I feel very encouraged with the direction of this union and the social climate in which we are working. Our own members in the City Colleges ran a contract campaign that lasted more than a year but came away with huge gains only after we convinced the administration we would strike on February 4th. Our brothers and sisters in Local 1708 Clerical in the City Colleges went out on strike for one day, which led to them getting a great contract. We’ve seen recent teachers’ strikes in right-to-work states such as West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona as well as a massive strike in Los Angeles. Here in Chicago we’ve been able to see up close the Chicago Teachers Union win the first strikes in charter schools in the United States. The increasing number of strikes in higher education unions inspired an article in the Chicago Tribune with the following headline recently: “Because we know that strikes work.” That quote should be the mantra for Local 1600 going forward.

In this edition of The Union Voice we will be focusing on our recent achievements, not all of them at the bargaining table. For example, in the political sphere we’ve just had an election cycle in which we worked on, endorsed and donated to six new progressive, pro-labor, pro-public education aldermen on the City Council. Of course, our big win going back to November was getting J.B. Pritzker elected Governor.

Continued on page 2...
Look at the results: $15 minimum wage, a graduated income tax, 5% increase in higher education; legalization of marijuana, an infrastructure bill and more.

While we did not get our Elected Board of Trustees legislation passed, we will continue to organize around that issue and we will win. It is not a matter of if, but when.

“Because we know that strikes work.” That quote should be the mantra for Local 1600 going forward.

When we shifted from a service model to an organizing model, we first focused on getting quality field organizers and staff and we now have a Field Director, two full-time organizers and one part-time organizer. With this staff we can give chapters the support they need to engage members and run contract campaigns. Please reach out to these people as well as our elected officers for any of your needs at the chapter level.

Local 1600 is only as strong as our members. One new initiative that we are very excited about which intends to reach our members is the Summer Organizing Institute. This is a training open to all members to learn the basics of organizing our members and building power. In creating our institute we have adapted it to our community college reality and the working conditions of our members at our colleges. We are training these members to have organizing conversations, to map worksites, and do power structure analyses of their college. The theory and content are complimented by field work: actually having conversations with members to get them involved in participating in the union and getting involved in actions that support contract campaigns happening now at chapters in negotiations.

We grow stronger as we are united in action. While you read of our recent accomplishments in this edition of The Union Voice, I hope you will see, as I do, that we have laid a foundation to improve our working conditions, expand our voice in politics, and build worksite activism.

In solidarity,
Tony Johnston, President of Local 1600

Billionaires are Working on "Diminishing and Impairing" Your Pension

by Don Radtke, Retiree Chapter Chair

Here is the Bad News:
In March of this year, the State University Retirement System (SURS) received a Freedom of Information Request from the Illinois Policy Institute (IPI). IPI requested information about SURS Annuants. Unfortunately, SURS gave them all the names. With this personal information, IPI is searching for our addresses. With annuitants’ addresses, they are sending letters to annuitants, making deceptive and false accusations against our Union, telling members to drop their Union Membership.

Why is the IPI doing this? IPI is a Koch Brother-funded organization. Yes, the United States’ 2nd and 8th richest billionaires. What is their plan? Weaken union resources and communication to its members, stop our legislative influence, fill the communication outlets with their message, and rid the Illinois Constitution of the “impair and diminish” clause. With reduced legislative power or no constitutional protection, our pensions can be reduced. Yes, our State would then be able give tax cuts to billionaires and their corporations. Sound impossible? Ask state pensioners in Wisconsin and Michigan. The Koch Brothers are looking to fill up their pockets in Illinois.

What has been done? The Illinois Federation of Teachers has contacted SURS. The IFT has asked that: 1) SURS give us the same information provided to IPI and 2) in the future, SURS should follow their own “blind mailing policy” which strictly controls private information to outside organizations.

Still, the damage has been done. The IPI has already sent two misleading mailings. More deceiving letters from the IPI can be expected. How can you “push back”?

- Please contact the Union when you receive an anti-union letter.
- Promote the importance of unions which deliver better worker rights and benefits
- Recruit your fellow retirees into our CCCTU Chapter

The Koch Brothers know how important unions are to protecting your pension and worker rights. As a Chapter, we will be contacting those who have been fooled. With your support, the IFT and CCCTU have strong Legislative efforts to improve State funding around the year. Over the next year, our union will be informing and encouraging you to Vote Yes in 2020 for the Fair Tax Amendment for a Progressive Income Tax. With increased state revenues, our pensions can be fully funded and “Pension Holidays” will not be needed to balance Illinois’s future budgets!

CCCTU’s Annual Retiree Luncheon is coming in Early Fall
Look for our Mailing with the Details

PAGE 2
Summer Organizing Institute:
Members Learn to ask, “Which side are you on?”

by Nick Reid, Organizer

“Strike Date Set!” “Contract Settled!” “Workers make big gains!” Have you ever gotten an update from your union with any of these lines or seen a news story about union members standing up to their employer? Have you ever been to a rally where hundreds of people are chanting in unison? Have you ever asked yourself, “How did this happen?” The answers always involve dedicated union members standing together, but is there anything else to it? Yes, there must be organizing. That’s the catch all term that describes the tedious work of getting a mass of scattered individuals to act as a collective group to wield more power than they had before.

