

West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571, IFT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Union Messenger

"A Union of Professionals"

May Calendar

5/4—Registration deadline for TRS Seminar (Westmont)
 5/7—TRS Seminar (Westmont)
 5/11—Ex.Bd Mtg. (5:30 p.m.—Westmont)
 5/11—HOR Mtg. (6:45 p.m.—Westmont)
 5/11—Vote on 571 proposed budget
 5/14—Registration deadline for IMRF Seminar (Westmont)
 5/19—IMRF Seminar (Westmont)

Union Messenger

Jane Russell, President
 Rachel Esposito, Vice President
 Sandra Erickson, Treasurer
 Cathleen Pope, Secretary
 Jonathan Pazol, Financial Secretary
 Brett Blair, Legal Defense Secretary
 Julie McShane, COPE/PAC Chairperson
 Tom Smith, IFT Field Service Director
 Arnava Mistry-Mujthaba, IFT Field Service Director
 Julie Masterton, Membership Secretary
 Patty Clancy, Office Secretary
 Andrew Bendelow,
 571 Web Administrator
 Robin Hancock,
 571 Union Messenger Editor



Extraordinary Times

This time calls for extraordinary measures too. **Thank you to our Local 571 sisters and brothers who continue to work with our students and in their communities.** You are doing amazing work! This is even though you are at home simultaneously caring for children, grandchildren, parents, spouses and/or other family members and continue to provide daily educational opportunities for your students.



In these extraordinary times, the IFT continues to advocate for our members, students, families and community. Nearly daily, the IFT President, Dan Montgomery, talks to the Governor or his Deputy Governor for Education, Jesse Ruiz, the Illinois Superintendent of Schools, the Illinois Education Association (IEA), the Illinois Principals Association (IPA) and the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA). Two joint documents from these education organizations, the Governor's Executive Orders, Illinois State Board of Education *Remote Learning Recommendations*, daily newsletters from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Superintendent, and specific guidance on school funding, special education, staffing, meals and travel are all posted on the ISBE website, isbe.net. Additional IFT staff and practitioners have been involved in the formulation of the joint documents including the *Remote Learning Recommendations*.



Inside This Issue:

| | |
|---|---|
| Randi Weingarten's Message on Coronavirus | 2 |
| Remote Learning Should Worry Us All | 3 |
| TRS/IMRF/Social Security Seminars | 4 |
| AFT Offers Trauma Coverage | 5 |
| Great Lakes ULI - Delavan Wi | 5 |
| Census 2020—It's the Law | 6 |
| Fair Tax—Questions/Answers | 6 |

You will also be receiving from the IFT, the *Special Edition: Coronavirus News*. The IFT has a section of its website devoted to the latest information including learning resources, COVID-19 safety practices, member news, and more. Visit www.ift-aft.org/coronavirus

Besides working with other state education organizations, the IFT talks regularly to the officers and board of the Illinois AFL-CIO, our other Union sisters and brothers. Many are on the front lines, essential workers, who continue to work in our communities despite the danger to themselves and their family's health. To those other AFL-CIO Union members, we say a huge **THANK YOU** and wish you and your families well. We are all in this together. This may be a scary time. Solidarity continues to be the best answer.

Randi Weingarten's Message on Coronavirus

By Bonnie Saracco

AFT President Randi Weingarten's March 15, 2020 column in the New York Times outlined AFT's message on the coronavirus crisis. This article is based entirely on that column.

It is apparent that our best source of information on this pandemic is not President Trump, or even the federal government, but rather mayors, governors, and medical professionals. Although President Trump did not initiate this crisis, his actions have exacerbated it. The tight controls put in place by both Canada and South Korea are in sharp contrast to the lagging response in the United States. But the declaration of coronavirus as a National Emergency, however tardy, is an important step ahead.

Our attitude should be "clear-eyed about risks, but we should not panic." And we need to understand the impact which accompanies the necessary closing of our schools.

Public schools are often "the safest places in any community," and for many children they are the main source of food and healthcare. The government must ensure that no child goes hungry during the shutdown.

Distance learning is a stopgap measure at best. It worsens the inequities caused by poverty and is inappropriate for English language learners and students with learning disabilities. **But everyone should realize that, despite having little or no training, teachers are doing their best delivering distance learning.**

Although it is surely no substitute to having students in school, AFT's web-based resource [Share My Lesson](https://www.aft.org/share-my-lesson) is now more valuable than ever.

