

The Sentinel

The Importance of a Fair Tax System



By Lynnette Sculuca

The Illinois Federation of Teachers has joined forces with over 65 other organizations to form a coalition called A Better Illinois (ABI). ABI's mission is to build accountability and fairness within the state's spending and tax systems to create an environment that will foster a strong middle class. Funding public services is important to the success of Illinois.

Currently, Illinois is struggling to fund vital services. These struggles will multiply on

January 1, 2015 when the temporary state income tax increase rolls back, bringing even less money to the state during a time of major budget shortfalls. The state has already experienced major cut backs to public services, including education and higher education. It is not difficult to imagine the devastating impact of losing almost 5.5 billion dollars from the budget if the state does not replace the lost revenue.

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Negotiation Update

As of publication, the ECCFA Negotiation Team has met with the Board of Trustees team five times. Progress is being made at the table. Your negotiation team is working diligently and efficiently in an effort to complete the negotiation process before the contract expires on December 31, 2013. The two teams have meetings scheduled until the end of October and have planned meetings into November.

In conjunction with the Board team, the ECCFA team has participated in the construction of an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) document that will be posted to the elgin.edu website. The two teams will be consulting with student leaders and also include questions they may have about the negotiations process.

As the process continues, be sure to check the ECCFA website, check out the ECCFA blog, which will be up and running soon, and the ECCFA Facebook page.

In an effort to support your negotiation team, be sure to post your ECCFA Unity signs. The signs can be found on the ECCFA website at eccfaculty.org, under the Membership tab. Also, be sure to go to eccfaculty.org/list/ to provide your personal email address in order to receive communication from the negotiation team.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings from the ECCFA Leadership Team. We hope you are having a great semester.



The weather has started to change, and we are now starting to enjoy the colors of fall. As the negotiation of the new bargaining agreement continues, we want to send you a big thank you for your support and especially to those that have and are in line to provide meals for the negotiation team. It is much appreciated.

It is with great joy that we announce that the ECCFA endowed scholarship has reached at total of \$25,818. This is a great reason for us to celebrate. We are making sure that our support for students' success goes beyond the classroom. Supporting the ECCFA Endowed Scholarship Fund is an investment in our community—the community we serve—by helping alleviate the financial burden that some of our students face in order to afford the cost of their education. This has all been possible because of you, because of your personal contribution, and your ECCFA dues. So, thank you very much. Let's not stop here. Let's make the fund grow and make sure we can help many more students succeed in their education.

On another topic, we are asking all faculty members to consider signing the petition to support an initiative being proposed by a new

coalition, "A Better Illinois." This organization was formed to propose a fair tax or progressive tax structure to Illinoisans. We have all been witness to educational funding cuts in our state for the last 13 years, plus the possibility of a roll back to the state income tax scheduled to take place in January 2014. This translates into possible additional cuts in education funding by the state. Illinoisans. In order for the state legislature to consider the possibility of a progressive tax structure, a constitutional amendment is needed. This is an issue-based initiative and is not partisan. There is bipartisan support. We are asking the ECCFA membership to support the first step by signing the petition and obtaining additional signatures. Please return the signed petitions to me no later than October 31.

You can request a petition form from your ECCFA senator or from any ECCFA officer. Once completed, the petition must be sent to me. Signers do not have to be registered to vote and simply must be 18 years of age or older. We need your help on this issue. More cuts to education are detrimental to our communities, our students and us. The pension issue is still unresolved, and less revenue means more cuts and worsening of the scenario for our pensions.

Have a great rest of the fall semester and continue to support your ECCFA Negotiation Team.

In Unity,
Luis Martinez
ECCFA President

...Negotiation Continued

The ECCFA negotiation team would like to thank the following people/departments who have provided food or will provide food through the end of October: Crystal Kerwin and the OAT Department, Carol Thompson, Mary Elfring, Dan Kernler and the Math Department, Armando Trejo, Alison Douglas, Sara Baker, Roxie Bell, Colleen Stribling

The team would also like to thank those who have donated money and other items. The team appreciates the support of so many of our colleagues. To donate money or food to the team, please contact Mary Elfring or Armando Trejo.

In Unity.

Union Membership is a Family Tradition

The following is a new edition to The Sentinel. It will highlight ECCFA members and the role unions played on them and their families. The goal is to emphasize the importance of unions.



Dan Kernler on strike in 1981 with his dad, Chuck Kernler.

