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Citizen's Oil Co-op is excited to provide a new opportunity for savings on electricity and propane. Since 1992, Citizen's Oil Co-op, Inc. has provided Connecticut consumers with competitively lower prices for full-service home heating oil.

Citizen's Oil Co-op, Inc. has partnered to help members save money on their electric bill. Due to deregulation of electric generation services competing market providers can now offer a reduced price on electricity. Citizen's Oil Co-op, Inc. is extending electricity at a discounted rate based on a member's kilowatt usage. Discount savings average from 5%-20% lower than CL&P or UI.

It is free to sign up. There are no hidden or cancellation fees, no long term contracts, and rates are all-inclusive. CL&P or UI will still remain your service provider and continue to handle billing process. Citizen's Oil Co-op serves both residential and commercial customers.

Propane companies associated with Citizen's Oil Co-op offer 24-hour service along with automatic delivery. Co-op members pay less for propane through group purchasing power. If you are already a member of the Oil Co-op, there is no additional membership fee. If you are not a co-op member there is annual membership fee of \$25 (\$15 for seniors), and a \$10 application fee. No fees for electricity. For more information call (860) 561-6011 or visit our website at www.oilco-op.com. Click "Now Offering Electricity" to sign up.

Get the latest news, info and opinion by clicking on: www.council4.org.

Be sure to bookmark our page and sign up for email alerts!



2010 AFSCME Family Scholarship Deadline Approaching

Looking for financial support for college? Each year the **AFSCME Family Scholarship Program** provides at least 10 \$2,000 scholarships to high school seniors that will be renewed for \$2,000 each year for a maximum of four years, provided the student remains enrolled in a full-time course of study. The scholarship may be used for any field of study.

To be eligible, you must be a graduating high school senior in 2010; a daughter, son or financially dependent grandchild of an active or retired AFSCME member; and an applicant to an accredited college or university and subsequently accepted as a full-time student in a four year degree program.

To apply, you must meet all eligibility requirements as identified above. Make sure your complete application, with all support documentation (essay, transcripts, letters of recommendations, SAT or ACT scores, proof of AFSCME membership, etc.), is mailed together in one envelope, **POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 31, 2009**, to:

AFSCME Family Scholarship Program

Attention: AFSCME Advantage

1625 L Street, N.W.

Washington, DC 20036

If you have any questions, please call (202) 429-5066.

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the 4WORD

The Voice of Council 4 AFSCME Connecticut

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“What Would Clara Barton Think?”



Delores Wright, front, of Local 3145 is joined by Tim O’Neill of Local 1378 as Red Cross blood collection workers rallied outside company headquarters in Farmington.

American Red Cross blood collection workers represented by Council 4 Local 3145 may be forced to strike by a company whose private behavior is a troubling contrast to its public image as a humanitarian organization founded by the nurse Clara Barton. [Story on page 5.](#)



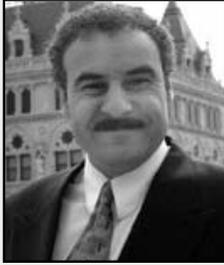
Local 3145 Executive Board member John Laszko and his co-workers are fighting to protect the blood supply.

Connecticut’s Economic Crisis: A Question of Choices

A group calling itself “Billionaires for Budget Cuts” recently staged a press conference at the State Capitol to thank Gov. Rell for lining up on the side of Connecticut’s wealthiest taxpayers and largest corporations. Subversive street theater? Absolutely. But the creative forces behind “Billionaires for Budget Cuts” (Connecticut Working Families) proved their point: Cutting public services in an economic crisis is the wrong way to go. Learn how our members are dealing with the budget fallout. [Stories on Page 6.](#)



MAKING UP MINDS



When the General Assembly overrode the governor's veto of the "Sustinet" health care reform bill in June, legislators were telling the governor and the country that Connecticut would not shrink from a leadership role in reforming the Nation's badly broken health care system.

Sustinet is a complete program that will provide quality affordable health care to all of Connecticut's citizens. It provides all the elements any good American health care package should contain: high quality health care availability for all; choice of public or private plans (yes, Connecticut passed a "public option"); no pre-existing condition exclusions; and importantly programs to reduce health care costs by improving—not cutting—health care quality and access.

It is ironic that in Connecticut our congressional delegation finds itself shouted down by people who oppose a federal plan similar to the Sustinet plan that was overwhelmingly supported by Connecticut citizens. What happened?