AFT members are working hard during this crisis, from AFT nurses administering COVID-19 tests in New York and treating patients in Washington and Oregon, to AFT teachers in Cleveland filling "blizzard bags" with food and lessons, to AFT providing over 16 million books so far to children living in poverty. Information about these and other AFT efforts can be found at <https://www.aft.org/coronavirus>

Federal legislation to respond to the coronavirus remains a work in progress that will need future expansion. The newly passed laws include funding to fight the virus' spread and to protect the economy, free testing, emergency sick leave, protection for frontline healthcare workers, extra assistance for needy children and seniors, and a robust economic stimulus package.

This crisis has uncovered and worsened deep inequities in our society. U.S. societal and government failures include lack of sick leave, cuts to our healthcare infrastructure, large numbers of uninsured and underinsured Americans, food insecurity, and deep digital divide.

But the crisis has also displayed the heroics of millions of good people. Among them are educators, health care workers, grocery store and pharmacy workers, and our friends and neighbors.

Weingarten concluded, "America will get through this. And we must dedicate ourselves to emerging as a country that is stronger, healthier, more equitable, and more united."



**Stay Informed
Illinois Coronavirus Response**

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/>



STATE OF ILLINOIS
Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response

I'm a Parent and a Teacher. Remote Learning Should Worry Us All.

By: Gina Caneva

The day after my children's school closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, I took my 8-year-old daughter to our local library. She's an avid reader, and we often stop by each weekend and leave with handfuls of books. That day, we acted like the library was Costco and checked out 35 books, knowing we were in it for the long haul. The next day, our library closed.

A week and a half later, my daughter had finished those books. She also flew through her "remote" learning tasks, as did her 5-year-old brother, as I struggled to balance our new "school" schedule with my own work as an e-librarian for the high school where I work.

My kids are engaged and enjoy their remote learning activities. But even with a master's degree in education and 16 years in the field, I know I am only half as adequate as their actual teachers.

With **55 million students** now out of school across our nation, school districts and state education boards are making decisions to implement remote learning, just like in Illinois. Our students will be out of school through April at least. Some states have decided to end the school year altogether, but offer e-learning and packets to students.

I spent half of my teaching career on the South Side of Chicago, with high schoolers who lived in under-resourced neighborhoods. I don't imagine a schedule or packet will go very far in families where a parent is still working to make ends meet and a high-school or middle-school-aged sibling is now the teacher because a parent has to work. Those siblings-turned-teachers also have little time for their own lessons.

As I spoke with colleagues from my suburban high school, East Leyden, many of them pointed out that 50 to 80% of students actually completed remote assignments. They said they struggle with how to grade accurately while following the Illinois State Board of Education guidance that "The emphasis is on *learning*, not on compliance." Grades for these lessons cannot be allowed to harm students' overall grades.

Melina Lesus, a friend and Chicago high school teacher, echoed my East Leyden colleagues. "I'm balancing between being frustrated that kids aren't really engaged and also understanding that they are probably scared/stressed/mourning even if they don't know it. Also, some of them are playing the role of parent."

As an educator, I believe these plans have been created with the best intentions to put students first during this unprecedented pandemic. Remote learning is the best that we can offer despite the various inequities in technology and time. But make no mistake, remote learning does not take the place of actual instruction. Teachers are vital to students' success, and children do not see their parents as teachers.

If students do not return to school until the fall, they will have had a six-month break. Researchers from the **Northwest Education Association** have found that even the common 10-week summer break causes achievement losses that are difficult to make up. These losses "increase with age through elementary and middle school."

On top of the traditional summer slide, the pandemic slide will be much worse.

Although I fear the learning loss happening for my own children and all of our students, I also fear that not much will change when our students return to school. But plenty should change.

First, states and school districts must plan to make up the instructional time lost. I am not suggesting that we add three months onto next year's calendar. But perhaps schools need extra hours, days or weeks over several years.

Second, educators will need additional professional development so they can best help students, since many will not be at grade level when we return. Our educators also need time to collaborate on solutions without standardized-test mandates and benchmarks hanging over their heads. Less testing means more instruction.

Finally, I fear fiscal cuts coming for school districts under a federal government that has not supported public schools. Schools saw these cuts after the 2008 recession, as many school districts in urban and rural areas lost key positions and are running skeletons of schools already.

We must consider these days of remote learning as days of lost instruction, and invest in our schools to get our students back on track when school resumes.

This article was first published in the Chicago Sun-Times on March 31, 2020.

