top of their pay grade.

“We were able to defend our members’ rights, we were able to defend our contract and we were able to defend our members’ benefits,” said Danny Homan, an International vice president and president of Council 61, which represents 20,000 public employees in the negotiations. “We won on the issue of health insurance and that’s extremely important to our membership. It’s a big victory for us.”

It wasn’t easy. Governor Branstad campaigned on a pledge to force state employees to pay 20 percent of health insurance premiums, and he was
determined to get his way. This was only the third time in state history that the state contract was decided by an arbitrator.

There's always an element of risk when a third party, however neutral, is called in to settle a contract dispute – especially if an arbitrator has ruled against the union in the past.

Members of United Public Workers/AFSCME Local 646 in Hawaii had to consider that as their contract dispute dragged on. “The executive negotiating committee for that unit understood and realized the risk of third-party arbitration,” said the local’s director, Dayton Nakanelua. “But they believed in themselves, and in the team that we put together.”

In the end, the 3,000 members of Local 646’s bargaining unit that includes institutional, health and corrections employees of state and local government won a 3.2-percent, across-the-board wage increase and no change to employee health insurance contributions. They successfully fended off attempts by government to cut their pay by 13.3 percent and increase the cost of their health insurance.

Their sisters and brothers in another unit achieved a four-year contract with consecutive 2 percent pay raises in October and April of each year. And members of the Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, successfully ratified a contract with 4 percent pay increases each contract year. After four years of pay cuts, these wins are good news for workers in the Aloha State.

In Difficult Climate, Wins Worth Celebrating

Despite a collective bargaining climate that remains difficult for AFSCME members, several victories are worth noting:

— In New York, Council 82 successfully bargained to raise wages 9.5 percent over four years (2010-2013) in an agreement that closes the pay gap between Albany police officers and those of nearby jurisdictions. Members approved the deal by a 5:1 vote.

— After more than 15 months of contentious negotiations with the administration of Gov. Pat Quinn, members of Council 31 in Illinois voted overwhelmingly to approve a contract that includes a 1.3 percent per year wage increase, in addition to step increases and an increase in longevity pay for those eligible.

— Members of Council 5, Locals 1842 and 2508 in St. Paul, Minn., achieved a three-year contract with a 1 percent increase in April 2013, a 0.5 percent increase in October 2013, and a 2 percent increase in both April 2014 and April 2015.

— In the District of Columbia, members of DC 20 negotiated a four-year contract with annual wage increases of 3 percent. The parties also agreed to identify the best means to enhance employee retirement benefits.

Send comments to pros@afscme.org

“"We were able to defend our members’ rights, we were able to defend our contract and we were able to defend our members’ benefits.”

— Danny Homan (left), president of Iowa Council 61 and an International vice president

Dayton Nakanelua, director, United Public Workers/AFSCME Local 646, Hawaii
WILLISTON, Vt. — More than 7,000 women and men throughout the state provide home care for relatives and others with mental or physical disabilities, including the elderly who need assistance to remain independent. Without a union, these workers are powerless to lobby the state – which pays their wages and sets the rules of their occupation – for better pay, benefits, and training.

That’s why thousands of providers have already signed up with Vermont Homecare United/AFSCME. For the first time, they are building a union so they will have a voice in the state Legislature, with the state agencies that govern their services, and before the public, whose taxes support home care programs.

Nationwide, we represent 125,000 home care workers in the public and private sectors, and have ongoing campaigns to represent thousands of other home care providers in nearly a dozen states. We are the leading voice for home care – locally and nationally – for these critically important workers, whose jobs are becoming increasingly essential as America’s aging population swells.

We are actively organizing thousands of workers nationwide, including emergency medical service workers in California and New England, state workers in Maryland, and city workers in Memphis. We’re expanding into new areas, such as New Orleans, where we’re organizing cab drivers.

Here in Vermont, the state Legislature approved a bill giving home care providers the right to collectively bargain over wages and benefits. Although expected to sign, the governor had not acted as AFSCME WORKS went to press. Check AFSCME.org/blog for the latest. Once accomplished, their union will immediately petition the state labor board to hold an election. When a majority votes to form their union, they will have a formal seat at the decision-making table through AFSCME.

That’s why Vermont home care providers Janelle Blake, Carol Delage, and Mary Montgomery are working so hard to build support for their AFSCME union. In addition to caring for clients, these three volunteer organizers are traveling throughout their regions of the state to meet other providers in their homes to explain the benefits of joining Vermont Homecare United/AFSCME.

This March, while snow and the inescapable mud still covered the landscape, they – along with other providers who have volunteered on this campaign – headed off in different directions to make house calls. Let’s travel and meet with these remarkable organizers and a few of the providers they set out to recruit.

Upfront and Personal

Janelle Blake sits patiently with a half-dozen people at a public library on this particular March evening to meet with her state representative, Timothy Jerman (D-Essex Junction). Brought together by Put People First, a progressive coalition that includes the Vermont AFL-CIO, they want to discuss a number of issues with the lawmaker.
Blake lights up when it’s her turn to speak. “I have been an independent home care provider on and off for the last 10 years,” she begins. “We are supporting a home care bill that will give caregivers like me the ability to collectively bargain with the state to improve the home care system for everyone. We ask for your support until this bill is passed.”

Blake explains that the bill (then still pending in the Legislature) “will allow us to unionize and achieve a decent wage, and some benefits. That way we can concentrate on the work we do for others, improve care, and reduce the turnover” that plagues home care in Vermont.

Finally, Blake says providers like her help people stay in their homes so they can keep their independence. Providers like her “save the state tons of money,” she notes with pride. “And what I’m hearing here is money talks.”

Can she count on Jerman to support the bill “when it comes up for a vote?” she asks politely.

“I never say yes to something I haven’t read yet,” the lawmaker replies. But he adds, “There’s no question I’ll vote for it” if a House committee he respects first approves the legislation. This is good news to Blake.

Earlier that day, Blake met with other home care providers to build Vermont Homecare United/AFSCME. While those she met had already signed up, she’s keeping them abreast of the latest union news, and answers their questions.

