

County and City Employee

WASHINGTON STATE COUNCIL OF COUNTY AND CITY EMPLOYEES — AFSCME AFL-CIO

Wisconsin warning

What happened in Wisconsin could happen in Washington State.

That's the sobering realization that is reverberating through Council 2 in the wake of Wisconsin

Gov. Scott Walker's attempt to break the public employee unions there.

It is true that, with the current political line-up, it seems highly unlikely right now that our state

could be another Wisconsin. But change sometimes can come with surprising swiftness.

Just as no one in Wisconsin thought it could happen there, — the birthplace of AFSCME —



no one has ever thought it could happen here.

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Frank Cricchio at his post in the Spokane County juvenile detention center

'We see the worst of the worst'

For more than 40 hours a week, Frank Cricchio lives in a world few of us ever see. As a Spokane County juvenile corrections officer, he oversees children who have been jailed for anything from truancy to prostitution to murder.

It can be an ugly world.

Depressing, disturbing and debilitating. If you let it get to you. "You learn to deal with it,"

This is the third in a series of articles highlighting Council 2 members and the services they perform.

says Cricchio, 44, who has been working at the detention center for 10 years. "I try to balance out what I see here by coaching my child's soccer teams so I retain my perspective. You have to do that or else you will get tunnel vision and start

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Bills affect pension benefits

The state legislature considered several measures affecting pension benefits during its recent long session. Among them were:

- HB 1742 was intended to eliminate the reductions in penalties for retiring before age 65. It applied only to new hires, not current employees.

Toward the session's end it was alive in the budget discussion, but was unlikely to pass.

- HB 2021 eliminated COLAs for Plan 1 retirees receiving more than \$1,500 a month in benefits. This measure passed but will probably end up in court.

- HB 2070 extended the current protections for furloughed employees so their pension benefits would not be reduced. Without it, employees close to retirement would have seen their benefits cut. This measure passed.

Web site is redesigned

The Council 2 web site has been completely redesigned, making it more attractive and easier to navigate.

Find out about events you might want to take part in, sign up for steward training and other classes, update your profile, view pictures and obtain news from your local union.

Check it out at: www.council2.com.

Rising medical premiums are a nightmare

CHRIS DUGOVICH

In 1983 in the City of Bellingham I negotiated one of a host of contracts which, for the first time, called for an employee-paid deductible on medical insurance. It started at \$50 per employee with a \$150 stop loss. During the three-year term



Letter from the President

of the agreement a \$100 deductible was phased in during the second year and a \$150 deductible in the third year. The stop loss increased accordingly to \$450.

The negotiations were tough as the employer originally desired the immediate implementation of a much higher deductible.

Prior to that contract, and in most contracts across the state, coverage was dollar-for-dollar. No matter what the medical issue was your claim was paid in full by all the different medical plans.

That type of coverage is long gone and no one would have predicted the continued benefit erosion that our medical insurances would undergo.

Now it's co-pays, deductibles, stop losses, procedures covered at 80 percent, and premiums that would choke a horse. For a long time, these premiums have really hurt increases in take-home pay.

This year again brought double-digit increases in many jurisdictions across the state, which fly in the face of an economy coming out of the worst recession since the Thirties. Although the economy and pay increases are flat, the health industry still requires more money for the same service.

Sectors of our society still yell loudly about the unfairness of last year's National Health Insurance, but it is our only hope to maintain our medical benefits.

Premiums now well over \$1,000 a month will become unsustainable at \$2,000 — and that number is quickly approaching. Certain family-friendly provisions have kicked in already, such as no disqualification from health insurance because of a pre-existing condition or covering a dependant to age 26. Additional provisions start in 2014.

The regulations to implement fully the new law are now being put together. Whatever regulations are created overall it's premiums that need to be held in check somehow without wholesale erosion in benefits. The number one reason for bankruptcy in this country today is a family's inability to pay their medical bills. Anyone who says a solution isn't needed is ignoring reality.

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believing that all children are bad.

"As a result, the normal misbehavior of my children doesn't bother me that much. Considering what I see when I come to work, I am thankful that my 15-year-old son, with all his faults, is a normal kid."

Also, although some of the inmates are just unlikeable, most are likeable, Cricchio adds.

"They are normal children who have been placed in bad situations, often by their parents.

"Sometimes they are here because their parents have filed an at-risk report on their kids. Some don't have parents and live on the streets. Some have committed serious crimes.

"We see the worst of the worst. A lot of the cause is generational poverty, drug and mental illness. Most learn this way of life from their parents."

Cricchio recalls the case of a 14-year-old convicted of murder and sentenced to 32 years in jail.

He is the father of two daughters, was the head of a drug-dealing gang and supported his mother on the money he made from dealing drugs. He was into prostitution. Then he killed another drug dealer.

On one occasion, Cricchio adds, he stopped a prostitute who tried to commit suicide in the jail.

"It can be emotional," he explains. "If it's their first time here, they don't know what it is like. But fortunately, we have never had any actual suicides here."

Cricchio splits his time working as an intake officer — booking the new inmates, fingerprinting them and taking mug shots of them — and regular duties, which involve waking up the children, serving them food, taking them to physical training, and seeing that they attend the school in the jail. Later in the day, the inmates are required to do their homework.

As a result, he and his fellow officers get to know some of the children well.

"We see more and more kids with mental health problems these days," he says. "It is a result of their parents' meth and crack use during the Nineties.

"We have one here now who is looking at involuntary commitment because he is too dangerous to be out in the general public."

Many of the children are on medication,

some on multiple medications, Cricchio adds. In that way, they are kept calm, can think properly and can cope with routine.

Cricchio has seen a number of changes since he began work in the detention facility in 2001.