Gina Caneva is the library media specialist for East Leyden High School in Franklin Park, IL. She taught in CPS for 15 years and is Nationally Board Certified. She has written over 60 op-eds focused on educational topics published locally and nationally. Follow her on Twitter @GinaCaneva

Seminars



The Illinois Teachers Retirement System (TRS) Seminar

*Sponsored by the
West Suburban Teachers Union
Local 571*

- WHEN:** Thursday May 7, 2020
5:00 p.m.—7:30 p.m.
- FOR:** Local 571 members
(teachers) close to retirement
- WHAT:** Light dinner followed by a presentation by a representative of the Illinois Teachers Retirement System
- WHERE:** Robert M. Healey Conference Center
500 Oakmont Lane
Westmont, Illinois 60559
(Entrance D or E)
- R.S.V.P.:** If you plan to attend, please contact Patty Clancy by May 4th at 630-468-4083 or pclancy@ift-aft.org
- OTHER:** Anyone who signs up to attend the seminar and finds that they cannot attend, must notify Local 571 by phone or email by 5:30 p.m. on May 4th, or they may be charged \$15 for the cost of the dinner.

I.M.R.F. SEMINAR

Retirement Information for Local 571 Support Staff Union Members

A speaker from the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) will present information and answer questions for PSRP (support staff) Union members of the West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571.

- WHEN:** Tuesday, May 19, 2020
- TIME:** 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Light Dinner and Workshop
- WHERE:** Robert M. Healey Conference Center
500 Oakmont Lane
Westmont, IL 60559
(Entrance D or E)
- R.S.V.P.:** If you plan to attend, contact Patty Clancy via e-mail at pclancy@ift-aft.org or by phone at 630-468-4083 by Thursday, May 14th

Anyone who signs up to attend this seminar and finds that they cannot attend must notify the local 571 office by 5:00 on May 14th, or they may be charged \$15 for the cost of the dinner.

A Social Security Webinar for Local 571 Members

Sponsored by the West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571

Identical Social Security Webinars will be presented and questions will be answered by a representative of the Social Security Administration.

- WHEN:** Tuesday, June 16, 2020
10:00 a.m.—Noon
OR
Thursday, July 9, 2020
1:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m.
- FOR:** Local 571 members
- WHERE:** Robert M. Healey Conference Center
500 Oakmont Lane
Westmont, IL 60559
(entrance D/E)
- R.S.V.P.:** If you plan to attend the **June 16** Webinar, contact Patty Clancy by June 15 at 630-468-4083 or pclancy@ift-aft.org
- If you plan to attend the **July 9** Webinar, contact Patty Clancy by July 7 at 630-468-4083 or pclancy@ift-aft.org

Light refreshments will be served.



<https://www.unionplasmortgage.com/AboutUs.html>

Extraordinary Times *(cont'd from pg. 1)*

Beyond the isolation, work and worry, I hope you have an opportunity to find some solace and relaxation in your daily routine, whatever that may be. In so doing, a movie came to mind that has a nice, heartfelt ending, something we are all yearning for.

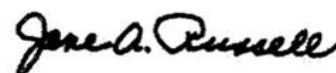
In the 1939 movie, the Wizard of Oz, Judy Garland's character, Dorothy, and dog, Toto, prepare to leave Oz and return home to Kansas. In so doing, Dorothy is reminded to close her eyes, tap her heels together three times, and say repeatedly, "There's no place like home!"

There may be no place like being isolated at home now but if I could dream just a little, would it be possible to do what Dorothy did, repeating, **"There's no place like school!"**

My eyes are closed and I'm clicking my heels together.

Be Safe. Stay Well.

In unity,



Local 571 President



On April 1, AFT Member Benefits launched [Trauma Coverage](#), a unique and timely benefit to support you during these difficult times. **This Benefit is available FREE to IFT members.**



[Trauma Coverage offers](#) counseling and support through new channels for those who are too busy, or too overwhelmed with work and family commitments, to seek out in-person counseling. The program addresses trauma that is event-specific and uses flexible scheduling and current technologies—phone, video, and text messaging—to connect you with a licensed therapist trained in trauma counseling.

To learn more about this new benefit, visit the [AFT website](#). **To access your free union-provided Trauma Coverage, go to the [AFT members-only benefits portal](#).** Please note, you will need your AFT member number. If you do not know it, [contact your local IFT office](#) and leave a message. (IFT staff are working remotely during the health crisis but will return your call quickly to assist.) For additional information visit:

<https://www.aft.org/benefits/trauma>

<https://www.ift-aft.org/your-union/contact>

GREAT LAKES ULI

The Great Lakes ULI is a four-day training and leadership development program to be held **June 22-26, 2020 at Lake Lawn Resort in Delavan, Wisconsin.** It is co-sponsored by the Illinois Federation of Teachers and the America Federation of Teachers.

