

the 4 WORD

The Voice of Council 4 AFSCME Connecticut

July 2012

What's Inside

“R-E-S-P-E-C-T”

From Ridgefield to Stafford, Public Employees Stand Up and Speak Out



L-R: Local 838 member Khamphiou Chansouk, Council 4 Staff Rep Lisa McKinnon and Local 838 President Rick Ferreira.

Khamphiou Chansouk knows of adversity; he came to this country in 1979 from a refugee camp in Laos. Still, the Ridgefield High School custodian with 32 years of service never expected to be fired for taking vacation time he thought was permissible under the contract.

That’s exactly what happened to Chansouk, a member of AFSCME Local 838, which represents Ridgefield school custodial and maintenance employees. Believing his supervisor had approved a request for vacation time that had been previously denied, Chansouk traveled to Laos last July to visit relatives.

He returned to work in August, only to find his employment abruptly terminated by a letter he had not yet received.

The move left him stunned. Despite a language barrier — he cannot read or write in English — Chansouk has been a dedicated worker who, in the words of Council 4 Staff Representative Lisa McKinnon, “was never less than an excellent worker,

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This spring, the *Journal-Inquirer* newspaper asked for a public employee’s perspective on the constant attacks on our salaries and benefits. Stafford Library employee Adreana Scussel, president of AFSCME Local 1303-427, responded. Here is Adreana’s op-ed, reprinted with permission of the paper:

I work at the Stafford Library, and I am privileged to serve the public. It saddens me to hear the hysterical claims that I as a public sector worker am responsible for bringing down the economy, while I see the real culprits: the Wall Street big shots and speculators who have walked away scot free, leaving the middle class to hold the bag.

The Dow Jones is rising. Profits are getting fatter than ever. CEOs are back to hoarding multi-million dollar bonuses and other excesses, while the rest of us struggle to pay the bills and cope with high unemployment. They go unscathed and in some cases unpunished.

I have an MLS (Master of Library Science) degree and earn substantially less than I did as a research librarian at Aetna. I have worked for the Stafford Library for 12 years; While I made significantly more money in the private sector, I find serving the public gives me a sense of accomplishment, of giving back to the community.

Like all other public service employees I know, I



Local 1303-427 President Adreana Scussel,

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The (Never-Ending) Perils of Privatization



There's a scene in the great movie *Chinatown* when Los Angeles city coroner Morty slyly says to Detective Jake Gittes (played by Jack Nicholson), "Can you believe it? We're in the middle of a drought, and the water commissioner drowns. Only in L.A."

The drowned commissioner is among the film's many victims of pervasive government corruption and a symbol of the twisted triumph of private interest over the public good.

Even in cinematic form, Depression-era L.A. is not so far removed from the present, not when anti-worker politicians like Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and billionaire reactionaries like the Koch brothers seek to dismantle the public sector and hand the reins of government over to private corporations and the ultra-wealthy.

Theirs is a vision built on selling public assets – prisons, water and sewage systems, roads, bridges, and parks – that leads inexorably to greed and corruption.

So it comes as welcome news that the Center for Public Integrity lists Connecticut as one of the least corrupt states in the country.

In a recently issued report, CPI scientifically measured states by Corruption Risk Indicators. While no state received an "A," Connecticut and four other states received a "B." While

praising Connecticut for transparency and accountability, the CPI report also warned that budgetary belt tightening could lead to loss of the same.

We represent state and municipal workers who understand that government provides public services for the public good, and who have resisted corrupt privatizations at every opportunity.

Former Gov. John Rowland and his cronies tried to pervert that idea by peddling government assets to self-serving private interests. Defrauding and depriving citizens of public service was the animating impulse of the Rowland regime.

At the height of Rowland's criminal activity, our Council 4 union launched "Privatization Equals Corruption," a campaign that continues to this day. We've come quite a ways since those dark days, as the Center for Public Integrity report proves. But we've got to be vigilant in protecting public services.

That's why we'll never put away our signs reading, "Privatization Equals Corruption" and "It's Unwise to Privatize." If your local wants to display those signs or bumper stickers, let us know. This fight is a visible cornerstone in our campaign to protect all middle class Americans.