Last summer, four CCCTU members participated in the summer organizing institute run by the Chicago Teachers Union. This summer our union is running the training and there are fourteen members of Local 1600 who have stepped up to learn how to organize. Members from Moraine Valley Community College, Harper College, South Suburban College, Triton College, Morton College and City Colleges are taking part. These Organizers-in-Training will bring what they learn back to their chapters to help build union power and organize for big wins at the negotiating table. But what does that look like?

Peggy O’Connell, Support Staff worker at South Suburban College and Treasurer of her Chapter, says participating has already had an impact. “I made the effort to talk to people I probably would’ve never talked to before,” she says. “We’re building a stronger union through stronger relationships.”

Participants have been covering topics like what goes into winning a good contract, aka, a contract campaign; mapping out the workplace; having an organizing conversation; how to mobilize fellow union members; analyzing power structures at work; and a bit of history to figure out how labor unions, their members and American workers have gotten to where we are today.

So, why make this effort to organize? Why devote time and resources to do this training? Because as you read this, there are people in power working to make sure that they have more and you have less. Billionaires are constantly giving money to politicians to make unions weaker and privatize public education. The U.S. Supreme Court joined the fight when it ruled against public sector unions in the Janus case. Then, at our own colleges we have administrations and boards who would love it if we sat back and accepted contracts that did nothing to keep up with the cost of living or to address our other needs.

“I made the effort to talk to people I probably would’ve never talked to before. We’re building a stronger union through stronger relationships.”

Luckily, we know what we need to do to fight back against these well-funded attacks. Organize. When working people stand together to build power, they can take power away from those in charge and give it to themselves. We then have the power to fund our public schools, protect our rights at work and demand affordable healthcare.

So, you have a choice: sit back and hope that those in power will grow bigger hearts and just give you what you need, or you could stand up, take action and fight for the world we all deserve. Which side are you on?
Education Policy Update

by Sean Noonan, Legislative Chair of Local 1600

On the higher education policy front we are locked in a defensive siege against the education reformers. While dual credit taught by a high school faculty member with the same credential, the same content and the same materials as the credit granting institution can be useful in helping students transition into higher education for a limited number of credit hours, Illinois higher education policy is moving towards a significant expansion of dual credit taught in high schools by faculty with lower credentials for too many credit hours with students not getting a fully collegiate experience. In May of 2018 an alliance of high school superintendents was successful in getting the Dual Credit Quality Act (DCQA) passed into state law. Before the DCQA, the gradual expansion of dual credit courses being taught in high schools had been chipping away at enrollment in on-campus community college classes, mostly in the humanities and social sciences. The 2018 DCQA will very likely magnify this trend.

The quality eroding provisions of the DCQA are many. Most concerning, in my view, is the erosion of faculty credential standards and the erosion of community college faculty academic freedom. Colleges that have higher than HLC minimum credential standards for teaching a course can no longer require that the high school faculty member teaching that course, for credit at that college, have the same credential as faculty teaching the same course on-campus at that college. Our faculty’s ability to set standards is being taken away by state law. Furthermore, under the provisions of the DCQA high school faculty lacking the HLC minimum credential can still teach dual credit courses if they have a professional development plan to earn the appropriate credential by 2023, and either: (1) an MA/MS in anything and 9 graduate hours in the field being taught, or (2) a BA/BS in anything and 18 graduate hours in the field being taught.

Another feature of the DCQA that will likely have negative consequences for us is the lack of a cap on the number of college credit hours taught in high school that a high school student can transfer into public universities in Illinois. Students skipping over the first one or two years of college at a college because they took 30 to 60 hours of college credit in high school could become a job killing reality for us.

This spring I was appointed to a joint Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Community College Board committee charged with developing the administrative processes and paperwork (called the Model Partnership Agreement - MPA), which is putatively intended to be a backstop agreement if the high school and community college disagree about the parameters under which dual credit will be taught. My concern is that the Model Partnership Agreement of the DCQA will, over time, become the starting point default agreement in a race to the bottom between community colleges trying to attract dual credit students and high schools seeking the lowest levels of oversight, and engagement with the community college when offering dual credit in a high school setting.

Students skipping over the first one or two years of college at a college because they took 30 to 60 hours of college credit in high school could become a job killing reality for us.

The current configuration of dual credit in Illinois is now incentivizing the large-scale outsourcing of our work to high schools where college credit will be earned under conditions where, in aggregate, the faculty teaching those classes have less knowledge and experience in the content areas of the field they are teaching. For courses taught in general education transfer programs at the community college, the alternative credentials sub-minimum credential with professional development plan is very likely out of alignment with HLC accreditation standards. The community college administrators on the DCQA committee expressed genuine concern about getting “dinged” by HLC for complying with this law.