It’s clearly working. Just ask Amanda Calder, a young home care provider who signed up after receiving a postcard in the mail that led her to attend a providers’ meeting where she met Blake. “We hit it off,” Calder explained. “I want to organize partly because I want to get paid better. It’s not a livable wage,” Calder explained. “We need to organize because there are such big cuts in social programs happening across the country and in Vermont.”

That’s also what motivates Blake to make her house calls. A union of their own “should – and can – help us have a voice in our work lives, and in the lives of our consumers,” she explains. “I think we can become a united voice so we can collectively bargain for better conditions.”

So Blake meets other providers and signs them up. Through AFSCME, she said, “I’m going to be able to help improve the lives of my fellow caregivers, and the clients that we serve.”

Making a Difference

On a wooden porch of a small house in Berkshire, near the Canadian border, home care provider Carol Delage talks to a fellow provider about joining Vermont Homecare United/AFSCME. In spite of the freezing cold, however, the man doesn’t invite her in.

Eyeing a giant dog pressing up against the front door, Delage is fine with that.

Standing outside for a half hour or so, they discuss the union’s goals and the man’s concerns. “I think he cared about his scale of pay and time off, and the care
his uncle was getting,” Delage said later.

Delage began working in home care 35 years ago. Now divorced, she found the job’s low wages were not enough to raise two daughters. So she took on a second job, even though she’d rather devote herself solely to her clients. That’s why she wants to build a union with AFSCME.

Even with a union behind them, Delage expects the state’s legislators will resist their efforts to increase their pay scale. But she is optimistic. “If you have a union, and you have enough people, maybe the state will listen to us.”

Delage knows a thing or two about unions. “I had started a union in one of my jobs,” she said, referring to earlier, private-sector work helping adults with disabilities. Those in management “were getting all the raises” while people like her who worked directly with the clients “were getting nothing,” she said.

One day, “one of the gals behind the desk said, ‘Why don’t you guys start a union?’ And I said that sounds like a good idea.”

Soon they had their union election and she was elected steward. Her activism comes from a need to help others. “I’ve always looked out for what I called the underdogs, which we kinda’ are,” Delage explained. “We’re not looked upon as being paid a lot, yet we do just as much care” as other health care professionals, only without vacation, health care or other benefits.

“AFSCME can make a difference.” Delage insisted. “I think that this union could be strong, and I think it’s going to help out a lot of people who really need it – both client and home care provider.”

A United Voice

Heading up the hilly roads of Barre, a picturesque city that bills itself the “Granite Center of the World,” Mary Montgomery prepares to greet fellow home care provider Jennifer Corbett. She wants to talk to her about building clout through Vermont Homecare United/AFSCME.

They sit down in Corbett’s living room, directly above a basement that’s been converted into a play area for her young son, who has developmental disabilities resulting from a stroke during birth. Corbett not only provides care for him – compensated by the state through a non-profit corporation – but also cares for other children with similar disabilities.

Corbett, who has signed an AFSCME card, also employs seven personal care assistants to help out. She’s both a provider of care services and an employer of those who provide services. So she knows the system from all angles. Yet, when Montgomery first showed up at her door to talk about unionizing, Corbett was skeptical.

“There’s such a broad spectrum for health care workers that I didn’t really know how it would work,” she says. “Some people work with older people, some work with younger people, some are home care providers, and some people do respite (providing short-term care when a primary provider, such as a parent, is not available).”
“AFSCME can make a difference. It’s going to help out a lot of people who really need it — both client and home care provider.”

Carol Delage, a volunteer organizer for Vermont Homecare United/AFSCME, explains her enthusiasm for unions: “If you have a union, and you have enough people, maybe the state will listen to us.”

Despite her doubts, Corbett realized that a union of seemingly otherwise unconnected home care and respite providers could offer them a platform to speak with a united voice to state agencies and the Legislature.

Without a union, she knew, they’re on their own. “Right now,” she says, “There’s no structure, no training. There’s nothing.”

Montgomery hopes to change all that through AFSCME. She’s no wallflower with her agency (“They already know I’m the one that’s going to tap dance on the desk,” she says). But she wants the right to collectively bargain for changes to improve their lives.

That can happen only if they gain the right to collective bargaining. So, while she waits for that to happen, Montgomery signs up other providers.

“There’s a lot of things I would like to see AFSCME do,” she says. “I think we need medical insurance, because a lot of people who do this are not able to go out, for whatever reason, and work full time. Yet we have no insurance.”

Montgomery is lucky that she has a second source of financial support: her fiancé, Roger, who is a trucker. “One of the ways we get paid is ‘difficulty of care,’” she explains. In other words, if that person starts out abusive, then becomes less so under the provider’s care, “they’ll have a review and say he’s better now and we’re going to cut your pay because he’s not quite as difficult. You’ve done such a good job, you’re getting less pay!”

“When we organize, we could help persuade those in authority to make such rules fair. We also could help improve our wages, now averaging about $10 an hour for a set number of hours per day. A strong union could work to gain providers essential health care insurance. It could even lobby for training so providers and respite workers don’t “burn out,” she says.

“I really want to see this (collective bargaining bill) go through,” Montgomery sighs. “My God, I really do.”

Send comments to cweiss@afscme.org

Mary Montgomery (left), a volunteer organizer with Vermont Homecare United/AFSCME, sits with fellow home care provider Jennifer Corbett to discuss how their new union will help them gain a voice on the job through collective bargaining with the state.

“‘They’ll say, ‘You’ve done such a good job, you’re getting less pay!’’”

PHOTOS: CLYDE WEISS

Become a VMO

Here’s the thing about being an AFSCME member: Once you see the solidarity and security that comes with being a member, you will want to help others join too. That’s what being a volunteer member organizer — or VMO — is all about.

Our VMO program is cutting-edge. We provide first-class training to members so that you can successfully reach out to your coworkers and communities. We give you on-the-ground experience with expert organizers. Then, you help grow our union and our movement.

To sign up to become a VMO, visit AFSCME.org/organize.
Why would a conservative AFSCME member contribute to the union’s political action committee (PAC) if he opposes Pres. Barack Obama and some of his signature legislation backed by the union?

