



UPDATE

American Federation of Teachers Local 604, AFL-CIO

www.aftlocal604.org

February/March 2019

Lunch with elected officials

A chance to relax, share

Often, when this office hears from an elected official, the request is for money and/or support. That said, if we contact them, we usually want something, too, like help with a bill in Springfield or something on the local level.

On Dec. 18, we turned the tide and invited anyone we financially supported or endorsed to lunch here in the office. After the highly successful November election, it was a new way to celebrate. Originally, 18 confirmed, but with demands placed on some and a string of flu, 13 joined the AFT Local 604 staff for some down time and great food.

True to the educational form, they were asked to respond to a few questions, including what their goals are for 2019 and how they thought the election went.

One reoccurring theme emerged. Rep. Natalie Manley, 98th District, said, "Hard work and support toward a common goal works."

Nick Palmer, chief of staff—Will County Executive, added, "The campaign cycle demonstrated what happens when we all work together."

State Sen. Pat McGuire, 43rd District, thanked AFT Local 604 and others in Illinois for all the help and said, "Illinois now has a Governor with a heart; thus, I look forward to restoration of our human services and higher education sectors."

Agreeing, Amanda Koch, Will County Board, 2nd District, wants to improve mental health care, but added, "we need to preserve greenspace and hold high environmental standards."

Rachel Ventura, WCB, District 9, echoed the need for expanded mental health care and said, "Education about behavioral health would benefit all." She wants to tackle the Opioid crisis.

Her second goal includes renewable energies. "I would love to see the county on 100% solar or wind as we need to be very proactive about climate change."

Infrastructure was mentioned, too. Rep. Larry Walsh, Jr., 86th District, believes "working to bring a full Capital Bill with revenue to pay for it" is needed to start to rebuild Illinois.

Not surprising, praise was heaped on the staff here at AFT Local 604 for their hard work and support during the long election cycle.

More thoughts:

Mimi Cowan, WCB 11th District, "The election—my first! —was such a special opportunity to get to know community members and to see so many new people

get involved."

Amanda Koch, "Some of my best ideas came from meeting voters. Voters are ready for a change."

Barbara Wells, Kankakee School District 111 President, "Although I lost my bid for County Clerk, the issues I brought up during the campaign have started to be addressed."

Sen. Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, 49th District, "we need to continue to make education a top priority—focusing on funding, our hard-working teachers, and promoting a strong education for our students."

Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia, "Pink Wave & blue tint, Union Strong, & Humbled to receive IFT support and their strong leadership."

Expanding on the Pink Wave, Andrea Lynn Chasteen, Will County Circuit Clerk, "was happy to see so many young women get involved and be successful." She is also excited about the new Will County Courthouse under construction.

Jackie Traynere, WCB 4th District, "I am most worried about workers being able to get ahead or just keep a head above water."

Lauren Staley-Ferry, Will County Clerk, is looking forward, "to engaging high school students and getting them excited about voting."



Attending the luncheon were, from left, Bill Briggs, AFT Local 604 President; Sen. Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, Rep. Larry Walsh, Jr., Sen. Pat McGuire, Rep. Natalie Manley, Mimi Cowan, WCB 11th District; Amanda Koch, WCB 2nd District; Andrea Lynn Chasteen, Will County Clerk of the Circuit Court; Lauren Staley-Ferry, Will County Clerk; Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia, Rachel Ventura, WCB 9th District; Jacqueline Traynere, WCB 4th District; Nick Palmer, Will County Chief of Staff. Not photograph, Barbara Wells, Kankakee School Board president.

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His agenda is lengthy

Pritzker leads the state



Bill Briggs

When JB Pritzker was sworn in as the 43rd governor of Illinois on Jan. 14, the question remained, “how much of his ‘principles’ and priorities’ will become a reality?”

On his first full day, the governor made some strong statements. First, he reversed Rauner’s stance against state workers and gave a raise to approximately 20,000 state employees. Their salaries, in the form of step raises, had been frozen since July of 2015 when Rauner denied their raises, despite a court order. In addition, he signed his first law that sets stronger prevailing wage requirements.

Throughout his campaign speeches and debates, JB was clear on his vision to make Illinois a stronger state for all, not just the wealthy. The campaign was long and brutal, so I thought I might remind you of his priorities. In reality, we know that even with a super majority in both the House and Senate, it will not be an easy task. Illinois NRP’s Tahman Bradley, Courtney Gousman and Joe Donlon compiled the following information:

* Education, Preschool, and Child Care *

Lower property taxes as part of a shifting the main funding burden for education from local government to the state
***Oppose the private school tax credit program or anything else that takes money from public schools** *Lower the mandated school enrollment age from 6 to 5
***Add more preschool teachers and classrooms** *Expand “birth-to-three” home visit services and creates a “Family Engagement Portal” to educate new parents on child development.

