



A Union of Professionals

# 1274 Newsline



North Suburban Teachers Union – Local 1274, CFL, IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

March 2015

## Rauner Runs Roughshod

Bruce Rauner has big plans for Illinois, but not the kind that most of us would applaud.

In a double-pronged attack within just a month of his inauguration, Rauner has launched an assault on unions and proposed a budget that could have devastating effects on middle class families across the state. (For an analysis of the Rauner budget, see page 6.)

During his campaign for governor, Rauner repeatedly criticized “government union bosses” who he said were “bribing politicians to give them unaffordable pensions, free healthcare, [and] outrageous pay and benefits,” thus raising taxes and driving businesses out of the state.

Following up on this campaign rhetoric, in his first State of the State address on February 4<sup>th</sup> Rauner offered two anti-union proposals. The first was to create “employee empowerment zones,” which could more accurately be called “right-to-work zones.” The idea is to let individual cities and counties pass ordinances to prohibit unions from

collecting “fair share” fees from nonmembers to cover the costs of collective bargaining and other services to workers. Modeled on a right-to-work campaign in five Kentucky counties, the plan is evidently designed to bypass the state legislature, which seems unlikely at this point to pass a statewide right-to-work law.



Rauner’s second proposal was to ban political contributions by unions that have a collective bargaining agreement with the state. While this does not directly affect teachers’ unions, the attempt to bar some public employees from legitimate election activities should be viewed as a dangerous precedent.



Following these first sallies, on February 9<sup>th</sup> Rauner issued an executive order allowing state workers to become “free-riders,” in other words to avoid paying union dues while benefitting from union representation. His order was based on a Supreme Court decision in the 2014 *Harris v. Quinn* case that said Illinois home health care workers did not have to pay fair share dues. This ruling, however, only applied to a subset of workers who are not full-fledged public employees, answerable to their clients rather than to the state, and is of dubious relevance to public employee unions.

At this time, State Comptroller Leslie Munger, a Rauner appointee, is refusing to comply with Rauner’s executive order, saying she will not stop deducting fair share fees from state paychecks without a court order. This position is supported by Attorney General Lisa Madigan. According to Madigan’s office, “There is no question that

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## Rauner Runs Roughshod, Continued

under the current law fair share fees are constitutional.” IFT President Dan Montgomery agreed, calling Rauner’s order “a blatantly illegal abuse of power” and applauded the Comptroller’s decision to “put the law over politics.”

Rauner’s actions did not stop there, however. Almost simultaneously with his executive order, he also filed a suit in federal court against public employee unions, seeking a ruling that they cannot collect fair share fees. This has implications beyond Illinois, since the ultimate goal is to bring a case to the Supreme Court that would give them an opportunity to overturn a 1977

ruling that established the right of public employee unions to collect the fees. During the deliberations in the home health care worker case last year, several conservative

justices called the 1977 ruling “questionable on several grounds,” thus signaling their willingness to reconsider the right-to-work issue. While a California case may beat the



**Rauner and his conservative allies hope to bring a case on right-to-work to the Supreme Court.**

Rauner suit to the Supreme Court, his actions are clearly part of a nationally-coordinated effort to squash the power of unions.

Over the last several years, we have seen conservative Republican governors in Midwestern states take an increasingly aggressive stand against unions. Most notable is Scott Walker of Wisconsin, the state that was the first to pass a collective bargaining law for public employees in 1959. After Walker signed a new law four years ago that included right-to-work provisions, Wisconsin teachers’ unions lost 30 percent of their members.

Rauner shows every sign of being equally if not more eager than Walker to undermine the ability of labor unions to protect and defend workers. ■

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***“None of Rauner’s attacks are a game to middle class workers and our families, and I can assure you, we are not sitting idly by. Our union is working nonstop with lawmakers in Springfield, and we’re spreading our message in the media to educate the public about this governor’s dangerous proposals.” – Dan Montgomery, IFT President***

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## Golan Workers Back on the Job

After six long months on the picket line, workers at Golan’s Moving and Storage of Skokie returned to work last month with a three-year contract and as proud members of Teamsters Local 705.