Loud rowdy mobs have been disrupting congressional town hall meetings across the country as our elected members of Congress go about the task for overhauling our train wreck of a health care system. Organized by far-right and corporate backed anti-health care reform and anti-government groups (nicknamed "tea-baggers") the screamers and shouters are bent on destroying reform.

To accomplish that, they must stifle discussion and instill fear. They want us to trade fear for facts – because the facts are against them. So, they want us to think, "Don't confuse me with facts; my mind's made up."

We've seen the screams and hysteria firsthand. At Congressman Chris Murphy's Simsbury community forum, tea-baggers taunted a handful of health care reform supporters, including Council 4 members and staff. At a Hartford town hall meeting with Sen. Chris Dodd and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sibelius, a few tea-baggers called on Dodd to commit suicide as a way to cure his recently diagnosed prostate cancer.

What is being lost in the media coverage of orchestrated outrage is that the majority of Americans say:

—The U.S. health care system is badly broken and costs too much.

—The health insurance industry has far too much influence on how health care is delivered.

—All of us have at least one relative, often a child, who works hard but has no coverage at all.

At most of these town halls, the large majority want real discussion about health care reform. The tea-baggers call those of us helping to ensure that happens "Socialists," "Communists," "Hitlerites" and other names that cannot be printed here.

So who are these advocates of health care reform?

Those good Americans campaigning for good quality affordable health insurance are Republicans, Democrats and independents. They are small business associations, religious leaders, community service organizations, municipal and state legislative leaders, and I am very proud to say, unions and especially members of Council 4 AFSCME.

Opponents of health care reform may be loud and obnoxious, but they are not the majority. This is no time to back away from key health care reform principles, including:

- (1) A strong public health insurance plan to give working families health coverage choices.
- (2) Shared responsibility, including an employer "play or pay" provision.
- (3) Fair financing that does not tax health benefits.
- (4) An end to insurance company abuses, including pre-existing condition exclusions. (The insurers promised Congress they would fix that in 1993, while opposing President Clinton's health care plan. Do you think they forgot?)

Lost amid the shout-downs and freak-outs is a simple fact: Major health care reform is closer than ever to passage, and it is no secret that special interests want to kill it outright or severely weaken it.

If you have any questions about health care, SustiNet or the pending legislation, please call me. If we can't answer your question, we'll get the answer and get right back to you. Health care reform is complicated. A good solution requires good information.

Having examined the facts closely, I have made up my mind: It's time for real health care reform. That's why I fought for SustiNet, and it's why I support the reform effort making its way through Congress right now.

In solidarity

Sal Luciano

Executive Director

Legislators Overrides Rell's Veto of Sustinet, Prison Safety Bills; Falls One Vote Short on Health Care Pooling Bill

A strong push by members of Council 4's NP-4 Corrections Bargaining Unit helped convince the state legislature overwhelmingly voted to override Gov. Rell's veto of a prison safety bill.



NP-4 Leaders held a press conference urging state lawmakers to override Gov. Rell's veto.

Legislators voted 131-10 in the House and 33-3 in the Senate on July 20 to reverse Rell's earlier veto of Public Act 09-223 which will create a permanent committee responsible for overseeing the health and safety of correctional staff who work in the state's prisons.

"Our members walk Connecticut's toughest beat, and that beat is only getting tougher" AFSCME Local 391 President Jon Pepe said. "This legislation won't cost taxpayers any money, but it will save lives."

Thanks to continuing pressure from AFSCME members, other trade unionists, and our community and healthcare allies, Connecticut legislators had the courage and support they needed on July 20 to override Governor Rell's veto of

SustiNet, Connecticut's universal health care bill. The Sustinet roll call votes in each chamber were: House 102-40 and Senate 24-12. Now that Sustinet is the law of the state (Public Act No. 09-148), by 2012 hundreds of thousands of people in Connecticut will start getting the affordable and quality healthcare that we all deserve.

Unfortunately, the Senate was not able to muster the votes needed to override Rell's veto of the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership, which would have allowed employees of municipalities, schools, small businesses, and non-profits to join the state health plan's pool. This legislation, originally proposed by the state union coalition, would have brought down skyrocketing health care expenses in local communities across the state. The veto override fell one vote short because Democratic Senator Joan Hartley of Waterbury, an ally of the the insurance industry that opposed the bill, left the chamber before voting.



Nearly 200 Council 4 members and retirees packed the State Capitol this spring for our 2009 Labor Lobby Day.

