

LOCAL 1600

College Union

VOICE

COOK COUNTY COLLEGE TEACHERS
LOCAL 1600, AFT, AFL-CIO
SPRING 2017

A woman with dark, curly hair and a purple headband is the central focus. She is wearing a red top and a pearl necklace. She is holding a large white sign with bold black text. In the background, a crowd of people is visible, some wearing blue jackets. A cardboard box is visible to her right.

**FUND
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COLLEGES**



Tony Johnston, President

Crisis Brings Opportunity: Building Power Externally and Internally

It is too obvious a statement to say we live in volatile times. At the national level we have a president who is reckless and whose Supreme Court justice selection, Neil Gorsuch, has all but sealed our fate that we are looking at a bleak anti-union environment in the near future. At the state level we have Governor Bruce Rauner who continues to hold our colleges and students hostage to an ultra-conservative agenda which is crippling higher education in Illinois. And we are not alone. Every state that surrounds us has implemented some form of Right-to-Work legislation. However, crisis brings opportunity and there are both external and internal avenues for us to “Build Power”.

Externally, we are already seeing it in people’s reaction to the anti-worker, anti-public education agenda coming at us. After Donald Trump’s initial executive order to ban immigrants from certain countries, people flocked to airports and social service agencies to protest and offer support. On January 21, millions of American citizens, as well as people in other countries, took part in the Women’s March. On April 27, there was a “Teach Out for Higher Education in Illinois” which included faculty, staff and students from 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities, making the public aware that our colleges and students are suffering because our funding has been cut 70% over the last two years without a budget. There was a massive May Day march to highlight immigration rights and other progressive causes.

A quick glance at our social media will tell you that our union was an integral part of these public demonstrations. These are examples of activism where our members can “plug in” and see that we are part of a bigger movement of unions and community organizations fighting for workers’ rights and properly-funded community

colleges. We are also a member of United Working Families (www.unitedworkingfamilies.org), a coalition of union and community-based organizations that will drive a progressive policy agenda in Chicago and Illinois. Our social media consistently features the actions and meetings of UWF so that our members can participate.

While these external actions are important, we must “Build Power” from within as well. Power comes through solidarity and unity of purpose. One way to demonstrate solidarity is to come as close to 100% full membership as possible in the next year. We’ve increased our full membership from 88% to 93% in the last year and a half, which is good progress, but we will be reaching out to members to help us get to 100% by June of 2018. Power also comes through effective communication. Even on the campuses where we have 100% full membership, we are lacking the personal emails and cell phones of many members. We need your cell phone number and personal email to send important information relating to union activities. Please check with your chapter chair on campus to make sure we have your correct contact information.

You play a crucial role in our drive to “Build Power”, and you’re not alone. You are one of 5,300 members of Cook County College Teachers Union. More than anything we need to talk to one another to find out what we can do to improve working conditions and become stronger as a union. Just asking a new employee if he or she knows about the union can have a significant impact. Over the next year, Local 1600 officers will be working with your campus union leadership to have a conversation with every member about working conditions and contract campaigns. We know that challenges lie ahead. But, working together we will “Build Power” and win.

City Colleges Elected Board Bill Passes the House, On to Senate

Great news from Springfield! On April 28, the bill for an elected board for the City Colleges of Chicago (HB 1776) passed in the house by a vote of 114 to 3. The bill will now advance to the Illinois Senate.

Currently, the city of Chicago is the only district in Illinois with an appointed community college school board. HB 1776 would change that system, allowing citizens to directly elect the people who govern our City Colleges. This step toward democracy in education would return the power to decide the direction of the City Colleges from the hands of the mayor to the hands of Chicago residents.

Despite the overwhelming support for HB 1776 in the Illinois House, the political battle in the State Senate is sure to be fierce. Please visit www.ccctu.org/electedboard to see how your representative voted in the House, and find information on how to contact your senator to urge them to support the bill. We’ll keep you updated as we learn more.

