



UPDATE

American Federation of Teachers Local 604, AFL-CIO

www.aftlocal604.org

February/ March 2020

Giving IS greater than receiving!

The JTHS District 204 Administrative Office and both Central and West Campus collected gifts for the Salvation Army Angel Tree. The district provided gifts and winter coats for over 100 children in the area. This included Joliet High Office Staff Council members as well as administrators and JTHS teachers.

Photos by Carly Ringo



Below are some pictures from Lemont/Bromberek school district. The photos show Christmas care boxes and the dinners being put together. These were delivered on Christmas. Volunteers included school board members, faculty, students, families, and many more. The event was held at Old Quarry. The organization that runs it is called, "The Hope and Friendship Foundation."

Photos by Michelle Nevin



AFT Local 604 made a donation to United Way who distributed food to many area pantries. We'd like to thank all the schools/colleges who participated in the food drive! Thank you for taking your time and efforts to collect and deliver it to us! You are all greatly appreciated no matter what your part was. We also had a request to deliver food to "Respond Now" in Chicago Heights. We were able to take an SUV loaded with food to them, and they were

happy to receive it! The schools who participated put their names in a box, and three were drawn to have a \$100 Jewel card sent to a pantry of their choice. Sovic had their card sent to Braidwood Food Pantry, Joliet Jr. College had theirs sent to the Micro Pantry at JJC, and Clifton Central requested their winnings be sent to the Clifton Food Pantry.

Photo by Bill Briggs

The December AFT Local 604 Retiree Luncheon was held on Wednesday, December 4th at Al's Steakhouse in Joliet. Twenty retirees were in attendance. Our February meeting was held on Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. at the AFT Local 604 office. The program had a presentation of Will



County Senior Services. Book recommendations for seniors will be shared by members.



Photos by Anita Wilson

2 the Union supports Democrats
by Bill Briggs

3 Public Education Forum 2020
By Brooke Shanley

4 Legal Remedies for Medical Negligence
By attorney James Ridge

In brief, this is why

the Union supports Democrats



Bill Briggs

By now, those of us who watch main-stream TV have already grown tired of political advertisements, especially for races that do not directly affect us.

Few AFT Local 604 members live in Chicago, but we are being inundated with commercials for both Bill Conway and Kim Foxx, each attempting to be Cook County State's Attorney.

The incumbent, Foxx is having to defend her decision to dismiss charges against TV star Jessie Smollett, who had been indicted on 16 felony counts of disorderly conduct. Conway, the son of a billionaire, is the former Cook County assistant state's attorney and a reserve US Naval intelligence officer and says he wants to return integrity to the office.

With the primary set for March 17, the amount of money being spent on this race is staggering. To add to the barrage of advertisements, Tom Steyer and Michael Bloomberg are both hitting the Illinois airwaves in an attempt to become the Democratic nominee for President. Both are billionaires and want to battle Trump, who claims to be a billionaire.

And who can forget the last campaign for Illinois governor where one billionaire, JB Pritzker, defeated another billionaire, Bruce Rauner, in the most expensive race in state history.

So, you might be thinking, where am I going with this verbiage. Really, it's simple. Around any election, the IFT is always questioned about why it, the AFT, and many locals usually support Democrats over Republicans. For me, it is clear; Democrats support public education more than the GOP.

In the last few years, we have seen many marches, motivated by the **Red for Ed Movement**, by educators in states, like North Carolina, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Kentucky, for more public education funding. All of these are **red** states.

On Nov. 19, more than 15,000 teachers and supporters of public education marched on the Republican-controlled statehouse in Indianapolis. Although it was not an official strike, more than half of the state's school districts were closed because so many had taken the day off to be in the state capital.

The Indianapolis *Star* reported "they were fed up with disinvestment in public schools and disrespect for their profession."

Anyone who reads the Chicago *Tribune* knows that their editorial board blames much of the money problems in Illinois on our pensions. Public educators are under attack at almost every turn. Without Democrats in control of the House and Senate, who knows what Rauner would have done to us.