Under the terms of their first contract, Golan workers will no longer be forced to work off-the-clock without pay. Before the strike, they worked as much as 15 hours a week without pay, losing up to \$4,000 a year. They will no longer have to pay a \$500 deposit when promoted to foreman or driver of a crew, nor will they have

illegal deductions taken from their paychecks. Finally, they are getting a pay raise!



**Above, IFT President Dan Montgomery spoke at a rally last September in support of striking workers at Golan’s Moving and Storage in Skokie. The workers won their first contract after six months on the picket line.**

The striking workers, supported by the NSTU and many other local labor and ecumenical organizations, deserve congratulations for their incredible courage and perseverance during some of the coldest days of the year. “I had faith,” worker August Rufasto explained. “We are in a country – America – where there is respect for the rights of people. I had a [good] feeling because there were so many people supporting us. I knew we had a good chance.”

For more information, go to [www.arisechicago.org](http://www.arisechicago.org).

# What Is Wrong with “Right-to-Work”?

## WHAT IS RIGHT-TO-WORK?

Despite the way it sounds, right-to-work does NOT guarantee people a job, NOR does it prevent unfair firings. Right-to-work refers to a state law that prohibits union security agreements. This means that in states with right-to-work laws unions are not allowed to negotiate contracts that require all workers who receive the benefits of the contract to contribute to the costs of union representation.

## WHY IS RIGHT-TO-WORK UNFAIR?

Right-to-work allows workers to get all the benefits of union representation without paying any of the costs. This creates a class of workers called “free riders” who, under federal law, must be represented by the union even if they refuse to contribute. This is unfair to dues-paying members and undermines the effectiveness of the union. Negotiating contracts that benefit and protect *all* workers can be an expensive and time-consuming process. Likewise, defending workers who are fired or punished illegally can also be expensive. It is only fair that everyone should share the costs.



## WHAT IS FAIR SHARE?

Under the federal National Labor Relations Act, no one is required to join a union or pay dues, even if they work under the terms of a contract negotiated by a union. However, they may be required to pay a lesser amount called “Fair Share,” which compensates the union for negotiating, defending and enforcing a contract. It is important to emphasize that Fair Share fees are not and cannot be used for political activities. A 1977 Supreme Court case, *Abood vs. Detroit Board of Education*, found Fair Share arrangements to be constitutional.

## HOW WIDESPREAD IS RIGHT-TO-WORK?

Currently, there are 24 states that have right-to-work laws on the books. Until recently, right-to-work states were mainly southern and western states without a significant tradition of unionism and collective bargaining. The current list of right-to-work states, however, now includes Illinois neighbors Michigan and Indiana, and by the time that this newsletter is published, will likely include Wisconsin as well.

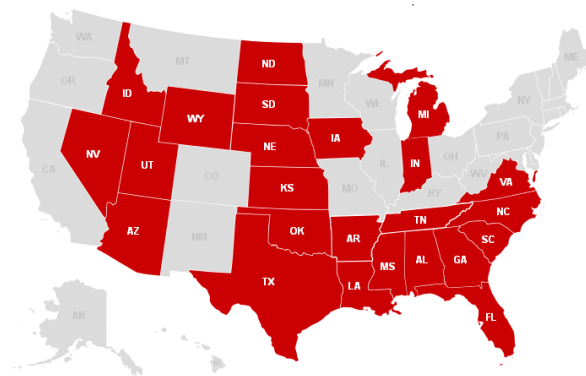
## WOULD A RIGHT-TO-WORK LAW BENEFIT ILLINOIS?

