



Iowa Unionist

The Newsletter of AFSCME Iowa Council 61

THE IOWA UNIONIST

WINTER 2012

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From the Desk of the President

Begin the Year with 'Action' at the Top of Your List

I want to welcome you all to 2012 with a strong call to action – action born of a desire to protect and improve the work place for all Iowans.

Action means not only being members of the union, but active members of the union. Action means voicing concerns to legislators, keeping up on current events and more. To understand just how important action is this year, simply look through the articles in this newsletter. You will also read about ways to become involved.

I can stand up and give a

speech, shake my fist in emphasis, raise my voice to underline an issue and talk to as many people as possible. However, it takes action from members who live the very challenges we face today that make change happen.

One voice is only one voice, but when you get hundreds, thousands of voices saying the same thing to Legislators, you can effect great change.

For example, we know Governor Branstad and the legislators of Iowa should be looking out for the unemployed. Yet, here we **(Homan Cont. on P.4)**



*Council 61 President
Danny Homan*

Proposals for Tax Reform and More Money for the Judicial System Mark Beginning of Iowa's 2012 Legislative Session

Proposals for tax reform and increased money for education and human services, as well as the state's judicial system marked the opening week of the Iowa Legislature's 2012 session.

Action on these and many other issues of interest to Council 61 membership will play out over the next few months.

Gov. Terry Branstad presented the 17th "Condition of the State" address on Jan. 10, the second day of the session. In his remarks, the Governor proposed increasing state spending by \$230 million, which would increase the state budget to \$6.24 billion. Under this scenario, the additional spending would go for education and human services. The Governor said the Department of Transportation will work to find \$40 to \$60 million in savings,

which can then be put toward road infrastructure. He also said he would not rule out a gas tax increase if legislators approved one. Branstad's budget did not include collective bargaining salary increases for Fiscal Year 2013.

The Governor introduced two major policy initiatives on education (SSB3009/HSB 517) and property tax reform (HSB 519). The House Republicans have their own version of property tax reform (HSB 500).

AFSCME Iowa Council 61 has been opposed to versions such as the House Republican and Governor's bills. The cost of these proposals would cripple city and county budgets. The Council will be working with a coalition of like-minded groups to improve or stop these bills from becoming law.

Senate Democrats passed their own proposal last year to reduce the prop-

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Council 61 Deputy Political Director Mitchell Stille has left Council 61 to work with the National AFL CIO. We wish Mitchell well in his new assignment.

erty taxes paid by small **(Legislature Cont. Page 4)**



"If capitalism is fair then unionism must be. If men and women have a right to capitalize their ideas and the resources of their country, then that implies the right of men and women to capitalize their labor."

-Frank Lloyd Wright

AFSCME Iowa Council 61 Seeking Member Stories from Local Unions

What Interesting Events, Fundraisers, Projects has Your Local done lately?

AFSCME Iowa Council 61 is looking to union locals for articles about individual members who have or are having an impact on their communities, where they work, their state or other non-profit organization.

We would like to highlight the good deeds and efforts of our union members and union locals in keeping with the "We Are Your Neighbors" campaign. Started about a year ago, the campaign is an effort to show the faces, the people, the individuality of union members in an effort to break through the barrier of looking at AFSCME as one giant entity.

In reality, we, as members, know that entity is made up of many different individuals, regular folks who often do extra-ordinary things. That's also true of our union locals.

With that in mind, we would like you to contact Juli Probasco-Sowers, communications specialist with AFSCME Iowa Council 61 with any story ideas you have. This can include past efforts or events, ongoing projects or future plans. Contact Probasco-Sowers by email at jprobasco@afscmeiowa.org or by calling (515) 210-9045.



Ask Our Attorney: Mark Hedberg

A Few Facts About Unemployment Compensation

What can a person expect from unemployment compensation?

A person on unemployment can expect to make \$347 per week and an additional \$13 per dependent for up to four dependents for up to 26 weeks.

Unemployment may be either total or partial (See Iowa Code Sec. 96.19-38). Total unemployment means a person has no work and no wages payable for a given week. Partial unemployment means a person is working fewer hours than in a person's regular work week.

To receive benefits, a person must be able to work, available for work and actively seeking work. See Section 96.4(3).

However, he or she need not accept a job offer. Work can be refused as unsuitable for such reasons as lower wages, terms and con-

ditions of employment and geographical location (Iowa Code Capt. 96.3)

What would disqualify a person from getting unemployment benefits?

The general rule is that an individual is disqualified if discharged for misconduct in connection with his or her employment. See Iowa Code Sec. 96.5-2-a.

Often misconduct is found in deliberate acts or omissions. The following actions are considered misconduct:

- Excessive unexcused absenteeism
- Absence due to matters of "personal responsibility", e.g., transportation problems and oversleeping
- Insubordination.
- Continued failure to follow reasonable instructions constitutes misconduct.



Hedberg

- Profanity or other offensive language in a confrontational or disrespectful context
- Threats that an employer should stay out of workers' way or he would be sorry
- Violation specific work rule even off-duty, can constitute misconduct

Information offered here is a glimpse into unemployment benefit issues. For more information visit www.afscmeiowa.org and click on the green icon to the left labeled "Ask the Attorney." Here readers will find more detailed information.