Dan Petruso, chairman of the Conservative Caucus of Washington Federation of State Employees/AFSCME Council 28, explains the causes we support through our PAC, known as PEOPLE, have less to do with party labels than with particular issues affecting workers.

As a result, he said, PEOPLE contributions have “opened the doorway to legislators – Republicans primarily – who ordinarily wouldn’t even talk to us. So it’s changed the whole political landscape, not only on Capitol Hill and the Legislature, but within our union. The Conservative Caucus in Washington has changed the tenor of the thinking of the whole Council.”

So much so, in fact, that Council 28’s Conservative Caucus has a nearly 100-percent participation rate in PEOPLE (Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality). That’s why Petruso, an enforcement officer for the state of Washington’s Division of Child Support, is a PEOPLE MVP That means he contributes at least $100 per year to the union’s political action committee.

Petruso, also vice president of Spokane Local 1221 and co-chair of his union’s Legislative and Political Action Committee, adds that conservatives contribute to AFSCME PEOPLE because through it, they can voluntarily financially support the union’s political activities. Conservatism is a family tradition for Republican Sheralynn Kern, vice president of Local 4041. Kem, a licensing technician for the Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles in Carson City, is also a PEOPLE MVP.

She explains: “One group of my family came from mining, the other came from agriculture. That’s a pretty conservative group of people.”

As Northern Nevada co-chair of her union’s Law and Legislative Committee, Kern understands the importance that money plays in politics. As a conservative, she also knows that her PEOPLE contributions can sway politicians to support causes that she supports.

“When things were going wrong in Wisconsin and other states – including Nevada – the PEOPLE program put up funding to help us to make the difference,” Kem said. Those who run the program from the national union “don’t just go off on their own,” she added. “They stay in contact with Nevada. They asked us whether we agreed with them or not, and I think that’s great.”

Kern may not support all the candidates that PEOPLE supports, but she says it’s important to contribute. “It’s a necessary program,” she said. “In the long run, it benefits every one of us.”

Send comments to cweiss@afscme.org

Learn more about PEOPLE at AFSCME.org/people.
Immigration Reform: We All Benefit

It would boost our economy. It would provide more money for public services. It would raise wages for all workers. Our sisters and brothers on the frontlines say the time for reform is now.

By Kate Childs Graham
For more than a century, these words and this statue were the welcome mat on the doorway to America. But today, nearly 11 million working immigrants are forced to live in the shadows in America. Many remain tired, poor, cut off from the economic and political freedom they came here seeking.

During his second inaugural address, Pres. Barack Obama signaled a change, saying explicitly that now was the time to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. “Our journey is not complete until we find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as a land of opportunity.”

We are striving to find a better way. The stakes for economic and social justice and our organizing strength are too high not to. A path to citizenship would raise wages for immigrants, which would, in turn, elevate the wage floor for all workers. It would generate much-needed revenue to support public services. It would allow us to organize into our ranks fellow workers, dramatically strengthening our union’s political and bargaining power. A path to citizenship would put us on the right side of history and strengthen our legacy of fighting for respect and dignity for all workers.

A Broken System Means Broken Public Services
Rebecca Zaremba is a case management assistant for Hennepin County in Minnesota. A member of Local 34 (Council 5), she helps people in her community access public assistance, and almost every person who comes through her door is an undocumented worker.

More often than not, she sees whole families who need food, clothing and shelter, but only the children are citizens. She can only get the kids access to resources, not the parents. “That means a family of five could be trying to feed themselves for just $30 or $40 a month.”

Zaremba tries to help these families as much as she can, scouring the Twin Cities for jobs that pay in cash and finding community partners who will lend a hand, even if the state can’t. But, still, it isn’t enough.

A few weeks ago, a young woman came into Zaremba’s office. “She was 30, maybe 35. I asked her how many kids she has.” The woman started to cry. She told Zaremba that she had a 2-year-old at home, but her abusive husband took her 4-year old – a U.S. citizen – with him back to Mexico. “She was afraid to go to the police because she was undocumented,” Zaremba said. And when he threatened to take the kids, she was afraid to go to court to dispute custody.

Zaremba has been working tirelessly with the Family Justice Center and domestic abuse organizations like Casa Esperanza to bring this woman’s child back to his home country.

Zaremba is one of thousands of AFSCME members who serve immigrant communities.

These members know that our immigration system is broken. They see it when they can only offer food assistance to one or two children, when the stomachs of four or five more family members go hungry. They see it when children who have been educated in the United States all their life can’t get into college. They see it when families lose their homes to pay medical bills. They see it when sons and daughters are separated from their parents, deported to countries they themselves only knew as children.

These AFSCME members know our immigration system is broken, and they want to help fix it.

When Immigrants Are Paid Fairly, We All Win
In 1989, nearly a third of Jamaican citizens were living in desperate poverty. Hupert Rose found himself down on his luck, and traveled to the United States as a visitor. “The United States is a country that gives you the opportunity to make a living if you work hard,” he said.

Rose overstayed his visa, and was living in the United States without proper documentation, taking jobs here and there until he got married and became a citizen. Rose had a friend who was a librarian, and she told him about a job opening in the City of North Miami Beach. It was a laboratory technician job. Only part-time, paying about five dollars an hour.

Rose took the job eagerly. And he has worked for the city ever since, now as a water plant operator. He is also an active member of Local 3293 (Florida Council
immigration reform

79), most recently working to fend the effort to privatize his city’s sanitation services. In addition to his job with the city, Rose delivered newspapers to make ends meet, waking up at 2:30 a.m. each day.

To Rose, it’s clear why so many people have come to the United States. “They saw an opportunity where they can make a life for themselves and for their family back home.”

But the inequities that immigrants face are equally clear. “There needs to be a path to citizenship. The people who came here, they have been working. They pay taxes, and can’t claim any benefits. They have been hiding. Some have been suffering.”

A path to citizenship would alleviate this. Right now, there is an underground economy in which employers pay immigrants workers next-to-nothing and have them work in dangerous conditions, and avoid paying taxes. This lowers standards and wages for all workers. A path to citizenship would boost all local economies. Immigrant workers, like Rose, contribute to our culture and our society. “I’ve been working ever since I came to America. I work hard,” Rose said.