Coalition Bargaining Works For East Hartford Housing Authority

East Hartford Housing Authority workers discovered that strength in numbers leads to a successful bargaining outcome. Bolstered by multi-union bargaining that included members of AFSCME Local 1303-353 and AFSCME Local 818, as well as CSEA, the workers reached agreement on a new contract that includes

substantial wage increases over the next three years and health security through a new master agreement.

The master agreement on health care locks in both coverage and cost for the next seven years, capping our members' co-insurance rates at 7% of today's health insurance costs. The new collective bargaining agreement also secured retiree insurance for 17 union members.

"This contract provides a tremendous sense of security for our members," said Local 1303-353 President Steven Kiniry. "We're dedicated to our jobs and to public housing."

Added Local 818 President Alan Harrison, "Bargaining in coalition made us stronger and more effective, both in representing our members and advocating for the services we provide to our tenants."

Council 4 Staff Representatives Jason Wells and Tricia Cardin served as co-spokespeople during negotiations with the Housing Authority.



Council 4 Staff Representative Jason Wells; Local 818 President Allen Harrison; Council 4 Staff Representative Tricia Cardin; and Local 1303-353 President Steven Kiniry.

Investing In The Future: 1303 Chapter Awards Scholarships



From left: Gena Hallisey, Kara Hallisey, Abby Grommisch, Colleen Grommisch and Ed Zimnoch.

Call it an investment in the future and a way of giving back. AFSCME Local 1303, representing more than 8,000 municipal and non-profit human service employees, awarded eight \$1,000 college scholarships to the children of local union members.

The eight high school seniors were awarded their scholarships from a large pool of applicants who authored an essay, "How Does Being Part of a Union Family Benefit Your Life."

Among the winners were Kara Hallisey, whose mother Gena is a member of Local 1303-132 (CREC) and Abbey Grommisch, whose mother Colleen is a member of Local 1303-050 (Naugatuck Board of Education).

Kara, a Wethersfield High School graduate, will attend Southern Connecticut State University in the fall. Her essay focused on how Local 1303 members have rallied around paraprofessional Vanessa Dumas-Console of Local 1303-132 in her battle with breast cancer (The 4-Word, February 2009), raising money to defray health care costs and trying to donate sick days.

"Vanessa's story taught me that unions do more than fight for employees' rights in the workplace," Kara wrote. "I learned the meaning of 'union family,' a family made up of compassionate people who reach out to their own."

Catch Us On Facebook

Council 4 introduced a new look for our website (www.council4.org) earlier this year. Now you can also find us on Facebook.

Simply log onto 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.



Abbey, a Woodland Regional High School graduate, will attend the University of Connecticut this fall. She wrote about the multitude of union benefits that have provided the Grommisch family with security in troubled economic times.

"During my recovery from [tonsillitis] surgery, my mother was able to take paid time off from her job to stay with me. I was in a lot of pain and taking medication; it was comforting to have her home," Abbey reflected.

Congratulations to Abbey, Kara and all the winners of the Local 1303 scholarship winners listed below, with their union parent's name in parenthesis:

Jaelyn D'Albero - Central CT State University (Jutta D'Albero- Local 1303-124)

Brittany Garofola - Southern CT State University (Cheryl Garofola- Local 1303-254)

Abbey Grommisch - University of Connecticut (Coleen Grommisch- Local 1303-050)

Kara Hallisey - Southern CT State University (Gena Hallisey- Local 1303-132)

Mary-Beth Kinchen - Gettysburg College (Richard Ballard Local 1303-261)

Tess O'Rourke - Western New England College (Leslie O'Rourke- Local 1303-197)

Ryan Ohanesian - Keene State College (Tammy Ohanesian- Local 1303-408)

Priya Ranade - University of Connecticut (Jyotsna Ranade- Local 1303-209)

ATTENTION ALL AFSCME LOCAL 1303 MEMBERS:

The AFSCME Local 1303 Annual Meeting for the Election of Officers will take place at 10 AM on Saturday, October 17th, 2009 at Council 4 in New Britain.

There will be door prizes and delicious refreshments served. (Union membership card is required to attend.)

For More Information, Call (860) 612-3847.

Local 3145 Members Fight Back As Red Cross Tries To Put Profits Ahead Of Safety

Members of Council 4 Local 3145 are at the forefront of a national campaign to tell the American Red Cross that donor, recipient, and worker safety must come first.

In their most recent action, Red Cross blood collection workers rallied in front the Connecticut Blood Services region office in Farmington. The Aug. 5 rally drew statewide media attention as blood collection workers protested the company's plans to boost profits by jeopardizing the safety of our blood supply and mistreating workers.

