FUND COMMUNITY COLLEGES
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.

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.
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.
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 (Moline 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-ducts, 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 312-758-9400 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.

AROUND THE CCCTU

Retiree Section Committee Chairs

Betsey DeVos, as Secretary of Education, held in Detroit. And I am pleased to say that this year’s conference was a huge success!
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