

# Update

American Federation of Teachers Local 604, AFL-CIO

August/September 2018

## New Illinois budget impacts potential raises

Public Act 100-587: it sounds so serious, and it is.

As the final days of the General Assembly were winding down, speculation spread that for the first time since Governor Bruce Rauner took office, it appeared that Illinois would have a balanced budget on time, May 31.

What most of us in education did not realize was that state employees in TRS and SURS were in for a shock.

Last-minute language, which probably was not described by sponsors, lowered the 6% cap, enacted in 2005, to 3% with a label of “pension spiking.” Most of the elected state senators and representatives either did not know it was in the budget or did not understand the impact of this change. A lack of knowledge is understandable, because the language that is of interest to teachers began on page 741 of HB 3342!

This change shifts the cost to the employer for any salary increase above 3% in any year that is used to calculate an employee’s pension annuity. According to the IFT, “the employer will be required to pay TRS/SURS the net present value of the increase in retirement benefit resulting from the portion of increase in salary more than 3%.”

So, if a teacher receives more than a 3% in one or more of the years used to calculate a pension, the IFT reports, “TRS will actuarially determine how much more the teacher will receive over the rest of their life, based upon actuarial assumptions of life span, and charge the employer the net present value of that amount.”

The following week, Local 604 staff members met with Representatives John Connor and Natalie Manley and Senator Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant to find out how this could have happened without our knowledge. Representative Manley said toward the end of session, there were no line-by-line updates and no mention of the 3% cap.

So, what does this change possibly mean for negotiations beyond what we call Pension Enhancements? Local 604 staff members have already had some issues surface during negotiations. Districts, that were considering raises of more than 3% percent, were pulling back for fear of what the future might bring.

While the cap explicitly affects only end-of-career increases, it technically can apply to increases early in an employee’s career, if they take another job not within the pension system. For

*(Continued on page 6)*

## PAC meeting helps explain endorsements



Representative Larry Walsh, Jr. (D), 86th House Dist.

Two issues of concern with some Local 604 members are how the Illinois Federation of Teachers endorses

candidates for office and why are so few Republicans endorsed.

In the past, we have explained that how an elected official votes on education-related issues is the main criteria. In addition, the committee reviews the Candidate Questionnaire sent out by the IFT, but member questions still emerge.

So, to be more transparent, this past June members were invited to our Political Action Committee (PAC) meeting where

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**2** We educate all, no questions asked by president Briggs

**3** Treasurers' corner

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# We educate all, no questions asked

from the president's pen

Growing up in the 60s, I experienced the affect the Beatles had not only with music, but also in a changing world. When I graduated high school in 1968, an unofficial dress code still existed; collared shirts were the norm, and hair could just touch it. Facial hair, maybe a little peach fuzz on some. The girls wore dresses or skirts. Of course, tattoos or piercing were taboo.

Three years later when I student taught at Wabash High, it seemed like the world had flipped. Yes, college was casual most of the time, but the atmosphere in a high school was a surprise. The Beatles had changed the world, and we were not going back.

The Liverpool Four genius lyrics still live on, but for some reason, "You say you want a revolution" and "All I am saying, is give peace a chance" have been running through my mind.

I believe this was triggered by an article I read in *The Indianapolis Star*, and President Trump's policy to separate children from their mothers, who crossed the borders illegally. The article reported that John Kluge, orchestra teacher at Brownsburg High School, resigned his position, because the district's new transgender student guideline ran counter to his religious beliefs.

He was quoted as saying, "I'm being compelled to encourage students in what I believe is something that's a dangerous lifestyle. I'm fine teaching students with other beliefs, but the fact that teachers are being compelled to speak a certain way is a scary thing."

His concern relates to the district's decision to allow "transgender students to change their name and gender in its online record system with approval of a parent and medical professional." In other words, students can choose to be called by a name that reflects a gender identity that does not match their born sex.

So, what is the issue? Does Kluge have a right to teach by his religious beliefs? What about his First Amendment rights? Here is where it gets touchy, for some.

Let me be clear on my view regarding public education. When one accepts a position in a public school, it should be a given that you educate everyone who walks in the door. If not, there are other options for those who cannot follow the guidelines. They need to seek employment in a private or parochial setting.