But it's not just on the local or state level where the party is fighting for us. Last month, according to *USA Today*, "the Democrat-controlled House voted to overturn regulations introduced by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos that critics said make it more difficult to get student loan forgiveness if a college suddenly closes." That bill had support from only six Republicans.

Even if the Senate sided with the House, Trump vowed to veto the legislation, in part, because the "so-called borrower defense rules were meant to protect students from fraudulent institutions" were introduced by the administration of former President Barack Obama.

So yes, it's important to vote in all elections, and it's equally important to support Democratic candidates because they have our backs in issues important to us, like public education and pensions.

For the longest time, I never understood individuals who were one-issue voters, like prochoice or prolife.

But now, I get it. I have to admit that I have become a one-issue voter.

I vote for public education, period.



Public Education Forum 2020

By: Brooke Shanley from East Aurora School District 131

Brooke was the only IFT teacher from Illinois to be selected to attend this conference!



In December, I had the privilege of attending the Public Education Forum 2020 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This forum, moderated by MSNBC, provided a stage for presidential candidates to discuss

their plans for public education and address questions from educators and other public education stakeholders.

After several televised debates, presidential hopefuls still hadn't dedicated much time to discussing what is one of the most important issues in our country, public education. This forum provided the spotlight necessary for public education to be front and center in this election.

Spearheaded by AFT president Randi Weingarten, in partnership with the NEA, the coalition of stakeholders that formed in the organization of this event demonstrates the depth and the far-reaching impact of public education in our society. They say it takes a village. This village was a powerful one, comprised of AFT, NEA, AFCSME, the NAACP, SEIU, Voto Latino, the Schott Foundation, Journey for Justice Alliance, and others; all representing educators, community leaders, activists, parents, and students from across the country.

At a time when the dismantling of public education is occurring faster than we've seen prior to this administration, ensuring public education is a priority in the 2020 elections is critical. The candidates seemed aware of our urgency in addressing the issues plaguing public education, coming to the stage prepared and well versed on all the most popular buzzwords and topics in education. Here is some of what we heard.

"If we honored teachers a little more like soldiers and paid them a little more like doctors, we wouldn't have the problem of a teacher shortage." - **Pete Buttigieg**

"We build a great country when we invest in every one of our students." - **Elizabeth Warren**

"If you prize education, you must respect the individuals that provide that education." - **Bernie Sanders**

"Teachers should be able to determine the curriculum they teach in their schools. They know what it takes to teach children what they need to know." - **Joe Biden**

The candidates talked about respecting and honoring educators, and paying us more. They talked about

investing in all students in order to build a great country. They spoke about the teacher shortage, crippling student loan debt, and the need for more educators of color. They referenced the need for improved facilities, saying that no elementary student should die from lead poisoning. Some even brought up the need to elevate our profession, allow us more professional autonomy, and protect our right to collectively bargain. However, what caught my attention was this statement by **Amy Klobuchar**. "The policies you put in place are a values statement."

If that's true, what does our current situation say about our values? We don't have a Secretary of Education putting policies in place but, rather, rapidly repealing policies and protections which safeguard our most vulnerable students. As a student participant at the forum pointed out, this is a direct result of the 2016 election. She explained that high school seniors have spent their entire high school career living with the consequences of this administration's policies and practices. We must do better. We must VOTE better.

In the contest entry I submitted to attend the forum, I had to consider the following question. What do the presidential candidates need to understand about public schools that will help inform and drive their policies? The answer is really quite simple. Presidential candidates must understand that every policy made, or left unmade, impacts students in our public schools. So, as we prepare to cast our ballots in the primary and general elections this year, let's carefully consider candidates' platforms on education and labor, but let's not forget that their other platforms also play a role in public education by creating the conditions that determine how our students arrive to us each day.

