

# the **4**WORD

The Voice of Council 4 AFSCME Connecticut

December 2009

What's Inside

## Living and Working in the Age of H1N1



Across the state, Council 4 members like Guilford school nurse and Local 1303-314 President Mary Crosby (pictured left, with two of her middle school students), must deal with a new nemesis to workplace health and safety: H1N1, better known as swine flu. Find out how union members are responding.

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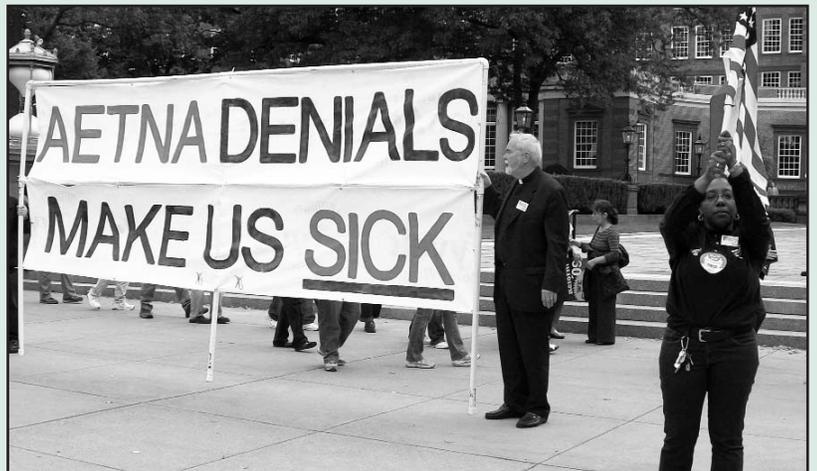
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## **“We Do Have Death Panels. They’re Called Insurance Companies.”**

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka wasn’t kidding when he said that. Insurance companies run death panels when they deny coverage. Council 4 members are joining with other concerned citizens under the Health Care for American Now! banner to stand up to Big Insurance. At right, Council 4’s Kathy Jackson, waves the American flag during a rally in front of Aetna Insurance headquarters in Hartford.

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## Generic Croutons and Sweaters Are Not Solutions to the Economic Crisis



When Connecticut's economic crisis began to unfold last November, Governor Rell called a meeting of state employee unions at Dinosaur State Park to hear what her economic advisors had to say. Before Rell's "advisors" spoke, the governor took a moment to let us know that she understood what people were going through.

When times get tough, she pointed out, people have to tighten their belts and make tough choices. Rell told us she understood this because of the hardship she and her family were enduring. The governor provided a real-life example: Her daughter had called from Colorado, concerned because, instead of buying the Pepperidge Farms croutons her husband preferred, she had to buy store-brand croutons!

Governor Rell told us another personal anecdote. Only a few nights before, rather than turn up the heat in her home, she chose to put on a sweater. Tough choices, that she – and everyone else – were being forced to make.

Fast forward a year. Last month, an investigation by Ted Mann of the New London Day uncovered \$223,000 of taxpayer money the Governor spent on a "study" to streamline government. But e-mails between the University of Connecticut pollster Ken Dautrich and Rell's chief of staff, Lisa Moody, revealed Rell was in truth seeking political advice on how to frame her message on the economic crisis.

The two pieces of advice Rell got for \$223,000 received are very interesting. One was to personalize her approach, hence, the croutons.

Really? At a time when people are losing their jobs and homes, the governor should talk about croutons? Adding insult to injury, Rell proceeded to make massive cuts to public services that people needed more than ever while resisting the imperative of raising taxes on the wealthy and closing corporate tax loopholes.

The second piece of advice Governor Rell took was that people wanted to see sales taxes raised to solve the economic crisis. I'm not a math teacher, but I still know how to add things up. Raising the sales tax would do nothing to help people make ends meet. It would only make things worse.

What's more, the public understands that as well. While Governor Rell was spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on a "study" that involved only nine people, the State Employee Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC), conducted a real survey of real voters.