In solidarity,

Sal Luciano

Executive Director

First Contract for West Haven Library Employees

Approximately one year after voting to unionize, West Haven Public Library staff have their first-ever collective bargaining agreement in place. Terms of the three-year agreement between AFSCME Local 393 and the Village Improvement Association of West Haven include general wage increases totaling 5.5% and other economic enhancements, along with a first-ever grievance process for library employees.

"We're all here because we love our jobs," said AFSCME Local 393 President Colleen Bailie, who heads Technical Services for the West Haven Public Library. "Joining a union, and bargaining for a fair contract, gives us a stronger voice at work." The bargaining unit includes librarians, technicians and support staff.

"We're proud of the services we provide to West Haven residents. We want to make sure we're around to protect the library system in these difficult economic times," said Ora Mason Branch Manager and Local Union Vice President Elaine Braithwaite.

Local 393's Bargaining Team included union members Colleen Bailie, Bob Amato, Elaine Braithwaite, Catherine Bushman, Treasurer Mary Walker, Secretary Tonjii Ormsby and Council 4 Staff Representative Len LaLuna, who served as spokesman during negotiations.



AFSCME Local 393 members, employees of the West Haven Library system, stand together after ratifying their first contract.

State Clericals Mobilize for Challenges Ahead

The challenges facing union stewards these days are bigger than ever, from representation at the workplace to mobilization in the community. State clerical employees learned about those challenges – the tools needed to protect middle class living standards – during the 10th Annual NP-3 Administrative Clerical Statewide Steward Training & Recognition Day held May 18 in New Haven.

“We designed this day to thank our union stewards for their dedication and service,” said Local 562 President and

Council 4 Executive Board member Thursa Isaac, “but we also see it as an opportunity to ask for an even stronger commitment to building their union.”

That commitment, Isaac said, can come in many forms, from protecting members' contractual rights to volunteering to help elect worker-friendly candidates.

Thanks to the NP-3 Bargaining Unit Presidents for their hard work on a successful event: Linda Armstrong (Local 355); Robert Augusta (Local 318); Grisselle Gonzalez (Local 196); Thursa Isaac (Local 562); Jeff Norton (Local 478); Roberta Price (Local 610); Wilson Maestre-Soto (Local 704); and Dawn Tyson (Local 538).



L-R: Rebecca Bleeker (Local 610); Anna C. Cruz (Local 478), Denise Stevenson (Local 704) and Council 4 Staff Representative Kelly Martinez participate in a union leadership training.



Local 355 President Linda Armstrong and Council 4 Staff Representative Jeff Scanlon at the NP-3 Steward Training.

Waterbury AFSCME Locals Help Build a New Playground

Waterbury public service workers are stepping up to support the collaborative effort to provide new playground equipment for Chase Park. AFSCME Local 353 (representing city and board of education employees) and AFSCME Local 2090 (representing city supervisors) donated \$800 to the project.

“Our union members are proud to support this wonderful project,” Local 353 President Mark Carlson said. “Great parks and playgrounds are critical to the quality of life for Waterbury’s children and families.

Added Local 2090 President Louis Spina, “The new playscape at Chase Park will improve community and neighborhood life in our city. We’re glad to be a part of this endeavor.”

Waterbury Constituent Services Manager Sarah Geary, who is overseeing the Chase playground project for Mayor Neil O’Leary, thanked the local AFSCME unions for their support.

“We’re excited that AFSCME is contributing to this effort,” she said. “It’s great to see the community uniting to provide residents with a sense of ownership in the new playground and create a strong feeling of pride in the neighborhood.”

AFSCME members also planned to turn out for the June 23 Build Day, when approximately two hundred community volunteers met at Chase Park to build the playground.

Earlier this year, O’Leary announced that KaBoom!, Inc., a national non-profit dedicated to saving play for America’s children, would team with the American Heart Association and the Connecticut Community Foundation in Waterbury to build the new playscape at Chase Park.



L-R: Ed McCann (Local 2090), Paul Pastore (Local 353), Sarah Geary (Mayor’s Office), Mark Carlson (Local 353) and Debbie Damicis (Parks & Recreation).

Council 4 Members Thank Our Veterans

Memorial Day holiday weekend provided Council 4 members with an opportunity to thank state military veterans at our union's CT Veterans Picnic, which takes place annually at the State Veterans Home in Rocky Hill.

