

SEIU to represent daycare workers [US-IL] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Service Employees International Union declared victory Thursday in an election to decide if it would represent 49,000 Illinois state-subsidized child care workers.

SEIU was supported by about 82 percent of the almost 17,000 workers who participated in the mail-in election. Only 359 of the child care workers voted against having any union at all.

AFSCME still drew 2,684 votes, compared to SEIU's 13,484.

Keith Kelleher, spokesman for SEIU Local 880, said the union's biggest priority will likely be securing better reimbursement rates from the state for the providers.

The providers are not state employees, but the state does subsidize the cost of child care so that poor parents can afford to work. The state payments depend on several factors including how many children a worker cares for, their ages and whether the worker is licensed.

The election was the result of an executive order by Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who granted the state-subsidized child care workers collective bargaining rights in February.

"Our next thing for the union is to codify the executive order into law and then sit down and negotiate a contract with the state of Illinois and win increases and improvements," Kelleher said.

Vicki McMurray, the executive director of the ABC Child Development Center in Du Quoin, said she was interested but disappointed in the way information about unionizing day care employees was distributed.

McMurray has traveled to Springfield on several occasions to advocate for bettering working benefits for day care employees.

She cited the nursing profession as an example of a profession that was lifted from a poor environment by unionizing. McMurray believes a union could work the same magic for day care professionals.

She said the profession is one that certainly needs more stability, as it is bleeding workers each year.

"This year alone for us our turnover rate was 57 percent, the highest we've ever had," McMurray said.

- reprinted from the Associated Press

Region: United States ^[2]

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