It seems so simple, but with some recent religious freedom rulings, the gray area is becoming darker. I harken back to prayer in school. When I taught, students could pray anytime they wanted, but to themselves. I could not impose my religion on them, nor did I want to.

I don't fault Kluge and his religious convictions, and he has a right to practice them, just not in a public school.

Furthermore, as we celebrated Father's Day, I couldn't help but think of how any parent would feel if their young child was ripped from their arms by the government because, in part, the parent was seeking safety for the child. Trump said, "That's the law, and that's what the Democrats gave us." However, the *Tribune* also reported "No law requires separation of family members."

Then, on June 22, Trump signed an executive order that halted his policy of separating children from their parents when they are detained for crossing our borders illegally. He had repeatedly said he could do nothing until Congress passed a law, but again he seems to justify his lies with more lies. Public pressure finally got to his "zero tolerance" policy.

In reality, we have a President who is the epitome of Fake News. His lies are so common that he, I think, does not even realize it anymore, or even worse, just doesn't care. And since most of the GOP and Fox News will not call him on it, the pattern has become his norm.

This disregard for others is foreign to me. Again, on my walks, I have seen many "Hate has no home here" signs. As simplistic as it sounds, it is not that easy, especially with the hate that spews from Trump. I wanted to take the sign and adjust it with the support of Local 604. To that end, 604 vice-president Phil Staley's daughter Schuler, who just earned her art degree from Lewis University, working on a sign for the Local, a sign that should reflect how all in public education feel.

With the new school year beginning, we need to reaffirm our belief that in public education, we accept all to create and maintain an environment that is the least restrictive. We also need to reflect on the brave students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, who devoted their summer to travel throughout the country with their Road to Change campaign. In a way, they are reacting to the Beatles, too, "You say you want a revolution."

Part of their mission is to empower the young and to push voter registration. They are taking a stand for what they believe in. We adults can learn from these future leaders by leading through example to show all are welcome while giving peace a chance.



Bill Briggs

Bill

# Treasurers' corner

by Carla Hettinger, AFT Local 604 treasurer



The start of the new school year brings new treasurers for some of our councils. Keeping that in mind it is time to remind all treasurers of things that need to be taken care of beginning with September.

## Monthly checks and balances

Be sure you balance your checkbook and receipts with your bank statement each month. Additionally, you need to make certain you have itemized receipts to coincide with expenditures. These receipts should be stapled to your monthly reconciliation sheet and kept in a monthly file. You do not need to send copies of the reconciliations or bank statements to our office.

## Council Audit, 2017-2018

It is time once again to complete your 2017-2018 council audit. All council presidents and treasurers received a memo detailing the directions for completing the audit. Make certain your audit committee gets a copy of the memo detailing the process for doing the audit and that they follow the directions that were highlighted. Please try and get this audit completed as soon as possible. The deadline for filing the completed audit with AFT Local 604 is **November 15, 2018**.

## Council Dues Payments

At the end of each month you need to complete and submit to AFT Local 604 the monthly dues statement along with your remittance. The forms are provided for your use throughout the school year. Remember dues are paid over ten months from

September through June of each school year. When submitting your dues, please remember to fill in the **number of members**, and **do not staple the check to the remittance slip**. Make all checks payable to **AFT Local 604**.

For members who begin employment after the start of the school year, their level of dues payment is **not based on how much they will earn in the amount of time they work**. Their level of dues payment is based on how much they would earn if they had worked the entire year.

## Council Rosters

Along with each dues remittance payment, our office needs a roster of all members. The information needed for each person on the roster is their **first and last name, address, employee number, and dues deduction (level of dues payment)**. This is needed in an **Excel format**. By having it in the Excel format, it can be easily merged with our data base thus avoiding errors in our membership database.

## 990 Filing

It is the time of year again to file 990 forms in order to keep the tax exempt status. Be certain that your council files the **appropriate** form by the deadline. Councils that are filing late are subject to a daily fine for each day the form is filed late. Information regarding the filing requirements for the 990 forms and the council's deadline for filing, based on the end of your fiscal year, has been sent to council presidents and treasurers.

## PAC meeting (cont.)

*(Continued from page 1)*

Republicans and Democrats candidates for state representative or senator up for election in November were asked to attend. Only two Republicans, Senator Sue Rezin and Representative Mark Batinick accepted.