"Three years ago, we sacrificed substantially during negotiations to help the Red Cross sell a competitive product," said Local 3145 President Debra Lenentine, who works as a phlebotomist. "The Red Cross is all about big money and bigger profits at the expense of donor and worker safety."

For 15 years, the Red Cross has been under a federal court order to improve its blood donor operation. Despite \$21 million in fines since 2003, it continues to fall short.

AFSCME Local 3145 represents 225 Red Cross blood collection workers who have worked without a contract since their three-year collective bargaining agreement expired in April. The bargaining unit consists of phlebotomists, nurses, drivers, apheresis, laboratory technicians and more.

"What would Clara Barton, the nurse who founded the Red Cross, have to say about all this?" said Local 3145 member Sarah Emmons, a registered nurse who works on blood drives. "She intended for the Red Cross to be a humanitarian organization, not a business driven by corporate greed."

Rather than pay its workers a decent wage, the Red Cross is trying to force employees to work unlimited hours, replace nurses with unlicensed supervisors, slash workers' health care and cut or freeze wages.



Local 3145's Aaron Mitchell and his son Xavier participated in the Aug. 5 rally. Aaron's sign refers to efforts by the company to reduce hours of rest between blood drives.

For 15 years, the Red Cross has been under a federal court order to improve its blood donor operation. Despite \$21 million in fines since 2003, it continues to fall short, according to the *New York Times*.

Since national Red Cross officials have taken over contract negotiations that used to be handled by local or regional officials, "the respect for the employees has totally disappeared," said Local 3145's Victor Perez.



State Rep. and Council 4 staffer Joe Aresimowicz, left, Sen. Don DeFronzo pledged to support legislation requiring a registered nurse at every Red Cross blood drive. The Red Cross wants to take unionized nurses out of the bargaining unit and off blood drives.

Local 3145 members are part of a national coalition of Red Cross workers advocating for blood safety. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said the Red Cross' actions demonstrate why workers need to be protected: "For decades there was a great relationship between workers and the Red Cross and it's a shame that they are now engaging in this disgraceful behavior that endangers donors and workers."

Local 3145 members say they hope to avoid a strike by reaching a just and fair agreement. But the possibility of strike grows greater with the company's continued unwillingness to respect its workforce. Stay tuned to www.council4.org for the latest news and action updates.

Southington Union Members School Playscape Campaign

Council 4 AFSCME Local 1303-026, representing 45 Southington town employees, donated \$500 to the campaign to build a playscape on the site of the new South End Elementary School.

"Our union membership unanimously and wholeheartedly supported this donation," said Local 1303-026 President Bob Taylor. "We hope to do more next year to turn the playscape into a reality for Southington's kids."

The new South End School is expected to open in September 2010. "We appreciate the AFSCME union's generosity in these challenging economic times," said South End Principal Sally Kamerbeek.



From left: Local 1303-026 Vice President Steve Pompei, President Bob Taylor, School Principal Sally Kamerbeek and Treasurer Mike Hubeny.

In The Public Service: Newington School Bus Drivers

Newington's public school bus drivers, represented by Local 2930 of Council 4, just finished another school year of proud service to students and families alike.



"I love this town," said Kerry McCusker Townsend, who's been driving for 3 years. "And I absolutely love driving the bus and being there for the kids." Veteran driver Donna Blair echoed those sentiments: "We feel we're very much a part of the educational community. We don't just sit behind the wheel of the bus."

Also exemplifying this spirit of public service is Tong Nguyen, a special education driver, whose commitment extends to making sure parents feel their kids are safe and secure. "I know all the parents and what time they get home," he said.

The bottom line: Newington's school bus drivers believe in public service. "We're dedicated drivers," said Drita Bulica, the union steward. "Parents can call us (with concerns) and we respond immediately. We know every kid's name."

Belonging to a union is major factor in the equation, according to Bulica. "The union gives us a voice. It allows us to advocate for the students we serve," she said.

Council 4 Files Board Charges In Winchester Contract Case

On behalf of the members of AFSCME Local 1303-44, representing Winchester Public Works employees, Council 4 filed a municipal prohibited practice complaint (MPP) against the town for failing to act on a new collective bargaining agreement.

The union and the town agreed to a new three-year agreement earlier this year, but the Winchester Board of Selectmen tabled voting on the agreement, even though it contained concessions by the members.