Furthermore, the assessment and evaluation processes of the Model Partnership Agreement will create significant pressure for academic departments to adopt one-size-fits all uniform common assessments. This will result in a steep decline in academic freedom.

As onerous as the current dual credit regime in IL is about to become in the wake of the DCQA there is another bill (SB2046) being promoted in the legislature that would require high schools to provide a path to an AA/AS degree earned by taking a full 60 hours of college credit courses in the high school. Skipping the first two years of college on a college campus would not only be possible, but high schools would be required to provide these classes and encourage students to take this route. Other states have similar laws in effect and the impact on community college enrollment is already being felt. When high schools are issuing AA/AS degrees the community college becomes an expensive redundancy. Another bill, (SB1501) calls for allowing “qualified” high school faculty to teach up to eight hours of dual credit in high school with the determination of “qualified” to be established by the high school and the community college without having to meet any of the academic credential requirements under the Dual Credit Quality Act. The current DCQA, and the proposed bills, SB2046 and SB1501, signal a growing disregard for quality education.

Despite the dire news around dual credit there is some relatively good news on developmental education policy. The Part-
nership for College Completion and Women Employed, both non-profit advocacy organizations, are seeking a massive expansion of the co-requisite model of developmental education. They are promoting legislation that would impose an overly uniform model of developmental education where 75% of all developmental education classes would be offered as co-requisite classes in which students needing to do developmental work are directly placed in credit bearing math and English classes alongside a developmental class. The proposed legislation called for using the highest placement measure among multiple measures (up to 14 were listed including self-reporting of student GPA). The bill also offered no new funding for a policy that would require new and varied placement measures, new reporting requirements and changes in student information systems.

Faculty from Local 1600 (professors Susan Grace - English at Wright College and Sunil Koswatta - Math at Harper College), President Tony Johnston and myself, joined with Illinois Federation of Teachers, the Illinois Mathematics Association of Community Colleges, and chief academic officers from Illinois community colleges and universities to convey our opposition to this one-size-fits-all state mandated approach to co-requisites in the proposed legislation. In response, Senator Pat McGuire, chair of the Illinois Senate Higher Education committee (and former advisor at Joliet Junior College) heard our concerns and agreed to withdraw the bill. In its place a resolution was passed (SJ041) which creates an advisory board of administrators, faculty and education reform advocates to study best practices in order to “maximize the number of students completing credit-bearing certificate programs.”

The original model of open admission community college that provides a wide array of programs serving the wide variety of educational needs of the community in which the college is embedded remains sound. The seemingly perpetual treadmill of education reforms that have taken over community college education in the last decade are too often misguided. They treat our working conditions (and student learning conditions) as almost infinitely interchangeable parts of a machine. Too many of the “innovations” in community college educational practice wrongly assume that if the parts of the machinery of the educational process can be aligned just right, then educators can almost magically fix (or more cynically create the appearance but not really address) the problems of slowing economic growth, rising economic inequality, and the insidious persistence of racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism and (increasingly) nativism.

Community college education is a social good with positive effects in the wider economy, in community health and well-being, in family life, in political and civic participation, in cultural enrichment and in the cultivating of one’s own humanity. Far too many politicians, pundits, and educational “reformers” portray community college faculty and staff as Luddites opposed to any and all change. On the contrary, and in fact, we are the people doing the useful work that makes quality higher education embedded in the community a reality. We should be front and center, with voice and agency, in all matters that impact the educational process.

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**Open Season**

by Charles Harper, Local 1600 Field Director

So as most of you know there are a lot of open contracts being negotiated this summer within Local 1600:

- Triton College Professionals
- Triton College Mid Managers
- Harper College Pro-Tech
- Morton College Professionals
- Morton College Faculty
- Moraine Adjunct Faculty
- One Million Degrees first contract

This offers some interesting opportunities for action across bargaining units and steps forward for our membership based on the new financial climate in the state in terms of its financial commitment to higher education.

We are dealing with different financial realities than existed just weeks and days ago. The legislature has raised the SURS cap from 3% to 6% and the Governor has committed to a 12.3% bump in funding to community colleges. So the realities of the state’s position has changed for both sides of the bargaining table. We have to have an unwavering commitment to share in the gains that the colleges will see in the advancement of state funding. One of the most consistent arguments from the other side of the table at the beginning of this year’s bargaining sessions was that they were hamstrung by the 3% cap on SURS calculations. Every single administration had strongly committed that they would not allow any benefits beyond 3% for any bargaining unit. We can not allow them to hang onto this now outdated argument any longer. Especially because we have seen raises for those on the other side of the table sometimes exceeding 10%.

