



A purple picket: Personal care assistants protest state overtime law

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Purple-shirted protesters picketed against the state's overtime law in front of the office of a state representative.

Representatives of the **Service Employee International Union** (SEIU) of Illinois and Indiana were picketing against the overtime law outside the office of state **Rep. Dwight Kay (R-Glen Carbon)**, which prevents them from surpassing 40 hours a week while caring for their clients. Those clients are exclusively senior citizens and the disabled. In many cases, those people would be interred in nursing homes, which would ultimately cost the State of Illinois as much as \$17 million.

SEIU Member Lead Paralee Stewart said the law prevented her clients from receiving the care they need. She was joined by more than two dozen union members Thursday evening as they held signs and chanted for the public to hear their cause.

"We're out here to let Dwight Kay know the governor's policy is unfair to workers and our clients," she said.

In former conversations with Kay, Stewart said the representative of the Illinois General Assembly said there was not enough money to pay for the overtime expense. That overtime, said several of the workers picketing, is essential for unplanned contingencies such as emergency room visits. Those impossible to predict situations are common when treating vulnerable individuals with disabilities.

One client, **Charles Taylor**, said the law could jeopardize his ability to live independently in his home.

"I want people to tell their representatives to change this law," he said. "These people allow me to live independently in my own home."

Richard Jones of Caseyville works as a personal assistant for SEIU. He said before the law, he worked 50-55 hours a week caring for three clients. He has been penalized twice for exceeding 40 hours a week, despite two of his clients requiring nearly as many as 15 hours each a week.

"Even though clients need my care, I cannot go over that 40 hour limit," he said.

Stewart said that limitation is causing personal assistants to have to work off-the-clock and leave their services early, which ultimately increases the burden on an already-vulnerable client. She said the SEIU endorses political candidates based on their abilities to "walk a day in their shoes."





Current U.S. President Barack Obama took that challenge when he was running for state senator. To walk a day in their shoes, Stewart said state representatives take the responsibilities of a personal assistant for an entire day. They assist clients with eating, waking, bathing, getting dressed and any other needs they have. **Sen. Bill Haine (D-Alton)** took that challenge. Stewart said Kay had not.