Under the Municipal Employee Relations Act (MERA), a local governing body has 45 days upon receipt of a tentative agreement to accept or reject the document. If the body takes no action, then the collective bargaining agreement becomes law. Council 4 contends the 45-day window expired May 15.

The case will go to a formal hearing on Nov. 2.

"We're trying our best to help the town in challenging economic times," said Local 1303-44 President Dennis Gomez. "Not living by a contractual agreement is a waste of precious taxpayer dollars and a drain on our morale."



Corrections Local 387 Awards College Scholarships



Local 387 of Council 4, representing State Department of Correction employees in the Cheshire Complex, recently awarded scholarships to the college-bound sons and daughters of members. Pictured from left: David Moffa and son Anthony David (Northeastern University); Thomas Curry, Sr. and Thomas Curry, Jr. (UConn); Benjamin Sanza and Gabriella Sanza (UConn); and Shadia Siliman (University of Hartford) and Adel Siliman. Missing from the photo are students Stephen Dombroski (parent, Richard Scott Dombroski; Rebecca LeClerc, Keen State University (parent Andrew LeClerc); and Michael Monson Jr. (parent, Michael Monson Sr.)

"This is a proud moment for our union," said Local 387 President Dwayne Bickford. "It's truly an honor to help the sons and daughters of our members pursue their educational dreams. Those dreams are made possible by our commitment to public service and to the strength of our union."

Protecting Local Public Services...

Across Connecticut's cities and town, our members are standing up to protect public services during the economic downturn, making choices that are often painful while raising their voice for a better way to raise the revenue that funds local services.

In South Windsor, members of AFSCME Local 1303-028 stepped forward to avert cuts in job and services. The local union, which represents public works employees, reached agreement on a plan to restore the positions of two laid off workers and five demoted workers. The agreement provides job security for all bargaining unit members through 2013 in exchange for a reduce general wage increase.

"You don't need an economic degree to know that cutting public services and public spending will make things worse, not better, for our residents and businesses," said Alec Arnold, President of Local 1303-028, adding that his union will continue to press their own cost savings ideas, including an end to wasteful contracting



South Windsor Public Works employees, Local 1303-028.

In New London, 80 city workers who belong to AFSCME Local 1378 staved off service cuts and layoffs by agreeing to modify their collective bargaining agreement to provide \$150,000 savings to city taxpayers.



Hartford Public Services Coalition members, including Local 1716 President Clarke King, center, talk to the media.

"We all sacrificed to make sure we can continue to make a difference New London residents and businesses," said Local 1378 President Bill Barlow, a city painter

In Hartford, members of Local 1716 are part of the Hartford Public Services Coalition, a group of unions and small business and taxpayer advocates speaking out for a fair budget and seeking a voice in the electoral process.

Local 1716 members recently ratified a job security and savings agreement earlier this summer that provided around \$500,000 in savings to city taxpayers.

"We accepted significant economic concessions to preserve public services and get our city on the road to recovery," said Local 1716 and Council 4 Secretary Clarke King. "But being part of this new coalition will allow us to speak with a more powerful voice, especially in the coming election cycle."

...Mobilizing Support For A Fair State Budget

Hheading into the Labor Day holiday at press time, Connecticut was one of only two states without a budget. (The other was Pennsylvania.). The continued impasse prompted members and leaders of the unions in the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) to spend the summer demonstrating how the Governor's Executive Orders are impacting vital public services.

At press events around the state, we've been informing the public about specific cuts and what they mean for middle-class families and our state's most vulnerable. From services for the elderly, to early childhood education

programs to public safety funding, Connecticut's chief executive has made her choice – to protect the wealthy at the expense of the rest of us.

SEBAC's message has been reinforced by the humorous, but pointed, Billionaires for Budget Cuts campaign. By highlighting the Governor's ill-conceived "no tax on the wealthy" policy, the Billionaires have complimented our members' exposition of the severity of the Governor's cuts to services. (Visit the satirical group's Facebook page or go to the SEBAC website at www.inthistogetherct.org.)

Taken together, the picture is quite clear — Connecticut needs a budget

that raises revenue from those who can afford to pay in order to save the services that all Connecticut residents need, especially in this recession.

That's why we we need your help. Council 4 members see what really happens when the Governor cuts funding for public services. Please write and share your stories. If budget cuts have affected your job, if the people you serve are waiting longer or not getting vital assistance at all, we want to know. Contact Council 4 Public Affairs Coordinator Larry Dorman at (860) 612-3855 or e-mail him at ldorman@council4.org to share your experience today.