One strategy has been to try and line up our contracts on each campus so they all expire at the same time. We saw success with this tactic recently at the City Colleges of Chicago. As we know, if we have the opportunity to have more of our members working towards the same goal at the same time it puts the power squarely on our side of the table. When these opportunities make themselves available to the Local we should not squander them. We are now planning joint meetings and actions of cross bargaining unit support at many of our colleges.
Dev Ed Reform: Another End-Run Around Open Admissions at Two-Year Colleges
by Susan Grace, Wright College Chapter Chair and Chair of Local 1600 Education Policy Committee

In 2010 Mayor Daley tried to end open admissions at CCC, citing concerns over the cost of developmental education (DE). The public outcry shut this maneuver down quickly, and Mary Mitchell of The Chicago Sun Times captured the harmful impact of such a massive change to the CCC mission: this plan would “[weed] out students who desperately need support [and] exacerbate the growing class schism, particularly among African Americans.”

Nearly a decade later, the agenda is the same, only hidden, and it is being rolled out across the country by powerful moneyed elites (think Gates Foundation, Lumina, Jobs for the Future, CCRC, and ALEC) without any public input and under the guise of access and equity.

One of the main strategies to circumvent open admissions is to eliminate DE courses and replace them with co-requisite courses, whereby students are directly placed into college-level English courses (and math) along with a three-credit support class. While co-reqs do indeed help those students who test near the college-level placement cut-off scores, it also doubles the failure rate of DE students placed into an English co-req. The result: nearly 30% of our most at-risk students (minority, low-income, and first-generation) are being pushed out the door (or perhaps into a certificate program) with “right to fail” programming. This is not equity or access; it is a form of racial and class segregation. What follows is a brief snapshot of the key issues concerning this seemingly unstoppable yet destructive co-req movement.

Echo Chamber Messaging: Think tank propagandists want to insist that DE is “a barrier” and “too costly” and “has too many exit points” and is simply “an inefficient use of resources.” Yes, traditional DE sequencing can be cumbersome and could be improved and some placement tools have been proven invalid. If this is the case, wouldn’t it be logical to change the tool and improve the curriculum and not implement sweeping program changes?

Further, worries about cost are overblown. The total cost of DE in higher education is approximately 0.3%—and no, that decimal point is not in the wrong place! Perhaps most disconcerting is the intentional sidestep of the democratic process through top-down decisions and the exclusion of faculty and the community who will be most negatively impacted by such arrogant and unethical policy choices.

Is DE a Barrier? The argument goes that DE students do not successfully complete or do no better than non-DE students in college-level English, so DE is a barrier! But since DE students have known risk factors (minority, low-income, first-generation, underprepared), it is these factors that impact success, not the DE course, which has been designed to level the playing field so that at-risk students have a shot at being successful in college. This is correlation, not causation. And a 2016 NCES study by Chen reveals otherwise: remedial course completers are more likely to enroll in and successfully complete a college-level English course, less likely to drop out of college, AND more likely to attain an associate’s degree or certificate than nonremedial students.

Are Co-Req the Solution? This message is being parroted across the country, and yes, they do facilitate success for some students, but the process of teaching and learning is far too messy for one size to fit all. Additionally, the research used by Gates and other groups to validate such sweeping reforms does not meet “rigorous research standards” (says the What Works Clearinghouse of the IES); is quite dated (two CCRC articles from 2010 and 2012 are touted as evidence; and buries the negative findings (doubles the failure rate, no better outcomes in college courses or completion rates; benefits white, rich, full-time, high-scorers). And another little nugget: buried in the 2018 Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, the CCRC now concedes that co-reqs “are unlikely to substantially improve graduation rates.” Clearly, Complete College America has not updated its research.

So what’s really driving this effort? In short, it’s all about resource allocation in a changing world. Starting in 2000, the census demographic projections showed massive expansion of minority youth of 3.5 million or 40%, and analysts warned of a “demographic tidal wave” seeking access to higher education. What an economic challenge! Tough decisions would have to be made! In 2004, Hillary Pennington of Jobs for the Future framed this challenge: “In an ideal world, we cannot achieve the quantum leap in educational attainment that the nation needs without reconfiguring the use of time and money across the K-16 system.” The conclusion: Restructure secondary and postsecondary education in order to get more young people more credentials more quickly and with certain groups of students getting a larger share of the resources than others. This restructuring includes the use of structured career Pathways and the collapsing of high school into two-year colleges via a massive growth of dual credit courses, transition courses, and co-reqs.

Still not convinced? In a 2005 Chicago Fed letter, Chicago’s Civic Consulting Alliance, asked this revealing question: “Is it more efficient to invest in our most talented students and our best institutions or can gains be made for the economy by increasing resources to community colleges and nontraditional student populations? Since student success is closely tied to parental income and education, poor students should be satisfied with job training and certificates and not insist on academic
programs.” Or in the words of Davis Jenkins (CCRC, Pathways, CCC Reinvention), “[If] students are to ultimately drop out, it is better that they do so earlier than later. ... Community colleges may have to limit access for disadvantaged students.”

In a nutshell: We are witnessing a massive restructuring of higher education into two tracks: higher education for the haves and certificate workforce training for everyone else.