AFSCME Iowa Council 61 Emphasizes Workers' Rights During CCI Rally

More than 400 people, including AFSCME Iowa Council 61 members and Council 61 President Danny Homan at-



Larry Fitzpatrick, an AFSCME Iowa Council 61 member from Iowa City, attended the Occupy the Statehouse Rally, as did Anne Duggan, also of Iowa City and with CCI. (Photo by Juli Probasco-Sowers)

tended a day-long rally at the Iowa Capitol organized by Citizens for Community Improvement.

Homan was one of several people invited to address the rally during a response to the "Condition of the State address." He called attention to efforts by Gov.

Terry Branstad to erode the rights of workers and the governor's disregard for the unemployed, emphasizing the closing of 36 Iowa Workforce Development offices.

Larry Fitzpatrick, an AFSCME Council 61 member from Iowa City drove across Iowa to attend the rally.

"I took a day of vacation to attend," said Fitzpatrick, a member of Local 183. "I'm interested in protecting our right to collective bargaining and in fair labor practices."

He said he believes it is important to let Gov. Branstad know "We are watching him."

Adam Mason, CCI political organizer, said "I think the boisterous crowd is a sign people are passionate about what they are fighting for."



AFSCME Council 61 President Danny Homan talks workers' rights at the CCI Occupy the Statehouse Rally Jan. 10 at the Iowa Capitol. (Photo by Juli Probasco-Sowers)

Oral Arguments in Homan et. Al. v. Branstad set for Feb. 21

The Iowa Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in the veto case of Homan et.al. v. Branstad at 7 p.m. Feb. 21.

This lawsuit was originally filed by five Iowa legislators and Danny Homan, President of AFSCME Iowa Council 61, against Gov. Terry Branstad. The gist of the lawsuit is that Branstad vetoed provisions that would have kept 36 Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) offices open that had

been slated to close, but at the same time didn't veto the money that pays for those offices.

During oral arguments, AFSCME Iowa Council 61 Attorney Mark Hedberg and private attorneys hired by Branstad will present their case to the court and answer the court's questions. A decision should be made shortly after that date, Hedberg said.

Currently, 36 out of 55 IWD offices remain closed. Public access terminals have been placed around the state, many in public libraries, as a replacement system. Council 61 has been strongly opposed to this change, which creates a hardship for many unemployed people who are or will be facing financial problems and who must travel further to obtain face-to-face services.

Make Plans Now to Attend Legislative Day Conference Feb. 29 at Holiday Inn

AFSCME Iowa Council 61's Legislative Day Conference on Wednesday, Feb. 29, offers an exciting opportunity for members to be directly involved in ensuring workers' voices are heard by Iowa legislators.

The day begins with registration at 8:30 a.m. at the Holiday Inn Downtown, followed by a 9 a.m. program where Council 61 President Danny Homan will give his address. Legislative Director Marcia Nichols will give an update, and attendees will get pointers on how to talk to legislators. Following lunch, buses will take participants to the Capitol to lobby legislators. Last year's event drew 300 union members. This year, let's make this event even bigger!

Council 61 Legislative Day Conference

Wednesday, Feb. 29, 2012,

Holiday Inn Downtown

Registration 8:30 a.m.

Program 9 a.m.

Buses to the Capitol after lunch

RSVP to Nicole Vander Linden

By Feb. 17 at 515-246-2621 or

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How do you become active?

(Homan Cont.)

are today, involved in a lawsuit against the governor (see newsletter article P.3) which started because of Branstad closing 36 of Iowa's 55 Workforce Development offices.

It is AFSCME Iowa Council 61's stand that the Governor and legislators should be making access to employment assistance easier, not harder.

Some of you reading this column have been active in getting your message heard, while others of you have been interested, but haven't taken action, or perhaps never realized how important activism is.

So how do you get started? Read the article on P. 3 of this newsletter about the AFSCME Iowa Council 61 Legislative Conference Day. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to attend. The day begins at the Downtown Holiday Inn with registration, speakers, tips on how to talk with legislators and a trip to the Iowa Capitol to talk to those very lawmakers.

Why don't you join us, learn some new skills of persuasion and feel good about your contribution to the betterment of workplaces all across Iowa.

Chief Justice Requests More Funding

(Legislature Cont.)

businesses (SF 522). The proposal passed the Senate with Republican votes, then failed to come out of House committee.

The Governor also released his education reform bill which is likely to meet with some resistance in the Senate. Changes to teacher discipline and discharge, as well as pay for performance issues, make this bill one that AFSCME Council 61 will not support.

On Jan. 11 Chief Justice Mark Cady addressed the Iowa Legislature and reported that the judicial branch operates on a budget of \$154 million – about 2½ percent of the total state budget. He asked for Legislators to look at a small fraction of an increase to adequately fund and staff the branch. Without additional money, the Judicial Branch has no means to absorb the additional costs of salary adjustments and will face another severe reduction of workforce and more cuts in the hours clerks' offices will be open.

Council 61 political staff will be working hard to make sure members are represented at the Iowa Legislature and will be contacting members for assistance. Be assured, they will follow bills of interest to AFSCME members and their families as the session moves forward.

Go to www.Afscmeiowa.org and sign up to receive Legislative updates.