

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

Union Messenger

"A Union of Professionals"

WSTU February Calendar

2/4-5-IFT ULI - Westmont
 2/6-571 EB Mtg. - Westmont - 5:30 p.m.
 2/6-571 HOR Mtg.-Westmont - 6:45 p.m.
 2/6-AFT Convention ballots pickup
 2/6-Deadline for proposed amendments to
 AFT Constitution & Bylaws
 2/28-Reservation deadline for 571 Social
 Security Seminar

Union Messenger

Jane Russell, President
 Alice Kautsky, Vice President
 Sandra Erickson, Treasurer
 Cathleen Pope, Secretary
 Jonathan Pazol, Financial Secretary
 Ed Hohman, Legal Defense
 Secretary & COPE Chairperson
 Tom Smith,
 IFT Field Service Director
 Arnavaz Mistry-Mujthaba,
 IFT Field Service Director
 Judy Jennings, Office Manager
 Julie Masterton, Office Secretary
 Andrew Bendelow,
 571 Web Administrator
 Angel Holmes,
 571 *Union Messenger* Editor



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2012 Illinois Redistricting

by Jane Russell

Michelle Federici, IFT/AFT State Affiliate Political Organizer, defined redistricting as “the actual redrawing of boundaries for Illinois General Assembly and Congressional districts.” Presenting at the WSTU House of Representatives’ October 17 meeting, Federici said the process of redistricting begins with the federal decennial census conducted in 2010. She described the process as creating instability mainly because four state senate districts and fourteen state representative districts now have at least two incumbent members paired in the new districts. The Illinois redistricting process took several months, with the final plan being approved October 5, 2011. Local 571 members:

- Live in 16 Congressional districts but most are concentrated in 8 districts;
- Live in 50 State Senate districts with concentrations in about 8 districts; and
- Live in 88 State House districts with concentrations in about 24 of those districts.

The 2012 election timeline has already begun. You may have been approached by a candidate running for state or congressional office to sign their petition to be put on the ballot. Candidates filed their petitions

by December 5, 2011. The campaigning begins and continues into 2012 with the primary election on March 20, 2012.

Knowing that redistricting is confusing, how do you determine the congressional and legislative district numbers in which you reside? To answer that question, an excellent resource is www.elections.state.il.us.

After entering the website, scroll down to “new interactive GIS map is now available.” In the “Find District” box, enter your address. The search results will locate your address on a map with boundaries for the numbered congressional and legislative districts. The County Clerk should also provide each voter with a new voter registration card.

For additional information on redistricting, go to: www.ilhousedems.com/redistricting or www.ilsenateredistricting.com

Once you have determined the congressional and legislative districts where you reside, learn about the candidates who are running for these offices so you can make an informed decision on election day, March 20, 2012.

Be Part of the Ultimate Process

Primary election day in Illinois will be March 20, 2012. All of the Illinois House and Senate seats are up for election because of the re-districting process. Candidates as well as incumbents seek the endorsement of the IFT which is considered by many legislators to be a highly sought-after endorsement.

How does the IFT actually endorse candidates for office? This is a process which begins with members interviewing potential candidates. There are 18 Political Action Committees (PAC) around the state which do the in-person interviewing. Before the PAC votes for an endorsement, survey questionnaires with positions critical to our members are reviewed. To gain an IFT endorsement, a candidate has to have submitted the IFT questionnaire and answered favorably on the questions.

The 18 PAC region endorsements are then reviewed by the IFT State PAC. Recommendations from the state PAC may include U.S. Presi-

dent, U.S. Senator, U.S. House of Representatives, Illinois Supreme and Appellate Courts, as well as Illinois House and Senate endorsements. The final endorsement recommendations are reviewed by the IFT Executive Board. Both Alice Kautsky, WSTU Vice-president, and I serve on the IFT Executive Board.

Many of the IFT endorsed candidates are also endorsed by Local 571, specifically candidates whose regions cover the communities where Local 571 members work and/or reside. I am fortunate to be able to work with many area legislators who are accessible and easy to reach, listen to member concerns, educate themselves on the issues, and vote positively on IFT positions. Many of these same legislators have voting records of at least 75% on IFT issues, but some have better than 90% voting records. These are the incumbents that we want to keep in office. There are several area candidates who have shown their depth of understanding of issues surround-

ing education and families. We want to elect them also.

The IFT endorsement process is transparent with several steps and the work of hundreds of IFT members, including some from Local 571. I encourage you to attend one of the area PAC meetings which will be held in January 2012. Consult your council president or go to the IFT website for meeting dates, times and locations at www.ift-aft.org.

Every one of us should know that being involved politically and voting is how we can make a difference for our jobs, our families and the students with whom we work. Thanks for being part of the "ultimate process."

Best wishes for a very successful and productive 2012 school term.

In unity,



Local 571 President



Photograph by Donald Uhrbrock/
Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images.

