



UPDATE



American Federation of Teachers Local 604, AFL-CIO

www.aftlocal604.org

November/December 2019

Fair Tax and Evidence-Based Funding

By Jared Ploger, Social Studies Teacher at Valley View

Article X of the Illinois Constitution states the following: “The State has the primary responsibility for financing the system of public education.” On August 31, 2017, SB 1947 enacted a new evidence-based school funding formula. Inside this law was something many overlook. Through a bipartisan committee and crafted by school finance experts, the formula admitted something most already knew. The state was underfunding many school districts.

In fact, even the law gives the state 10 years to get all school districts to at least 90% funded. How much will this cost? It will take an additional \$740 million a year in new revenues to meet this goal. The last two years, it has been half funded. The District I work in, Valley View 365U is currently about 65% funded. However, that is basically where my school district was when EBF was passed two years ago. Why? Well, what is happening is our EL population, SPED population, and FRL (Title I students) is increasing. The funds are not keeping up with the additional demands.

The state has two options: Continue to underfund schools or raise revenues. Governor Pritzker has championed the idea of a graduated tax, aka “Fair Tax.” Currently, 33 states and the federal government practice such a system, a graduated tax. Illinois is currently set up under a flat tax system. In a graduated tax system, higher income brackets pay a higher rate on the portion of their income which is in that higher bracket. In our current flat tax system, everyone pays the same rate. A flat tax is considered more equal. A graduated tax is considered more equitable.

The Governor has proposed aiming the Fair Tax at the top 3% wage earners in order to find more revenues. The proposal, if successful, would generate an additional \$3.4 billion of revenue.

It is the plan put forward by the Governor to fully fund EBF, though it is uncertain if even the Fair Tax will fully fund EBF. Without additional revenues, however, there is no identified means to fund EBF going forward.

In 2005, Unions had the terrible choice of helping students and current teachers or helping pensions. Support the pension holiday and there would be an increase in educational spending. Without it, there was no extra money for schools. Fast forward and today Illinois has \$14 billion in unpaid bills and an unfunded pension liability of \$133 billion. Again, there are two options: Cut or raise revenues.

The Fair Tax will drive up taxes on those at the highest income levels. If more revenues are to be gained from the Flat Tax, it will drive up taxes on everyone in the state. If cuts are made, it will absolutely impact all of us who work in schools.

As we move closer to the November 3, 2020, decision on the Fair Tax, no one is saying the decision made will be an easy one. However, one thing is for sure. There will be ramifications regardless of what decision we make. Some of those will be positive and some negative. One thing I would ask is what are the ramifications of us not being able to fulfill that Constitutional obligation put into our State Constitution to protect schools and make sure they provide a proper education to all of our students in this state?

For more thoughts on the Fair Tax, please go to www.aftlocal604 under Resources or click on link below and copy/paste into your browser

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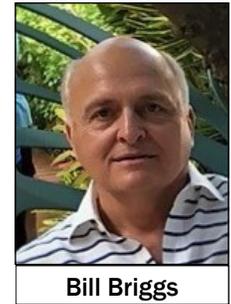
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By president Bill Briggs

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One tough decision, Strike authorization



Bill Briggs

When I thought about possible topics for my column this month, I knew I wanted to address strikes in education that seem to be more predominant this year than in recent ones. However, I didn't know what my direction would be.

Then, during one of my increasingly sleepless nights, it hit me, SOLIDARITY!

In our area, Chicago's battle between the Union and the Board created lead stories during most of the news cycles. Yet, we heard very little about what IFT Local 4324, the Decatur Federation of Teaching Assistants, are going through.

Before CTU started their walkout, a *Chicago Tribune* columnist, whom I really admire and is one of the few liberal voices in the publication, took me by surprise. Basically, Eric Zorn said the teachers would be crazy not to accept the board offer of a 16.5% increase over five years. He even hinted that there would not be the community support that the Union enjoyed during their last strike in 2012.

And I must admit, on the surface, I began to agree with him. Why, not because I didn't support our brothers and sisters in the city, but I had not been walking in their shoes. And herein lies the issue. Most of us do not know what is happening in individual buildings and what specific problems are.



This is true in every school district. I thought back to understanding that a problem in Ohio, one of our smallest councils, might seem trivial to Val-

ley View members, our largest council, but the problems are real. And until they are solved, life is not smooth for those teachers or support staff.

Add to this mix the emotional stress suffered by students of striking union members who cannot participate in school-related activities. It became even more evident as the football playoffs loomed. If the team cannot get three practices in before the playoffs begin, they cannot compete.

