



# AFSCME Capitol Update



January 27, 2017

## **Child Protection is on the Radar**

AFSCME represents child protection workers in Minnesota's largest counties. Their caseloads are so heavy that they live in constant fear that a child will slip through their safety net. Last week, AFSCME members left 317 voice messages asking their legislators to provide funding to help counties hire, train and retain child protection workers. Our collective action put this staffing crisis on the radar of key senators and representatives who serve on the Health and Human Services committees.

## **Child Protection Lobby Day Yields Positive Results**

Twenty child protection workers lobbied January 24 for additional screeners, investigators and case managers, as well as changes to the screening guidelines. They shared their stories and concerns with Senator Jeff Hayden and Reps. Ron Kresha, Diane Loeffler, Rena Moran and Dave Pinto. The Lobby Day was extremely successful and resulted in legislators agreeing to work with AFSCME on a bill to address the workers' concerns. Child protection workers from Hennepin, Ramsey and St. Louis counties have a plan to continue lobbying their legislators each week this session.

## **Governor Dayton's State of the State Address**

Governor Dayton fainted briefly near the end of his 45-minute State of the State speech Monday night. The governor, who turned 70 this week, returned to the Capitol the next morning to propose his budget and answer questions about his health. He announced that he has prostate cancer, but insists that he has the stamina to do the job and finish his term. He joked that he has no brain cells in his prostate. We wish him good health and a long, joyful life.

Governor Dayton's health troubles overshadowed an ambitious agenda, including his proposal to make health coverage more affordable for Minnesotans who purchase their insurance on the individual market. His plan would allow Minnesotans to purchase their health insurance through a "public option" by enrolling in MinnesotaCare.

## **Governor Dayton's Budget Release**

Governor Dayton released a two-year, \$45.8 billion [budget](#), called "An Opportunity Agenda for a Better Minnesota." His budget would continue making the investments our state needs to create opportunity for everyone, everywhere in the state. He proposes significant investments in early education, higher education, transportation, safe staffing and clean water. His budget also includes expansion of the working family and child care tax credits and would close corporate tax loopholes.

AFSCME supports Governor Dayton's budget because it reinvests in the work we do. Working families deserve an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy few. We think everyone should get a fair shot, give their fair share, and play by the same rules.

But Republican lawmakers, who control both chambers of the Legislature, say the DFL governor's proposal is too bold. Expanding the public health insurance option is a "non-starter," according to Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka (R-Nisswa).

## **Governor Dayton Proposes Major Investments in MSRS**

Governor Dayton is protecting our pensions with a major investment in the Minnesota State Retirement System. He is proposing to increase the employer contribution by one percent in 2018 and another one-half percent in 2019. His budget makes this investment in the state agency budgets.

The Governor's proposal also increases employee contribution rates by one-half percent in 2018 and reduces the cost of living adjustment to one and one-half percent per year beginning January 2018.

The Governor also proposes lowering the investment return assumption to 7.5 percent for both MSRS and PERA.