Note: Of course, vocational education is valuable and necessary, but imposing ceilings of possibility on students is unacceptable.

Please help us defend the importance of DE and the original mission of two-year colleges and fight for real opportunity and equity for all! Contact Susan Grace at the union to get resources.

Continued from page 6...

Don’t Retire from your Union

Support the Union Movement

Be Involved in Our Political Action

Donate to Our Student Scholarship Program

Be a CCCTU Retiree Chapter Member

For Details contact Don Radtke at:
DRATKE2133@gmail.com or 773-238-3299

Fighting for Part-Timers
by Jordan Weber, Tutor at Daley College

For more and more working-class folks, “part-time” employment has become a full-time lifestyle. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, even with today’s high employment numbers, millions of Americans working part-time are still struggling to find a full-time position.

Typically, part-time positions have lower wages, fewer benefits, and, in my experience, less respect in their workplaces. Which is why the CCCTU’s recent contract battle – and victory – has been so inspiring to a part-time professional like myself. During negotiations, the entire membership of the union – part-timers and full-timers alike – came together to fight for a contract that was fair for everyone.

When contract negotiations first approached, I had mixed feelings. Watching the recent wave of teachers strikes across the country – starting with the red state rebellion in Kentucky and spreading to California, Colorado, and elsewhere – had filled me with excitement about what we at Local 1600 could win for our schools.

At the same time, working other part-time positions had taught me some hard lessons. In my experience when questions of raises or changes in workplace conditions were on the table, part-time employees were all too often relegated to an afterthought or left out of the conversation entirely. I figured, likelier than not, this state of things would be the same at City Colleges. I was wrong.

Throughout the contract talks, many of the major sticking points were related to the needs of part-timers. And as the potential strike date neared, it became clear these issues weren’t just the prerogative of the negotiating team, but a sentiment shared by the entire union. Full-timers were ready to walk the picket line to make sure part-timers got a fair deal, and that threat was more than the bosses were willing to stomach.

From pay-hikes to priority hiring, winning the new contract has had real, material benefits on my life – the bills are a little easier to pay these days. But, the negotiation process also taught me a couple of things.

First, I learned that at Local 1600, everyone is respected for their work and what they contribute – no matter how many hours they clock in each week. Second, I learned what real solidarity looks like. Instead of letting the bosses pit us against each other in a race to the bottom, we came together in common struggle, and we won.

From pay-hikes to priority hiring, winning the new contract has had real, material benefits on my life.

Our union may not be able to reverse the larger trend of increased part-time employment, but, together, we can fight to ensure that, in our workplace, everyone is paid a fair wage and treated with the dignity they deserve.

PAGE 7
Local 1600 members have special access to low-rate loans

Open only to members of Local 1600 and Local 1708.

For more than 35 years the credit union has been helping our members purchase cars, build savings and borrow money while on strike!

- Personal loans up to $15,000.00 with rates as low as 7.99%

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Learn more and fill out an application today!
www.CUCU1600.com
Contract Campaign and Threat of Strike Leads to Great Contracts in City Colleges of Chicago

by Kaitlyn Skoirchet, Local 1600 Chief of Staff

After more than a year-long contract campaign, 21 professional negotiation sessions, 20 faculty negotiating sessions, numerous board actions and solidarity days, informational picketing at all seven City Colleges and the public announcement of a February 4th strike date, Local 1600 members reached a tentative agreement for the faculty and professional contracts on January 26, 2019. It’s clear that in the City of Chicago, strikes or near-strikes are necessary to reach fair agreements that will benefit both our members and our students.

We are working to transform our union into an activist union built on collective power.

Our strike solidarity rally on January 24th seems to be what pushed the Chancellor and his administrative team to finally get serious about our contract demands. We had more than 300 members and community allies attend the rally at the Chicago Teachers Union Center, and we received excellent press coverage from WBEZ and all of Chicago’s TV stations. The Chancellor could see we were serious about walking out on February 4th and that we had the community behind us. The picket signs were ordered and the megaphones on standby. The Chancellor himself showed up to our next session and it was clear the other side of the table had been given a directive to try and avoid a strike.

Some of the more significant gains in the contracts include 3% annual increases over a four year contract, keeping the faculty and professional contracts on the same schedule (the administration wanted the contracts to expire separately to weaken our ability to strike in the future), paid maternity leave, increased professional development funding, reduced chemistry lab class sizes, more part-time paid holidays, and much more. We went into the process with ambitious goals, and while we didn’t get everything we wanted, our members overwhelmingly agreed with our negotiating teams that we negotiated strong contracts. Faculty and professionals voted in a landslide to ratify the agreements with 1,043 voting YES and only 55 voting NO.

President Tony Johnston has said time and again that we are working to transform our union into an activist union built on collective power. These strong contracts and the member-driven contract campaign that led to them demonstrate what union power can achieve, and will serve as a model for how union members can build power to benefit our members and our students at every one of our colleges.