In addition, four 604 members took up the challenge and listened to the candidates explain their views on issues, like the 3% pension cap and the progressive state income tax.

The day-long discussion provided interesting insight to how Springfield operates. Senator Rezin mentioned that it is "tough to buck your party," but she was one of four Republicans to vote to raise the starting teacher salary to \$40,000.

As for the 3% cap on pensions, they were all a little surprised that it appeared in the budget even though there had been rumors about some change. Repre-



(top) Representative Natalie Manley (D), 98th House Dist.; (L to R bottom) Senator Sue Rezin (R), 38th Senate Dist.; Representative Mark Blatnick (R), 97th House Dist.

Photos by  
Dorene Barrera &  
Kathy Harris

# We care. We fight. We show up.

On July 12 twenty-three members from AFT Local 604 joined 3,000 AFT members from around the globe at the AFT Convention in Pittsburgh. In her address to the delegation, AFT president Randi Weingarten stated, “Our members are sticking with their union.”

According to president Weingarten, there has been member engagement and community involvement throughout the country around issues that matter—and that equals *A Better Life*. She commented, “Like so much of the recent activism, the teacher walkouts are stoking a movement for social justice, for workers’ rights, for women’s rights, for civil rights and children’s rights, for decent healthcare and well-funded public schools, for safety—on the streets and in our schools. People acting together and accomplishing together what individuals can’t do on their own, and doing it in places that no one predicted.”

“And that makes us a huge target. Right-wing groups and their wealthy allies want us gone, because unions are often the only organized force challenging their enormous power in politics and the economy. It’s part of their trifecta strategy: suppress the vote, privatize public education and eliminate unions—the three ways working folks have any agency, any *real* power in America.”

“They know that working people gain strength in numbers. And they know working people do better when they join together in unions. So the right wing is doing everything they can to stop us, so people will have to fend for themselves.”



Voting for the future leaders of the AFT

“Janus is going to ignite us. Don't sit down, don't lay down—Rise Up!”  
Quote by AFSCME president Lee Sanders

Ready to march together

Photo by Elliott Cramer

Photos by Phil Staley

# #IamAFT



First-time attendees (l to r) Gerry Mestek, E. Aurora council; Susan Koziarski and Stella Kapusta, Homer support staff council; Sandra Sarmiento and Judy Durham, E. Aurora council

“Attending the convention renewed my strength to continue to be the voice of those that had no voice and to keep fighting for all.” Homer support staff copresident, Stella Kapusta

“AFT exceeded my expectations as a first-time delegate. With speakers such as Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren and Hillary Clinton, to CTU member and candidate for Cook county board Brandon Johnson and Bernie Sanders, there was never a dull moment. The convention inspired me, gave me hope and renewed my passion for advocacy.” Homer support staff copresident, Susan Koziarski

“It couldn’t have come at a better time in my career. All our day-to-day struggles had me feeling down, hopeless and helpless. Being around union sisters and brothers gave me inspiration and insights into our purpose and our work. Hearing the strength of AFT president Weingarten’s message helped me focus on fight for policies that improve education rather than being distracted by negative personalities. I also saw how expressing healthy disagreement can be part of a productive process. The convention encouraged me to get people registered to vote. Finally, I’m reminded that the union is so much bigger than our local issues—it’s worldwide. We’re fighting for so much more than better pay—we stand for the rights of all workers and I’m excited and encouraged to know that none of us are alone in this fight!” East Aurora vice president Judy Durham

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First-time attendee Kankakee council president *Beth Anderson* got into the spirit in the march for public education funding. Beth expressed her reaction to her first convention, “For months, we have felt dread in anticipation of the Janus ruling. After attending the AFT Convention, it is obvious we can celebrate our solidarity. The Supreme Court has only encouraged our members to fight for our right to organize. Every day, delegates shared stories of members becoming activities and recommitting to growing our membership. Dread was replaced with pride and optimism.”

“Who are We? AFT”

### Inspirational speakers



**I** am writing this last column and newsletter with mixed emotions, but after 21 years at AFT Local 604 (my second home) it is time to start a new chapter in my life.

It has been my honor and pleasure to work with my union brothers and sisters at Local 604 and all of IFT. There have been too many to name that have touched my life in a positive and meaningful way.