Once immigrant workers are paid fairly, they will have more to spend on dinner at a local restaurant or be able to catch a movie at a local theater. And employers will be forced to pay their fair share of taxes, generating much-needed revenue that funds public services.

AFSCME Members Support a Path to Citizenship

Edmundo “Mundo” Cavazos was born in the City of Laredo, Texas, on the border of Mexico and the United States. His family’s land, passed down generation to generation, was once Mexican and is now American. Or as Cavazos puts it, “I didn’t cross the border. The border crossed me.”

Now Cavazos lives in Tacoma, Wash., nearer to the Canadian border than the Mexican. There, he is a medical interpreter and a member of Interpreters United, WFSE/AFSCME Local 1671 (Council 28). Most of the people he serves are undocumented immigrants.

Cavazos helps patients and families understand medical issues and navigate the complex medical system. And, in doing all that, Cavazos helps keep his community healthy and curb the spread of disease.

Though Cavazos’ main task is medical interpretation, other issues often come up. Around immigration. Around rights. Around responsibilities.

“These people have the courage to come here against all odds,” Cavazos says. “They’re looking for the dream and working at it. That’s what makes them so admirable. That’s why I’m glad to give my time and be of service to them. That’s why I want them to have equal rights.”

AFSCME members have been highlighting the importance of comprehensive immigration reform for decades. According to recent polling, 76 percent of AFSCME members believe our current immigration system is broken. Nearly 80 percent support a path to citizenship. These numbers show that, overwhelmingly, AFSCME members have resolved that time for immigration reform is now.

“I’m not saying this isn’t an issue that comes with some tough conversations, some controversy,” said Pres. Lee Saunders. “But the numbers are clear: A vast majority of our members understand why AFSCME must be involved in this fight. We’ve got to be on the frontlines, making sure our members’ priorities in reform are heard.”

When We Fight, We Win

JoAnne Xavier came to the United States when she was “five, or maybe six.” Her parents moved her and her nine siblings from Cape Verde, an island off the coast of West Africa. When her mother and father earned their citizenship, Xavier and her siblings became citizens, too. They went to elementary school and middle school and high school. And when they graduated, they went to work.

Today, Xavier works as a development service worker at Wrentham Developmental Center in Massachusetts. She is also president of Local 646 (Council 93).

Xavier has focused her activism on making sure the right people are elected to office, beginning with President Obama. In both 2008 and 2012, Xavier was instrumental in her local’s get-out-the-vote efforts. “We did everything we could to get people registered to vote.” She told people about President Obama’s health care reform and his stance on immigration.

On January 29, 2013, in Las Vegas, Nev., the President proved Xavier right. He said, “I’m here today because the time has come for common-sense, comprehensive immigration reform. The time is now.”

AFSCME members immediately got to work. During the 2013 legislative conference, we lobbied more than 50 members of Congress. We co-sponsored rallies across the country. Our leaders are speaking out, and the International Executive Board released a powerful statement, saying, “AFSCME will do everything in its power...to help achieve a full path to citizenship for all immigrant workers.”

It is the stories of Zaremba and Cavazos, who serve immigrants, that compel AFSCME members to believe in immigrant justice. It is the resolve of Rose and Xavier, who came here and served their communities, that drives us to fight for comprehensive immigration reform. And it is the freedom – the promise of our country – which inspires us to win.

Send comments to kchildsgraham@afscme.org
AFSCME membership has many advantages. Check out some of the great resources available throughout the year.

**AFSCME Advantage**

The Advantage Mortgage Program helps members save money on closing costs when purchasing or refinancing a home. Advantage also offers credit cards and no-cost accidental death insurance.

Go to [AFSCME.org/members](http://AFSCME.org/members) or call (800) 588-0374 today.

**Union Plus**

Union Plus, a program established by the AFL-CIO, provides consumer benefits to members and retirees of participating labor unions, including AFSCME. Head to [unionplus.org](http://unionplus.org) to learn more about 15 percent discounts on cell phones, breaks on pet food, medication and supplies, moving supplies, mortgage and other loan discounts.

**Look for the Union Label at Your Summer Cookout**

There's no need to abandon your principles when you’re firing up the grill this summer. Our friends at Labor 411 provide a handy resource throughout the year: holiday-specific lists of union-made goodies. Since July 4 is right around the corner, they shared their union-made picnic and party list with us.

- Butterball burgers and franks, Johnsonville brats and sausage, Foster Farms fresh chicken, Oscar Mayer or Boars Head hot dogs
- Heinz Ketchup
- Bugles, Chex Mix, Doritos
- Pepsi, Welch's, Mountain Dew, Pabst beer, Shock Top beer
- Good Humor ice cream

Check out their complete list of union-made products – from electronics to diapers – at [labor411.org](http://labor411.org).

**Learn Online, for Free**

AFSCME’s Online Leadership Academy features both live and self-paced classes for leaders, activists, members and staff that are interactive, fun and educational. The Webinars are live, scheduled one-hour classes conducted in real-time, cover timely and hot topics including: pensions and state battles; and core topics including: organizing and representing workers. Each self-paced OnDemand Class is flexible, can be taken at any time, seven days a week and will take just 20 minutes to complete. Learn more at [AFSCME.org/academy](http://AFSCME.org/academy).
Family Ties

When Unionism Is in the Blood

BY KATE CHILDS GRAHAM

AFSCME is built of union sisters and brothers. And in that sense, AFSCME is a family. But for some members, that family connection is literal. Their union steward might just be sitting across from them at the dinner table.

The potential impact of senior labor veterans on young family members is significant at a time when more than three times as many people ages 55 to 64 are union members as are younger workers ages 16 to 24. For those in the latter group who are union members, those ties were often passed down from parents and grandparents, or other family ties.

We talked with three members, whose labor activism begins right at home, about the family influence that welcomed them into the labor movement, and why that’s a tie that binds.

Like Grandfather, Like Father, Like Son

Michael McDonald is a groundskeeper at the University of Rhode Island and the president of Local 528 (Council 94). His local’s vice president? Also, Michael McDonald, Senior.