In the long run, the contract received a TA, students went back to school, football could participate, but other teams, like cross country, volleyball, soccer, and tennis, were not as fortunate. Fast forward to the last days leading up to the IHSA-sponsored crossed country Sectionals, Saturday, Nov. 2. A judge ruled that the Chicago cross country teams and individuals could compete even though they had not advanced through the Regionals like all other participants.

In the end, 13 individuals and one team placed high enough to participate in the State finals in Peoria one week later. Great

for those individuals, but not so great for those who followed the rules but could not advance because of the Chicago winners.

By the time you read this, the championships will be over. To me, the logical solution would have been to allow both the Chicago participants and the ones they eliminated to compete at state, but we all know how logic seems to be dismissed.

I elaborated on this issue because as educators, how do we continue to fight for our members without hurting our students? Missed days can be made up, in most cases, but what about the hopes and dreams of those students who had practiced all season long and were shutout? It's especially hard on the seniors.

Do I have an answer, no. If the rules allowed the students to participate, would that create friction between the striking teachers and the coaches who are also members. Who knows?

In smaller communities, the parents and fans would have stormed school board meetings to push for a settlement so that marching band, class plays, and athletics could get back on track. In Chicago, pockets of support for the student activities were evident, but it went largely unnoticed.

There was also another issue, insurance. The teachers were threatened with the loss of their benefits on Nov. 1 if they did not settle. Although COBRA was an option, that is expensive.

Insurance has also emerged in Decatur where the teaching assistants were told their benefits would stop if they went on strike, but those who continued to work would not suffer this blow. They struck on Oct. 29th and discovered that their insurance, including Vision, Dental, prescription, and life, stopped on Nov. 1st

What was the core of their strike, insurance! With an average salary of \$20,000, these employees are looking at a 247% increase in premium for family and 64% increase for other plans. They faced no realistic option but to return to work and continue to hammer out an agreement.

You might be asking, what does all of this have to do with me? My answer would be everything.

2019 IFT Convention/Chicago... "Our Union. Our Future."

This year, we celebrated our successes, learned how to build more power, and helped to inspire one another. In addition to regular union business, we were taught how to engage our members and to win our must-win battles... this includes passing the Fair Tax.

AFT Local 604 Staff & Delegates who attended convention. Front row: Molly Cox, Marcie Staley, Kathy Alexander, Beth Anderson, Kathy Stenson, Carla Hettinger. Second row: Bill Briggs, Jeff Mlec-zko, Andrew Flaherty, Katie Kollross, Vicki Goebel, Kristin Ryan, Judy Durham, Darlene Mercer, Vicki Morris. Third row: Jared Plog-ger, Jason LaBroschian, Phil Staley, Ron Fonck, Mike Rende, Todd Stachowiak, Sean Hunt, Dan Mercer, Erik Jurgens, Renee Calabrese, and Gerry Mestek.



Left: Karen Lewis, former Chicago Teachers Union President came to speak.



Above: Beth Anderson, (serving as Sergeant at Arms) is with a gentleman who is speaking out on a resolution at the General session.

Valley View Delegates



Left-right Jason Labroschian, Mike Rende, Jared Plogger & Renee Calabrese.



Right: Beth Anderson, IFT Executive Board Member, Bill Briggs, AFT Local 604 President & IFT Executive Board Member and Kristen Ryan, newly elected IFT Executive Board member.

Right... Nick Christen, Jeff Mlec-zko, Shannon Anderson, Beth Anderson, Bill Briggs, & Jeff Chinski enjoying dinner at the HofBrauhaus in Rosemont.



Governor Pritzker speaks on the Fair Tax.



Kathy Stenson & Phil Staley. This was Kathy's last IFT convention after retiring from the IFT Executive Board.



Kristen Ryan, Vicki Goebel & Sean Hunt.



Above: Students from the NJROTC from East Aurora presenting the colors at convention before General Session.



Right: Bea Lumpkin spoke at the general session. She is a 101-year-old union activist & CTU retiree.

Your rights under the workers' compensation act

by James M. Ridge, attorney at law



Slip and Fall on Snow and Ice



Every year, millions of Americans get hurt in a slip and fall accident. One in every five of these falls results in serious injuries such as broken bones or head injuries. Believe it or not, slip and fall cases have a time limit, called the *statute of limitations*. This deadline – **often two years**, but some exceptions can mean it's **even shorter** – determines how long you have to file a slip and fall lawsuit.

After a slip and fall on ice and snow, always follow these three important steps:

1. Report the fall.

A slip and fall on ice and snow often leaves no trace, other than the damage to your body. And insurers often use this to their advantage. The best thing you can do for your claim immediately after the accident is to notify the property owner. Be very careful about what you say and do after a slip and fall accident! Even simple phrases like "I'm ok," or "I didn't see that there" could be used against you, so keep quiet as best you are able. If you need to describe the accident stick to the facts!

