



A Union of Professionals

1274 Newsline



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

October 2014

NSTU Gets in High Gear for Election

This year's race for governor in Illinois is not just politics as usual.

One of the candidates – Republican Bruce Rauner – is a real threat to the future of Illinois. He is bad for teachers, bad for children, and bad for working people. In fact, he is nearly a clone of Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin. And he has all the money he needs to run a campaign blitz, including a barrage of misleading ads.



The other, incumbent Pat Quinn, offers a chance for a fair shake for public education, workers' rights, and middle class values. But he lacks the deep pockets of the other side.



For that reason, the Illinois Federation of Teachers has endorsed Quinn and embarked on an all-out effort to unmask Rauner.

The plan is to counter the power of Rauner's money by mobilizing an army of people who can spread the word – through family and friends, through phone calls to union members, and through knocking on doors.

Here are just a few of the things that should alarm us about Rauner:

- ♦ He has put forward a proposal for **education funding** that would slash money for public schools by as much as \$4 billion per year. This could result in as many as 1 out of 6 teachers losing their jobs, not to mention higher class sizes and reductions in offerings like art and music.
- ♦ He offered a blueprint for **education reform** that includes elimination of tenure for teachers along with the loss of their rights to due process, to be replaced by a merit pay scheme patterned on a draconian Florida law.

Early Voting
begins on
October 20th



And it is *never* too late to
volunteer and get involved!

- ♦ Join us at the union office on any or all Saturdays at 10 a.m. for a canvass of neighborhoods. Bring friends to make a team!
 - ♦ Reach out to family and friends. Come to a pizza and letter-writing party on Wed., October 8th from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Village Pizzeria Inn at 8050 Lincoln Avenue in Skokie. We'll provide the pizza and supplies. You bring a list of contacts.
 - ♦ Join a phone bank from 4-7 p.m. on Wednesday, October 15, 22, or 29th at the union office.
- For details, go to NSTU.org or call 847-673-1274.

- ♦ He has vowed to break **public employee unions**, even shut down the government if necessary in order to “redo everybody's contract.”
- ♦ He supports “**right to work**” laws that would strip all workers of their rights to form unions and negotiate contracts.

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Rauner, Continued from Page 1

- ♦ He is committed to increased funding for **new charter schools**, thus putting more of our children in the hands of profit-making companies.
- ♦ He is “adamantly, adamantly” opposed to an increase in the **minimum wage** – this from a man who made \$53 million last year, or \$25,000 per hour.

As for pensions, the issue remains in limbo while the Illinois Supreme Court considers the constitutionality of SB 1. (See article on page 4.) Rauner has vowed to eliminate our current pension system, which he calls “absolutely unaffordable and incredibly generous,” replacing it with risky 401Ks. We can be sure that if the issue is thrown back to the Illinois General Assembly while Rauner is governor, he will not favor solutions that benefit either retirees or working people. ■

NSTU Completed First Canvass

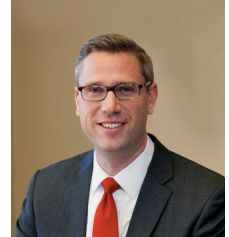


On Saturday, September 27th, the NSTU, in conjunction with the Chicago Federation of Labor, successfully completed its first canvass on behalf of Governor Quinn. Volunteers reported a friendly and positive reception. Canvasses will continue from the union office at 9933 N. Lawler, Suite 222 in Skokie every Saturday at 10 a.m.

Friend of Labor Running for State Treasurer

The IFT and NSTU strongly recommend a vote Mike Frerichs for State Treasurer of Illinois.

Frerichs, whose father is a Teamster truck driver and mother a retired AFSCME secretary, is unabashedly pro-union. “My parents and family members are proud union members and I will never forget what Labor does for them and other working families every day.”



Currently a state senator from Champaign-Urbana, Frerichs voted no on SB 1, explaining that, “I will not support any legislation that unfairly punishes our seniors for simply doing what was required of them while the state of Illinois failed to live up to their end of the bargain.”

IFT Backs Fine

Laura Fine is running for her second term as state representative of the 17th district, including all or parts of Evanston, Glenview, Golf, Morton Grove, Northbrook, Skokie and Wilmette. This is a district that Republicans hope to pick up this fall, so Fine is facing a strong opponent with conservative positions on issues related to education and the economy. The IFT expressed confidence that Fine “will serve as a partner in finding the best solutions to the challenges facing our profession.” Fine, as a former teacher at Northeastern Illinois University, has also been a union member.



NSTU Announces Peggy Couch Scholarship Winner

Gina Orlandi, a student at Illinois State University, was awarded the \$1,000 Peggy Couch Scholarship for 2014, based upon her strong academic performance, essay, and letters of recommendation. She is the daughter of Cathy Orlandi, a support staff union member at District 219.