Michael’s dad became an AFSCME member in the late 1970s, following in the footsteps of his father – also named Michael – who worked as the captain of the police department at the university in the 1970s and 80s.

The youngest Michael spent his summers at the university and his weekends at union rallies or meetings with his father and grandfather. “I grew up in a union house, with all the activism,” he said, “I didn’t know anything different.”

Michael’s father has been the local’s vice president for nearly 30 years. When the young man decided to run for president of his local and won, his dad was filled with pride.

Michael is also a Next Waver – AFSCME’s group of young members – and stepping into a leadership role meant building upon what his father had done and lifting up the voice of a new generation. “I can’t stress how important it is for young members to take the mantle,” he said. “We need young people to step up and take that leadership role.”
A Family Affair

Sheralyn Kalua is a custodian at Waiakea High School. She’s a United Public Workers/Local 646 member. So was her mother Sherry, her uncle William and her aunt Miriam. Her dad, Herring, is an Hawaii Government Employees/AFSCME Local 152 member, as is her brother, Herring, Jr. Her grandfather and uncle, both Samuel, were both in HGEA and UPW at different points in their careers.

The surname Kalua is synonymous with AFSCME in Hawaii.

As a young child, Sheralyn remembers knocking on doors and attending rallies with her father and grandfather. He father instilled in her and her siblings the benefits of being a union member.

“He always told us to be involved,” in the union, for the strength and solidarity it provided, Sheralyn said. “If you look at other (non-union) people, he would say, ‘They don’t have the benefits or the job security that we have.’”

When Sheralyn had the opportunity to visit AFSCME’s Washington, DC, office this winter, her father told her, “You don’t realize what the union does for you until you go behind the scenes and see what your union does.”

During her visit, she had the opportunity to see the inner workings of the union, from organizing and research to political action and legislation. That trip transformed her inherited activism into activism of her own.

Now, Sheralyn is passing on her family’s AFSCME tradition and her own passion for the union to her four children, all under the age of 10.

“We go house to house organizing workers, talking to voters,” Sheralyn said, “I get them involved just like my father did for me and my grandfather did for him.”

Labor of Love

Couples today meet at a party, a bar or online. That wasn’t the case for Tom and Diana Morneweck. In 1988, Tom and Diana, who both work for Summit County in Akron, Ohio, met working on AFSCME political action campaigns.

Their love for AFSCME and for each other has carried them through more than 20 years of marriage. Tom is now president of Local 1229 and Diana, a union representative. Their family motto? “We are union through and through,” Tom said.

Their union activism hasn’t gone unnoticed by their children and grandchildren, who have often asked, “Do you ever talk about anything besides the union?”

They’ve even been trying to organize their youngest daughter’s employer, the Juvenile Court in Summit County.

Whether organizing drives or political rallies, Tom and Diane are there together. During the fight against Senate Bill 5, they canvassed together.

“We went door to door,” Tom explained, “She took one side of the street, and I took the other.”

Send comments to kchildsgraham@afscme.org

HAVE YOUR OWN AFSCME FAMILY STORY?

Email family@afscme.org with your story and a photo and you could be featured on AFSCME’s blog.
This year, after much behind-the-scenes deliberation, Harris County, Texas, officials decided against privatizing the Harris County Jail, despite what an internal memo described as a “very compelling proposal” by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA).

CCA, the largest for-profit corrections operator in the nation, runs more than 65 facilities in 19 states, including Texas. In 2012, it sent a letter to 48 states offering to buy their prisons in exchange for a 20-year management contract and the assurance that they would be kept 90 percent full. Had the county opted to privatize, as a commissioner there suggested in 2010, it would have made CCA shareholders very happy: With the capacity to house 10,000 inmates, the Harris County Jail is the largest in the state of Texas.

“That would be scary if the Harris County Jail went private,” said Lance Lowry, president of Texas Correctional Employees/AFSCME Local 3807 in Huntsville. “CCA could not handle that beast. That’s a tough jail.”

It could have become another one of the horror stories reported across the country recently. From Texas (where a woman gave birth in the toilet of a jail) to Ohio (where inmates have been forced to defecate in plastic bags), the troubling incidents make one thing clear: In their drive to maximize profits, CCA and other private operators have continued to show a shameless disregard for the public safety of corrections officers and residents in neighboring communities, and the basic human rights of inmates.

‘An Abusive and Neglectful System’

Autumn Miller was feeling intense pressure and pain in her abdomen. An inmate of the CCA-run Dawson State Jail in downtown Dallas, she had requested a pregnancy test three weeks before, but never received it, according to her mother.

Unable to walk, Miller was brought down to the medical unit on a stretcher. But because there was no medically trained staff at Dawson between 5 p.m. and 5 a.m., employees there could only guess what the matter was. When the pressure in her abdomen became too great, Miller sat down in a bathroom stall and delivered her daughter Gracie prematurely at just 26 weeks. Gracie lived four days.

Lowry has been vocally advocating for the closure of the Dawson State Jail.

“It’s a recipe for disaster,” he said, adding that there have been three other preventable deaths at the facility. “There’s no experienced correctional staff, the pay is low – just above minimum wage – and there is a lack of security staff. Security audits show the facility has failed miserably. The fact is, CCA has been cutting corners in all their facilities, and the end result is an abusive and neglectful system that is not creating an environment for rehabilitation.”
Dawson is hardly an exception. In the single year since Ohio Gov. John Kasich’s administration sold the Lake Erie Correctional Institution to CCA, reports have surfaced of inadequate staffing, delays in medical treatment, and “unacceptable living conditions” among inmates, including “evidence of urine in plastic containers inside the recreation area and inmates using plastic bags for defecation.”

A major rise in crime has burdened the nearby town of Conneaut, Ohio, where police have been busy responding to nearly four times as many calls related to the prison as in the previous five years combined.

“That the Lake Erie Correctional Institution failed their safety audit should be a surprise to no one,” said Chris Mabe, an International vice president and president of the Ohio Civil Services Employee Association (OCSEA)/AFSCME Local 11. “We know where the corners get cut when prisons are privatized. But the more we learn about the horror stories coming out of the first prison ever to be sold, the more we fear for the safety of not only the staff and inmates, but the whole community.”

