

September Newsletter

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September, 2020

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VOTE LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT BECAUSE IT DOES

It is no secret that there is a lot at stake with the upcoming election. On a national level there has never been a more important Presidential race than the one we are currently facing. It is important that everyone gets out to vote. Early voting begins September 24, 2020. Contact your county clerk to ask for a mail in ballot if you're concerned with COVID 19 and or go in person to your polling place. Election day is November 3, 2020. As you all know, AFSCME has endorsed Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris believe in supporting the working class and equality for all. AFSCME is also endorsing Dave Vella for 68th district. Dave is a long-time attorney in Rockford and the grandson of the late Zeke Giorgi, a long-time supporter of working families and unions. Seth Wiggins was also endorsed for the 90th district. Seth's concerns are that of the working class and equality for all. It is important that we have those within our districts that will support our values within the State House of Representatives.

Meeting Dates

Rockford Labor Temple 212 South First St. Rockford, IL	September 3, 2020
All Membership meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m.	

As for the State of Illinois, passing the Fair Tax amendment is critical! We need to ensure that our members understand what the amendment really means and what could happen to us, as State employees, if it does not pass. For that reason, we will be holding an informational meeting via Zoom to provide the facts and answer your questions. The meeting will be held on September 16, 2020 starting at 7:00 PM. If you are interested in participating please send Alice Sutherland an email from your personal email address to Mikenalice86@aol.com. She will send you the meeting information. The meeting is limited to the first 95 members that sign up. If we need to have additional meetings to accommodate more members, they will be scheduled.

ILLINOIS TAX INITIATIVE

Illinois now has a constitutionally mandated flat-rate tax that taxes all personal income at the same rate of 4.95%. Under a graduated-rate income tax, different levels of wages are taxed at different rates. Proponents say higher income taxpayers should bear a greater tax burden than lower income

taxpayers. **Please review the questions and answers below on the tax initiative.**

How does a graduated rate tax work? When a state imposes a graduated income tax, it separates the pay scale into a number of fixed income brackets and determines a different tax rate for each bracket, called a marginal rate. These brackets apply to every individual taxpayer's income-the first bracket of your income will be taxed at the lowest rate, the second bracket at the second lowest rate, and so on.

Do any other states do this? Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia impose graduated-rate income taxes. The federal government also uses a graduated rate structure to determine federal income tax.

What are the brackets and rates? Under tax rates approved by the General Assembly, the tax rate would drop to **4.75%** for the first \$10,000 of income for single and joint filers. **Income between \$10,000 and \$100,000 would be taxed at 4.9%**, and the rate would remain at **4.95%** for income between **\$100,000 and \$250,000**. From there, **single filers would be 7.75%** for income between **\$250,000 and \$350,000** and **7.85%** for income between **\$350,000 and \$750,000**. Joint filers would be taxed at **7.75%** on income between **\$250,000 and \$500,000** and **7.85%** on income between **\$500,000 and \$ 1 million**. After that, all income for single filers that make over **\$750,000** or joint filers that make over **\$1 million** annually will be taxed at **7.99%**.

How will this impact what I pay? Under the rates approved by legislators in 2019, Pritzker's proposed graduated income tax plan would lower the average tax rate for all taxpayers earning less than \$250,000 annually, which amounts to 97% of Illinois wage earners. **You will NOT be taxed on your state retirement. This is a false statement made by Illinois Policy and big business and corporations as they don't want the amendment to pass as they will be taxed at a higher rate.**

What will Pritzker do if the amendment doesn't pass? If the graduated-rate income tax does not pass in November, Pritzker's proposed options include cutting state spending on education, public safety and social services by 15% or raising the flat tax to 5.95% for Illinois taxpayers.

When and how would this graduated rate income tax take effect? Since the Illinois Constitution mandates a flat-rate income tax, the Pritzker administration must pass a constitutional amendment to impose a graduated-rate income tax. Last year, the General Assembly agreed to put a proposed constitutional amendment before voters as a referendum question in the general election on November 3, 2020 that would remove the state's flat-tax rate requirement. **In order for Pritzker's tax reform to go into effect, the amendment requires approval by 60% of those who vote on the issue or a simple majority of the total votes cast, in the November 2020 election.** If the amendment is approved, the new graduated-rate tax structure passed by legislature will take effect on January 1, 2021.

An informational meeting on the fair tax will be held on September 16, 2020 starting at 7:00 p.m. If you are interested in participating please send Alice Sutherland an email from your personal email address to Mikenalice86@aol.com. She will send you the meeting information. The meeting is limited to the first 95 members that sign up. If we need to have additional meetings to accommodate more members, they will be scheduled.

CHILD CARE CONCERN GROWS

Just a few months ago, it looked like K-12 education would resume in classrooms across the state. But as more and more evidence emerged of the risks to students, teachers and families that such a strategy represented, Illinois school districts began to drastically revise their plans. Now it appears that very few districts will see students returning to their classrooms—and almost all classes will be taught remotely with children remaining in their own homes.

While this may well be a safer course of action, it is also one that has rapidly shifted a much greater responsibility to parents—both for basic child care and for assisting children with their remote learning. To respond to these changing circumstances, AFSCME immediately began to work with CMS to develop more scheduling flexibility for union members in state government that would help parents to meet these unprecedented challenges.

Employees who are covered by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) have the option of taking up to twelve weeks of leave at 2/3 pay, which may be taken intermittently. However, for the thousands of state workers who have been excluded from FFCRA coverage because they are deemed “essential,” the flexibility that the union is seeking to negotiate will be especially critical. We hope to reach a broad agreement with CMS soon that will cover every union member and will pave the way for agency-specific agreements that will strengthen the right to flex schedules, day swapping, and other innovative measures that can help to address child care concerns.

UPWARD MOBILITY UPDATE

Testing exclusively for Upward Mobility Program participants re-opened several weeks’ ago—and many members were quick to respond. Now UMP participants can call and schedule test dates at any of the five test centers statewide after September 1, 2020 when testing is opened to others as well. Limited seating will continue at all test sites, but the good news is that one-fourth of all available seats will be reserved for UMP testers! As is currently the case, UMP participants will be required to have a Proficiency Examination Registration form in order to be allowed to schedule a test.

This week, UMP counselors began issuing an electronic version of the Career Development Plan, Proficiency Examination Registration form, and Work Commitment forms for the first time in program history. The UMP counselor can either mail or email the documents to an UMP participant depending on their choice of delivery. Once the form is delivered to an UMP participant and all necessary signage has been completed, the member is also allowed to either mail or scan and email it back to UMP to improve efficiency.

Final preparations are being made to begin counseling in the very near future for the 3500 new enrollee's UMP has received since mid-February. If you have questions about the Upward Mobility Program, you can contact AFSCME UMP Coordinator Chris Goodman at 217-788-2800.

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

Applications received for the Cindy Overton Scholarship are currently being reviewed by the scholarship committee. Winners will be announced in the October newsletter. This year we had a record number of applicants. Good luck to everyone that applied.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

PEACH BREAD

1 cup finely diced peaches, peeled
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup sour cream
1-1/2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup vegetable or coconut oil
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Use a 9x5 baking pan greased and floured.

Add sugar and oil to large bowl and mix well.

Add eggs, sour cream, chopped peaches, and vanilla, mix well.

Add dry ingredients, flour, baking soda, and salt to the wet ingredients and mix well. Add pecans and mix until just combined. Do not overmix.

Pour into prepared pan and bake for 50-55 minutes or until the sides of the bread starts to pull away from pan. Insert toothpick into the center and if comes out clean it is done.