I am thankful for the challenges I have had in my position, because without them, I wouldn’t have found my strengths and accomplish things that I never thought I would be able to do.

I am also grateful that I have had the opportunity to meet so many wonderful people. I have seen Local 604 double in size and go through many changes. The local now has new leaders with new and fresh ideas, and I know Local 604 is in good hands and will continue to be an outstanding Local and continue to grow.

I want to publicly thank former president of Local 604 Dick Manley for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to work at Local 604 in a job that I have thoroughly enjoyed—even in the crazy times. His determination and focus were inspiring to me.

*I thank all of you for your part in my journey.*






# The importance of providing accurate history

Your rights under the workers' compensation act by James M. Ridge, attorney at law

The circumstances surrounding a work-related injury is often the gatekeeper to whether an employee claim is found compensable. Not all accidents that occur at work are compensable under the Illinois Workers' Compensation Act. As our November 2017 article stated, neutral risks (risks that the public is also exposed to) that an employee is exposed to at the same degree as the public, and idiopathic falls, are not compensable under the Act. Thus, the importance of providing an accurate history of your accident to your treating physician is paramount.

The compensability of a claim is fact specific. If there are no witnesses to an accident, the trier of fact places a greater weight on the history given to the first doctor/hospital. It is important that you make sure that your doctor documents each and every body part that was injured. Many times, a condition starts out as being a simple sprain, but later develops into a major problem. It is imperative that all the body parts are documented early in the treatment.

Your workers' compensation claim is always strengthened when you seek medical attention as soon as possible after your accident.

When you seek medical treatment for your work accident, provide as many details to all your medical providers, including but not limited to:

- A *descriptive history* of how the accident happened and the injuries suffered
- Whether you were in a designated *employee-only area*
- Whether you were in the middle of *performing a work duty*
- Whether you were *holding work supplies* in your arms during the accident
- Whether you were rushing to a *work meeting or emergency*
- If you tripped or slipped, what exactly *caused your fall* (wet floor, a crack or defect, etc.)
- *All* body parts that are injured, even minor injuries

When more details surrounding your accident are provided to your physician, the physician is more likely to include these details in the medical notes that are used in proving your claim.

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:**



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## New Illinois budget (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

example, the IFT used the example of, "a 35-year-old teacher who receives a 10% increase one year after getting a master's degree and decides to quit teaching and go to law school. Even though the teacher is 25 years from retirement, under the current law, TRS would require the employer to pay the pension liability on the increase over 3%; but the district will not receive that bill until the teacher retires, 25 years after the teacher left the district."

Two issues emerge with this scenario. First, any raise over 3% could cause concern with districts, but a second problem is evident for those who continue to work toward an advanced degree, especially if their increase exceeds the limit. Districts will now probably look at lane advancement, too.

The penalty does not apply if a teacher leaves one district for another district and, in doing so, receives an increase of more than 3%.

However, the district will still be responsible if, for example, a

teacher takes on new extra duties, like club sponsorship or coaching, or teaches summer school or homebound.

What can be done now? When the law changed in 2005, with the IFT support, exemptions were added for areas like overload and summer school pay. The IFT is currently working on support of a trailer bill that could address some of these issues.

There is one more part to the bill that could cause havoc for many districts outside of Chicago and the collar counties. The minimum starting salary in Illinois must be raised to at least \$32,076 for 2019-20, \$34,576 for 2020-21, \$37,076 for 2021-22, and finally, \$40,000 the year after. Then, increases would be based on the Consumer Price Index.

On the surface, with the teacher shortage, the idea is great, but how to fund it is not as clear as it should be. It is just one more worry for districts already struggling to balance their budgets.

**See page 7 for buyout options also under new budget**

# Students with bright futures

## AFT Local 604 awards scholarships



AFT Local 604 awarded the Jacqueline B. Vaughn Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$4000 to **Agata Bermat**. She is an undergrad of University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and on

the Deans List with a Dual degree in social work and psychology; Minor in Global studies and Spanish.

Since Jan 2016, Agata volunteered at Crisis Nursery that provides an ‘island of safety’ for young children at risk of neglect by feeding, changing and interacting with them;

The AFT Local 604 Paul O. Johnson Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$4000 was awarded to **Garrett Roth**. Garrett graduated from Wilmington High School.