Below left, Brooke Shanley w/ AFT president Randi Weingarten
Below right, The Forum



Your rights under the Workers' Compensation Act

by James M. Ridge, attorney at law

Legal Remedies for Medical Negligence

We are often asked by clients whether they should file a medical malpractice suit against a hospital or doctor when they or a family member obtain a poor medical outcome. There are many factors that need to be considered when deciding whether to pursue such an action.

To be sure, doctors and hospitals are not immune from making mistakes. As long as medicine is practiced by human beings, mistakes can and will occur. There are countless ways that this can happen. A radiologist can misread an x-ray or MRI scan and miss a significant finding. A nurse can administer the wrong dosage of a medication or fail to report a patient's significant complaints or signs and symptoms to the treating physician. A doctor can fail to order appropriate tests or studies to diagnose a condition or disease. A surgeon can embark on a "misadventure" and remove the wrong anatomy. These are just a few examples and the list can go on and on.



Sometimes, medical errors can result in serious or catastrophic personal injuries and even death. Other times, the injuries are only temporary in nature and can be corrected with further care and treatment. The nature and extent of the injuries, and whether they result in permanent disability and/or pain and suffering, are often the determinative factors in deciding whether it is economically practical to file suit and litigate.

In order to prove a medical negligence claim against a physician or nurse, the plaintiff has the burden of showing that the healthcare professional deviated from the accepted standards of care and that his/her negligence was proximate cause of the plaintiff's injuries. This requires expert testimony. In other words, the attorney representing the injured plaintiff must retain qualified physicians and/or nurses who are willing to review the pertinent records and testify in court as to the negligence of another physician or nurse.

As medical negligence cases can be both challenging and expensive to litigate, it is important to evaluate the strength of the claim, the cost of litigation, the likelihood of a successful outcome and the settlement/verdict potential before deciding whether to pursue a claim. It is best to consult with an experienced medical malpractice lawyer to discuss the facts of the case.



For more information on your rights contact:

RIDGE & DOWNES, P.C.

REPRESENTING INJURED PEOPLE IN ILLINOIS FOR OVER FORTY-FIVE YEARS

230 West Monroe Street, Suite 2330 Chicago, IL 60606

1-800-572-1136

www.ridgedownes.com

Concentrating in workers' compensation claims, FELA and personal injury cases.

Free consultations in Joliet and other areas throughout Illinois.



