

'America Will Succeed When Unions Succeed'



(Photo by Khalid Najji-Allah)

A throng of Volunteer Member Organizers lead delegates to the rally to support Chicago taxi drivers' efforts to organize. See story, Page 2.

Organizing Day at the AFSCME Convention got a surprise video message from the President of the United States, and a boost of energy from the Secretary of Labor on Wednesday.

On a day when delegates heard the stories of brave member activists and Volunteer Member Organizers (VMOs), and adopted six resolutions setting forth the union's organizing strategy going forward, President Obama's message told delegates: "If I were looking for a

good job with good wages that lets me build some security for my family, I'd join a union."

Labor Secretary Perez followed by saying, "America will succeed when unions succeed! Make your voices heard. That's the most important thing we can do to grow the middle class."

Perez also urged us to mobilize to get engaged in the elections in November. "Too many people still don't have a job," he said. "Too many people are working a full-time job and living in poverty." But that can change through political action, he noted. "Make sure that your voices are heard. Elections have consequences!"

Ramogi Huma, president of the newly formed National College Players Association, told delegates why he became involved in organizing for the rights of college athletes and recounted his group's efforts to help Northwestern football players organize. The players won a major victory in March when a regional director of the National Labor Relations Board determined, for the first time, that college athletes are employees and have the right to form their own union.

"After they signed the cards, many doubted that we'd win," he said. "They stood up, they stood together and they won!" He said their victory "ends a period of 60 years in which the NCAA made a pay-for-play system" to skirt federal labor laws.

"I am fully aware that workers' rights are under attack in this country," he noted. "College athletes are not exempt from this.... Those who would try to strip away the rights of college athletes are on the wrong side of history."

Standing up for workers' rights – by organizing – was the theme of Wednesday's special program. VMOs from several states told Convention delegates of their personal experiences about building union strength to protect their rights. They were joined by new AFSCME members from several states who explained why they chose to sign up.

Among them were Susan Rowe, RN, a VMO with Iowa Council 61, and Cory Quist, a law librarian with the state library of Iowa and a newly organized member of Council 61.

Quist and his co-workers were 'at will' employees without union protection. "Because we were not covered by a union contract, the governor could and did target us," he said. "He wanted us to dig into our paychecks and fork over more for health insurance while the state was sitting on a pile of surplus cash. We knew that the only way forward was with the power of a strong union. So we organized!"

"I became a VMO because now more than ever it's important for all us to do our part and organize non-union workers," Rowe explained. "We know the only way to survive in a right-to-work state like Iowa is to grow membership, and to stand united against attacks on rights and benefits."

Vermont home care provider Mary Warren received a warm welcome from Convention delegates as she recalled a three-year effort by the state's providers to build a union with AFSCME. It culminated last year in

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(Photo by Tessa Berg)

Leading the Pledge of Allegiance at AFSCME's Convention in Chicago on Wednesday are Malaeki Lewis (left), whose mother is Cherlyn Poindexter of Connecticut Local 3144 (Council 4); and Justin Hart, whose grandfather is Ronnie Hart of Wisconsin Local 1654 (Council 48). Both boys are 9 years old.

HIGHLIGHTS

ELECTIONS

6 – 10 a.m., McCormick Place North, Level Two, Room N228

CHILD CARE

6 a.m. – 1 hour after session
McCormick Place North, Level One, Rooms N126-N129

WOMEN'S WORLD CAFÉ

8 – 9:30 a.m., McCormick Place South, Level One, Grand Ballroom S-100

BOOTHS

8 a.m. – 1 hour after recess; closed during General Session; McCormick Place North, Level Three, Hall B:

Cyber Dome, Learning Lounge, Pin Trading Post and Affiliate, AFSCME Advantage, Generations United, Information, Labor History, Organizing, PEOPLE, PEOPLE Q+A, Video and Wellness

CONVENTION RECONVENES

10 a.m., McCormick Place North, Level Three, Hall B

PEOPLE T-shirt Day

Program: Building Power With Allies

Speaker: Barb Kalbach, president, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement Action Fund

Speaker: Rev. William Barber, president, North Carolina NAACP

Speaker: Paul Moist, national president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

AA MEETING

6 – 9 p.m., Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel, Picasso Room

AFSCME's Got Talent Finale!

The finale of AFSCME's Got Talent, our PEOPLE fundraiser where you vote with dollars to select the winner, gets underway after the General Session. All money raised on behalf of your favorite performances goes to AFSCME PEOPLE, so be generous and VOTE. General admission is free and premium seating in the first 3 rows (if not sold out) is \$10. The show is at McCormick Place South, Level One, Grand Ballroom S-100.

ELECTION TODAY!

An election will be held today for International vice president (IVP) from the Southwestern Legislative District. For delegates of that district, voting is from 6 – 10 a.m. in McCormick Place North, Level Two, Room N228. To vote, delegates will need to show photo IDs and Convention badges. They will receive paper ballots that will be scanned electronically to make the election results available more quickly. If runoffs are necessary, they will occur on Friday, 6 – 10 a.m. at McCormick Place North, Level Two, Room N228.