* Higher Education *

Create a single, shared application for every state university in Illinois
***Increase financial aid for low-income students, known as Monetary Award Program or MAP grants, by 50%** *Create a state-run program to help people re-finance student-loan debt
***Restore funding for state universities and community colleges to levels that predates Gov. Bruce Rauner’s tenure** *Assign a task force to study how Illinois might “set a course toward” free college
***Ensure university credit for Illinois community college courses** *Expand technical education and apprenticeships.

* Taxes and State Government Administration *

Supports a graduated or progressive income tax where higher amounts of income are subject to higher tax rates. Such a change would have to be passed by the legislature and ratified by voters in a general election
***Add progressively to the flat tax (while waiting for the progressive tax) by increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit and raising the overall tax rate** *Support “fair maps” to stop legislators from gerrymandering their own district boundaries
***Support term limits for leadership roles in the General Assembly, though not for legislators in general.**

* Veterans *

Let servicemen and -women more easily use past military experience to earn college credits
***Make it easier to get a professional license based on military skills** *Expand incentives for businesses to hire veterans
***Reduce homelessness among veterans** *Increase nursing staff at state veterans’ homes.

* Health Care *

Creation of a state “public health insurance option,” called IllinoisCares, that would let people buy into the state’s Medicaid program. Based on current spending figures, the annual cost would be in the range of \$3,350 per adult and \$2,109 per child
*access to drug courts and treatment facilities
***Legalize marijuana for recreational use.**

[Continued on page 6](#)

Retiree Holiday Party



The AFT Local 604 retirees met Dec. 5th at Al's Steakhouse for a holiday lunch. Pictured from left are *Jan Benson, Mary Bennett, Kathy Ullian, Karen Benson, Cheri Day, Jurate Pezze, Don Snyder, MaryLee Snyder, Steve Fowler, Terri Avery, Marcie Staley, Phil Staley, Pat Fosnaugh, and Anita Schluter Wilson*. Every meeting they have a project to help others. This time children's books and puzzles were collected to be donated to area agencies for Christmas presents.

On March 12, 2019, the group will meet at 2pm in the AFT Local 604 office. The program presented will be the History of New Lenox. The service project will be collecting items for area animal shelters, like dog and cat food, treats, toys, and cat litter.

April 9, 2019 at 2:30 p.m. at the Joliet Junior College Planetarium located at the Joliet Junior College Campus. "Out There (Dark Matter)"

May 14, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. Boat tour of the I&M Canal in LaSalle. Cost is \$10 per person. Guests are welcome.

All retirees are welcome to attend meetings. Please call with any questions to 815-725-0402

There is a yearly membership fee of \$20.00

Not a surprise

Members' hearts show holiday spirit

It's no surprise that we go into education to help others. It doesn't matter the position—instructor, clerical, custodian, bus driver, or whatever—we share that common bond: others do matter and need help.

During the recent holiday season, two efforts stand out. AFT Local 604's second food drive and a tradition brought to our attention for the first time, a drive to help homeless men.

Staff and members were asked to donate items and bring them to the Dec. 12th Senate meeting. To spice things up a little, three \$50 gift cards were given away to those who donated.

And we were not disappointed. Over 1800 items filled our conference room.

The Homer Support Staff was instrumental in some of the donations going to the Joliet food bank which, in turn, will be distributed to satellite centers to help the needy.

Susan Kozarski, Homer ESP co-president, said, "Thank you to the caring members of Local 604 for participating in donations to food pantries. The Homer 33C Support Staff loves participating in these terrific causes. We care, we show up."

As a result, Kuzma Care Cottage, Wilmington; Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry at East Aurora High School; and the Northern Illinois Food Bank, South Suburban Center, Joliet; benefited from the generosity. In addition, almost \$200 was collected for more purchases.

Sandy Hobbs-Galyon, co-director of Kuzma, said, "Thank you for your generous holiday donation of 600 lbs of food; you are amazing." She went on to say that for every \$1 they receive in donations, "we are able to purchase \$8 in groceries through our network of resources. In 2018, we distributed over 227,312 meals."

Kuzma Care Cottage is making a difference in the lives of 387 families, and Sandy said, "376 children will go to bed less hungry at night; 155 seniors will suffer less hardship."

Besides the food, so many sundries were brought in that Aunt Martha's in Joliet and Aurora were included in the generosity.