He is attending Illinois State University and was accepted to the Honors Program in Special Education/ Speech Pathology and Communication Disorders.



maintains a safe environment by cleaning, sanitizing & organizing the facility.

As a member of the Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity, she contributes 90+ hours of service over the course of four semesters to organizations including Books to Prisoners, University Place Christian Church, Girl Scouts, Champaign Public Library & many more.

Being a Community Service Chair in the Delta Zeta Sorority, she engages in fundraising efforts to benefit the Starkey Hearing Foundation and Painted Turtle Camp that provides summer camp for children with special needs; organizes and participates in donation drives, including food and hygiene products & clothing to benefit the U of I campus and surrounding community.

Agata’s mother, Boguslawka, is a member of the PSRP Homer Support Staff as a Custodian.

During his high school career, Garrett was on the Honor Roll and also the High Honor Roll. He received many awards including Illinois State Scholar, FCA Wilmington HOME Integrity Award, Wilmington School District student of the month, as well as receiving All Academic Honors in baseball, basketball and golf.

Garrett was not only able to maintain grades but also made time for extracurricular activities such as baseball, basketball, football and golf. He was a member of the National Honors Society.

He has volunteered his time in youth summer camps, assisted his coach in baseball and basketball, worked at concession stands, aided secretaries in various activities and assisted at Stevens Intermediate School Office.

Garrett’s mother, Stacy, is a member of the Wilmington Support Staff as a secretary.

### Buyout Options Under New Budget

PA 100-587 also has two buyout options intended to save the state money. IFT strategic research director Nick Christen said, “Long story short, these optional buyouts are probably not smart financial decisions for most members.”

1) **Voluntary Pension Buyout for Vested, Inactive Member**—This option offers a pension buyout in an amount estimated at 60% of the preset value of pension benefits for all members who have a vested pension, but are no longer active members of SERS, SURS, or TRS.

2) **Voluntary 3% Automatic Annual Increase (AAI) Buyout**—This option provides retiring Tier 1 members an option to have their AAI calculated at 1.5% of the originally granted retirement annuity (instead of 3% compounding) in exchange for an accelerated pension benefit payment equal to 70% of the difference between the present value of the AAI under between 1.5% and 3%.

Are you registered to vote  
in the General Election?



General Election: **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2018**

<b>Sept. 2018</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>EARLY VOTING:</b> First Day for early voting for the General Election.
<b>Oct. 2018</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>CLOSE OF REGULAR REGISTRATION:</b> Last day to register to vote.
	<b>10</b>	<b>GRACE PERIOD VOTING AND REGISTRATION:</b> First day for grace period registration and voting.
	<b>21</b>	<b>CLOSE OF ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION:</b> Last day to register to vote online.
<b>Nov. 2018</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>EARLY VOTING:</b> Last day for early voting for the General Election.
	<b>6</b>	<b>GRACE PERIOD REGISTRATION AND VOTING: LAST DAY FOR GRACE PERIOD REGISTRATION AND VOTING.</b>

## Welcome to our local's new office manger



**D**arlene Mercer joins our staff after working as office manager for a retina specialist for 13 years. She has worked in office settings for over 25 years. Darlene resides in LaSalle with her husband Dan Mercer.

She enjoys cooking, traveling and locating treasures for the store she and Dan run on Saturdays. She and Dan also enjoy spending

time with their 2-year-old granddaughter.

Please join us in giving Darlene a warm union brother and sister welcome. We know she will be a great addition to our staff.

**Next Senate Meeting  
Wednesday, October 17, 2018, 6:00 pm  
Local office in Crest Hill**

### PAC meeting (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

sentative Natalie Manley said when something is “last minute, it makes it more difficult for people to organize.”

With some unexpected humor, Manley also said, “People in Springfield want the truth, unless they don’t like it, and they want cuts, unless it’s against them.”

So, what can be taken from this meeting? The questions, answers and discussion are invaluable. We got to know the candi-



**Representative John Connor (D), 85th House Dist.**

dates better, and they got to know us. Also, for the first time in recent years, Republicans accepted the invitation; and, we were impressed by what they had to offer.

The negatives, only two Republicans agreed to attend, and *only four* of our members attended. In the future, we hope both groups have a better turnout. For Local 604 members, it is *your* chance to use *your* political voices.



IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

## Update

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www.aftlocal604.org

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