"I'm having a blast," said Vietnam veteran Jim Vannest. "This is an enjoyable day. It's nice to know someone cares about us, even with these tight financial times."

AFSCME Local 2018 member Bill Kates, a Milford school custodian and Vietnam veteran, volunteered at the picnic for the first time and came away impressed. "What a great way to honor veterans for their service. I'm glad my union is doing this," he said.

Since adopting the state veterans home nine years ago, Council 4 has raised funds to support substantial improvements to the State Veterans Home and other related veteran causes.



Local 2018 member Bill Kates



L-R: Veteran Jimmy Vannest, Carol Whelan, APRN and Veteran Jack Johnson

"This picnic is a way to thank our war veterans," said State Correctional Officer and Council 4 Executive Board member Steve Curran, who chairs the Council 4 Veterans Committee. "They have given their all for us. We need to give our all for them."

Thanks to the members of the Council 4 Veterans Committee who helped make this event possible, including Curran (Local 1565), Jay Bartolomei (Local 714), Gil Bironi (Local 184), Dwight Frederick (Local 714), Thursa Isaac (Local 562), Joe Manes (Council 4 Retirees), Brian Mitchell (Local 1303), Anna Montalvo (Local 1522), Tom Stough (Local 991) and Megan Batchelder (Council 4). Thanks also to the Council 4 members, retirees and staff who volunteered on this special day. We'll see you next year for our 10th anniversary celebration.

Milford School Security Officers Ratify First Contract

Milford School Security Officers stood up for the protective services they provide, and now have the protection of a collective bargaining agreement to show for it.

Members of AFSCME Local 1303-353 ratified their first contract March 16. The Milford Board of Education approved the contract at its March 26 meeting.

The new agreement includes general wage increases totaling nearly 8%, provides 7 paid holidays, increases sick leave from 6 days per year to 10 days per year and establishes a 401(a) savings plan with a 5% match from the employer.

And, as Council 4 Staff Representative Ed Thibodeau points out, "The members also now have just cause protection and a grievance procedure, as well as contract language on transfer and promotion, layoff and recall, and overtime, among other things."

The agreement capped a tumultuous 18 months in which the workers voted to join Council 4 and then suffered layoffs that prompted our union to file a complaint with the State Board of Labor Relations.

"Council 4 did a great job for us," said Local 1303-

453 President Sal Follo. "I'm so proud of the way our members advocated not just for their jobs but for the safety of the students."

Debbie Rodriguez was one of the security officers laid off last spring. She was called back to work at the start of the 2011-2012 school year. "This is a great contract. I'm grateful to Council 4 for fighting on our behalf. We're here for the kids. Parents deserve to know their kids are safe and being taken care of."



Standing, l-r: Council 4 Staff Representative Ed Thibodeau, Local 1303-453 President Sal Follo. Seated, l-r: Local 1303-457 members Chris Bugyi Debbie Rodriguez and Joe Chamborski.

State Legislative Session Concludes

The state legislative session concluded in May with some significant accomplishments that benefit our members and working families at large. Some of the highlights included:

Additional funding to the state employee pension fund, reducing long-term liabilities and strengthening the fund.

\$100 million in aid to towns and cities as part of education reform.

Family and medical leave rights for school paraprofessionals.

Restored funding for stress reduction programs for corrections officers.

Collective bargaining rights for 12,000 state-funded personal care attendants and child care providers.

Project-Labor Agreements to ensure municipalities hire local workers at decent wages on local construction projects.

Election-Day registration and other reforms that make it easier for citizens to vote.

Our lobbying team also blocked numerous attempts to slash state and municipal employee pay, pension and health care as well as changes to binding arbitration.



L-R: Lisa McArthur (Local 2663), Lori Pelletier (Connecticut AFL-CIO), Kristy Porter (Local 749) and Evelyn Rodriguez (Local 269) outside the Hall of the House.

A number of other priorities, unfortunately, did not come up for a vote before midnight on May 9 including our effort to expand retirement security through the creation of a public retirement plan; a modest 25 cents increase in the state minimum wage (now \$8.25); and adding consumers and small business representatives to the Health Insurance Exchange Board so healthcare reform not guided by profiteering health insurance executives.

