



1274 NEWSLINE



NORTH SUBURBAN TEACHERS UNION – LOCAL 1274, CFL, IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

Elections have Consequences

Last year, with the help of IFT members like you, we elected a governor who shares our values on public education and worker rights, and who has strengthened support for those issues in the General Assembly. All seven of the candidates that we profiled in our Illinois Midterm Elections issue of Newsline ([October 2018](#)) won their elections. Besides the governor's office, Democrats gained three seats in the Illinois State Senate and seven in the Illinois House of Representatives.

We are already seeing results from these significant electoral victories. Dozens of bills supporting public education and working families were passed in this summer's 101st General Assembly session. Some of these bills were IFT initiatives, all supported by voluntary COPE contributions (see *Your COPE Contribution Makes a Difference* on page 2).

Here are a few of the successes from the General Assembly so far:

Balanced Budget

We have a balanced budget for the first time since 2015. Remember, our last governor refused to pass a budget for a record 736 days in an unsuccessful attempt to get legislators to pass his anti-worker, anti-union, and anti-school agenda ([November 2017 Newsline](#)). This budget supports the idea of a better-educated, more equitable, and prosperous Illinois. It includes:

- Full pension payment
- 5% increase for PreK-12, including \$375 million for EBM
- Additional \$50 million for early childhood education
- 5% increase for public universities
- 6.1% increase for public community colleges
- \$50 million additional for MAP (total of \$451 million)
- Funding for state employee back pay
- Increase for state operations
- More than \$1 billion to pay down our backlog of bills and slash interest costs



Governor J.B. Pritzker signs legislation raising the minimum salary for teachers to \$40,000 in the governor's office at the Illinois State Capitol.

Fair Tax on the 2020 Ballot

In November 2020, voters can amend the Illinois Constitution to pave the way for a Fair Tax. The proposed Fair Tax will generate \$3.4 billion a year and protect 97% of Illinoisans from a tax increase while raising rates for the top 3%. Only those earning more than \$250,000 per year will see any tax increase, with millionaires paying the most (see [April 2019 Newsline](#)).

Repeal of 3% Cap on End-of-Career Teacher Salaries

This legislation repealed the 3% cap on end-of-career teacher salaries that had been implemented in the FY2019 budget, restoring it to the previous 6% threshold. The 3% cap would have depressed salaries by forcing the employer -- instead of the state -- to pay the pension liability for any increases over 3%. Employers had already begun using higher pension costs as an excuse to keep wages low (IFT initiative).

PSRP Recall Rights

[HB 921](#) gives paraprofessional and school-related personnel the same recall rights as teachers in the event of layoffs (IFT initiative).

Restoration of the Instructional Day

[SB 28](#) restores the definition of instructional school day and year. The bill also expands e-learning pilots to districts after a public hearing and school board vote (IFT initiative).



PERA Evaluation Appeal

[SB 1213](#) provides an appeal process for educators who receive an “unsatisfactory” evaluation (IFT initiative).

Teacher Shortage

[SB 1952](#) eliminates the basic skills test requirement, allows student teachers to be paid, and refunds the \$300 cost of the EdTPA test to educators who teach for one year in a Tier 1 district (IFT initiative).

[HB 2078](#) increases the statewide minimum educator salary to \$40K by the 2023-24 school year.

[HB 1472](#) allows a teacher to return to work in subject shortage areas without impairing retirement status.

Charter schools

[SB 1226](#) abolishes the State Charter School Commission and gives oversight of state authorized charters to the Illinois State Board of Education (IFT initiative).

[HB 2272](#) provides that the governing bodies of contract schools in Chicago are subject to the Open Meetings Act and FOIA (IFT initiative).

Your COPE Contribution Makes a Difference!

COPE stands for the Committee on Political Education and is the Political Action Committee (PAC) of Local 1274. Funded by voluntary contributions from our own members, COPE engages in the political process at the local and state level to advocate on issues that we value: supporting public education, protecting workers' rights and retirement security, and creating a fair economy.

Remember, **unions cannot use dues for political activity**. Your COPE contribution is separate from your dues and is voluntary. The COPE contribution is a once-a-year payroll deduction, usually in late October. The standard contribution is \$20 per year, though many members give more.

At the local level, our COPE activities help fund area referenda drives and support pro-worker school board candidates and area legislators. At the state level, COPE funds lobbying efforts on our behalf in Springfield, such as our victory against the state's attempt to diminish our pensions, and the successes of this summer's 101st General Assembly session.



AFT Member Benefits

Did you know your AFT membership comes with exclusive discounts and benefits? Find them on the [Member Benefits](#) page of the AFT website. You will need your AFT member ID to create an account. If you do not know your member ID, fill out this [form](#).

EDUCATOR APPRECIATION

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NORTHWESTERN

VS

MASS

UMASS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16
RYAN FIELD

GROUP BENEFITS

- Specially-priced tickets for educators, families and friends
- Pregame recognition of educators
- Video board message

JOIN US AT THE EDUCATORS TAILGATE!

- Meet with other educators
- Northwestern giveaways

TICKETS START AT JUST \$15

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From the President: Know your Weingarten Rights

Leura Collins began working at Weingarten's, a retail store chain, in 1961 and maintained a spotless record for over a decade. In 1972 she was brought in by her manager for questioning after a coworker claimed she saw Collins underpay for a box of carry-out chicken. Collins asked to have her union steward present but her manager denied the request. She was eventually cleared but not until other accusations were made and she was again denied union representation. Collins reported the entire event to her union steward. Her union then filed an unfair labor practice with the National Labor Relations Board claiming that the employer violated Collins's rights by denying her union representation.

