



A Union of Professionals

1274 Newsline

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

April 2016

MAY DAY RALLY

Sunday, May 1st
3-5 p.m.



Oakton Park
4701 Oakton
Skokie

Please join us to celebrate the achievements of the labor movement and to stand in solidarity with working families across Illinois.

There will be refreshments, music and activities for kids. Everyone is welcome – spouses, partners, children, neighbors and friends!

Speakers will include:

Jan Schakowsky, U.S. Congresswoman
Jesse Sharkey, Chicago Teachers Union
Kathi Griffin, Vice President, IEA

Dan Montgomery, IFT President
Stephanie Camba, AFIRE Chicago
Steve Grossman, NSTU President

NSTU Welcomes New Support Staff Council

On March 28, the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board (IELRB) certified the support staff employees at District 64 in Park Ridge as a new bargaining unit within Local 1274, named the Support Staff Council of District 64. NSTU's newest council is made up of 70 members, including custodians, maintenance workers, secretaries and assistants.

The journey toward union certification began last year, when District 64 employees contacted the NSTU. With no contract to protect them, they were concerned about the gradual erosion of their benefits and working conditions and wanted a greater voice in decisions affecting their work. The group, working with IFT organizers, moved quickly,

holding well-attended informational sessions and meeting with support staff employees one-on-one. The effort was led by an organizing committee that included custodians Brian Cash and Jason Borst and secretaries Elizabeth Gonzalez, Teresa Bergren and Lynn Franz.

Following Illinois labor law, the group undertook a "card check," meaning they collected signed and dated cards from employees authorizing payroll deductions for union dues as proof of their desire for union representation. By December 18th, they had



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collected cards from more than the required number of signatures, clearly demonstrating a “majority interest,” and filed for certification with the IELRB.

According to IFT Organizing Director Dave Bevard, the organizing drive went smoothly, attributable largely to the dedication of District 64 support staff, who felt that if they wanted to be heard, they had no other option than to be organized.

The next step for District 64 support staff is membership ratification of a constitution and by-laws, followed by election of officers, which should take place by the end of this school year. They will also appoint a negotiations committee, which will begin the process of writing and negotiating a new contract over the course of the next several months. ■

Big Win in Friedrichs Case

On March 29, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of labor in the Friedrichs case, in which California teachers objected to paying fair share fees to cover the cost of bargaining and other duties the union is required to undertake on their behalf. (See February newsletter at nstu.org) This was a significant win for working families and a blow to wealthy, corporate interests who want to further bend the rules in their favor.

The decision of the court, delivered in a single sentence, was tied at 4-4, meaning that the ruling of a lower court in favor of unions was left intact, upholding nearly four decades of precedent.



the issue will be revisited through dozens of similar cases currently moving through the system.

On the day after the ruling, the Illinois Federation of Teachers called on union members to use this victory and momentum as an opportunity to further our work to engage members and build collective power. They pointed out that in Illinois, Governor Rauner continues to protect the wealthy while ordinary families suffer and sacrifice, much like those who brought the Friedrichs case.

For the full text of the IFT statement on the Friedrichs victory, go to ift-aft.org. ■

The case was the focus of increased attention in recent weeks, not only because of the far-reaching implications of the case itself, but also due to the February death of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia, who was seen as likely to have ruled against unions as the tie-breaking fifth vote.

While the ruling was a victory for public employee unions, it set no precedent and left the door open to further challenges, depending upon the balance on the court when a ninth justice is finally approved to take Scalia’s place.

The Friedrichs case was the culmination of decades of anti-union activity on the part of conservative right-to-work organizations funded by wealthy supporters. The goal was to undermine the power of working people to bargain collectively and protect the interests of their members. Given the determination of our opponents, it’s certain that

“This case provides a vivid illustration of what’s at stake when it comes to the Supreme Court. That is why the same wealthy special interests that manufactured this attack on working people are also trying to prevent President Obama from fulfilling his constitutional responsibility to fill the vacancy on the Court. It’s time for conservatives to stop playing games with the Supreme Court.”

- Statement of the IFT in response to the Friedrichs ruling

Crisis in Education and the Threat of Privatization

By Diane Ravitch
Research Professor
of Education, New
York University;
author of **Reign of
Error**



It has become conventional wisdom that “education is in crisis.” I have been asked about this question by many interviewers. They say something like: “Do you think American education is in crisis? What is the cause of the crisis?” And I answer, “Yes, there is a crisis, but it is not the one you have read about. The crisis in education today is an existential threat to the survival of public education. The threat comes from those who unfairly blame the school for social conditions, and then create a false narrative of failure. The real threat is privatization and the loss of a fundamental democratic institution.”

Yes, there is a crisis, but it is not the one you have read about. The crisis in education today is an existential threat to the survival of public education.