Ideas on Menu at Women’s World Café

Connect with your sisters and share your ideas for winning economic security for women by joining us at the Women’s World Café this morning at 8 a.m. in the Grand Ballroom, S-100. Breakfast will be available for attendees starting at 7 a.m. Directions to the Women’s World Café: from the shuttle level, take the escalators to the convention level. Walk to your left, away from the convention hall. Make a right in the main hallway and take two escalators down to the first level. The Grand Ballroom (S-100) is on the left.

Special Deal Today: Interactive Learning Labs!

Today is your last chance to visit the Interactive Learning Lounge. Don’t miss out! It’s located at McCormick Place North, Level Three, Hall B.

Here is what you’ll find there today:

- 8:00 a.m. Sing Out with AFSCME
- 8:30 a.m. Lobbying 101
- 9:00 a.m. Economics for the People

ATTENTION, AFSCME SHOPPERS: Wear Your PEOPLE T-shirts Today!

Thursday is PEOPLE T-shirt Day, which means: Wear it! If you haven’t already purchased yours at the PEOPLE Booth, go get one without delay! These limited edition, commemorative Convention PEOPLE T-shirts feature the awesome Chicago skyline. Both men’s and women’s cuts are available in AFSCME green with white print. The PEOPLE Booth is located at McCormick Place North, Level Three, Hall B. It is open today from 8 a.m until one hour after the General Session.

Wednesday’s Winners!

Wednesday’s AFSCME Advantage winners of the Union Plus gift cards are: Joan Hill, New York Local 1070 (DC 37) and Jessica Hausman, Washington State Local 872 (Council 28).

The winner of Wednesday’s Cyber Dome raffle is Bernard Anderson, Local 4011 (Organizing Committee 962).

Got (Extra) Toiletries?

Save all your little unused bottles of cream, shampoos, mouthwash and whatnot. Don’t just stuff them in your suitcase where they’ll become clutter at home. Give them to us and we’ll donate them to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH). Drop off your contributions at the Information Booth. You’ll feel better that you did!



(Photos by Khalid Najj-Allah)

Thousands of AFSCME delegates and members turned out in solidarity with Chicago’s cab drivers, who are organizing to gain a voice with City Hall.

Hard-working Cab Drivers Seek Union

Chicago’s cab drivers have been facing rising lease costs, credit card fees that cut sharply into their profits, and a maze of regulations, while fares have been frozen for 10 years. The average Chicago cab driver earns only \$20,234 – a figure which would put a family of four below the poverty line.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel allowed ride-sharing services like Lyft and Uber, which amount to unlicensed cabs, to grab an increasing share of the market without holding them to basic standards like insurance requirements and a living wage.

“They put the squeeze on us cab drivers like they were squeezing a lemon. But there’s no more juice left in the lemon,” said 40-year driver Dave Mangum.

Drivers want a better life for their families, Ezz Abdelmagid told Convention delegates during the external organizing program.

“For many years, drivers have been mistreated and exploited by the city,” he said. “We have to deal with petty tickets, unreasonable regulations and overhead expenses that make it impossible for us to make a decent living.

“Drivers are saying enough with this and we are uniting to take action to improve our pay and



AFSCME delegates march through downtown Chicago to show their support for the city’s cab drivers, who are trying to form a union.

working conditions. That’s why we’re forming our union with AFSCME Council 31.”

The thousands of AFSCME delegates that hit the streets on Wednesday had a pointed message for Mayor Emanuel: Chicago cabdrivers deserve better working conditions and a living wage.

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one of the largest union elections in the state’s history and was the nation’s biggest organizing win in 2013.

“To the people I care for, my job is vital and I wanted to build a union so that home care workers in Vermont could advocate for ourselves and our clients,” she said. “I traveled throughout the state knocking on doors, having kitchen-table conversations with hundreds of home care providers just like me who wanted a voice. And just last year, Vermont’s 7,500 home care providers came together and overwhelmingly voted for AFSCME!”

Warren said it was “the biggest union election in Vermont history and the largest organizing win in the nation in 2013. And it is already changing lives. The contract we fought so hard for will lift thousands of providers out of poverty. In fact, we went from \$7.25 an hour to \$10.80 an hour.”

Delegates passed seven resolutions: Building Power: Winning Full Collective Bargaining Rights (3); Organized, Quality Health Care Interpreter Services (13); Organizing Retirees to Build Union Capacity (46); Building Power for EMS Workers (68); Organizing the Unorganized (91); Volunteer Member Organizers (99); and Beyond the Challenge of Harris v. Quinn (88).

Delegates also showed their determination to build union strength by passing seven constitutional amendments:

- An amendment to include Organizing Committees among the groups whose affiliates may unite to send delegates to the International Convention
- An amendment to increase the maximum value of a paper ballot, increasing the cap from 500 to 5,000 votes
- An amendment on convening a Special Legislative District Convention to elect an International Vice President
- An amendment to give a subordinate body 45 days to appeal after advance notice is given by the president of the establishment of an Organizing Committee within its jurisdiction
- An amendment to allow the electronic printing and distribution of International Convention reports
- An amendment to provide for electronic meetings of subordinate bodies
- An amendment that allows councils and local unions to adjust per capita tax rates and dues each year by directly applying the average percentage increase in membership pay to their established rates.