The case made it all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court which ruled in favor of the union. In *NLRB v J. Weingarten, Inc., 1975*, the Court determined that the company violated the employee's right under the National Labor Relations Act to "engage in ... concerted activities for...mutual aid or protection..".

Weingarten Rights and You

What does this case mean for you? You have a right to have a union representative present at any meeting in which a supervisor is asking you questions seeking information that you reasonably believe could be used as a basis for disciplinary action against you. That is what is known as your Weingarten rights.

However, there is an important caveat that all union members must know: the employer does not need to allow union representation unless and until you ask for it! If you fail to invoke your Weingarten rights, any information that you provide to your administrator CAN be used as a basis for disciplinary action against you.

That is why many unions provide members with Weingarten Rights cards that contain instructions to say the following if you are being questioned by a supervisor about something that you believe might lead to disciplinary consequences:

If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or discharged, I respectfully request that my Union representative be present at this meeting. Without representation, I choose not to participate in this discussion.

Note that some of our contracts across the Local contain clauses making union representation man-

datory at all supervisory meetings. Nevertheless, we all need to be aware of our Weingarten rights and proactively assert them if the situation arises.

Once an employee has invoked her Weingarten rights, the supervisor then has three options under the law:

1. Grant the request and delay the interview until a union representative arrives;
2. Deny the request and immediately end the interview;
3. Give the employee the choice of (a) having the interview without representation, or (b) ending the interview.

If you are in this situation and the supervisor denies your request and continues the interview, **you should respectfully refuse to answer any questions.** An employee cannot be disciplined for refusing to answer questions after invoking his Weingarten rights. If the supervisor persists in the interview and demands answers, that would be grounds for an unfair labor practice charge against the employer.

Having your union representative present at an investigatory interview provides you with many rights and protections:

- The union rep has a right to know the nature of the issue being investigated before the interview can begin.
- You have a right to meet privately with your union rep prior to answering your supervisor's questions.
- Your union rep has a right to speak during the interview in order to:
 - Help clarify questions being asked by the supervisor;
 - Ask the supervisor to rephrase confusing questions;
 - Object to questions that are abusive, misleading, badgering, or harassing.
- After the interview, your union rep has a right to summarize your position, provide information not covered by the interview questions, and provide extenuating factors that might help cast your situation in a better light.
- Finally, having a union rep present can protect you from false accounts of the interview that might be made later by your supervisor.

You have rights as a union member – know them and use them! If you do not have a Weingarten Rights card and would like one, ask your union rep.

In solidarity,




In Support of the Fair Tax Amendment

Illinois voters will decide in November 2020 on an amendment to the Illinois state constitution that would change the income tax system from a regressive, flat tax to a fair tax (also called graduated or progressive). The IFT supports the Fair Tax amendment as "the only way to fix the state's finances without imposing a 20% tax increase on everyone or drastically cutting funding for schools and services." See the [April 2019 Newsline](#) for background and rationale on the Fair Tax.

Based on the results of the Local 1274 member survey on the Fair Tax Amendment, only 3 percent of member respondents said they were going to vote against the amendment. Of those member respondents who have not yet made a decision in support or opposition of the amendment, most would like more information on this issue. Many members reported that they get their information from the union. Please watch for further information in Newsline and in Local 1274 and IFT emails over the course of the next year. The passage of the Fair Tax Amendment is vitally important to the future of our schools and communities. We will have a lot to say.

The Fair Tax will be resolution #1 at the upcoming IFT Convention in October, where the delegates set the agenda and priorities for the organization for the ensuing years. Local 1274's Executive Board has joined with many other locals from around the state to adopt a resolution in support of the IFT Fair Tax resolution. We will report on the outcome in the next Newsline.

Fair Tax Facts

- We can't solve Illinois' fiscal problems with spending cuts alone. Ninety percent of all state spending from the general fund goes to healthcare, public safety, human services, and education. Adequate funding of those essential services will require increased revenue.
- Under our current regressive, flat tax system, we can't raise taxes on millionaires without raising it equally on working families.
- Under the proposed fair tax system, 97% of taxpayers would see no tax increase. Only those making over \$250,000 would pay more.
- The governor's tax proposal will generate \$3.4 billion in additional revenue.
- 33 states already have a fair tax, where the wealthy pay more (including 4 out of 5 of our neighboring states).

Local 1274 Councils With Upcoming Contract Negotiations

Contract Ending in 2019

Golf Teachers Association and District 67

The teachers and PSRPs of Golf School District 67 have been in negotiations since last school year and are currently working under an expired contract. There is now a mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) to help reach a settlement. Not surprisingly, salary and retirement benefits are the biggest issues. The working conditions for PSRPs (who organized under GTA since the last contract) have also been a sticking point.

Contracts Ending in 2020

East Prairie Council, District 73

Niles Council of Teachers and Support Staff, District 71

Niles Township Federation of Teachers and Support Staff, District 219

West Northfield Teachers Association, District 31

Wilmette Support Staff Union, District 39

Contract negotiations can be an unsettling time. Fortunately, Local 1274 members are well represented by their council leadership and by our knowledgeable and experienced IFT Field Service Directors, Lenny Nieves and Cameron Sweeney.

1274 Newsline

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