No. A 2013 study conducted by Robert Bruno, a professor of employment and labor relations at the University of Illinois, reflected the findings of studies in other states. According to Bruno, passage of a right-to-work law in Illinois would reduce income by 5.7 to 7.3 percent and would also result in the loss of health insurance and retirement savings for many workers. Overall, Illinois workers would lose between \$35 and \$40 billion dollars in income, with the burden falling heaviest on women and people of color. Of course, that loss in income would also result in a loss of state revenues in the form of declining income taxes, just at the time the state is facing budget shortfalls.

## WHO BENEFITS FROM RIGHT-TO-WORK?

Although studies show that right-to-work laws do **NOT** improve the business climate, reduce unemployment, or make a significant impact on where businesses decide to locate, many business leaders and their conservative allies seem to believe otherwise. This belief is fed by a desire to weaken unions so they don’t have to bargain and can set wages and benefits as they see fit. It is also fed by a concerted campaign by well-funded conservative groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Right to Work Committee.

As a result, we are now engaged in a destructive “race to the bottom” campaign, funded by conservatives, in which states are competing to see who can do the most to weaken unions, lower wages, undermine working conditions, and deny workers a voice in their workplace.



The map above shows right-to-work states in dark and more union-friendly states in light gray. Wisconsin is likely to join the right-to-work ranks soon.

# Progress219 Candidates:

At a forum on Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup> at Niles North High School, ten candidates for the District 219 Board of Education had an opportunity to express their views on academics, fiscal responsibility and transparency. The candidates included four who were endorsed by a newly-created organization called Progress 219, a coalition of parents, teachers, support staff, and community members

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dedicated to fostering an open dialogue for the betterment of District 219 schools.

One of the biggest themes of the evening was trust, with several candidates arguing that the school board needs to be more responsive to the needs of the community, as well as to communicate more effectively with parents and staff. →

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## Brian Novak



*"The three most important issues in this election are trust, trust and trust...The community wants to see change."*

Brian is an attorney who has been previously elected to the boards of Skokie District 73.5 and Niles Township District for Special Education 807. He has an extensive record of involvement in community organizations and activities. He and his wife Cyndy live in District 73.5 where their children attend school.

## Lateef Farisa Hussain



*"One of our main challenges is strengthening communication and trust between teachers, parents and administration."*

Farisa is a Lincolnwood resident who has a Masters of Education from Loyola University. She has served as the principal of Averroes Academy and has served on the board of AdvancED, a non-profit organization that offers accreditation to school districts around the country. She has four children who graduated from Niles West High School.

## At Progress219.org you can:

- ♦ *Learn more about the candidates.*
- ♦ *Sign up to get involved.*
- ♦ *Donate money.*
- ♦ *Contact the candidates directly.*



# “We Need a New Perspective”

The four candidates endorsed by Progress219 are vying for four seats on the District 219 Board, along with a number of other candidates. After a rigorous process including questionnaires and interviews, the members of Progress219's selection committee feel confident that it is recommending excellent candidates who share the values of the D219 community. ➔

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On these two pages, you will find a short summary of each endorsed candidate's qualifications and goals. If you live in District 219, please take their names with you to the polling place on April 7<sup>th</sup>, and be sure to share this information with family and friends as well.

Thank you for voting!

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## Mark Sproat



*“The Board must be responsive and receptive to students, parents, teachers and staff, accessible and willing to collaborate.”*

Mark is a business analyst who graduated from Niles West. In addition to many community activities, he has been involved as a parent in the district, serving on the booster club, as a debate parent and a supporter of the fine arts program. One of his children graduated from Niles West, another is attending now, and a third is in middle school at Fairview.

## Dr. David Ko



*“I am most passionate about equity in our schools. I want to make sure that all students have equal opportunities, that they don't fall through the cracks.”*

David is a board certified, licensed chiropractic physician who is currently serving on the District 219 Board and is a graduate of Niles North High School. He has been involved in many community and school activities, including volunteering as a team physician for athletes at Niles North High School. He and his wife are expecting their first child shortly.