These days, there is added emphasis on what is called "detention alternative programming" to keep the children away from developing friendships with the hard-core inmates and to help them create useful lives for themselves.

"When I joined we had 73 beds here and 60 to 65 kids a day," he says. "Now we are down to the low twenties. They try to keep them out of detention as much as possible, using such things as electronic monitoring."

In addition, the officers are always trying to do something positive to improve the lives of those who are in detention.

"It is really a pro-kid environment," he says. "They go to school Monday through Friday, take cooking classes and learn how

'We see more and more kids with mental health problems these days.'

to play chess. We try to highlight the positive. We are trying to do the best we can with the kids."

Cricchio, who is president of Local 492-J, appreciates the benefits of Council 2.

"I worked as a private juvenile officer until I found something else," he says. "I made about \$10 an hour and the medical benefits were unaffordable. You could get fired on the spot.

"The contrast with being protected and assisted by the union is huge. Having seen the other side, I can see the importance of the union so much more."

Spokane Staff Representative Gordon Smith says, "It's been a pleasure to work with Frank and to watch him blossom as a highly effective union leader.

"He deserves a lot of credit for ensuring that a highly diverse group of members, (in terms of thought, beliefs, and backgrounds) remains a united and cohesive bargaining unit."

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Spokane takes to the streets



Rallying is fast becoming a way of life for Spokane Council 2 members.


In the wake of the union-busting attempts in Wisconsin, Council 2 members in Spokane not only attended the big rally in Olympia on April 8, but also have been showing support for their fellow public employees in Wisconsin and in Washington state in weekly street rallies.

Council 2 also took part for the first time in the St. Patrick's Day parade in Spokane.

LEFT: Local 1553 members rally in the snow in 1-degree weather. From left, Rebekah Johnson, secretary-treasurer, Colleen Smith, vice president, and Josh Smith, shop steward. **BELOW:** Taking part in St. Patrick's Day parade is Jill Ruetsch, Building & Planning Services Coordinator II.



Wisconsin says: 'Thank you'



May 3, 2011

AFSCME Council 2
PO Box 750
Everett WA 98206

Dear AFSCME Council 2:

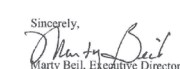
On behalf of all of the hard working union members of Wisconsin, we thank you for the recent donation to the Workers' Rights Emergency Response Fund. Please offer our sincere thanks and appreciation to your members.


The outpouring of support for us in Wisconsin in our ongoing fight against Scott Walker's union busting tactics is deeply appreciated by all AFSCME members. We have been deeply moved and encouraged by the passionate response to this attack on our freedoms.

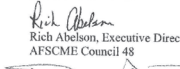
Our fight against this threat to the rights of all public employees is costing significant sums for transportation, media and support of our members. We know the importance of this fight in Wisconsin and the effect the results will have nationwide for all working men and women, and we ask that you contact coalitions and organizations in your area to help build support to sustain our fight. We would not have had the success in building the public support we experienced here in Wisconsin without the help of so many other organizations and leaders who saw the attack on our rights as an attack on everyone's rights.

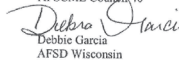
Thank you again. We can say with the utmost sincerity that we could not have come this far without your support! Together we will win this fight!

Sincerely,


 Marty Beil, Executive Director
 AFSCME Council 24


 Rick Badger, Executive Director
 AFSCME Council 40


 Rich Abelson, Executive Director
 AFSCME Council 48


 Debbie Garcia
 AFSD Wisconsin

Doug Burnett
Political Legislative Director

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
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In the wake of attempts at union busting in Wisconsin, Council 2 sent \$10,000 to support AFSCME in its fight in the state.

Here is the thank-you letter sent by AFSCME in response.

COUNTY AND CITY EMPLOYEE

Official publication of the Washington State Council of County and City Employees

AFSCME, AFL-CIO
Published quarterly



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Above: Council 2 members were prominent participants in an April 8 workers' rally in Olympia. Clockwise below: Lhisa Reisch (Local 3758 – Timberland Library) holds the labor bibliography created specially for the rally; Kevin James (Local 275); and Sonia Pitterle and Deborah Miller (Local 2699).



WISCONSIN, From Page 1

But if it could happen there and spread to Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, that mood could sweep into our state, too.

“Make no mistake about it; the threat is real,” says Council 2 Deputy Director Pat Thompson, who represents Council 2 in Olympia.

“We should not be lulled into a false sense of security.”

Public employees in Washington State have taken their collective bargaining rights almost for granted since they were won 44 years ago. Few thought there was any chance that they would be taken away.

Now Wisconsin’s experience shows that such an event can happen when you least expect it.

Already teachers in Washington, the largest union in the state, face a government bill that says they cannot bargain at the local level, Thompson says.

And bills are regularly introduced in the Washington State Legislature to curtail bargaining rights or privatize pensions, he adds.

They have always been considered to have no chance of passing — until now.

“If it were not for the results of

about a dozen races, we could be the next Wisconsin,” Thompson says, pointing out that a change in governor, a switch in five or six seats in the House and three in the Senate could lead to the implementation of Wisconsin-like

measures.

Similar fears that union busting could take place in other states has made Wisconsin the rallying cry for labor unions around the country.

Not only are they rallying in support of the embattled government workers in Wisconsin, they are also telling their own legislatures that they will vehemently oppose attempts to impose such restrictions in their states.

The protests are as loud as anywhere in Washington state.

On April 8, a crowd estimated at 7,000 rallied outside the state capitol in Olympia, showing both solidarity with Wisconsin workers and determination that any attempts at similar action will be vigorously opposed here.

‘We should not be lulled into a false sense of security.’

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