EZ Guide to Tier 1 and Tier 2 Retirement under Public Act 96-0889

Tier 1 (Before Jan. 1, 2011)	Tier 2 (On or after Jan. 1, 2011)
Membership Defined by First Contribution Date	
A Tier 1 member first contributed to TRS prior to Jan. 1, 2011 or had previous service credit with TRS or a reciprocal pension system prior to 2011, even if he/she left TRS or a reciprocal pension system at any time and then returned to a TRS-covered position.	A Tier 2 member first contributed to TRS on or after Jan. 1, 2011 and does not have any previous service credit with a pension system that has reciprocal rights with TRS.
Retirement Eligibility	
<p>A Tier 1 member can retire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at age 55 with full benefits if he/she has 35 years of service credit accumulated and the member has elected to have his/her pension determined by the 2.2 percent formula and paid the required fee. at age 55 with at least 20 years of service credit and receive a benefit that is reduced by 6 percent for every year the member is under age 60. at age 60 with 10 years of service and receive benefits that the member has earned. For example, 10 years of service multiplied by 2.2 percent equals 22 percent of the final average salary. at age 62 with five years of service and receive full earned benefits. 	<p>Tier II requires teachers and administrators to be 67 years old and have accumulated at least 10 years of service credit in order to qualify for non-reduced benefits that a member has earned. Tier II members may retire at age 62 with at least 10 years of service, but will receive retirement benefits reduced 6 percent for every year the member is under age 67.</p> <p>Ten years of service is equal to 22 percent of the member's average salary before any age reductions.</p>
Benefit formulas	
<p>Retirement benefits are capped once. The maximum benefit a member can receive is 75 percent of his/her final average salary. The benefit for most members is based on a 2.2 formula: 2.2 percent multiplied by the member's final average salary multiplied by years of creditable service. A small percentage of TRS members employed before July 1, 1998 have their benefits determined by an older, graduated formula.</p> <p>The final average salary is the member's highest average salary earned during four consecutive years out of the last 10 years of service.</p>	<p>Retirement benefits will be capped in two ways.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The maximum benefit a member can receive is 75 percent of his/her final average salary. In determining a final average salary, no member's salary will exceed a limit that is tied to the Consumer Price Index. Benefits will still be determined by the formula of 2.2 percent multiplied by final average salary multiplied by years of creditable service. <p>Tier 2 benefits will be based on the member's highest average salary earned during eight consecutive years out of the last 10 years of service.</p>
Annual Cost-of-living Adjustments	
The annual cost-of-living increase is 3 percent, compounded annually.	Annual cost-of-living increases for members will be calculated using either 3 percent or one-half of the Consumer Price Index as of the preceding September, whichever is less, of the originally granted retirement annuity. If the increase in the Consumer Price Index for the preceding September is zero or there is a decrease, then the annuity will not be increased. When there is an increase, it will not be compounded.
Survivor Benefits	
No less than 50 percent of the retired member's benefit for dependent beneficiaries.	Sixty-six and 2/3 percent of the retired member's benefit for dependent beneficiaries.
Post-retirement Employment Limitations	
Retired members may be employed in another position covered by TRS and retain their benefits, but service is limited to 120 days or 600 hours per year. The 120 days/600 hours limit is in effect through June 30, 2020. Members can be employed in a position covered by a pension system that has reciprocal rights with TRS, but the annual length of employment allowed may be capped by that pension system.	Retired members may be employed in another position covered by TRS and retain their benefits, but service is limited to 120 days or 600 hours per year. The 120 days/600 hours limit is in effect through June 30, 2020. The law suspends a Tier 2 member's retirement benefits if the member accepts full-time employment in a position covered by another pension system that has reciprocal rights with TRS.

TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS
 2815 W. Washington | P.O. Box 19253 | Springfield, IL 62794-9253
 877-927-5877 (877-9-ASK-TRS) | FAX: (217) 753-0964
 members@trsill.org | https://www.trsil.org

*Printed by the authority of the State of Illinois.
 electronic - PUB05 - 4/18*

Just a reminder— We do send out an email letting you know that the UPDATE is ready for viewing, but we wanted you to know that at anytime you can go to www.aftlocal604.org and look under Updates for past and current issues. If you are not receiving a notice every other month, contact Darlene @ darmercer@ift-aft.org so I can update your information.

Issues come out in August, October, December, February, and April.

Political Action Committee

AFT Local 604 hosted the Regional M Political Action Committee (PAC) meeting on Dec 17, 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to consider endorsements for the primary race. Marcie Staley is the chairperson for this event. This was her first meeting in that capacity. Marcie reported “so far we have endorsed Representative Bill Foster, Congressional District 11 and Meg Loughran Cappel for State Senate District 49.”



Left:
Jennifer
Bertino-
Tarrant



Right:
Larry
Hug



Left:
Lori
Wilcox



Right:
Meg
Loughran
Cappel



Left:
Nick
Palmer



Right:
Robert
Ellington
-Snipes

- ⇒ President— no endorsement yet
- ⇒ US Senate— Richard Durbin
- ⇒ Senate District 40— Patrick Joyce

- ⇒ Note— There will be more endorsements for the November election.

TRUMP IMPEACHMENT RALLY

This rally was held in October, 2019, at the corner of LaGrange Rd. and Route 30 in Frankfort.

Julie Harris, president of the Tinley Park Council, and her father were two of the attendees along with approximately 60 others despite the freezing cold temperatures that evening!