Solidarity Swag Shop

Want to show your union pride?

Show your solidarity with some CCCTU swag!

We have hats, tees, and polos!

To get your swag on, contact us at the Union Office: 312-755-9400
On June 2nd, the spring session of the 101st Illinois General Assembly came to a close. For public education for the people who work in education and for working class people generally, this has been the most fruitful legislative session in a generation. The wins are many and meaningful.

The first sign that Governor Pritzker was serious about living up to his commitments on the campaign trail came early in the spring legislative session when the minimum wage was raised. On February 19th, Governor Pritzker signed into law Rep. Will Guzzardi’s bill ramping up the minimum wage in Illinois up to $15 an hour by 2025. Raising the minimum wage will add $19 billion a year to the state economy and reduce public assistance costs for people who work but still qualify for Medicaid, SNAP, etc. More than 1.4 million working people in Illinois will get a pay raise. They will begin seeing their increases in January 2020, when the minimum rate goes from $8.25 to $9.25 before increasing to $10 on July 1, 2020, and $11 on Jan. 1, 2021. After that, it would increase by $1 every January until it hits $15 in 2025. If inflation tracks the same over the next 6 years as it has over the last 6 years, the real value of that $15 an hour in 2025 will be around $10.70 an hour in today’s dollars.

Raising the minimum wage isn’t only about the principle of solidarity between working people. Raising the floor on waged work is sound economic policy these times of slow growth and low inflation, as evidence from localities across the country that have raised the minimum wage over the past five years demonstrates. Low income workers tend more than others to spend their income in their local economy. Despite what the people shilling for permanent austerity suggest, when almost 70% of the economy is consumer demand for consumer goods, paying working people closer to a living wage for their work stimulates aggregate demand and drives overall economic growth.

For the first time in four years Governor Pritzker, the House and Senate worked together and passed a balanced budget. Funding across all of higher ed. increased by 5% and community college base operating grants were increased 4.8%. MAP grants and other scholarship funds were expanded by $50 million and other student support programs grew by $23.8 million. All of our colleges, except Harper, received funds for capital projects totaling over $150 million for construction and renovation projects at community colleges in Cook County.

This budget makes the full payment of state money into our SURLS pension fund. The 3% pension liability cap, passed as a poison pill in Rauner’s last budget, has been repealed. Before Rauner, Illinois law made the individual district responsible for the pension liability of late career pay raises over 6%. As part of the grand bargain that finally passed a state budget in May of 2018, Rauner got the legislature to agree to lower the threshold at which this pension cost shift from the state to our community college boards down from 6% to 3%. The consequences of this 3% cap were chaotic and costly. Promotions within a position or change of position within the college often involve pay raises of over 3%. Taking on additional duties often involve pay raises of over 3%. Over the last year administrations at our colleges have been using this 3% pension liability cap as an alibi for demanding that we agree to paltry raises for our members during contract negotiations. With the repeal of the 3% threshold and restoration of the 6% pension liability cap, the administrations we negotiate with no longer have this alibi for denying us fair compensation.

With the state’s credit rating near junk status, and with the state’s current framework for generating revenue via high sales taxes, high property taxes, and significantly lower income taxes on the rich
(compared to other similar states) Illinois has only been able to adequately fund its public services during the top half of the business cycle when the economy is growing and tax revenues are flowing in. When recessions happen (and they always do), and especially in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the gap between what services the state of Illinois provides and the revenues it can bring in becomes an enormous budget hole. In the past the state government has tried to fill this hole by shorting its contribution to our SURS pension fund.

Illinois is not broke. The state has a large and diverse economy. The perpetual fiscal crisis of public finance in Illinois is due to the flat and regressive income tax structure and the over-reliance on regressive sales and property taxes to fund state and local government services. Under the current mix of revenue streams (flat and regressive sales, property and income taxes) Illinois families in the bottom 20% of the income scale pay almost 13% of their income in taxes to the state. Statistically middle-class families (40th to 60th percentile on the income scale) pay just under 10% of their income in taxes to the state and top 1% families pay under 6% of their income in taxes to the state. Illinois desperately needs a tax system (like the federal tax system) that is progressive or graduated, where a person pays higher rates of taxes (marginal rates) as their total income increases. Working families earning $61,000 a year, the median (50th percentile) household income in IL, should not be paying the same tax rates as families bringing in $1,300,000 a year (the avg. yearly income of the top 1% in IL).

Illinois has been locked into this regressive tax structure due to the state constitution only allowing for flat income tax rates. When J.B. Pritzker ran for governor in 2018 he made the call for amending the state constitution in order to implement a Fair Tax, with progressively higher marginal rates, the centerpiece of his election platform. Now governor Pritzker is living up to his pledge. This spring the senate and house passed, and the governor signed, a resolution placing a Fair Tax referendum on the ballot for voter approval in the November 2020 election. With the credit rating of the state one or two notches above junk status, with close to $7 billion in backlog of bills (thanks to Rauner) and with over $100 billion in long-term pension obligations Illinois must modernize its tax system. Fighting for voter approval of the Fair Tax amendment will be a top-line issue for Local 1600 in the 2020 election cycle.