Many Reasons for Shutting Down Private Facilities

There are other, equally compelling reasons for keeping corrections operations in public hands. In Harris County, Texas, for example, the jail’s inmate population has been on the decline since 2008, a fact that has contributed to significant savings in the sheriff’s budget.

According to a confidential memo that surfaced there earlier this year, local officials were wary of promised savings by CCA. And perhaps most importantly, there were shared concerns about oversight, including fears that “outsourcing such a vital function to a third party” would create “uncertain effects” on the treatment of inmates, security at the facility, and re-entry programs.

In New Hampshire, state officials recently canceled the bidding process to privatize state prisons because they remained unconvinced that the vendors would meet all legal requirements to administer the facilities and provide adequate inmate services. A bill approved by the Statehouse and currently before the Senate would make it illegal to privatize state prisons.

Lowry – in his efforts to shut down not just Dawson, but the Mineral Wells Pre-Parole Transfer Facility and the Lindsey State Jail, all run by CCA – has emphasized the absence of financial sense in keeping them open. His strategy focuses just as much on receding inmate populations that can be housed in state-run facilities and wasteful spending.

And it’s working.

“Our goal is to close Dawson by September 1, when its contract expires,” Lowry said. “We’re actively seeking the support of the Legislature, because it doesn’t make sense how our money is being spent. The business community agrees. The Dawson jail sits on prime real estate in downtown Dallas, and it’s interfering with economic development.”

Send comments to pros@afscme.org
We’re Fighting Paycheck Deception, Right-to-Work-for-Less and Privatization

By Pablo Ros

Paycheck deception, right-to-work-for-less, and privatization schemes are but a few of the dirty tactics employed by corporate-backed politicians and right-wing extremists, to weaken unions and raise funds at the expense of public employees. In all parts of the country, AFSCME is involved in the struggle to fight such efforts and protect the livelihood of our members. The following states are part of our battleground.

Alaska
National groups that promote passage of right-to-work-for-less laws have targeted Alaska, though the Legislature adjourned without introducing such a bill. We’ll continue to keep an eye on this state.

In the City of Anchorage, the Assembly approved Ordinance 37, an anti-worker measure that takes away city employees’ contract rights - including the right to strike and arbitration - and rewrites the city’s collective bargaining policies. It is a regressive step towards undermining collective bargaining rights statewide.

An effort to repeal it is already underway, with unions calling for a referendum on the law. They’ve submitted a petition to the city and have vowed to continue their efforts until they succeed.

Arizona
The Republican-controlled Legislature in this western state has made it its mission to pass a paycheck deception law that would make it harder for unions to collect member dues and use them for political purposes. But those who oppose them have a three-vote bipartisan majority against the bill, and plan to hold on to that lead.

Already a right-to-work-for-less state, some in Arizona have tried this scheme in the past but failed, and we’re confident they will fail again. But we’re not taking anything for granted in this right-wing paradise, which is why we’re also closely monitoring measures that would make it a criminal offense to help others by returning their early-vote ballot.

Florida
Right-wing lawmakers in Florida are trying to undermine the state’s $136 billion pension plan, used by more than 600,000 public employees. Two bills are in contention: the House proposal, which would close the plan to new employees and offer them instead a 401(k)-styled investment plan; and the Senate version, which would leave the traditional plan instead and offer employees incentives to use the new, 401(k) version.

Ironically, the state’s current pension plan is among the healthiest and best funded in the nation, and does not call for the kind of drastic action demanded by lawmakers.

Kansas
The right-wing governor of this southern state has signed legislation prohibiting public employee unions from deducting from members’ paychecks to help finance political activities.

This already being a right-to-work-for-less state, workers do not automatically pay union dues but must agree beforehand to any paycheck deductions. The new law is merely an attempt to further undermine labor rights and the power of labor unions.

Missouri
Paycheck deception is gaining ground next door as well, with the Missouri House having approved a bill that would require employers and unions to obtain written consent each year from their employees and members for any political contributions they make through payroll deduction. Right-to-work-for-less legislation is also on the minds of right-wing lawmakers here, and has passed out of committee.

To the advantage of public employees, it’s a good thing that Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat, vowed to veto the paycheck deception bill should it reach his desk.
HUMBOLDT COUNTY
CALIFORNIA

Victory for Home Care Workers

The lowest paid home care workers in California live in Humboldt County. The 1,400 members of California United Homecare Workers (CUHW) Local 4034, have never received a wage increase above the state minimum wage. So, two years ago, after winning a hard-fought recognition campaign, Humboldt home care workers looked forward to bargaining a contract that would give them a fair shake.

Since February 2011 when they voted for union representation, these home care workers put every effort into bargaining their first contract. They held weekly testimonials at Board of Supervisor meetings. They rallied. They executed strategic media campaigns. They garnered support from elected officials, community partners and faith leaders. They attempted mediation again and again.

This spring, these workers finally saw victory. After the county’s Board of Supervisors approved an agreement—which included a historic wage increase for county home care workers—the county home care workers themselves ratified the deal overwhelmingly in May. The wage increase also requires final approval from the state and county before it can take effect.

Margaret Lewis, a home care worker from Garberville, Calif., and member of CUHW, said, “I’m glad we’re finally able to move forward. The real winners today are the people we care for. Better pay for county caregivers means better care for our seniors and disabled.”

CUHW statewide Pres. Gail Ennis called the agreement a “great victory for home care workers who have lived in poverty for over a decade.”

PENNSYLVANIA

Another state on the list of those targeted by right-to-work-for-less groups, the state is headed by Gov. Tom Corbett, who is aggressive in trying to privatize public services. Though no right-to-work-for-less bill has yet been introduced, Corbett moved forward in his bid to privatize public services.

On one front, he insists on privatizing management of the state lottery despite strong opposition, including from state Attorney General, Kathleen Kane. Council 13 has been successful so far in helping to defeat the governor’s attempts to sell management of the lottery to a British company and will continue to raise concerns of constitutional legality. Also, a bill that would phase out the state’s 600 state-operated liquor stores has passed the Statehouse, and is under consideration by the Senate. It would put thousands of state employees out of work, increase costs and generate less revenue than predicted.