AFT Local 604 Senate Holiday Party

This event was held on December 19, 2019, at the IBEW Hall 176 West Banquet Facility. Food was provided by our workers' compensation attorney, James Ridge. One last *Thank You* to everyone for joining us in this celebration! We hope you had a great time :)



Left: Mr. James Ridge speaking on Workers compensation





Scholarships offered by AFT Local 604

Jacqueline B. Vaughn Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship was established to honor the late Illinois Federation of Teachers president Jacqueline B. Vaughn. Her commitment and dedication were hallmarks of her nearly four decades in the teacher union movement. She was elected IFT president in 1989 and was completing her third term of office when she died of cancer in 1994. She was also a member of the AFT Executive Council and chaired the AFT Task Force on School Safety and Violence.

AFT Local 604 is offering at least one \$4,000 (\$2,000 per semester) scholarship to a dependent of an AFT Local 604 member who is eligible for the scholarship. Deadline is March 20, 2020.

Visit our website at www.aftlocal604.org for scholarship rules and application form.

Paul O. Johnson Scholarship

This scholarship was created in memory of a longtime union activist, Paul O. Johnson. Paul became a member of AFT Local 604 on November 9, 1950. He served as vice president of the Local in 1955-56 and was elected president during the 1956-57 term. In 1959, he began a four-year term as vice president of the Illinois Federation of Teachers. Paul went on to serve as president of the IFT from 1963 until 1967, when he once again became President of AFT Local 604. In 1976, when AFT Local 604 (Joliet area) and Local 1291 (Lockport area) merged, Paul was elected treasurer of the new AFT Local 604 and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1987. He was a strong and devoted union leader.

AFT Local 604 is pleased to offer at least one \$4,000 (\$2,000 per semester) Paul O. Johnson Scholarship to a deserving public high school senior or a full-time college student who plans to pursue a career in the field of education at any college or university. The deadline is March 20, 2020.

Visit our website at www.aftlocal604.org for scholarship rules and application form.

There is still time to apply for:

The Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship at ift-aft.org/your-benefits/scholarships
Deadline is March 6, 2020 @ 5 pm.

The IFT Robert G. Porter Scholarship at ift-aft.org/your-benefits/scholarships
Deadline is March 6, 2020 @ 5 pm.



AFT Convention Call

For: AFT Local 604 Members in good standing
Where: Houston, Texas / George R. Brown Convention Center
When: July 27, 2020 starting at 9:00 am-
July 30, 2020 ending at 5:00 pm

86th Convention of the American Federation of Teachers

May 2020

Election of AFT Convention Delegates to the AFT National Convention

In addition to the elected delegates, AFT Local 604 officers are automatic delegates. Reasonable expenses will be paid by the Local. **You must be present to vote to be reimbursed.**

Election of AFT Local 604 Officers

The officers of AFT Local 604 (president, vice presidents, secretary and treasurer) shall be elected for a term of two years.

DEADLINE for calling the AFT Local 604 office and placing your name on the ballot for AFT Convention delegate OR AFT Local 604 officer is
4:00 p.m., Friday, March 20, 2020

Call (no email) 815-725-0402 All members in good standing are eligible.

Lottery for placement of names on the ballot will be held at 4:00 p.m. on Monday March 23, 2020. Ballots will be mailed the week of April 13, 2020. Elections are to take place within each council between May 1 and May 22.

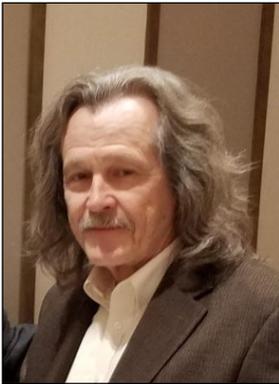
Election of Council Officers

If your council is having an election at the same time as AFT Local 604, we can print your ballots along with the Local's. We need to know this information by March 20, 2020 unless other arrangements are made.

Election of Council Senators to AFT Local 604

According to the AFT Local 604 constitution, each council will be represented in the Senate by their council president or vice president plus one additional senator for each 100 members or major fraction thereof. Senators shall be elected by their respective councils for a term of two years. If interested in being a senator, contact your council president.