Website of the Month

MLK Memorial

Martin Luther King's birthday is celebrated each year on the third Monday in January. To prepare your students or children, watch the MLK Memorial in Washington, D. C., being built. There is also video from the dedication ceremony. Primary literature sources which can be ordered include his autobiography and *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr. Rediscovering Precious Values July 1951-November 1955*. David Adler and Robert Casilla are authors of a childrens' book, *A Picture Book of Martin Luther King, Jr., Illustrated*. The famous "I Have a Dream" speech is available on DVD.

www.mlkmemorial.org

Teaching Online Safety

by *Bonnie Saracco*

Along with its many benefits, technology has presented students with new dangers and teachers with new responsibilities. AFT has provided information to help us stay current on how to help our students stay safe online.

Online safety should be part of the curriculum, including assessment of student knowledge before any assignment that requires online access.

AFT gives these basic guidelines to teach students:

- Never give out personal information, such as your name, address, or phone number, on a social networking site, or in a chat room or video chat site. Do not include personal information, such as your birthday or hometown, in your screen name.
- Photos posted on social networking sites should be designated as accessible to “friends only.” All posted photos should be appropriate and not embarrassing to anyone in the photo. Realize that every posted photo can easily become public property.
- Once posted, information can never be taken back. Even deleted information will exist on older versions of the site on other computers.
- Do not communicate with anyone you have not met in person, and never meet in person with anyone you have encountered online without your parents’ permission. Realize that people online

may not be who they say they are, and tell your parents about anything you see online which makes you uncomfortable.

In addition to these guidelines for students, parents should be encouraged to monitor their children’s Internet use and to educate themselves on its potential dangers. The site www.OnGuardOnline.gov has practical tips for parents.

In addition, teachers need to watch for behaviors that are characteristic of students who are victims of cyberbullying. These students are often upset after computer use, anxious about participating in activities such as lunch and physical education and reluctant to do assignments that require Internet use. Increased absences can be a sign of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullies also show characteristic behaviors. Cyberbullies often close or minimize screens when a teacher walks by, and do not want to answer questions about what they are doing online or with their cell phones. They can be extremely upset when their access to these devices is restricted.

Teachers who suspect cyberbullying among their students should consider talking to students and informing parents and administrators. Cyberbullies and their victims both need to know that responsible adults will intervene.



What to do About a Cyberbully

1. Don't react to the bully.
2. Protect your child's profile.
3. Block or delete the bully.

(Cyberbully tips courtesy of www.OnGuardOnline.gov)

FINANCIAL SERVICES THAT

**MEET
MEMBERS'
NEEDS**



aft A Union of Professionals
AFT +
Member Benefits

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Credit and Budget Counseling

- Certified credit counselors are available 24 hours a day.

MORE **VALUE** FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP

For more details and benefits, go to:
aft.org/members

AFT + is your advocate. For information on all **AFT +** programs, call 800/238-1133, ext. 8643, or e-mail aftplus@aft.org. The AFT has an expense reimbursement and/or endorsement arrangement for marketing this program. For more information, please contact AFT Financial Services at 800/238-1133, ext. 4493; send an e-mail to disclosureinfo@aft.org; or visit www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure.

Retirement Security for Illinois Educators

by Jane Russell

One of the most popular and well attended Local 571 seminars was held on November 30, 2011. Mary Tally, a regular presenter and Benefits Counselor from the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) Member Services Division, provided detailed information for those considering retirement in the next few years. Three major topics covered were: Understanding Your Benefits, The Retirement Process, and Post-retirement Matters. The final topic included information about health care providers and costs associated with the Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP).

Membership in TRS is for educators in positions requiring certification under the Illinois School Code and employed in public schools outside Chicago. Some employees of state government agencies, as well as some positions in the Illinois State Board of Education, are in TRS. Other school positions which do not qualify for TRS membership are generally covered by the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF).

A member's creditable earnings determine the amount of their future pension benefit. Forms of compensation that are creditable earnings include salaries, extra-duty pay, substitute teaching, teaching after school hours (like night school or drivers education), longevity stipends, and several other types of earnings. Employer paid fringe benefits are not considered creditable earnings. For the complete list of both creditable and non-creditable earnings, consult the *Tier I Member Guide, August 2011*.

Active TRS members are required to contribute 9.4% of gross creditable earnings toward retirement each

year consisting of:

- 7.5% for retirement annuities
- 0.5 % for automatic annual increases in annuities
- 1% for death benefits
- 0.4% to fund the Early Retirement Option (ERO)

Employers also contribute a percentage as well as make a contribution to the Teachers Health Insurance Security (THIS) Fund.

An annual benefits statement is provided for each member covering the previous fiscal year, July 1 through June 30, and is mailed in December. The statement provides information about service credit, contributions and any beneficiaries as well as an earnings history.

To create a personalized online account, called "Member Account Access," go to trs.illinois.gov and click on the left navigation bar. For those considering retirement, a benefit estimate can be obtained when the personalized account has been created.

The two member service offices are located in Springfield and Lisle. To have questions answered or to set up an appointment, call (800) 877-7896. TRS can be reached by e-mail at members@trs.illinois.gov.

The West Suburban Teachers Union offers annual TRS seminars as well as biennial IMRF seminars. An IMRF seminar is scheduled for April 17, 2012, in Westmont. Read the *Union Messenger* for additional member workshops.

What's Missing from the Messenger?



E-mail your thoughts to Angel Holmes at angelholmes@sbcglobal.net

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

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