The annual scholarship was established in honor of Peggy Couch, an outstanding union member and former president of the District 39 support staff in Wilmette. Peggy worked tirelessly for the members of the NSTU and believed that all employees should be treated with respect.

Applicants for the scholarship must be the children of Local 1274 support staff members and must be attending or planning to attend a two or four year college. Those interested should contact the NSTU office for more information and application materials.

From the President

Winning with the Ground Game

The Illinois gubernatorial election poses a threat to public education and workers' rights the likes of which we have never before seen. That might sound hyperbolic, and you might be thinking that we say that in every election. But this election truly is unique in many ways.

To begin with, we have never seen a candidate like Bruce Rauner. Sure, in every election cycle there are opposition candidates who take positions on issues that are contrary to our interests as educators and union workers. But in this case we face a candidate who has made destroying unions – particularly those in the public sector – and dismantling public education the cornerstone of his campaign. If you do not believe me, here it is in his own words:

We have a financial tumor growing in the United States created by the public sector unions...for excessive compensation, both current pay and retirement pay to government unions.



What I'm strongly against is the teachers union. They are not about quality and the students and the taxpayers; they're about their own political power...We've got to fight the power.

It's the weak teachers. It's the lousy, ineffective, lazy teachers – unfortunately there are a fair number of those – they're the ones the union is protecting.

Our government workers are overpaid by 23%...That's not fair.

Why should government workers get a pension that makes them millionaires when they retire? ... This is the reason I am running. Somebody's gotta take 'em on.

I could go on. He certainly does any chance he gets. Combine the attitude expressed in these quotes with his position on issues detailed in the article on page 1 and you can see why Rauner poses such a unique threat.

And to make matters worse, Rauner is a billionaire willing and able to spend millions of his own dollars on his behalf, with friends and corporate allies willing to do the same. As a result, he has virtually unlimited resources to fund his campaign.

Finally, Rauner hopes to capitalize on an off-year election, without an Obama running at the top of the ticket, to keep voter turnout down, particularly in heavily Democratic regions of the state. After all, Quinn's margin of victory in 2010 was only 32,000 votes – or about 1% - and he only took four of the 102 counties in the state. And that was against a less savvy, and certainly less well-financed candidate.

Add it all up and it spells trouble.

But there is hope. Recent polls show Quinn gaining strength and wiping out a double-digit lead that Rauner held throughout the summer. And colleagues, this is where we come in. While Rauner can outspend Quinn, and inundate the state with his misleading commercials, elections are won on the ground with volunteers willing to work the phones, canvass the streets, register voters, and get-out-the-vote. That is where Quinn, with our support, has an advantage.

But the success of a ground game requires an army of volunteers, meaning that every one of us must do our part – we cannot sit back, hoping and assuming that others will do the lifting for us.

So please, follow our emails, check our website (www.nstu.org) along with that of the IFT (www.ift-aft.org) and the Chicago Federation of Labor (www.chicagolabor.org), and look for opportunities to get involved. Any effort on your part can make a difference.

In Solidarity,



"While Rauner can outspend Quinn, elections are won on the ground with volunteers willing to work the phones, canvass the streets, register voters and get out the vote on election day."

Good News on Pension Reform

There have been two recent developments that make it seem more likely than ever that the courts will overturn the pension-slashing SB 1 as unconstitutional.

The first was a decision by the Illinois Supreme Court over the summer in the case of Kanerva vs. Weems.

The case involved a reduction in health care benefits for retired state employees. The court ruled, by a 6 to 1 vote, that the pension protection clause, which says that pensions “cannot be diminished or impaired,” applied to other retirement benefits as well as the core pension payment itself.



This ruling is highly significant because the state is arguing that the COLA reduction central to SB 1 is not part of the core pension. We are arguing the opposite. If the court is saying that health benefits are protected by the clause, most legal observers believe that the COLA will be protected as well.

Encouragingly, the court used strong language in its decision, saying that the state “may not rewrite the pension protection clause to include restrictions and limitations that the drafters did not express and the citizens of Illinois did not approve.”

In a second development, a circuit court judge recently ruled in favor of a motion to expedite our appeal against SB1, based on the ruling of the court in Kanerva vs. Weems. We argued that given the court’s

recent support of the protection clause as absolute and without exception, a long discovery process is unnecessary in the case. The judge agreed,



saying that the Kanerva case was like “an elephant in the room” and that “I can’t stick my head in the sand and act like it isn’t there.”

In Kanerva vs. Weems, the court ruled that the stated cannot “rewrite the pension protection clause to include restrictions and limitations.”

These court decisions underscore what the IFT and the We Are One Coalition have been saying all along – namely that the so-called pension crisis cannot be solved by taking it out of the hides of those who have always held up their end of the bargain. It is time – finally – for political leaders to drop the language of crisis and get serious about accepting fair solutions, including restructuring the debt and finding new sources of revenue.

For more information, go to:
ift-aft.org/pensions/pension-watch-blog ■

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