AFT Local 604 welcomes three new members elected to its Executive Board



Gerry Mestek has worked at Cowherd Middle School in East Aurora since 2000, teaching science. This is going on his fourth year as council president of his union. During his tenure, he has served his district in many capacities including but not limited to the following: team leader, department chair, curriculum council, IMSA E2K 2000+ Leader, Math Lesson Study, PBIS, SIP, New Teacher/Peer Mentor, Scheduling Committee, Building Safety Team, LEA Teacher Seminar Leader for MS/HS Life Science

IMSP, Discipline Committee, and as Co-Chair for District level teams such as MTSS, PLC, Safety, Calendar and PERA. He has also been involved in coursework student teaching activities with NIU and North Central College. He began union work as a building representative in 2004. "My role as a teacher/leader has opened many opportunities for professional development, and it is my honor to be selected to the AFT Local 604 Executive Board where I can continue to be effective and gain more experience in Labor leadership."



Heather Pilch has 17 years of union experience/involvement. She is currently employed by LaGrange Highlands School District 106. She has been a senator for her council for the past 7-10 years, served as vice president of the council from 2013-2017 and has served as council president since 2017. She has served on 3 negotiating teams, led monthly council meetings, participated in council audits, and has represented 80+ members as council president. Heather has trained in Interest Based Bargaining.

Her work experience includes being an elementary resource teacher, middle school resource teacher, co-teacher for language arts, team leader for 6th grade team, a past member of the Strategic Planning Committee and a past member of the Technology Committee. "My experiences in and out of the classroom have helped prepare me for this opportunity. I believe in supporting educators and students, and I have a strong background knowledge about education and union membership. I am dedicated to continued learning, maintaining an open mind and seeking out information as needed. I use technology daily with my students and my association to provide effective communication and feedback. I look forward to this new opportunity where I can share my experience, knowledge, and skills to support the executive board."



Susan Koziarski is employed by Homer 33C Support Staff and has been a union member for 5 years. Susan has been a paraprofessional in the district since 2007. She has been a Co-President since 2014. She has been involved with organizing her council since the start of it. Homer did not have a support staff council in the district. Most of her current executive board organized and put together their first

contract. She's been to several conferences and conventions over the past 5 years as well as attending trainings offered at AFT Local 604. Susan is currently preparing to help negotiate the third support staff contract. She's worked in special education since the age of 16. Susan has been a volunteer, respite worker, a case manager at a residential facility for adults with developmental disabilities, and a teacher. "I am proud to be in the labor movement and grateful for what unions have done for society. I can bring a unique perspective to the executive board, having been a teacher and now a paraprofessional. We at Homer feel privileged to be in a union and are proud of all we have accomplished together."

Next Senate Meeting
Wednesday, April 15, 2020 @ 6:00 PM
At the AFT Local 604 office in Crest Hill



American Federation of Teachers Local 604
www.aftlocal604.org

Darlene Mercer, Office Mgr./Editor/darmercer@ift-aft.org

1520 N. Rock Run Drive #1
 Crest Hill, Illinois 60403-3232
 PH: 815.725.0402
 FAX: 815.729.2130

William Briggs, President
 Sean Hunt, Treasurer/Business Mgr. / Julie Harris, Secretary
 Anita Wilson, Retiree Chair

Vice Presidents

Kathy Alexander	Gerry Mestek
Beth Anderson	Heather Pilch
Renee Calabrese	Kristen Ryan
Susan Koziarski	Phil Staley
Robert Marincik	Mary Ann Stubler

Vicki Goebel, Local 604 Field Service Director
 Adam Harding, IFT Field Service Director
 Erik Jurgens, Local 604 Field Service Director
 Katie Kollross, IFT Field Service Director
 Dan Mercer, IFT Field Service Director
 Todd Stachowiak, IFT Field Service Director
 Kathy Harris, IFT Secretary
 Angela Rallis, IFT Secretary