A progressive income tax will help move Illinois back towards fiscal stability. But other changes are needed as well. Here in Cook County, new assessor Fritz Kaegi is working to make the assessment process more transparent and more accurate. A research report from ProPublica last year found that commercial and affluent residential properties have been under-assessed (and thus under-taxed) and at the same time working/middle-class (and especially people of color) residential properties have been over-assessed (and thus over-taxed) to the tune of $2 billion in recent years. Additionally, bigger businesses and affluent home owners have the resources to appeal (and thus reduce) their assessment while assessment appeals from working/middle-class property owners are few and far between. Even with flat and regressive property taxes, the way in which the value of property has been assessed in Cook County has shifted the tax burden down the class structure so that the wealthy few are paying less and the working many are paying more.

Although it did not make it out of committee this spring, Local 1600 is supportive of Senate Bill 1379 that calls for reporting income generated from commercial properties in order to get a more accurate picture of what a property is worth in assessment. This would increase transparency and reduce the need for appeals. Similar systems are already up and running successfully in Florida, Tennessee, Virginia Boston, New York City, Seattle, and Washington D.C. Greater transparency and accuracy in property tax assessment would be a significant step in lowering taxes for working/middle class families.

In the long-term the rational approach to taxation is to align tax rates with the ability to pay. Sales and property taxes should be low and income taxes should have marginal rates where tax rates on last dollars earned are higher than first dollars earned. Local 1600 is committed to the campaign of working with our allies to win legislative victories that will reconfigure the tax system in Illinois so that the state can adequately fund community colleges and other social services, but also do so in a manner that is fair. If you are interested in working on this important issue via Local 1600 contact me at noonan.cctu@gmail.com

Progress & Victories

• $15/hr minimum wage by 2025
• 5% Increase to Higher Education funding
• $50 Million MAP expansion
• Pension cap increase from 3% to 6%
• Fair Tax on the ballot

Useful Links:

• www.ift-aft.org
• www.aft.org
• www.unionist.com
• www.labornotes.org
Beat the Billionaires; Contribute to COPE!

Your union dues are not used for the political work of the union. Rather, the political activities of the union are funded by voluntary contributions to the Cook County College Teachers Union political action committee (called the Committee on Political Education – COPE – fund). We’ve recently won real gains in both elections and in legislation, but there is much more work to be done.

We need your help. Please contribute to the CCCTU COPE Fund. You can have the HR department at your college automatically deduct a contribution from your paycheck by going here:

https://ccctu.org/for-members/resources/online-forms-for-members/

Fill out the form appropriate for your College, and then send it to your HR Department to initiate the deduction. Every dollar counts. A lot of folks contribute just a dollar per pay period. Many others contribute $5-$10 per pay period. Some get up to $25. You can stop the deduction at any time.
Celebrating Local 1600’s History and Success

by Rose Sakapis, Classified Vice-President of Local 1600

This was the theme for Local 1600’s Annual Social that was held on Friday, May 3rd. This year the committee took the Social “on the road” and it was held at Capri Banquets in Countryside. This year’s theme was chosen so our members could reflect back and celebrate the many successful contracts and accomplishments that the Local was able to negotiate for them over the past year. In the city and suburbs our chapters were able to negotiate great contracts for their members, retain a high level of union membership at their chapters and build union solidarity at each campus.

One of the greatest successes this year was the City Colleges of Chicago contract campaign. A strong team at negotiations, backed by members from every City College represented on the contract action team, and many solidarity actions, helped to secure that win. Accomplishments such as these is what creates Union Solidarity and the importance of union solidarity was celebrated throughout the evening. More than 150 guests attended and not only enjoyed a great meal and musical entertainment, but they were also able to hear from Local 1600’s first president, Norm Swenson, about how our Local was founded and the challenges that our founding fathers faced as they fought to gain union recognition and negotiate some of the best contracts ever. After establishing themselves in the city, the Local ventured out to the suburbs to organize faculty and, eventually, classified and pro-tech chapters at seven community colleges throughout Cook County. The Local is now 26 chapters strong in the city and suburbs.

But this evening was not just about celebrating our union membership, it was also about celebrating accomplishments of our students! At the social thirteen students from the various campuses were awarded scholarships by the Local. Those students were all present at the social and President Tony Johnston and former president, Norm Swenson, presented each student with a plaque and check from the Norman G Swenson Scholarship fund to help them further their education. It was great to celebrate with the students and for them to see why union membership is so important to all of us in Local 1600.

Organizing the social is a collaborative effort by the Social Committee and the Scholarship Committee. Please extend thanks to the members of these committees who have taken their time to organize this annual event. The members of each committee are as follows: Social - Don Radtke, Bill O’Connell, Lynn Doulas, Maria Estrada, Erica Humphrey, and Rose Sakapis; Scholarship - Don Radtke, Sal Attinello, Debra Callen, Maria Estrada, Benette Glover, Lesa Hildebrand, George Otto, Phil Stuckey, and Gail Wiot.