SEBAC's survey contacted over 500 voters, which is a typically representative sample in polling. The SEBAC survey asked voters which would be best to solve Connecticut's economic crisis: Raising income taxes on millionaires and closing corporate tax loopholes; or laying off public service workers; or cutting public services.

Overwhelmingly, people chose increasing taxes on millionaires and closing corporate tax loopholes. Undoubtedly the state legislature had similar information that gave it the impetus to enact tax increases for families earning over \$500,000.

It is truly unfortunate that Governor Rell has chosen to ignore the will of the people time and again by continually cutting public services.

In fact, Governor Rell failed to heed the advice of her own economic advisors. At that same meeting at Dinosaur State Park, Rell's own advisors declared that the most important thing NOT to do during an economic crisis was cut funding for public services and education.

Instead, Rell, made those cuts and wants to make more, even though new studies have shown that cutting public services and programs will lead to the loss of 50,000 jobs in Connecticut.

Governor Rell's misuse of taxpayer money to get political advice is just one more example of her poor leadership and questionable ethical behavior. Unfortunately, we will have to wait one more year before we can exercise our rights under the democratic process, and elect a governor who will offer us real solutions, not croutons and sweaters.

In solidarity,

Sal Luciano  
Executive Director

## New Report Criticizes Red Cross on Donor, Worker Safety

Millions of Americans contribute blood and money to the Red Cross with the belief that the organization is well run and the blood supply is protected. But a new Jobs with Justice report raises serious concerns about donor safety and the security of the nation's blood supply.

The investigative report, *Labor Relations at the American Red Cross and Its Impact on Employee and Donor Safety*, outlines practices that jeopardize blood donors' safety and the integrity of the blood supply, including long work hours that lead to fatigue and mistakes; sharp pay cuts that cause dramatic increases in employee turnover and hiring non-qualified workers instead of certified nurses.

According to Philip Dine, an award-winning journalist and author of the report, "Few national institutions have a prouder name or a more storied history than the American Red Cross. But many frontline blood workers see the Red Cross as an employer that is increasingly determined to cut expenses and increase revenues, even to the potential detriment of donor safety, employee wellbeing and the security of the nation's blood supply."

Dine interviewed Red Cross workers around the country, including Christine Holschlag, president of Local 3145 and a phlebotomist at the Connecticut Blood Services Region of the Red Cross. (You can view Dine's report at [www.council4.org](http://www.council4.org) by clicking on the "Campaign For Safe Blood")



Connecticut Red Cross workers are currently fighting the company's practice of using unlicensed personnel, instead of licensed nurses, to perform a common type of blood collection procedure known as the double red procedure.

Responding to our members' concerns, the State Department of Public Health issued a letter to the Red Cross stating that the practice of delegating the 'double red' procedure to unlicensed personnel must be corrected.

"Red Cross employees are the watchdogs of the blood supply. We will continue to take a stand for public safety," said Local 3145's Melissa Carter, a registered nurse.

Local 3145 members have been working without a contract since April and are preparing for the possibility of a strike to protect blood safety.

## Council 4 Staff Representative Nick D'Andrea Retires

Council 4 Staff Representative Nick D'Andrea retired Oct. 1 after a 40-year career in the Connecticut labor movement organizing and mobilizing workers to improve their lives.

Nick's rich career included working at the former Scoville/Century Brass plant in Waterbury, where he was a leader on the shop floor, mobilizing his fellow UAW members. Nick went on to work for UAW Region 9A as well as the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union and the Machinists Union.

Nick joined Council 4 in 1984, serving as a staff representative for 25 years. Throughout the entirety of his career, he recognized the interconnection between politics, organizing and negotiating.



Nick D'Andrea

"I've had the time of my life," Nick reflected. "Where else but the labor movement can you come from the working class and make a difference in helping deliver justice on the job on behalf of working families?"

We congratulate Nick and thank him for his substantial contributions to our members.