As we have seen again and again, the corporate education industry is eager to break into U.S. public education and turn it into a free marketplace, where they can monetize the schools and be assured of government subsidization. On the whole, these privatized institutions do not produce higher test scores than regular public schools, except for those that cherry-pick their students and exclude the neediest and lowest performing students. The promotion of privatization by philanthropies, by the U.S. Department of Education, by right-wing governors (and a few Democratic governors like Cuomo of New York and Malloy of Connecticut), by the hedge fund industry, and by a burgeoning education equities industry poses a danger to our democracy. In some communities, public schools verge on bankruptcy as charters drain their resources and their best students. Nationwide, charter schools have paved the way for vouchers by making “school choice” non-controversial.

Yes, education is in crisis. The profession of teaching is threatened by the financial powerhouse Teach for

America, which sells the bizarre idea that amateurs are more successful than experienced teachers. TFA — and the belief in amateurism — has also facilitated the passage of legislation to strip teachers of basic rights to due process and of salaries tied to experience and credentials.

Education is in crisis because of the explosion of testing and the embrace by government of test scores as both the means and the end of education. The scores are treated as a measure of teacher effectiveness and school effectiveness, when they are in fact a measure of the family income of the students enrolled in the school. The worst consequence of the romance with standardized testing is that children are ranked, sorted, and assigned a value based on scores that are not necessarily scientific or objective. Children thus become instruments, tools, objects, rather than unique human beings, each with his or her own potential.

Education is in crisis because of the calculated effort to turn it into a business with a bottom line. Schools

are closed and opened as though they were chain stores, not community institutions. Teachers are fired based on flawed measures.



Disruption is considered a strategy rather than misguided and inhumane policy. Children and educators alike are simply data points, to be manipulated by economists, statisticians, entrepreneurs, and dabblers in policy.

Education has lost its way, lost its purpose, lost its definition. Where once it was about enlightening and empowering young minds with knowledge, exploring new worlds, learning about science and history, and unleashing the imagination of each child, it has become a scripted process of producing test scores that can supply data.

Education is in crisis. And we must organize to resist, to push back, to fight the mechanization of learning, and the standardization of children. ■

Reprinted from the Huffington Post

Fair Tax Amendment Pending in Springfield

By now, it must be obvious to everyone that Illinois, under the leadership of Governor Bruce Rauner, is in serious trouble. The budget impasse, along with an unfair tax system that lets the wealthy off the hook, is taking a significant toll on working families in the state.

One of our many problems is that our constitution requires a flat rate income tax, meaning that all citizens pay the same percentage of their income in taxes. This is despite the fact that the tax can be a significant burden for those with lower incomes, while wealthier citizens could easily pay more. It has contributed to a tax system that is upside down. Taking the burden of all state and local taxes into account, a low income Illinois family pays nearly 14% of their income in taxes, while a family making \$1.5 million pays only 4.9%. It also means we are ignoring a source of revenue that could help ease the pain of budget shortfalls.

This is a problem that can be fixed, however, by devising a graduated or progressive income tax – a fair tax – in which **lower rates apply to lower incomes and higher rates apply to higher incomes** (like the federal income tax



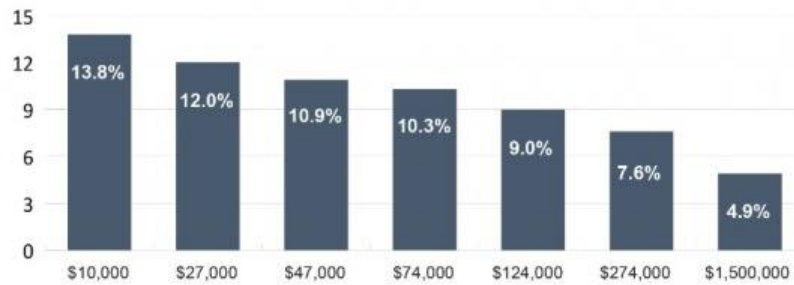
and all but three other states). The IFT has been working with A Better Illinois, a coalition of unions, faith based and nonprofit

organizations and concerned individuals, to change the constitution.

To this end, bills have been introduced in the General Assembly to place a proposed constitutional amendment on the November ballot. The proposal would be to remove the requirement that the Illinois income tax must be a flat rate. In the Senate, the bill is SJRCA 1 and in the House it is HJRCA 8. The deadline to pass it is May 7th, and we need to get a 3/5 majority in each chamber to put the proposal to the voters in November.

Illinois' Tax System is Upside Down

Total Share of Income Spent on State and Local Taxes by Non-Elderly Households



Source: Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy

In 2014, there was a similar campaign for a Fair Tax that made tremendous progress but failed to get out of the state legislature. Had it passed, we could have created enough new revenue to prevent \$5.5 billion in cuts to core priorities. At the same time, 94% of Illinois families would have seen a reduction in their state income taxes.

This year, if we can push the proposed amendment through Springfield, research suggests it will have an excellent chance at the polls. A recent survey of

Illinois voters found that 71% of voters said they would vote “yes” on the measure, while only 27% would vote “no.” Furthermore, support for the amendment extended to all geographical and demographic groups. It is quite rare to see a policy initiative with support as wide and deep as the Fair Tax Amendment.

The time to act is **NOW**. The deadline for a vote is May 7th. Call your state senator and state representative and ask for a yes vote on SJRCA 1 and HJRCA 8.

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