Council 4 will keep fighting for these priorities in the next legislative session. We want to thank all of our members who helped us maintain a steady presence at the State Capitol throughout the legislative session, culminating in our successful May 2 Lobby Day.



L-R: Local 196 members Grisselle Gonzalez, Yolanda Rolando, Ronke Oyeniyi-Stallings, and Lori Adgers.



Sen. Beth Bye, 2nd from left, talks with Bob Facey (Local 3713), and Sarah Schuyler-Galloway and Anthony Miller (Local 269).



Local 3429 members Claudine Wilkins-Chambers and Donna Monroe discuss issues with State Rep. Toni Walker of New Haven.



Sen. Edith Prague, left, and Sen. Ed Gomes, longtime supporters of labor, address our members.

Council 4 Conference: A Call to Action

Council 4's annual conference and convention took place April 21 in East Hartford. Nearly 200 members participated in a day filled with inspiring speakers, including U.S. Reps. John Larson (CT-1), Rosa DeLauro (CT-3) and Chris Murphy (CT-5), Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, Comptroller Kevin Lembo and Secretary of State Denise Merrill.

There were plenty of thought-provoking workshops. Through topics such as Internal Union Organizing, Saving the Middle Class and AFSCME at 75, our members explored the meaning of unionism against the backdrop of a hostile political and economic landscapes.

Convention delegates also elected our new Executive Board (whose members are listed below) and thanked outgoing President Thomas Ledoux (Local 2930) and Vice Presidents Linda Armstrong (Local 355, State Clerical) and Roberta Price (Local 610, State Clerical) for more than 30 years of combined service to our union.

The conference closed with the presentation of Council 4 PEOPLE political action awards to Tom Stough (Local 991, Manchester), Jon Green of the Working Families Party, and State Sen. Ed Gomes of Bridgeport (with Anna Montalvo accepting on Sen. Gomes' behalf).



L-R: AFSCME National Staff Rep Patricia Glynn, Local 269's Brian Cutler and Local 1161's Rich Rivera presented at a class linking AFSCME's 75th anniversary to the personal involvement of members in our union.

Council 4 Executive Board 2012-14

Executive Officers:

Executive Director: Sal Luciano, Local 2663

President: Clarke King, Local 1716

Secretary: Anna Montalvo, Local 1522

Vice Presidents:

Jay Bartolomei, Local 714

Blair Bertaccini, Local 269

Gil Bironi, Local 184

Joseph Cirigliano, Local 2930

Steven Curran, Local 1565

Marie DeSousa, Local 391

Robert Facey, Jr., Local 3713

Thursa Isaac, Local 562

James LoMonaco, Local 2836

Brian Mitchell, Local 1303

Robert Montuori, Local 287

John Ondusko, Local 749

Guy Pappalardo, Local 566

Thomas Stough, Local 991

Dawn Tyson, Local 538

Claudine Wilkins-Chambers, Local 3429



Tom Ledoux of Local 2930, Roberta Price of Local 610 and Linda Armstrong of Local 355 were recognized for their many years of service on the Executive Board. Ledoux stepped down as President while Price and Armstrong stepped down as Council 4 Vice Presidents.



Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (3rd District) discusses workers' concerns with, from left, AFSCME International Field Rep Suzanne Haviland, Local 269 President Blair Bertaccini and Local 562 President Thursa Isaac.

“Pray for the Dead, Fight for the Living”

April 28 marked Workers Memorial Day, a time for union members and community allies to mourn the dead and injured and continue the struggle for safe jobs and health workplaces. Council 4 members and staff gathered for a brief but solemn ceremony in front of our Workers Memorial Monument in New Britain, where the names of our members who died on the job are etched in stone.



Mike Fitts of ConnectiCOSH speaks at Workers Memorial Day.

We honored the memory of Nick Yetishefsky of AFSCME Local 1026, a Metropolitan District Commission employee who passed away last October. Nick's wife Meg, his sister-in-law Beth and his mother-in-law Betty Kuehnel, a retired Council 4 Staff Representative, joined us on this solemn day.

“Nick believed in the union and every day he went home to a family he loved dearly, a family that loved him in return,” said Council 4 Executive Director Sal Luciano.