2020 COURSE OFFERINGS:

- Advanced Grievance Administration
- Becoming a More Effective Trainer and Presenter
- Introduction to Negotiations and Contract Campaigns
- The Union Solution of Students' Stress and Trauma
- Union Leadership Skills

Registration forms are due by May 15

<https://www.ift-aft.org/professional-development/ULI/great-lakes>



Please note: The IFT Spring ULI North session which was to be held at the IFT Robert M. Healey Center in Westmont Illinois on April 25-26, 2020 **has been cancelled.**

There is no information available at this time in regards to rescheduling. However, we will keep you informed of new developments and will reach out with any new information.

Questions? Call Benita Twillie at (630) 468-4080

Have you completed your Census 2020 response yet?



ILLINOIS

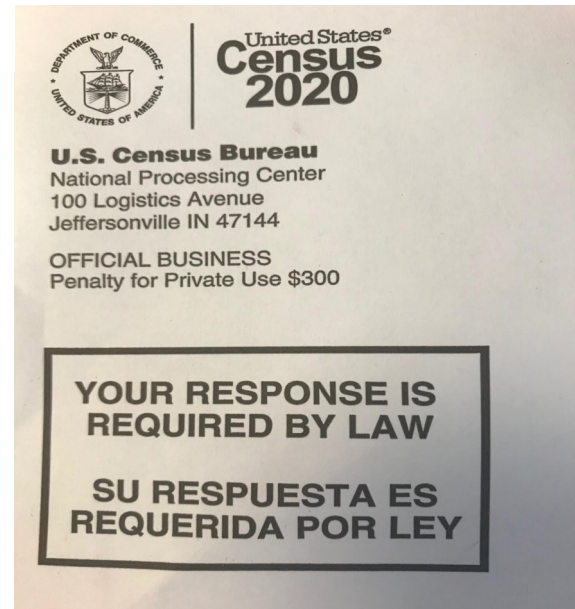
In FY 2016, Illinois received

\$34,331,000,530

From 55 federal spending programs using data derived from 2010 census. **The Census means money for our communities. To learn more about the programs funded, visit: <https://www.aft.org/census2020>**



#CountMeIn



Fair Tax—Questions and Answers

What is a Fair Tax?

The Fair Tax constitutional amendment changes the state constitution to eliminate the requirement that Illinois tax income at a single flat rate, allowing instead for higher rates for higher incomes and lower rates for people with low and moderate incomes. It is also known as a progressive or graduated tax.

Why do we need a Fair Tax in Illinois?

At present, we have a flat income tax rate in Illinois. And while taxing everyone at the same rate sounds sensible, it actually harms the majority of taxpayers. This current way of taxing income in Illinois is unfair and inadequate—it falls too heavily on the middle class and those struggling to get there, and it causes budget deficits that push up property taxes and force cuts to schools, public services and jobs.

What does Fair Tax address?

Makes our tax system more fair and equitable for middle-class and working families by lifting

some of the tax burden off them and placing it on the wealthiest 3% of earners.

- Addresses Illinois' structural budget deficit
- Requires only those making over \$250,000 a year to pay more
- Ensures 97% of Illinoisans see their taxes cut or remain the same
- Generates additional revenue to fund our public schools, services, and pensions
- Makes the wealthy pay their fair share

What does a Fair Tax mean for Illinois?

Fair Tax will raise more than \$3 billion per year that can help fund state and local government, schools and human services, and responsibly pay the state's bills.

Will this affect people making less than \$250,000?

Fair Tax will require wealthy people to pay their fair share, only increasing taxes on those who make more than \$250,000 a year (the top 3%). The vast majority of the increases will be paid by millionaires. You can calculate your own tax estimate under a Fair Tax here:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/fairtax/Pages/default.aspx>

What's Missing from the Messenger?

Is there something innovative or exciting happening at your school? If so, we want to hear from you!

Email your news to Robin Hancock at: 571editor@gmail.com

We Want To Hear From You



We're on the Web!!!
www.wstu571.org

West Suburban Teachers Union Local 571
500 Oakmont Lane
P.O. Box 390
Westmont, IL 60559-0390
Phone: 630-468-4098 Fax: 630-468-4088
E-mail: jrussell@ift-aft.org