## Information on the election:

- ◆ *You can vote early starting March 23<sup>rd</sup>.*
- ◆ *You can vote by mail.*
- ◆ *You can vote at the polls on April 7<sup>th</sup>!*

For instructions on where and how to vote, go to: [Progress219.org](http://Progress219.org)



# Rauner's Budget: "Unconscionable"

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, Rauner unveiled a proposed budget that amounted to yet another attack on Illinois workers and families. The IFT immediately denounced it as unconscionable because it "decimates public services for ordinary people in order to pay for massive tax breaks for the very wealthy."

While Rauner claims his plan will balance the state budget, it depends entirely on massive cuts in programs that are vital to lower and middle income families and it fails to include a single proposal to increase revenue. His budget proposals include the following cuts:

**Public employee pensions and health care.** Rauner is proposing to offer all current teachers, university staff and state employees a choice between two bad options: take a lump sum payment into a 401(k)-style plan or else a move from the Tier I pension system to the inadequate Tier II system. The second option would shift the retirement age to 67, put an upper limit on pensionable income, and reduce cost of living adjustments to half the rate of inflation. In addition, he is proposing to eliminate the current Teacher Retirement Insurance Program and the College Insurance Program. Rauner claims these measures will save \$2.2 billion, but these savings are entirely fictional since the Illinois Supreme Court has yet to rule on the pension theft bill of last year. If that bill is found unconstitutional, which many observers think likely, Rauner's proposals will also not pass muster.



**Higher education.** Rauner proposes cutting funds for higher education by 31%, a draconian measure that would surely result in higher tuition costs for already hard-pressed Illinois families.

**Medicaid.** Rauner proposes \$1.5 billion in cuts for Medicaid, which covers health care for low-income citizens, including one out of every two children in Illinois. He is also proposing to slash mental health services, community and family services, and alcohol and drug treatment programs, among many others.

**Local government.** Rauner proposes a 50% cut in the municipal revenue sharing program, meaning that cities would have to either eliminate programs or raise taxes to cover their costs.

**Funding for K-12 education.** In an exception to a litany of cuts, Rauner proposes to increase funding for both K-12 and early childhood education. However, these increases are disingenuous, since he is simultaneously proposing to freeze local property taxes. According to the IFT, the increased state funding would barely cover one-third of the loss in property tax revenue, resulting in a net loss for school districts.



The proposed cuts have been presented by Rauner as if there was no alternative. In fact, there *are* alternatives. In January, we saw the temporary tax increase of 2011 expire, dropping from 5% to 3.75% for individuals and from 7% to 5.25% for corporations. This alone has created a budget shortfall of \$4 billion – enough to cover a large part of what Rauner is proposing to cut, if it were reinstated. In addition, the IFT has suggested that the Governor should listen to Illinois voters, who endorsed a millionaire's tax to support public schools in last November's elections. He could also recommend closing loopholes that allow 70% of corporations to pay zero in taxes in this state.

Rauner has spoken of the need for "shared sacrifice," but it is hard to see what sacrifice the wealthy will be making in this budget. As one Evanston resident wrote to the Sun-Times, "those who get to sacrifice are disabled children and their families, the blind, the elderly, cancer patients, the mentally ill, people who rely on public transportation, retiring nurses and librarians, and poor and working class individuals who aspire to improve their minds and increase their opportunities through higher education."■

For more on the budget, go to [www.ift-aft.org](http://www.ift-aft.org) or [www.weareoneillinois.org](http://www.weareoneillinois.org).

## From the President

# The Seeds of Progress219

Late last year the union, in coalition with a group of parents, community members, teachers and support staff living in District 219, helped to create a new organization that we now call Progress219. This endeavor represents a new level of engagement and activism for our union, one that holds great promise for stronger ties with the community and a greater voice for all of its stakeholders, but one that comes with certain challenges as well. In the end I am confident that Progress219 will be a force for positive change and productive relationships within District 219 for a long time to come.