Thank you to all who attended this year’s event and we hope to see many more of you at next year’s event! □

Pictured left to right: Erica Humphrey, South Suburban College; Jesu Estrada, Harold Washington College; Rose Sakapis, Classified Vice-President of Local 1600.
Notes from the Field

Recently, we’ve seen a surge of strikes across the country from West Virginia to LA, and nearly everywhere in between. Chicago was no exception with the Chicago Teachers Union making history by setting the first ever charter school strike. Meanwhile, members at the City Colleges of Chicago settled their best contract in recent history, moments before stepping on the picket lines.

Our office has evolved due to the changing landscape of public education and labor in the post-Janus world. The staff is spending more time at colleges interacting with our members. Thankfully, our numbers have increased, giving us a total of three organizers to assist at our fourteen colleges.

In the days leading up to the City Colleges strike, we were moving from college to college making sure that our members were receiving updates, aware of strike plans, planning and attending actions, spending long evenings at Contract Action Team meetings, and helping with informational pickets and Strike Authorization votes.

The culmination of this effort was an enormous rally held at the CTU Foundation. Hundreds packed the main hall to sign up for strike shifts, purchase their winter union swag, and make signs. Along the way, we were at colleges to push for turnout in what resulted in a massive sea of red. Local 1600 members stood in solidarity with one another as they prepared to step out on a picket line to fight for the contract they deserved. While these were long hours and tough days, it goes without saying: it was well worth it.

Our assistance was not limited to our own members though. While we were lucky to have settled on a contract, our allies at CICS (Chicago International Charter Schools) were not so lucky. We joined them in solidarity as they fought to gain big wins for their members. These were cold, bitter days. The teachers at CICS seemed to have an unlimited supply of energy as they were constantly blasting tunes, cracking jokes, and dancing on their picket lines. There was a special sort of camaraderie built on those lines.

We joined UIC GEO (UIC’s Graduate Employee Organization) as they fought for big wins in their contract. We were also back at our colleges helping 1708 members prepare for their strike. We used many of same tactics we learned readying for our strike to help 1708. This meant having one-on-one conversations about building power. We met 1708 members on their picket lines as they held a one-day strike before coming to a tentative agreement that was fair and well deserved for their members.

Many of our suburban colleges have begun their fight for a fair contract. We have recently learned the best strategies to get our demands and how to build power. We look forward to working with our suburban chapters in holding solidarity days, board actions, and whatever else is needed to make sure that all of our chapters at 1600 have the contracts they deserve.

Last summer, we participated in CTU’s Summer Organizing Institute, which taught us valuable techniques to build power and negotiate demands at the bargaining table. This summer, we held our own Summer Organizing Institute training based off of CTU’s model. We’ve adapted the program to fit the specific demands of faculty and professionals at our schools. While it was an intensive schedule, demanding Saturday morning lessons and briefings, as well as fieldwork during the week at our colleges, our members learned tactics and leadership skills that engage members and earn big wins at the negotiating table.

Field Director Charles Harper and CCC Professional Roberto Guzman showing solidarity with the striking CICS teachers.

Continued on page 15...
Continued from page 14...

As mentioned, our team has been growing. Nick Reid is a new member of the team and comes from SEIU 73 where he is at home working on contract campaigns. Nick helped the Loyola adjuncts form a union in 2016 and get their first contract in 2018. Nick’s a natural at organizing and his skills will be right at home in Local 1600.

Between contract campaigns and strike support, we also lent our services to many of the political campaigns in Chicago during the February election and April runoffs. In some cases, this required us to work at the office during the day and at aldermanic offices at night. As a result, we saw some favorable wins in many of Chicago’s wards.

This is especially true for our newest organizer, Caitlin Brady, who worked on Rossana Rodriguez’s campaign as the Volunteer Manager. Rossana’s huge win in the 33rd ward is in no small part to the amazing efforts of our newest organizer who was able to pull nearly a hundred volunteers each week to canvass for Rossana. Local 1600 is very lucky to have her talents.

But our most recent addition to Local 1600 is Kaitlyn Skoirchet’s baby girl, Cora. Welcome aboard!

We have assembled a strong team that is eager for the many challenges ahead. 

Moraine Valley Adjuncts and Local 1600 members gather after a board action at Moraine Valley College.

Local 1600 staff celebrate the Union’s annual Summer Social. From left to right: organizers Nick Reid and Caitlin Brady; President Tony Johnston; organizer Zach Poulos; and Field Director Charles Harper.
What's Inside the *Union Voice*:

- **Strikes Work, Elections Matter, and Other Truisms**  
  *A message from the President*

- **Springfield Update**  
  *Election updates; Springfield Update*

- **Fighting for Part-Timers**  
  *One CCCTU member reflects on what the new contract means for them.*

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