We also learned that one of our members has donated items to a men's homeless shelter for several years. This individual does not want any recognition, but 25 stockings were delivered.

Items included a stocking hat, gloves, 2 pairs of socks, candy, Chapstick, Granola bars, a box of Band-Aids, floss picks, hotel sundries, Q-Tips, and ear warmer, i.e. a "manly ear muff."

It goes without saying that sometimes we need to be reminded how lucky so many of us are. For most of us, we cannot imagine how something so simple as donating food or health-care products can make another human feel a little love.

Thank You!

Your rights under the workers' compensation act

by James M. Ridge, attorney at law

When your Employer is Disputing your Workers' Compensation Claim

It is not uncommon for an employer to dispute some aspect of a valid workers' compensation claim. There are ways to minimize the impact that a dispute can have on you and your family. The best way to avoid a dispute is to contact an attorney as soon as you are injured. Potential clients may do something that will cause a dispute, such as giving a recorded statement and adopting the company doctor as your treating physician.

An employer can dispute several issues in a workers' compensation claim. The most common disputes from employers are:

1. whether the accident arose out of and in the course of your employment;
2. whether your work-related accident is the cause of your disability; and
3. whether you can return to work (with or without restrictions).

If a dispute arises, you should immediately contact an attorney experienced in workers' compensation matters. One of the most important issues you will need to deal with is making sure you receive proper and immediate medical treatment.

If you did not hire an attorney and you submitted your medical bills to your group health insurance, there are several things you **MUST** do to protect yourself. First, you will need to tell your doctor and insurance company that your injury IS work-related, but your employer is disputing compensability. Second, you will need to enter into a subrogation agreement with your group carrier which requires that the group carrier be reimbursed by the workers' compensation carrier should the case be found compensable. Last, you need to make sure the medical bills are submitted to your group carrier in a timely fashion. This is crucial as failure to do so could result in you being held responsible for these bills if the case is eventually held to be non-compensable. Some group carriers have different submission timelines so it is important to submit as soon as possible.

Remember, if your case is disputed, the insurance company has probably hired experienced defense counsel for advice – you should do so as well. As always, if you or anyone you know is injured at work or elsewhere, please do not hesitate to contact our office for a free consultation. We are always happy to help.



For more information on your rights contact us at:
Concentrating in workers' compensation claims FELA and personal injury cases. Free consultations in Joliet and other areas throughout Illinois.

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AFT Local 604 Scholarships

AFT Local 604 is offering the following scholarships to dependents of Local 604 members. Scholarships will be awarded at the May 1st, 2019, Senate meeting.

All dependents of AFT Local 604 members who meet the requirements are encouraged to apply. *Applications may be obtained by calling the AFT Local 604 office at 815.725.0402 or by emailing darmerc@ift-aft.org or kharris@ift-aft.org. You can also get the application online at aftlocal604.org.* All applications will remain confidential. Scholarships will be presented to the winners upon proof of enrollment at a public college or university in any state or vocational/trades program.

First, second and third runners-up will be recorded for each scholarship in the event that the winner is unable to accept the scholarship because of an infraction of the rules.

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 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 one \$4,000 (\$2,000 per semester) scholarship to dependents of all Local 604 members.

Scholarship Rules

1. Application must be postmarked no later than Monday, March 22, 2019
2. Applicant must be a public high school senior or be enrolled in an undergraduate, vocational or trades program with at least a "B" cumulative average.
3. Parent(s) or guardian must be an AFT Local 604 member in good standing.
4. Scholarships will be presented to the winners upon proof of enrollment at a public college or university in any state or vocational/trades program.
5. The following must be submitted with this application:
 - copy of ACT and/or SAT test score
 - transcript from high school or college
 - brief description of volunteer and/or service projects in high school or college

The Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship Honoring AFT President Emeritus Carl J. Megel

IFT educators have a unique opportunity to help special education students pursue higher education or career training by sponsoring them for the union's [Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship](#).

Paul O. Johnson Scholarship

AFT Local 604 is awarding one \$4,000 (\$2,000 per semester) Paul O. Johnson Scholarship to a deserving public high school senior who plans to pursue a career in the field of education at a public college or university in any state. The scholarship was created in the memory of 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 a 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 Local 604. In 1976, when Local 604 (Joliet area) and Local 1291 (Lockport area) merged, Paul was elected treasurer of the new Local 604 and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1987.

Scholarship Rules

1. Application must be postmarked no later than Monday, March 22, 2019
2. Applicant must be a public high school senior with at least a "B" cumulative average.
3. Parent(s) or guardian must be an AFT Local 604 member in good standing.
4. Scholarships will be presented to the winners upon proof of enrollment at a public college or university in any state.
5. The following must be submitted with this application:
 - copy of ACT and/or SAT test score
 - transcript from high school
 - Brief description of volunteer and/or service projects in high school
6. Applicant must pursue a career in the field of education at a public college or university in any state.