May Day March on Chicago

Members of Local 1600, President **Tony Johnston**, and Legislative Chair **Sean Noonan** joined thousands of Chicago activists for a May Day rally and march on May 1st. This year’s march focused on immigration issues and stopping the Trump agenda. Many of our students are undocumented immigrants, and they deserve to learn in a safe environment, free of fear. We call on Mayor Rahm Emanuel and our college administrators to protect those who may be targeted by the Trump administration and defend access to education.



COOK COUNTY COLLEGE TEACHERS UNION, LOCAL 1600, AFL-CIO



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- Vice President, City Colleges Division _____ Rochelle Robinson-Dukes
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Member of AFT Communications Association and Midwest Labor Press Association



Sean Noonan,
Legislative Chair

Hundreds Head to Springfield to Demand Rauner Fund Higher Ed

Hundreds of faculty, staff and students from across Illinois rallied in Springfield on April 27 to demand Governor Rauner fund higher education. Students aren't receiving Map grants, colleges are closing programs, laying off faculty and staff due to Rauner's efforts to starve our colleges and universities. Rally attendees sent a clear message to Rauner and his supporters that the time is now to fund education.

Under the leadership of Gov. Rauner, Illinois has been without a state budget for two years, with Rauner opposing even temporary stop gap measures that might help higher education. In the past two years, state funding for Illinois community colleges has been cut by a staggering 73%, and 160,000 Illinois students who qualify for higher education MAP grants have been denied funding.

The rally on April 27 began early, as demonstrators performed a Teach-Out on the first floor rotunda of the State Capitol building, forming groups and sharing experiences with one another. Local 1600 members shared how community colleges have felt the strain as enrollment has dropped, staff have been reduced, positions are going unfilled, and colleges such as Prairie State and South Suburban have shuttered their child care programs. Our Union brothers and sisters from Eastern Illinois University talked about their 413 cut staff positions, and faculty from NEIU talked about mandatory furlough days and their 18% pay cut. One thing was made abundantly clear: the budget impasse is destroying higher education.



After the Teach-Out, the demonstration moved outside in front of the State Capitol building. A crowd formed around the Lincoln statue as speakers called out the Governor for his continued assault on higher education. Speakers included Democratic candidates for governor **Daniel Biss** and **J.B. Pritzker**, State Representative **Chris Welch**, Illinois Federation of Teachers **Dan Montgomery**, and staff and students from colleges and universities across Illinois.

Although the rally on April 27 was a strong show of force from the colleges, universities, and unions across Illinois, there is much more to be done. We must continue to organize and push back against Rauner's anti-education agenda and inaction on the state budget. Moreover, with Illinois Democrats in a deadlock with Gov. Rauner over the budget, and neither side showing signs of relenting, it may be that this crisis won't be resolved until a new Governor is elected to office. Hope for higher education may well reside in efforts to elect a pro-education, pro-union governor in November of 2018. Be on the lookout for more opportunities to join us as we fight for the future of higher education.





Rose Sakanis,
Classified Vice
President

AFT's PSRP Conference – Fighting Forward

On April 28-30th four of our newest Classified division union leaders accompanied me to this year's AFT conference for Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) which was held in Detroit. They were: **Sarah Henderson** (Prairie State), **Erica Humphrey** (South Suburban), **Lilliana Raygoza** (Morton), and **Norma Vasquez-Zwick** (Moraine Valley). And I am pleased to say that this year's conference was a huge success!

Local 1600 has been sending union leaders to the AFT PSRP conference for many years, but this year's conference really hit the mark addressing key issues that we as union leaders may need to face in the near future.

The workshops that were offered included topics such as: Community College Unionism in a Right-to-Work Environment, Building a Union Culture, Federal Legislative Updates, E-dues, Ergonomics, Leading to Organize, Workplace Bullying, and Building to Win in 2018.

Keynote speakers for the conference included **Ruby Newbold** from Detroit, who is the AFT PSRP Division Leader and **Randi Weingarten**,

President of the AFT. Both speakers addressed the threat of national right-to-work that is looming over us and how to keep our members organized during the rough road ahead. Remember right-to-work is a deceiving term that actually means right-to-work for less. Randi also spoke to us about the devastating effects that the presidential election can have on us as well as the appointment of **Betsy DeVos** as Secretary of Education.