PENNSYLVANIA

In Memoriam:

RITA URWITZ

PHILADELPHIA — Rita Urwitz, who served as vice president of District Council 47 and Local 2186, passed away in January. She was 69.

Urwitz had been active in the union since she began working as a social worker for the City of Philadelphia in 1980. She was a strong advocate for children, labor, and social justice issues.

Her boundless energy was seen in her many accomplishments whether it was overseeing the DC 47 Political Action Committee; engaging in an ACLU lawsuit against the City of Philadelphia (which changed the way abuse and neglect cases are handled in the city); leading a groundbreaking wellness and disease management program for DC 47; or working on a domestic partnership ordinance that passed in the city.

BONNIE F. MARPOE

SHIPPENSBURG — Bonnie F. Marpoe, the first woman to be elected president of Council 13’s executive board, died in March at age 70. Marpoe was also co-chair of the AFSCME-United Nurses of America Advisory Committee from 1994, when the committee was founded, until she retired in 2008.

“Bonnie was a tough leader who paved the way for Council 13 women,” said Dave Fillman, the council’s executive director and an International vice president. “It was an honor to have her committed leadership over all those years.”

Marpoe, a licensed practical nurse supervisor until her retirement, was an active AFSCME member for more than 30 years. She served as president of Local 2245.

PHOTO: CALIFORNIA UNITED HOMECARE WORKERS LOCAL 4034

Let’s Settle This

Home care workers and supporters rallied in front of Humboldt County Courthouse in February, before achieving their contract victory.
SAN JUAN   PUERTO RICO

New Retiree Chapter

Nearly 500 retirees came together for the founding assembly of AFSCME United Public Workers of Puerto Rico, Retiree Chapter 95. With attacks in recent years to retirees in Puerto Rico and across the United States, the formation of this retiree chapter could not have been more timely.

Pres. Lee Saunders attended the event, noting that it represented “the start of something big.” He praised retirees for building their chapter into “a powerful force whose presence will be felt throughout Puerto Rico.”

Annette Gonzalez Perez, president of AFSCME Council 95, praised the tenaciousness of assembly delegates in organizing the retiree chapter. Already, Chapter 95 has more than 2,200 members, with more joining every day.

Assembly delegates adopted a constitution and elected their first slate of officers: Blanca Paniagua as president; Eva Canabal, vice president; Adelina Lopez, secretary; and Obdulia Lopez, treasurer. They elected Joselito Cortes Quinonez, Minerva Gonzalez, Mirim Quinones and Roberto Hernandez to the executive board, and Irma Iris Linero Rivera, Rosa N. Rios Lugo and Norma Paniagua as trustees.

Retirees passed two resolutions. In the first, they vowed to use their collective power to protect the pensions they earned after decades of hard work and service to the people of Puerto Rico. And in the second, delegates vowed to join with other like-minded groups to fight cuts to Social Security and Medicare.

NEW YORK CITY

NEW YORK

One-Man March for Child Care Gains Support

Raglan George, Jr., DC 1707’s executive director and also an International vice president, sandwiches himself between two picket signs every Monday afternoon. They bear slogans like “New York City working families need child care.” Then he makes his way back and forth in front of New York City Hall. He calls it his One-Man March for Child Care, and he’s been doing it ever since Mayor Michael Bloomberg implemented his harmful Early Learn Program last fall.

George gained company on his picket line, including New York City Council members, supporters from the New York City Central Labor Council and the New York State AFL-CIO.

On his weekly marches, George exposes the multiple flaws of a program called Early Learn. Until Mayor Bloomberg came into office 11 years ago, the city’s comprehensive child care network was acclaimed. It included day care, Head Start and an extensive after-school program. Then the mayor implemented Early Learn without a pilot program or City Council hearing.

Some 5,000 children were immediately removed from the program as kindergarten classes were yanked out of day care centers. Now the city’s kindergartens have waiting lists. Another 5,000 eligible children will not receive services.

More than 1,000 unionized day care center workers and Head Start workers were fired in the wake of Early Learn.
COLUMBIA MARYLAND

Council 3 Holds Founding Convention

The union’s newest council is Maryland Council 3, which held its founding convention this past winter in Columbia, Md. Council 3 represents 24,000 state and university, and private sector employees from more than a dozen departments and agencies and university campuses.

More than 150 delegates attended. They ratified their first constitution and elected a slate of officers – including Pres. Patrick Moran (Local 1770), and Sec.-Treas. Flo Jones (Local 112). Also elected were several executive vice presidents: Mo Said (Local 539), Lisa Henson (Local 1427) and Ron Lohr (Local 898).

Delegates also elected region board members, unit board members and trustees.

Council 3 is the reconstituted Council 982, which went into “organizing committee status” five years ago to reorganize and rebuild. At that time, the council had fewer than 9,000 members. Today it has more than 24,000 members.

AFSCME Maryland Council 3 officers, including Pres. Patrick Moran (center), are sworn-in during the council’s founding convention in Columbia, Md.

The council is nearly three times larger than it was in 2007.

And it already has several highlights, including winning fair share, a Correctional Officers Bill of Rights, stopping furloughs and pay cuts, and the recent vote of 1,500 Maryland state workers to join the council.

“From the beginning, the work that Council 3 has accomplished shows that unions are very much here for workers and workers are responding to that,” Moran said.

AFSCME Pres. Lee Saunders, Sec.-Treas. Laura Reyes and International Vice Pres. and Exec. Dir. of Maryland Council 67 Glenard S. Middleton, Sr. addressed the Convention, applauding Council 3’s victories and encouraging the delegates to keep up the fight in Maryland.

SPRINGFIELD ILLINOIS

AFSCME Blocks Efforts to Weaken Pension System

As the legislative leadership in the Illinois General Assembly prepared to renew efforts to slash public pension benefits in early January, thousands of active and retired public service workers, including members of Council 31, swarmed into the state Capitol for two days of protests.