The seeds for the idea of Progress219 were planted over time, as those in union leadership repeatedly encountered parents, community members, and fellow workers who were frustrated with the status quo in the district. Through those engagements, a common theme



emerged. While those involved universally expressed a commitment to, and love for, our schools, many felt frustrated with the lack of voice given to those outside of the inner ring of decision makers. District 219 has embarked on many bold

initiatives over the last few years; some of those decisions have been controversial. Yet what concerns people most are not the decisions themselves, but the manner in which those decisions have been made and communicated.

Those seeds of Progress219 began to take root in the fall of 2014 when the budding coalition came together to share their concerns. A cornerstone of that group is the large number of teachers and support staff members who actually live in the district. Some of them are people who grew up in our community and decided to stay here to build their careers and raise their families. Others are people who came to work in the district, fell in love with our schools and community, and decided to move their families here. Either way, their large numbers speaks volumes about our members' commitment to the community. With those members at the core, the group began to expand outward.

By late fall, leaders were beginning to emerge who were willing to take the next step by committing to run for the school board. As we covered in last month's Newsline,

Progress219's candidate selection committee undertook a thorough and deliberative process of vetting all of the candidates, including the incumbents, leading to the endorsement of a slate of candidates that share the group's vision of a responsive and respectful school board.

As I mentioned at the start, engaging at this level is not without its risks. We certainly have caught the attention of the current board and school leadership, and the ire of the three incumbents who were not endorsed. Some have cast aspersions on the union's role in this whole process. But who can dispute the right – indeed the duty – of workers to weigh in on an election that determines the stewardship of the schools in which they are employed?

While the union has never hidden its involvement with the organization of Progress219, we have purposefully sought to cast a wider net by reaching out to the community at large. We did so to build a coalition with the conviction that we will have a greater voice working together as a community.

It remains to be seen how this will turn out. When engaging in the political process there is no guarantees. But I can tell you this: over the past several weeks I have had the opportunity to work closely with the four candidates endorsed by Progress219 and I have been impressed by their level of integrity and their commitment to an inclusive and respectful stewardship of the district. I believe that Progress219 is here to stay and will be an important force in District 219 for years to come.

In Solidarity,



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*"Over the last several weeks I have been impressed by our endorsed candidates – both by their level of integrity and their commitment to an inclusive and respectful stewardship of the district." – Steve Grossman*

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# In Memoriam



Many members of the NSTU and the D219 community were deeply saddened to learn in early February of the passing of Paul Wack, an English teacher at Niles West, who over the last year and a half had suffered from ALS.

In his twenty years at Niles West, Paul earned the respect of his colleagues and the affection of his students through his unfailing patience, thoughtfulness, generosity of spirit, and, of course, sense of humor. He was a teacher who combined his love for literature with a conviction that his students would love it as well.

Paul was a man of many dimensions – he was a musician, scholar, athlete, storyteller, and seeker of spiritual truths. This, perhaps, was one of the things that made him a great teacher, for he recognized, accepted, and honored the many dimensions his students brought to his classroom. For him, it was about the students as people, not numbers.

Paul was also deeply committed to social justice, which made him a staunch union member as well as someone who spoke out on behalf of the poor and oppressed everywhere around the world. His sense of fairness and equality made him someone that union leaders trusted as a voice of conscience on troubling issues. He also brought this commitment to the classroom, where he regularly engaged students in discussions of peace, war, equality, and civil disobedience – and held the belief that these were the discussions essential to education.

Fittingly, Paul's family has asked for contributions to be made in his name to Expanding Lives, an organization devoted to helping young women from

Niger develop the self-confidence and problem-solving skills necessary to become agents of change in their home communities. To contribute, go to:  
[www.expandinglives.org](http://www.expandinglives.org)

## Update on Pension Lawsuit

As you know, the We Are One coalition's lawsuit against SB 1 is underway, with oral arguments set for March 11. A copy of the brief that our union coalition and certain other plaintiffs filed in opposition to the State defendants' appeal is available on the IFT website at [www.ift-aft.org](http://www.ift-aft.org).



Continue to check the IFT Pension Watch blog for updates on the lawsuit as they become available.

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