The best part of the conference took place amongst our group. Attending these conferences brings our own union leaders together. This is always the part that I enjoy and one of the many reasons why I advocate to send our leaders to these conferences. This new group of union leaders had the opportunity to get to know each other and to discuss some of the issues that they are facing at their own colleges each day. For the Classified/Support Staff leaders who attended this year's conference it was a winning trip not only for them, but for our members, and for our Local.

Union Leaders Prepare for Challenges Ahead

On a Saturday in March, leaders from each chapter of Local 1600 gathered to share ideas, learn from best practices, and brainstorm about new ways to improve working conditions at our colleges. Many of the leaders had only just been elected and hadn't yet taken office, but they were already focused on the task at hand – strengthening our power to organize for the future. The day proved very productive and leaders left energized for the challenges ahead. To learn more about your newly elected leaders or find contact information, please visit www.ccctu.org.



Fight Back through Retiree COPE Deduction

Who could have imagined seeing and hearing our U. S. President and gleeful Representatives congratulating, back slapping, and high fiving themselves on legislation designed to take away health coverage for 24 million citizens. Who would have thought this “wonderful” health coverage plan would fund the “largest in history” tax cut for billionaires and their corporations. Have you seen and heard enough? **Our response can be made through our Union membership and Local 1600's Committee on Political Education Fund (COPE).**

Over the decades, the Union Movement has been guided in its legislative actions through viewing our fellow citizens as “brothers and sisters.” Unions have been at the forefront in legislation giving citizens Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Affordable Care Act, Worker Rights, and Civil Rights. **Local 1600 and our Chapter fought for legislation to improve and protect your retirement benefits.** Currently, Unions are defending our past gains and working to expand and improve programs for the common good. Your Retiree Chapter membership gives you opportunities to support and help Local 1600, Illinois Federation of Labor, and American Federation of Labor. **If you sign up for a COPE deduction, we can do more.**

Our Illinois Governor and Legislature Elections seem far away but the commercials are already running. Our billionaire governor has put in \$50 million for his re-election and the promotion of his anti-labor legislation. Governor Rauner ignores budget compromises resulting in harm to State Colleges, Students, Employees, and Seniors. It is also important to note that our next governor would be in office if a State

Constitutional Convention were to be convened in 2020. The Illinois Constitution contains the “diminished or impair” clause which protects our pension benefits. **Do we want to see back slapping and high fiving from changes to the State Constitution or legislation reducing our retirement benefits?**

In the month of May, retiree members received an authorization form to sign up for a COPE deduction from your monthly SURS pension. This new deduction allows retirees to participate in COPE. COPE will facilitate and fund our Union's election efforts.

We are very appreciative of those signing up so far. **Do not forget! Please send in your COPE signup form today.** Call the union office at 312-755-9400 if you need another form.

Make our governmental laws and programs serve our fellow citizens as our “Brothers and Sisters”

PS Hope to see you at the **CCCTU Summer Social on June 23rd**. If you want to sit with the Retirees, please contact me at dradtke2133@gmail.com or 773-238-3299.



Don Radtke,
Retiree
Chapter Chair



Retiree Chapter Members at the April 27th Rally in Springfield.



AFT-Local 1600
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Cook County College Teachers Union

SUMMER SOCIAL

June 23 5-10 PM \$20

Join us for food, friendship & solidarity!
Kids Welcome Music & Dancing

5pm: Appetizers & Cash Bar

6pm: Buffet Dinner Catered by Smoque BBQ

7:30pm: Scholarship & Union Leadership Awards

Location: CTU Building 1901 W Carroll Ave, Chicago, IL 60612

Free parking is available in the CTU lot & on the street.

Deadline to purchase tickets is Friday, June 9th

Please mail a check made out to CCCTU to the union office:
Cook County College Teachers Union
208 W. Kinzie Street, Chicago, IL 60654