## In Memoriam: Theresa Foss

Local 818 member Theresa Foss, who served as Plainfield's Animal Control Officer, died Oct. 8 at the age of 47. A wife and mother of three, Terry was a dedicated public service worker who enjoyed her work and loved animals. She will be sorely missed.

Karen Jones, a spokeswoman for the Connecticut Municipal Animal Control Officers Association, said Foss is believed to be the first animal control officer in Connecticut to die in the line of duty.

The Council 4 union family extends our deepest sympathy to Theresa's family and friends.

## Catch Us On Facebook

You can now find Council 4 on Facebook. Just log onto [facebook.com](http://facebook.com) and type "Council 4" in the search box. Our Facebook page is another way to stay on top of what our union is doing on the job and in our communities.



## CJTS Workers “Flip-Flop” for Haitian School Children

Members of Local 2663 (P-2 Social & Human Services) who work at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School in Middletown played a major role in a unique campaign to provide desperately needed shoes to impoverished residents of Haiti.

CJTS employees, along with Department of Children & Families Central Office staff, recently donated more than 200



From left: Ida Suarez, Bill Rosenbeck, Local 2663's Fred Phillips and the Rev. James Walker.

pairs of shoes to Flip Flops for Haiti, a non-denominational program sponsored by the Phillips CME Church in Hartford.

Local 2663 Steward Fred Phillips is a Youth Service Officer (YSO) at CJTS and an active member of the church. He jumped at the opportunity to marshal support for the campaign after talking to residents and staff at CJTS.

“The stories you hear [about Haiti] touch you,” Phillips said. “Collecting flip-flops is a simple but powerful way to help people in need.”

According to the Rev. James Walker, Pastor of Phillips CME Church, CJTS/DCF employees made the largest personal contribution of flip-flops outside of church members. “Fred and the CJTS staff have been a godsend,” he said.

Ida Suarez, a missionary liaison for the Phillips church, said Haiti's poverty is evident in many ways, including a lack of practical shoes for children to wear when they play in hot, humid weather. “It's something people take for granted,” she explained.

YSOs N'Gai Lobon, Ray Monteiro and Christine Muzik, along with CJTS Superintendent Bill Rosenbeck and DCF Central Office's Luz Lozano, also played a major role in the Flip Flops for Haiti campaign.

## Board Decision Supports Derby Workers' Case Against Privatization

The Connecticut State Board of Labor Relations recently sided with Council 4, ordering the town of Derby to cease and desist from using a private company to operate the transfer station.

The board's ruling came in response to an unfair labor practice complaint Council 4 filed against the town on behalf of Local 1303-006, which represents Derby Public Works employees. Council 4 successfully argued that the town ignored the collective bargaining agreement when it extended a sub-contracting agreement with Annex Associates to run the transfer station and perform bargaining unit work.

“This case was about more than protecting our work. Our goal was to stop corrupt privatization,” said Local 1303-006 President Ron Luneau. “We're thankful that we have a great union like Council 4 to back us up.”



From left: Local 1303-006 members Billy Tiano, Mike Piscioneri and Ron Luneau, along with Council 4 Staff Rep Jim Castelot.

Council 4 Staff Representative James Castelot served as spokesman for Local 1303-006 before the labor board. According to Castelot, the town of Derby has refused to comply with the labor board's ruling that its representatives sit down with Council 4 and negotiate the impact on bargaining unit members that arose from the use of a private company.

“We will file a non-compliance complaint with the labor board,” Castelot said. “We're not going to stop until the town of Derby does right by its workers and residents.”

**Privatization EQUALS  
Corruption**  
COUNCIL 4  
AFSCME

## A Newly Declared National Emergency, Swine Flu Challenges Council 4 Members At Work

**M**ary Crosby of Local 1303-314, a school nurse at Adams Middle School in Guilford, reminds two of her students to cough into their sleeves and wash their hands. Chris Thomas of Local 1303-183, the assistant sanitarian for the town of New Milford, greets a visitor to her office in a slightly non-traditional manner, using a slight elbow bump instead of a handshake.