2. Gather evidence.

Take photographs of the icy conditions that caused your injuries. If anyone witnessed your fall, take note of their contact information and ask them to provide a statement. Find out if any surveillance cameras

were in the vicinity of your fall, and request copies of the footage.

Remember, if you wait too long, the evidence will disappear.

3. See a doctor.

The only way to tell if your injuries are serious – and how to help them get better – is to seek medical care. But seeing a doctor isn't just good for your physical recovery, it is also important to the success of your legal claim.



Getting help for your slip and fall accident

Slip and fall accidents often lead to considerable medical bills and time away from work. In order to receive compensation for medical expenses and lost wages, injured individuals often choose to file a lawsuit against the person or company responsible for the conditions that caused the accident. A great first step in pursuing a potential claim is to contact an experienced lawyer at Ridge & Downes for a free claim evaluation.

For more information on your rights contact:

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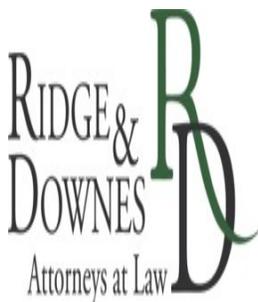
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Chicago Teachers Union Strike... Longest in decades

It is known as the teachers strike that lasted 11 days, the longest in decades, and turned life upside down for families across the nation's third-largest school district. *(New York Times)*



Right... Vicki Goebel and Adam Harding of AFT Local 604 showing their support for CTU as they march along side of their union friends.



Pictured below left to right: Dr. Josh Brown, John Barber, and Dr. Chris Merrill

Joliet West High School CTE Teacher John Barber was honored as the 2019 Illinois State University's Outstanding Young Alumnus from the Dept. of Technology this past October. Congratulations!



Below: Valley View School District was selected as the recipient of the 2019 Mayor's Award by Village of Romeoville Mayor, John Noak for the district's participation in the Founders Day Parade. In the photo below from left to right VVSD Board of Education Vice President Mr. Victor Zack, VVSD Board of Education Member Mrs. Sally Guilbo, Romeoville Mayor John Noak, Valley View Council President Ms. Renee Calabrese, & VVSD Asst. Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Judi Nash.



Below: AFT Local 604 Retirees took a field trip to the I & M Canal in LaSalle on Friday, October 18. A mule-pulled boat tour of the canal with information provided by a tour guide gave insight into the importance of the canal in Illinois history. Lunch was enjoyed at the Lock 16 Visitors Center after the tour.



LaGrange Highlands Negotiations

This negotiation has been long and hard-fought for the last 11 months. The Board team has been very unsupportive and demeaning. It is a battle we are working hard for and we will not relent in pursuit of what we know is right and what we deserve. At times we have been discouraged with the ill-preparedness and tardiness of the Board. We have been insulted and berated by the Board and their attorney more than once. Fortunately, the support from our colleagues, parents and community members has been truly remarkable and it is what keeps us going and working to get the best deal possible! *By Heather Pilch, Council President*



Senate Bill 10



Update on Senate Bill 10. Passed both houses on November 14, 2019, so paraprofessionals can now take the Work Keys test to get their license. This is effective immediately!

2020 union scholarships available



2020 Union Plus® Scholarship Program

Amounts range from \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the fall of 2020. Students may re-apply each year. This is open to current and retired members, their spouses and their dependent children (as defined by IRS regulations). Criteria: at least one year of continuous union membership by the applicant, applicant's spouse or parent (if applicant is a dependent); the one year membership minimum must be satisfied by May 31, 2020. Apply online at <http://www.unionplus.org/college-education-financing/union-plus-scholarships>. Applications are available starting in mid-June, and a complete application must be received *on or before 12:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on January 31st of the scholarship year*. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

Chicago Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship Awards

The Chicago Federation of Labor will award ten \$2,000 one-time cash awards. Five are academic-based scholarships and five are random-drawing scholarships. Students may only apply in one of the two categories.

The following rules apply:

- ⇒ The \$2,000 awards will be paid for the first year of college enrollment only.
- ⇒ Applicants must be high school seniors.
- ⇒ Only members or children of members in good standing in unions affiliated with the Chicago Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO may apply. (Local 604 is affiliated with the CFL.)
- ⇒ **Deadline is February 12, 2020.**

The period for submitting applications is January 1 through February 12, 2020. Please see the application for complete instructions. Applications are available online **after January 1, 2020 at www.chicagolabor.org**. You may also send a written request for applications to William A. Lee Scholarship Committee, Chicago Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, 130 E. Randolph St, Ste 2600, Chicago IL 60601. (Indicate whether you want the academic or the random-drawing application.)

The Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship

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 Scholarships.

In 2020, the IFT will award two \$1,000 Megel scholarship 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 2020.

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 6, 2020 @ 5 pm.*

<http://ift-aft.org/your-benefits/scholarships>

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 2020 IFT Porter Scholarship is Friday, March 6, 2020 by 5:00 pm. Winners will be announced in the Spring of 2020. Visit the [AFT website](http://ift-aft.org) for additional information.**

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 [AFT website](http://ift-aft.org/your-benefits/scholarships) for additional information. <http://ift-aft.org/your-benefits/scholarships>

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 a dependent of an AFT Local 604 member who is eligible for the scholarship. Deadline is March 20, 2020 @ 4:00pm. Visit our website @ www.aftlocal604.org

Paul O. Johnson Scholarship

AFT Local 604 is pleased to offer 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 a longtime union activist, Paul O. Johnson. Paul became a member of 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 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. He was a strong and devoted union leader.

Visit our website at www.aftlocal604.org for scholarship rules. Deadline is March 20, 2020 @ 4:00pm.

Strike Authorization (cont.)



With our setback in the Janus case, some of our negotiating teams are hearing if we don't get what we want, no matter how unrealistic, we will just quit the union.

So, what if a few walked away, some think. But that might lead to others following, and eventually the power of the union is eroded.

One of the most difficult decisions for our members to make is to vote yes when asked to strike. However, one of the easiest reactions to this vote is for all our members to stand in solidarity with them because in numbers is strength.

Thank you, Chicago and Decatur, for reminding us just how important unity is.

WWW.aftlocal604.org
What can you find on our site?

- See our staff & Executive Board
- Financial Topics
- Legal Topics
- Member Benefits
- Political Information
- Retired or Soon To Be
- Recent Presentations
- Scholarships
- Other Union Sites
- UPDATES dating back to 2017
- Upcoming Events

Please let us know if you don't see what you're looking for!

Joliet 86 ratified — after they rallied for a better contract! #Leaderstrong



Dedicated to the students, the Joliet Elementary Teachers began the 2019-2020 school year with a contract expiring the 31st of August. The Joliet Elementary Teachers Union initiated the negotiation process in January of 2019, and thus far have made little progress in bargaining a new contract, despite meeting approximately 10 times. The Union brought to the table 21 items to seek contractual change; the Union has since dropped the majority of the items in hopes the District will negotiate in good faith over the remaining items. The latest Union offer is proposing stronger contractual language on involuntary transfers, notice of where teachers will be teaching the next year, and increased wages.

By Erik Jurgens

Chicago Heights, back to school fair

Our Chicago Heights Certified and Classified Staff Council held a Back to School Fair as a charitable effort for their students and families this past September. Each student who came was able to receive at least one school uniform donated by the Union. Council Secretary Gloria McFarlane, Classified Staff Vice President Tamara Dillard, and Council Treasurer Denise Lira spent several days of their personal time meeting with local businesses to gather and purchase these uniforms at a discounted rate. Old Navy, Dollar Days, and Foreman Mills worked with these dedicated Union members so every child who came through the door left with at least one uniform in their arms and a smile on their face. Thank you for your philanthropic endeavors, Chicago Heights Council! There were 272 families served that day!

By Katie Kollross



Tinley Park Kindergarten teachers embracing the Halloween Spirit!



Oak Park Elementary, from East Aurora showing their support for CTU



Cowherd in East Aurora showing their support for CTU



Wonder what's new from AFT Member Benefits?

Southwest Airlines

SWA is offering an 8% discount off Business Select fares, 6% discount off Anytime fares and a 3% discount off select Wanna Get Away fares for travel, along with other benefits. This is a members only discount and requires registration.

<https://www.aft.org/members-only>

Hilton Hotels

We have access to a 12% discount on all global Hilton hotels (subject to availability).

<https://www.aft.org/member-benefits/aft-travelentertainment/hotel-discounts>

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<https://www.aft.org/members-only>

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To ALL our members of AFT Local 604,
we wish you a safe and happy holiday season!

Thank you for ALL you do :)



From:

Bill Vicki
Sean Erik
Darlene Katio
Dan Kathy
Todd Adam
Angela

Next Senate Meeting

Wednesday, February 26, 2020 @ 6:00 p.m.

AFT Local 604 office in Crest Hill



IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

UPDATE

American Federation of Teachers Local 604
www.aftlocal604.org

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