



A Union of Professionals

1274 Newsline



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

January 2012

New law draconian, says Local 1274

Recently, a number of Niles Township High School teachers got a rude shock. All of them had qualified as National Board certified teachers, and according to the ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) they had ten years before they were required to renew their teacher certification. Yet suddenly they learned that their certificates had already lapsed or were about to lapse and they could lose their jobs. How was that possible?

The answer is that ISBE's website makes it incredibly easy for even the most vigilant teachers to make a mistake. And under the terms of an act signed into law in August of 2011, the penalties for making that mistake can be severe.

"We agree that teachers must be held accountable for professional development and their license renewal, but the new law imposes draconian consequences on people who make a simple error of omission," says Local 1274 President Steve Grossman.

Here's why it's easy to make a mistake: there is a distinction between **renewal** and **registration** dates which is far from self-evident. For example, a National Board certified teacher might see on the ISBE website that her renewal date is far in the future --- 2019 or 2020, for instance -- and assume that nothing needs to be done until that date since National Board certification earns a 10-year master certificate.

Continued on page 2

Inside This Issue	
From the President	3
All in the Family: Outsourcing in Wilmette	4
Council Corner	4

When solidarity makes a difference: the story of a union's start

How did your union come to be? Do you remember what it took to get certified or to get that first contract? Are any of the "seasoned veterans" of that time still around to tell the tale? Here's a story of our latest council to join local 1274 and the journey they took to make it happen.

In June of 2010, the support staff employees of School District 74 filed for union representation with the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board. This decision came after a 4 year period going back to 2006. During that time, the employees had periodically reached out to the IFT, only to pull back again because some of them had concerns. By the time the decision was made to go for it, however, the employees were highly united. When the IFT was finally contacted, they had organized themselves into a significant majority who wanted the union. Cards were signed and the process began!

Because many of the support staff employees do not work in the summer, the union wasn't certified until November 2010. They worked through the fall of 2010 to write their constitution and by-laws and to elect their first officers. Once their structure was in place, a negotiations team was formed and trained.



Negotiations began in December of 2010. Throughout the next months, the union members met periodically for updates, and nerves were tense. This period felt like forever, especially when the new school year started without a contract or a pay increase.

At the end of September 2011, still without a contract and facing a significant snag in contract negotiations, the union officers determined a show of solidarity was in order to move the process along; the new union needed to mobilize!

Continued on page 4

New Law Draconian, continued from page 1

However, if that teacher happens to scroll down the page she will find a registration date that will be much earlier. This is the date by which a teacher must register and pay a fee -- it does not automatically renew when a teacher moves from a standard to a master certificate. As it turns out, it is the registration date, not the renewal date, that really matters.

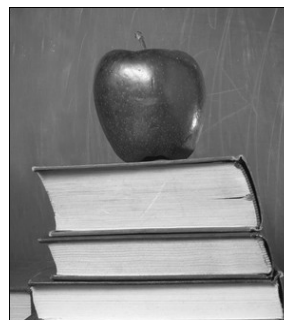
Other teachers may experience a similar problem. When it comes time to renew your certificate (now called a license), you must apply by submitting proof of having met state requirements for recertification. You then must wait until the application is approved by the ISBE. You may assume that at this point you have completed the process, since there will be no communication from the ISBE to alert you to take further steps. However, once approved you must go back into the website, register and pay a fee. Otherwise you have not actually been recertified. And unless you check frequently, you will not know when you have been approved.

All of this is bad enough, but the new law (Public Act 97-0607) makes it much worse by instituting new penalties for failing to renew *and* register by the deadline. Under the old law, those failing to recertify had a grace period of five years in which to complete the requirements and could continue to teach. Under the provisions of the new law, any certificates not renewed by their expiration date lapse within 6 months and cannot be reinstated without completing 9 semester hours of course work in the content area of the teacher's endorsements.

In the case of the teachers at Niles Township High School who were unaware of their lapsed certificates, the district proposed putting them on unpaid leave and giving them until June to complete 9 hours of course work -- a severe hardship, to say the least, for teachers who had made a simple, unintentional error on a website whose design and notification system did not match the rigors of the new law.