The union members and retirees delivered a strong message to Gov. Pat Quinn and other political leaders who want to change the method for calculating the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) provision for pensions. The proposed changes would drastically reduce the ability of retirees to keep up with rising costs for food, utilities and other basic necessities.

The We Are One Illinois coalition, of which Council 31 is a member, says it is “wrong to punish public employees for the actions – or inaction – of irresponsible politicians” who, for decades,” shorted or skipped the employer contributions required by law, creating the nation’s largest pension debt.”

AFSCME and the We Are One Illinois coalition offered their own framework for a fair and constitutional solution to the pension funding problem. It would provide an ironclad guarantee that state government could not skip its pension payments in the future; close wasteful corporate tax loopholes worth $2 billion a year; and ask active employees to contribute an additional 2 percent of their salary to help close the shortfall.

“Our coalition has consistently indicated our willingness to work constructively toward a solution to the pension underfunding problem,” said Council 31 Exec. Dir. Henry Bayer, also an International vice president.

Delegates also elected region board members, unit board members and trustees.

Council 3 is the reconstituted Council 982, which went into “organizing committee status” five years ago to reorganize and rebuild. At that time, the council had fewer than 9,000 members. Today it has more than 24,000 members.

Demonstrators fill the state Capitol in Springfield to protest plans to undermine the retirement security of public service workers.

AFSCME Maryland Council 3 officers, including Pres. Patrick Moran (center), are sworn-in during the council’s founding convention in Columbia, Md.
Member Helps Police Nab Robbery Suspect

When Richmond, Ind., Sanitary District employee James Darren Duncan, a member of Local 1791 (Council 62), heard a broadcast description of a truck driven by a robbery suspect in January, it jogged his memory. He’d just seen a similar vehicle on his route.

Duncan immediately contacted Richmond Police Capt. Jim Branum to tell him what he knew. Police followed up, finding a suspect scraping a decal off a red pick-up truck. It was the same decal a passerby spotted on a truck a day earlier. That passerby connected the truck to a local store robbery that same day and notified the police.

As a result of Duncan’s quick thinking, police secured a warrant to search the suspect’s home. The suspect was later charged with one count of armed robbery.

Richmond Police Department Capt. Bill Shake told a news reporter, “We would not have been able to solve this as fast if it had not been for citizen input.” Duncan and Richmond resident Russell Mabry – who gave police the initial description of the suspect’s vehicle – were honored on Feb. 4 with a commendation from the Richmond Police Department. Duncan’s proclamation stated:

“Your dedication to the quality of life in Richmond and your community spirit and sense of teamwork as an employee of the City of Richmond; and your assistance in locating the vehicle involved in the series of Village Pantry robberies is to be commended. You have raised the bar for many to achieve.”

Kasich Protestors Demand More Money for Schools, Services, Oppose Right-to-Work

“More empty promises.” That was the theme of a demonstration by protestors, including AFSCME members, who stood in the freezing night air this February before Gov. John Kasich gave his State of the State address across the street. Their message to the governor: no more budget cuts that hurt education and support for local governments. The demonstration, outside the Veterans Memorial Civic and Convention Center, was sponsored by the progressive labor group We Are Ohio.

“As a community, we’re just getting by,” said Bart Anderson, an electronic technician who works on the City of Lima’s water plants. Anderson, also president of Local 1002 (Council 8), said it’s a struggle to fund education, and the last school levy failed to pass. “And from what I know about the budget, it’s just more empty promises.

IVP Sworn In

Council 93 Exec. Dir. Frank Moroney, newly elected to the International Executive Board, was sworn in as an International vice president (IVP) by President Saunders in Washington, DC. Moroney was nominated last November to fill the vacant IVP position by a unanimous vote of the Local 804 Executive Board. He has served since December.

Moroney will fill the remainder of a four-year term that will expire in 2016. “It is truly an honor and a privilege to be part of the AFSCME International Executive Board,” said Moroney. “I look forward to drawing on the experience and resources of my fellow board members and President Saunders and Sec.-Treas. Laura Reyes.”
MEMPHIS
TENNESSEE

A Striking Celebration

During the last days of his life, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. joined the sanitation workers of Memphis Local 1733 in their fight for dignity and respect on the job. Their historic 1968 strike drew the nation’s eyes to the struggle for workers’ rights.

This April, AFSCME convened students, clergy, union members, political leaders, and civil rights activists for an historic, two-day commemoration of the 45th anniversary of the strike and Dr. King’s Poor People’s Campaign; Martin Luther King III also served as co-chair of the activities.

Addressing the crowd gathered for a rally at Local 1733’s union hall, Pres. Lee Saunders said, “How ironic that, 45 years after Dr. King spoke out against economic injustice here – right here – Wall Street booms for a few, while the American Dream remains out of reach for so many. The fight for workers’ rights and civil rights are inseparable. With working families and unions under attack, we must make alliances with community groups to ensure everyone has a chance at the dream.” The City of Memphis honored Local 1733 and the striking workers by renaming the street where the local office is located “1968 Strikers Lane.” AFSCME’s volunteer member organizers hit the streets of Memphis to organize new members and reclaim inactive members into the union.

View video and other coverage from Memphis at AFSCME.org/memphis.
Public Heroes at Boston Marathon

**BY PABLO ROS**

In April, two bombs ripped through a crowd at the Boston Marathon, killing three people and injuring 176. Within seconds, public service workers, including AFSCME members, rushed toward the detonation sites, tending to gravely wounded victims, evacuating survivors, and peeling back debris.

“The knowledge that AFSCME public works and other city employees rushed to the scene to help first responders evacuate and treat the injured makes us proud,” said International Vice Pres. and Council 93 Exec. Dir. Frank Moroney and Pres. Charles C. Owen, Jr. “But these feelings of relief and pride are completely eclipsed by a profound sense of shock and sadness over what happened to our city.”

Council 93 represents more than 45,000 state, county and municipal employees in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. At left, Boston Department of Public Works employee and Local 445 member Steve Stapleton rushed back to the impact area to assist other first responders.

“Our hearts go out to those who lost family members and those struggling with the injuries they suffered,” said Pres. Lee Saunders.