

Group inspired by Wisconsin workers' fight for union rights

Marchers call for solidarity

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It started at a Jewel copy machine early Saturday morning and ended yesterday afternoon with group of nearly 20 parading down Oak Forest's Central Avenue to a chorus of honking motorists.

After witnessing the protests in Madison, Wis., firsthand, brothers Bill and Joe Hincks realized they needed to do something.

Bill, a tradesman and member of Local 281 Sprinkler Fitters, and Joe, a student at Southern Illinois University, made hundreds of fliers for their solidarity march and posted them up and down St. Patrick's Day parade routes to gather support for their cause.

"What got me involved was seeing the hardship in the community," said Bill Hincks, an Oak Forest resident. "Seeing people go through these hard times and they keep asking for more and more off our backs."

On a chilly March afternoon, the group of demonstrators met in front of Acorn Public Library near 157th Street and Central Avenue, and armed with signs encouraging support for Wisconsin public union members marched up Central Avenue to Oak Forest High School.

Once they'd reached their destination, they spread to three corners of the intersection in an attempt to raise awareness of the recent union legislation in Wisconsin.

The protest Tuesday was part of a call by organized labor for a "national day of action" to protest proposed cuts to the federal budget, among other things.

"We need to have collective bargaining," said demonstrator Dr. Sandra Ryder, a local college professor and former Oak Forest High teacher. "I don't understand why they're picking on teachers, police officers and firefighters. We're the hardest working, yet the least well-paid."

The Wisconsin Legislature has recently moved forward with legislation that would limit collective bargaining rights for the majority of public employee union members in an effort to cover a projected \$3.6 billion budget shortage.

The protests in Madison have gathered crowds of more than 100,000 and have opened a boisterous public debate on union rights.

In Indiana, Democratic state lawmakers have been boycotting the Legislature since Feb. 22 in protest of Republican-backed measures, and many fled to Urbana.

Democrats oppose a measure that would allow parents to receive state vouchers to help send their children to private schools and another that would effect wages on government construction projects.

- Caption: The march is on: Bill (right) and Joe Hincks (second from right) lead pro-union marchers Tuesday along Central Avenue in Oak Forest. The brothers organized the march by posting fliers along St. Patrick's Day parade routes in the Southland. Nicole Kopec (below), of Tinley Park, makes signs for the march. | Photos by Joseph P. Meier~Sun-Times Media Joseph P. Meier Joseph P. Meier Joseph P. Meier The march is on: Bill (right) and Joe Hincks (second from right) lead pro-union marchers Tuesday along Central Avenue in Oak Forest. The brothers organized the march by posting fliers along St. Patrick's Day parade routes in the Southland. Nicole Kopec (below), of Tinley Park, makes signs for the march. | Photos by Joseph P. Meier~Sun-Times Media Joseph P. Meier Joseph P. Meier

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