In 2019, the IFT will award two \$1,000 Megel scholarships to a deserving high school senior who is enrolled in a special education school, class, or program for students with disabilities. Applicants must be high school seniors who will graduate in 2019.

IFT members who work directly with (or previously worked with) an eligible student must provide a letter of sponsorship for the applicant. (Children of IFT members may also apply.) **The application deadline is March 1, 2019. Go to aftlocal604.org website for application.**

The IFT Robert G. Porter Scholarship Honoring late AFT Secretary- Treasurer Robert G. Porter

The Illinois Federation of Teachers shall provide annually two \$10,000 scholarship awards (\$2,500 each year for four years) to current high schools seniors with no less than a cumulative "B" grade average. Successful applicants must plan to attend full-time at an Illinois public university and maintain at least a "C" cumulative grade average after graduating from high school. The award is unrestricted as to race, religion or political affiliation.

An applicant must be the son or daughter of a currently employed, active member in good standing of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, the son or daughter of a member of an IFT retirees chapter, or the son or daughter of a deceased member who was in good standing with the Illinois Federation of Teachers at the time of death. **The deadline for the 2019 IFT Porter Scholarship is Friday, March 1, 2019. Visit AFTlocal604.org website for more info and application.** Winners will be announced in the spring of 2019.

American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Robert G. Porter Scholars Program

The AFT Robert G. Porter Scholars Program offers four 4-year, \$8,000 post-secondary scholarships to students who are dependents of AFT members, as well as 10 one-time \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with their continuing education.

Visit the aftlocal604.org website for additional information.

Pritzker...Continued from page 2

* Criminal Justice *

Ban assault weapons, bump stocks, and large-capacity magazines ***Have universal background checks for all Illinois gun sales** ***Create a state license for gun dealers**
***End monetary bail across the state.**

* In Addition *

Raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour ***Pass a big infrastructure spending bill to build and repair highways, bridges, ports, public transportation, and government buildings** ***Update lead pipes in water systems**
***Promote wind and solar power while supporting the Advanced Coal and Energy Research Center at SIUC**
***Force "net neutrality" on internet service providers that**

have state contracts ***Support construction of the Peotone airport on the condition it doesn't take jobs from O'Hare or Midway.**

The list is only partial, and most would say unattainable. However, we owe him the opportunity to try and we can demand our elected officials work with, not against progress.

William E. Puzgi

Interest-Based Bargaining at Joliet Junior College

This is a negotiation year for faculty at Joliet Junior College, and the talks have begun.

This marks the sixth time the JJC Faculty Council and administration are engaging in Interest-Based Bargaining, a process whose goal is to have the two parties work as one to address issues that both parties bring to the table. Instead of coming to the table with "demands," the two parties attempt to identify and work on issues that one party or both believe need to be addressed.

The process has worked well for both parties in the past, and the faculty representatives are hopeful that it will again serve the best interests of all.

Talks began in earnest on Jan. 18 as both parties brought their issues to the table. The parties have agreed to a code of silence around the talks that includes no discussion of details with the press and limited discussions with stakeholders during the process.

The current faculty contract, which was signed in late 2015, expires at the end of the final summer session of 2019.

One key issue that will hover over the talks is the state's new 3 percent rule for raises. The law requires any institution whose employees are future SURS or TRS pensioners to pay a penalty if any retiree receives more than a 3 percent raise in any of the years used to calculate his or her final pension. That replaced the old 6 percent rule.

That provision, which was buried in last year's budget, directly led to a number of early retirements at JJC. Faculty who "put in their papers" in the fall are covered by the current contract, which includes incentives for early retirement. With uncertainty surrounding the future of the 3 percent rule, many saw retirement as the best option.

The Faculty Council at JJC has hope, as does the administration, that the state legislature will reverse that ill-conceived decision in the coming spring session. As the IFT previously noted, two bills have been introduced. Sen. Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, D-49th, filed SB60 on Jan. 16, and Rep. Kathleen Willis, D-77th, introduced HB 350 on Jan. 14. Both bills would reverse the 3 percent rule and revert to the previous 6 percent rule.

In other news, there are ongoing talks about combining the clerical and support staff unions at JJC. Those talks are still in the early stages.

By Bob Marclink, President, Joliet Junior College Faculty Council

NEWS SHORTS:

Young people and school shootings

The AFT reported that a new poll released by Axios said young people believe school shootings are the most important issue facing the country right now.