When the problem came to their attention, Local 1274

staff and officers snapped into action, contacting IFT President Dan Montgomery to discuss possible remedies. Sharon Teefy in the IFT Department of Political Activity contacted the ISBE, set up meetings, and provided information documenting the problem.



The ISBE has subsequently sent school districts a letter saying that, given the lack of time to implement the new law effectively, school districts will not be required to dismiss teachers with lapsed certificates until after June 30, 2012. (See link below for the full text of this letter.) However, those teachers, including the teachers from District 219, whose licenses lapsed will still be required to complete the 9 hours of coursework, a significant hardship for people who are already working full-time in the classroom.

The IFT has initiated discussions with legislators to make changes that will mitigate the worst consequences of the new law. In the meantime, it is very important for all teachers to carefully check the ISBE website for registration as well as renewal dates (see link below), and when applying for recertification to make sure they have completed **ALL** steps including registration and payment of fees.

If you have questions or concerns, you should consult with your council president, union representative or IFT staff, who may need to work with school administrators in the case of lapsed or lapsing certifications. ■

To check the status of your certificate, go to:
<http://isbe.net/ECS/default.htm>

To see the full text of ISBE letter to districts, go to:
http://www.isbe.state.il.us/certification/pdf/lapsed_cert_memo12-11.pdf

Decoding the ISBE website

Select	Cert No	Cert Code	Description	Cert Level	Status	Issue Date	Renewal Date
○	XXXXXX	09	Secondary Teaching	Standard	Issued	07/12/2002	July 1st, 2019

Above is a sample of what you will see when checking your certification status in the ECS (Educational Certification System) on the ISBE website. Please note the renewal date is in 2019.

Registration		
Region	Region Description	Registered Through
05	Region 05 North Cook ISC 1	06/30/2012
06	Region 06 West Cook ISC 2	06/30/2012
07	Region 07 South Cook ISC 4	06/30/2012
15	CITY OF CHICAGO	06/30/12

Above is what you will see as you scroll further down the page. Please note that the renewal and registration dates are not the same, and it is the registration date that is important for keeping your certification up to date.

From the President:

2011: For labor, a year to remember

It has been an amazing year for organized labor in general, and teachers' unions in particular, locally and nationally. Faced with a series of relentless and unprecedented challenges, we experienced some setbacks but still managed some impressive victories.

Last year at this time, on the local level, we found ourselves in full crisis mode. Shortly after Local 1274 favorite son Dan Montgomery took the helm as IFT president, House Speaker Michael Madigan tried to ram through legislation during a brief winter session that would have been devastating to our profession. Written and promoted by outside anti-union lobby groups masquerading as "education reformers," the proposed legislation would have eliminated tenure, seniority, the right to strike, and collective bargaining as we have known it since the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act of 1983.

We blocked that bill, thanks to an all-out pressure campaign by the IFT, our labor allies, and all of us on the ground who called and emailed our legislators. Though we won that battle, the war had only just begun.

To corporate interest groups and the politicians who follow their agenda, we clearly represent an inviting target.

As a part of our effort to defeat that legislation, we convinced many lawmakers that real education reform required a more deliberate process and the input of real educators. After months of hearings and tense negotiations the legislation known as SB7 was passed. Though clearly an imperfect law that dramatically changes the landscape on issues such as seniority, teacher evaluation, lay-offs and contract negotiations – and will present new challenges for us as we move forward – the legislation nevertheless represents a victory against what could have been.

While the embers were still smoldering on SB7, a new fire erupted over the issue of pensions. Once again we faced a poisonous bill written completely by an outside interest group representing the state's corporate elite. Through an unprecedented campaign effort, we defeated the bill in the spring and again in the fall veto session. Unfortunately, that's not the end of the story: protecting our pensions promises to be the big legislative battle in the coming year.

On the national front, many states faced challenges worse than ours. All across the country new Republican governors and legislatures proposed legislation that attacked public workers and their unions. It was a classic page from the right-wing playbook: take a current crisis (in this case the economic downturn) and use it as an excuse to ram through reactionary laws that serve their agenda. (Remember what they did after hurricane Katrina? They converted the entire New Orleans public school system to charter schools).

The most highly publicized attack on the public sector occurred in Wisconsin where recently elected Governor Scott Walker and his new Republican legislative majority passed a draconian law that virtually eliminated collective bargaining rights for most public employees.