They're not going through the motions. Like many AFSCME members, Crosby and Thomas are dealing with the H1N1 virus, better known as swine flu, as part of their jobs.

Swine flu is the latest example of a pandemic flu virus that spreads quickly and easily around the globe. President Obama on Oct. 24 declared swine flu a national emergency.

"I've definitely seen more and more kids become ill with flu-like symptoms," Crosby said in early October. "We're going to have increased flu cases. That will definitely tax the workforce."



*Christine Thomas, Local 1303-183, Town of New Milford. She's holding an "Emergency Survival Guide" that the town is distributing free of charge to residents and businesses.*

Guilford High School closed for two days the following week after several students came down with the flu. The Guilford school system, meanwhile, is tracking ill students, conducting education campaigns in each school, and designating "sick rooms" to quarantine students and staff.

The New Milford Health Department recently held a pediatric flu shot drill as part of its preparedness plan. Preschoolers are especially vulnerable to pandemic flus.

"Our health department is extremely busy and H1N1 is one of the reasons," Thomas said. "The challenge is how quickly we can react when something like this happens."

New Milford is also reaching out to the businesses community. "Businesses need to have contingency operations in place. They're going to have to rethink policies about attendance," Thomas said. "If parents don't have sick time,

then they're going to work sick. So you have a definite multiplier effect."

Pandemic flu viruses like H1N1 present challenges for workers in many realms, including public safety. "We're constantly dealing with the threat of infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis, HIV and MRSA" said Local 1565 member Steve Curran, a correctional officer at Garner Correctional Institution in Newtown, which houses inmates diagnosed with mental health problems.

The NP-4 Corrections Bargaining Unit (Locals 387, 391 and 1565) participates in regular labor-management meetings to address health and safety issues like pandemic flu. DOC has issued an H1N1 protocol for employees. "Employers have to be held accountable for providing the safest work environment possible," Curran noted.

Members of Local 566, representing Hartford school custodial, maintenance and kitchen staff, took their swine flu concerns public, saying they lack both the manpower (due to layoffs) and cleaning supplies. "Hartford test scores are improving, but kids deserve the cleanest, healthiest and safest educational environment possible," Local 566 President Levey Kardulis said. "They're not getting that right now."

Crosby and her fellow union members in Guilford are pushing the issue of professional development and front-line staffing to the forefront, incorporating their concerns into current contract negotiations. "We need to protect the quality of our work in order to protect the kids," she said.

### Tips For Staying Healthy

**Get vaccinated.** Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people. Vaccination is the best protection we have against flu. Seasonal flu vaccine is available now and initial doses of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine also are available, with additional doses available later this year.

#### Take everyday actions to stay healthy:

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash when done.

Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread that way.

Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.

Find healthy ways to deal with stress and anxiety.

**Stay informed** by clicking on the Center for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> or calling 1-800-CDC-INFO for more information.

### WHAT LAWS ARE THERE TO PROTECT WORKERS?

There are currently no laws that specifically protect workers from pandemic influenza. AFSCME has petitioned OSHA for an emergency temporary standard to protect health care workers, emergency responders and other essential personnel at risk.

For more information, visit AFSCME's website at [www.afscme.org/issues/73.cfm](http://www.afscme.org/issues/73.cfm) or the AFL-CIO's site at [www.aflcio.org/issues/safety/pandemic\\_influenza.cfm](http://www.aflcio.org/issues/safety/pandemic_influenza.cfm).

## Code Orange: Union Members Rally To Support The Richard Family



Local 391's Tim Richard receives his retirement badge from CRCI Warden Christine Whidden.

In the parlance of the state prison system, “Code Orange” means a correctional employee is down and needs help. “Code Orange” is also the name of a benefit raffle to mobilize support for Local 391 member Tim Richard and his family as they confront extraordinary hardship.

Earlier this summer, Tim, a 22-year DOC veteran, collapsed at home – the night before his wife AnnMarie was scheduled for surgery for ovarian cancer.