ConnectiCOSH Executive Director Michael Fitts noted that 14 workers die on the job every day. “Any number [of workplace fatalities] higher than zero is unacceptable,” he said.

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work hard for my money. Mine is a modest salary in a state like Connecticut, where the cost of living is so high. Because I live in Stafford, my dollars stay right here in my community. My job has a beneficial financial ripple effect on Stafford, its small business and the jobs they create.

Interestingly, a high level of education is not uncommon in the public sector. A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute found that public sector employees are much more highly educated than those in the private sector. In fact, 54% of state and local public sector workers hold at least a four year college degree, compared to 35% in the private sector.

The same study found that state and municipal employees are undercompensated by 3.7% when compared to similar employees in the private sector. State employees are undercompensated by as much as 7.6%.

So I find it ironic that many of our elected officials, who have pensions and other benefits, are the first ones to suggest that the rest of us sacrifice ours in a bogus attempt to balance a budget. To face that kind of onslaught, I believe that we continue to need to have a united front.

Organized labor is increasingly the last line of defense for the middle class against the corporate and big money interests (the 1% everyone talks about). My faith in labor is why I am president of AFSCME Local 1303-427, representing the workers at the library.

I am proud to say that since the Stafford Library workers unionized six years ago, we have strengthened our voice on the jobs, enabling us to better protect services while modestly improving our standard of living.

Unfortunately, the recession, caused by the collapse of the Wall Street “casino” economy, means that libraries continue to confront severe budget cuts while our

communities, especially our children, desperately need library services.

My friends like to tell me I became a librarian for the money; the power and fame are just a bonus. All kidding aside, public services workers are not the reason for the financial collapse, but we can be a force to make our economy strong again.

Ridgefield, continued from page 1

someone with no discipline problems at all.”

Fortunately for Chansouk, his union stepped up to reverse the firing. Local 838 filed a grievance, which Council 4 pursued through arbitration, arguing that Chansouk's firing was without cause.

McKinnon argued that termination was unjustified for a dedicated, long-term employee. “The last test of just cause asks whether the punishment fits the crime,” McKinnon said. “In this case, the employer is completely overreaching in its response to a misunderstanding.”

Arbitrator Laurie Cain, Esq. agreed with Council 4. In an April 9 decision, she ruled the Ridgefield Board of Education violated the “just cause” language within the collective bargaining agreement and reduced Chansouk's penalty to an unpaid suspension instead of termination. “The penalty was too harsh for the infraction,” Cain wrote.

“Khamphiou's case is a textbook example of why workers need unions,” said Local 838 President Rick Ferreira. “Without a union, we're at the mercy of the employer. We appreciate the hard work Lisa McKinnon and (Field Representative) Bob Parziale put into this case. It paid off for Khamphiou and our Local.”

Get Union Smart! Text message “CT” to AFSCME (237263) for the latest updates and alerts *standard rates apply

Westport Supervisors Vote to Join Council 4



Newly elected executive board members of the Westport Supervisors Union, AFSCME Local 818-59, take their oath of office. Standing, l-r: Scott Sullivan (Vice President), Mary Young (Secretary), Dan DeVito (President) and Rick Giunta (Treasurer).

Council 4 is proud to represent the Westport Supervisors Union, AFSCME Local 818-59. The bargaining unit represents 18 supervisory employees who voted to join Council 4 in a union representation election.

Newly elected union President Daniel DeVito, Operations Supervisor for the Parks and Recreation Department, said it's more important than ever for town employees in Westport to have a voice at work.

"The town is cutting back so much on services and people" DeVito said. "Being part of Council 4 gives us more strength. It's good to have someone backing us up."

Council 4 and Local 818-59 have begun the process of negotiating a first-ever collective bargaining agreement with the Town of Westport.

Council 4 Union Night at the New Britain Rock Cats



**Saturday, June 30, 2012 @ 6:35 p.m.
New Britain Stadium at Willow Park
New Britain, CT**

Come see the Class AA Rock Cats take on the Bowie Baysox. Free tickets available on a first-come, first serve basis.

**Contact Scott Soares of Council 4 at:
(860) 989-9110 or ssoares@council4.org**

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Council 4

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President: Clarke King (Local 1716)

Secretary: Anna Montalvo (Local 1522)

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