In the poll, 68% of 14-29 year olds' polled have this concern.

The *Washington Post* reported that, "more than 150,000 students attending at least 170 primary or secondary schools have experienced a shooting on campus since the Columbine High School massacre in 1999."

The *Post* went on to report that the figure is very conservative and does not include, "dozens of suicides, accidents, and after-school assaults that have exposed" this age group to gunfire.

Axios also revealed that, "these massacres have come to define an era for young people and have created a new generation of activists dedicated to fighting back."

As a result of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School one year ago on Valentine's Day, **Never Again MSD** was created by 20 students who were attending the school.

They organized other teens in the country to get out the vote last November and to become active.

With a Democratic-controlled House of Representatives, we could finally see some sensible guns laws passed.

Madigan appears in a recent TV ad

In the long political season leading up to the November elections, we all suffered through thousands of TV ads by both parties.

Republicans painted Representative Mike Madigan as the root of all evil, and Democrats retaliated by painting a like picture of Governor Rauner.

Now, after the Illinois Blue wave, Madigan will preside over the largest supermajority he has had since taking over as Speaker of the House.

After being silent through the campaign about these attacks, in January the Speaker started running advertisements on the Chicago TV stations touting his party's agenda.

The ad states, "they tried to take your health care away" with

images of Trump.

It also mentioned, "they even failed to act as our veterans died." Here, there is no image of Rauner, but the intent was evident.

With images of Trump Tower in Chicago, the ad also promotes that everyone should pay his/her fair share.

So, after the GOP made Madigan out as the bad guy, is this his way to rub a little salt in the wounds?

Who knows, but you see a softer side to him at the end where he simply says, "in the fights that lie ahead, Democrats are on your side."

Interesting Pink Wave results

The Democratic side of the House of Representatives looks a lot different from the GOP side after Nancy Pelosi became Speaker on Jan. 3. More women and minorities are serving in Washington than ever before.

In Will County, we also saw the power of women when they voted.

However, the results also raised a few questions that need to be studied in the future.

For the first time in years, Democrats now control the County Board.

The vote totals, in some races, produced interesting results.

All these races were electing two representatives.

In District 1, Democrat Laurie Summers was the top vote getter with 9,421. One might expect that her fellow Democrat would receive close to the same number of votes. However, his total was 5,563, far below the Republican Judy Ogalla's 8,098. A like pattern followed in District 5. Democrat Meta Mueller had 8,836 while Republican Gretchen Fritz gathered 8,164. In third place was the Democrat Mazyar M. Hedayat with 6,428. In the 9th, Democrat Rachel Ventura netted 8,552, but her co-Democrat had 6,123 votes. Annette Parker, the Republican, took second with 6,920. Finally, in the 11th, Michelle 'Mimi' Cowan, a Democrat, had 10,159 votes, good for second place, 150 votes behind the Republican winner, Julie Anne Berkowicz. However, Jim Kopchok, also a Democrat, only had 7,545 votes.

The numbers can lead to a lot of conclusions.

We would be interested in hearing what our members think.

NOTICE

IFT CONVENTION CALL **AFT Local 604 members**

October 18-20, 2019
Rosemont, Illinois

**69th Convention of the Illinois Federation
of Teachers
AFT/AFL-CIO**

Election of IFT Convention Delegates

AFT Local 604 members who are interested in being a delegate must call the Local 604 office *personally* by 4 p.m. on **Friday, March 15, 2019**, to be placed on the ballot.

CALL
815-725-0402

Any member in good standing of AFT Local 604 is eligible to be a delegate. A lottery for name placement on the ballot will be held at 4 p.m., Monday, March 18, 2019, at the AFT Local 604 office. Any member interested in observing the lottery drawing may be present.

The AFT Local 604 Senate will elect delegates at its meeting on Wednesday, May 1, 2019.

Elected delegates will be notified by May 3, 2019, by the AFT Local 604 office. More detailed information will be mailed to all delegates at that time.

Delegates are expected to attend ALL convention proceedings from 5:00 p.m., Friday, October 18 until 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 20, 2016
(times subject to change)

Reasonable delegate expenses will be paid by Local 604

AFT PSRP Conference

April 26-28, 2019
Las Vegas, NV

**Call AFT Local 604 for registration
and details. 815/725-0402**

Deadline to register is
Wednesday, February 20, 2019
@ 4 P.M.

Next Senate Meeting
Wednesday, May 1, 2019 @ 6:00 p.m.
AFT Local 604 office in Joliet



IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

UPDATE

American Federation of Teachers Local 604
www.aftlocal604.org

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