Tim was diagnosed with an advanced form of brain cancer. He and AnnMarie underwent surgeries within days of each other and are now undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Tim retired Oct. 1 from duty at Carl Robinson Correctional Institution (CRCI) in Enfield. AnnMarie, a nurse, is still out of work as she receives treatment. As they cope with their medical traumas, Tim and AnnMarie are trying to take care of three children: one daughter in college and twin girls

who live with cerebral palsy and were recently diagnosed with muscular dystrophy.

Co-worker Augie Lopodota, a correctional locksmith union steward for Local 391, jumped into action when he heard about Richard family’s struggles, helping organize the “Code Orange” Benefit Raffle that will take place Dec. 6 during the union’s holiday party for children in Somers. (The top prize is a 50” high definition television.)

“When I learned about [the Richards], I knew we had to do something as a union. I can’t imagine a family going through what the Richards are going through,” Lopodota said.

The state correctional community has rallied around the Richards with an outpouring of financial and emotional support. In October, nearly 100 DOC staffers traveled to Tim’s house for a special roll-call ceremony with CRCI Warden Christine Whidden, who presented him with his retirement badge and a check to help defray medical and other expenses.

“The Richards are an extraordinary family,” Lopodota said. “I know our AFSCME union family will do what they can to help them in their time of need.”

*Tickets for the Code Orange Benefit Raffle on behalf of Tim Richard and his family are \$20. You can purchase raffle tickets by calling AFSCME Local 391 at (860) 745-0391 or logging onto [www.afscmelocal391.com](http://www.afscmelocal391.com). Monetary donations are also welcome. Please make your check out to “The Richards Fund” and mail it to Local 391, 109 Elm ST., 2nd Floor, Enfield, CT 06082. Donations will be deposited in a local credit union administering the fund.*

### “Sick of Big Insurance”

Supporters of real health care reform delivered that message loud and clear during a protest at Aetna's corporate headquarters in Hartford. The Connecticut chapter of Health Care for America Now! (HCAN) sponsored the rally as part of a nationwide day of action to spotlight the insurance industry's well-funded opposition to providing quality, affordable health care to every American.

“There is a battle going on in America,” said Peter Thor, Council 4's Director of Policy and Planning. “The American people are on one side. Big insurance companies like Aetna are on the other. If the insurance companies win, we all lose.”

In a petition sent to Aetna CEO Ron Williams (who earned nearly \$24 million last year), protesters called on the company to reform abusive practices and stop the use of customers' premium payments to fund lobbying against a public health insurance option.

Council 4 members are pressing for real reform that includes a public health insurance option to compete against private insurance companies. “Our health care system is broken. Those of us who are fortunate enough to have good coverage need to step up and make our voice heard for real reform and a public option,” said Gary Klein, a Department of Public Health employee and member of AFSCME Local 355.

### Public Supports ‘Public Option’

Would you support or oppose **having the government create a new health insurance plan** to compete with private health insurance plans?



*Public support for a public health insurance option is increasing, according to a new Washington Post/ABC News poll. 57 percent of all Americans now favor a public option, up from 52 percent in mid-August. In addition, the poll found that the majority of people — more than 60% — oppose a tax on benefits. Learn more at [www.afscmeblog.org](http://www.afscmeblog.org)*

## Report: Low-Income Young Workers Hard Hit

**W**hile all young workers face a tougher economic reality in 2009 than they did in 1999, low-income workers face particularly tough economic challenges. The new AFL-CIO and Working America report, “Young Workers a Lost Decade,” chronicles a future of economic doubts and a present of lower-paid jobs, fewer benefits and longer hours than under-35 workers faced a decade ago.

More than half of all young workers live on the low-income end of the wage scale, earning less than \$30,000 a year. Three quarters of those workers say prices are rising faster than their incomes, and seven out of 10 say they do not have enough money saved to cover just two months of living expenses.

If they get sick, not only are young workers likely to lose a day’s wages if they stay home, they’ll pay for health care out of their own pockets. Less than half have paid sick leave—compared to 70 percent of workers who earn more than \$30,000 a year—and 44 percent do not have health insurance.