Yet the year ended on a more positive note for labor unions as voters in state after state let Republican leaders know that they overreached. The greatest victory for labor came in Ohio where the people resoundingly voted to repeal the anti-public worker law of Governor John Kasich.



Above, AFT President Randi Weingarten rallied with teachers in Ohio

And in Wisconsin, Governor Walker is now defending himself against a recall campaign. At this writing, activists have accumulated over 507,000 of the 540,208 signatures needed by the January 17th deadline to trigger a recall election.

And if you are wondering why the right wing has it out for public workers, consider this: in the private sector less than 7% of workers now belong to a labor union while 36% of public workers are unionized (with teachers making up a significant portion of that group). To those corporate interest groups and the politicians who carry their agenda, we clearly represent an inviting target.

So as we usher in 2012, Illinois teachers can feel proud of fending off the worst of the anti-labor hysteria in states like Wisconsin and Ohio, but our optimism must be cautious. Without a doubt, more battles lie ahead. And also without a doubt, we will fight them together as we did in 2011.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Steve".



All in the Family: District 39 support staff fights for bus drivers

The District 39 school board met on Monday, December 12 to discuss the possible outsourcing of their school bus service to save money. There are currently 10.5 bus drivers employed by the district. Seven drive part-time and are otherwise employed as custodians. The rest drive full-time. The union is working to protect these members' jobs, hoping to keep the bus service in-house.



Bus driver Carl Walker spoke at the meeting, highlighting the high-quality, personalized service District 39 drivers currently provide for the children. He said that parents know their child's driver and consider them a part of the Wilmette school family.

Past Support Staff Union President Lisa Winter pointed out that the district had tried outsourcing the bus service in the 1970s and was so unhappy with the result that they brought the bus service back in-house.

Several parents spoke, each making the point that the current bus service is excellent and that the cost savings would need to be substantial for the district to even consider outsourcing.

The board did agree that the district could seek bids. ■

Solidarity in Lincolnwood, continued from page 1

After an open member meeting in which strategies were discussed, a multi-step plan was developed. The first step was that all union members in the district wore buttons that proudly said, "LSSU: Part of the Lincolnwood Family". In solidarity, teachers wore similar buttons that stated "LTA: Part of the Lincolnwood Family".

In October, a large group of the support staff and many teachers walked in unison into the school board meeting and read statements, proudly reminding the board of their ongoing commitment to the school and of their hopes for a resolution. A local newspaper reporter covered the story in the Skokie Review. Shortly after these actions, the union and School Board met again for negotiations. That night, the contract was settled and the parties unanimously ratified it in November.

We often forget about the struggles of those before us who won the contracts we enjoy today. The story of the Lincolnwood support staff reminds us that when we come together and form a union, we become true partners in the education of every child. Hillary Clinton said it takes a village to raise a child; we call that village Local 1274. ■

Council Corner

District 39SS: We are working to stop the board from outsourcing student transportation (see story on the left). We have also been providing professional development training for paraprofessionals through the union's ER7D program entitled "Managing Student Behavior."

District 74SS: The support staff is finally a union! See complete story on page 1.

District 219SS: We continue to have monthly meetings with the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources involving issues with individual members. Our negotiations team is going through the results of a survey of our members on key issues in the upcoming negotiations. We are working with the IFT Field Service Director on developing proposals.

Retirees: Do not allow your license to lapse if you intend to sub or even teach out of state after you retire. If you do, it will be much more difficult to renew your license because you may need to take a "skills" test. To find out more, contact Carlene Lutz at 630-468-5054 or 630-468-4089.



1274 Newsline

Produced and published by the North Suburban Teachers Union Local 1274 – IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

9933 N. Lawler, Suite 222
Skokie, IL 60077
847-673-1274
Fax: 847-673-6079

Officers

Steve Grossman, President
Lyndy Massoth, Vice President
Robyn Caplan, Treasurer

Field Service Directors

Kathy Shaevel and Lenny Nieves

Retiree Chapter Co-Chairs

Karl DeJonge & Bill Robinson

Questions and/or comments?

Please contact:

Janet Kelsey
Newsline Editor
847-626-2854
jankel@d219.org