Further education could offer a path out the low-income world for many young workers, but the rising cost of education, coupled with their low-wages, is moving that dream further out of reach. Some 43 percent of low-income workers say they have put off education or professional development because of the cost, and 54 percent say they are worried about being able to pay for further education.

Overall, young workers have a clear vision for reinvigorating the economy, and it’s largely summed up by one short word—JOBS. But few trust their own employer to do what’s best for employees. Even fewer have confidence in corporate America as a whole. When asked who is most responsible for the country’s economic woes, close to 60 percent of young workers place the blame on Wall Street and banks or corporate CEOs. Read the report on [www.council4.org](http://www.council4.org).



## Stimulus Program Helps Council 4 Train Workers

**T**hanks in part to the Obama administration’s federal Economic Stimulus package, New Britain residents Katherine Gaud and Angel Echevarria spent 10 productive weeks working for Council 4’s Strategic Information Services (SIS) department.

Gaud, 18, and Echevarria, 21, came to Council 4 by way of the Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program. The Program was coordinated by the United Labor Agency and overseen in Connecticut by Capital Workforce Partners.

“They have been exceptional workers,” said SIS Coordinator Carla Simmons, who supervised Gaud and Echevarria. Projects accomplished during their tenure include scanning current collective bargaining agreements into files, organizing grievance and arbitration award files and systematizing Council 4’s records room.



From left: Katherine Gaud, Council 4’s Carla Simmons and Angel Echevarria.

“This experience will definitely help me in the future. I never considered an office-type position before.” Echevarria said.

Gaud added, “Working [for Council 4] taught me so much in a short time. Developing my computer skills in an employment setting was really helpful.”

## Local 2480 Honors Retirees, Elects Officers



Council 4 Local 2480, representing administrators, counselors and librarians, at Connecticut’s community technical colleges, held their annual meeting at Council 4. The Local honored two long time employees, Karen Aubin and Doug Fichtel, who are retiring with a combined 74 years of experience. Pictured above, from left: Council 4 Executive Director Sal Luciano, Local 2480 member Karen Aubin, Local 2480 President Bill Chagnon and Local 2480 member Doug Fichtel.

Local 2480 also elected their new officers. Pictured below, from left: Vice President Ted Hale, Secretary Ruth Krebs, Treasurer Dania Williams and President Bill Chagnon. Local 2480 members help students at Capitol Community, Gateway Community, Naugatuck Valley, Norwalk Community and Three Rivers Community Colleges.



## Local 1303 Elects New Officers



**C**ongratulations to the newly elected officers of AFSCME Local 1303, the umbrella union representing more than 8,000 of our members in our 1303 chapters.

Brian Mitchell of Local 1303-61 is the new President; Don Haggerty of Local 1303-234 is Vice President; John Lorange of 1303-133 is Treasurer; and Mike Giliberto of Local 1303-61 is Secretary.

Also elected as Board members were Vanetta Lloyd (1303-102), Beverly Manes (1303-329), Wayne Wysocki (1303-278) and Rose Valle-Patraw (Local 1303-132). Stacie Harris-Byrdsong (1303-132) and Paul Barrieau (1303-161) were elected as Council 4 Delegates.

Mitchell succeeds Ed Zimnoch, who recently retired.

"It's an honor to succeed Ed, who did so much for our members. I'm excited about working with our new officers and continuing to move this union forward in an exciting new direction," Mitchell. "Now more than ever, we need to stand up for our rights, whether it's at the bargaining table, at the state legislature or local town councils, or in the media."

## COUNCIL 4 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & CONVENTION

Friday, April 9 - Sunday, April 11, 2010  
Hilton Stamford Hotel  
One First Stamford Place  
Stamford, CT 06902

Registration Fee: \$100 per person  
Hotel Rate: \$119 per day

Agenda includes workshops, guest speakers and election for Council 4 Executive Board

Stay updated on [council4.org](http://council4.org)



### Council 4

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