By Dan Kernler

Unions have always played a significant role in my life, beginning with my father's early experiences as a union treasurer and steward when I was young. He worked as a seasonal laborer for Whitewater State Park in southeastern Minnesota for 13 years before getting a full-time job at a state fish hatchery, and served in leadership roles in AFSCME Local 1692 for most of that time.

I have memories as a young boy of seeing my dad with the union budget documents spread out across the kitchen table, with his calculator recording every expense. I recently asked Dad about what got him started, and he said it was the negotiation process and improvements he hoped for, and situations where park employees had been hurt by decisions made in the main office in St. Paul, MN. He gave an example where one employee was forced to retire at age 65, but then not allowed to come back to work when the mandatory retirement age was later raised to 70.

One of the most interesting aspects of my dad's union service is something I hadn't realized until recently – throughout nearly all of his time as both treasurer and

steward, he was only a part-time employee. In 1981, I joined my dad on the picket lines as a 6-year-old. Looking back on that strike now, he noted, "The main issue was the cost of health insurance, for which I was ineligible as a seasonal employee!" (I should note that Dad was eventually able to negotiate partial payments for health insurance for seasonal employees.)

This, to me, is the power of unions. While there is certainly value to the individual for being in a union, we don't bargain for individual benefits, or make decisions solely for what is best for us as individuals, or strike for what is best for us as individuals. It's easy to drown out the "In Unity" as white noise, but this is exactly why unions were first formed.

After some promotions later on in his career, my dad became a member of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. I distinctly remember his distaste for that particular union, especially their view of hourly employees. Even thinking about it now, Dad writes, "I resent the 'professional' label, inferring that laborers and technicians are not 'professional'."

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...Fair Tax Continued

A Better Illinois is seeking a Constitutional solution to this dilemma, creating a means by which the State of Illinois can create a fair tax system, different than what exists today. Simply put, A Better Illinois advocates for a fair tax system whereby those who earn higher incomes pay higher rates, while the state also works to close corporate loopholes and wasteful spending. Thirty-four states, including the surrounding states of Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, and Kentucky, and the Federal Government implement such a system.

As it stands now, Illinois has the smallest number of state workers per 1,000 residents of any state in the Union. Illinois, the 5th largest economy in the nation, ranks dead last in education spending, while two-thirds of corporations in Illinois paid no corporate income tax and the lowest 20% of earners paid 13.7% of their

income in sales, property, and income taxes, while the top 1% paid only 5.3% of their income. A fair tax could achieve better balance and help address the state's yearly budget shortfalls.

Changing the tax system requires a Constitutional Amendment. The process first requires that 60% of the House and 60% of the Senate vote to put the question on the ballot. Legislation has been introduced in Springfield in both chambers. The House Amendment measure (House Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 33, HJRCA33) has approximately 33 sponsors and counting while the Senate Amendment (Senate Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 40, SJRCA 40) has 40 sponsors and counting. ABI is focusing on getting the 60% vote in each chamber to put the Amendment on the ballot so the people to decide on the Constitutional question and whether or not Illinois should

consider a fair tax system. The state cannot change the system without the will of the people and the constitutional change.

In order to accomplish the first phase of this campaign, there is an active petition drive. The IFT is committed to bringing 100,000 signatures to the group. These signatures will be used to show legislators that there are many thousands of constituents who want the opportunity to consider the question of whether or not the state should amend the current system. As a part of the IFT, ECCFA needs to assist in this campaign. ABI needs signatures on the IFT created petitions and later in this phase may also need direct contact with legislators.

Should the Amendment be on the ballot, the second phase would consist of getting out the vote.

...Family Continued

It's experiences like these that have shaped my own view of unions, and the role I can play in creating equity within them. I'm not privy to the deliberations the ECCFA's negotiation team has had, but I hope they give me the opportunity to return the favor my father granted in his support for benefits he didn't have. While there are certainly increases I expect to see in the full-time contract, our members with the most need are those teaching part-time. I firmly support any efforts to work toward ensuring that my part-time colleagues are treated fairly and paid equitably for the work they do, and I am proud to continue in the family tradition of both membership and active participation in my union.

WRITERS CENTER WELCOMES KAREN TINTORI

Karen Tintori will give a reading on Thursday, October 23, 2013 at 7:30 p.m. in H 142. Tintori is an internationally bestselling author of fiction and non-fiction whose novels, written with Jill Gregory, have been translated into more than 25 languages. Their *SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE* (Doubleday, 1993) became a CBS-TV Movie-of-the-Week. *THE BOOK OF NAMES*, their hidden history thriller published by St. Martin's Press in 2007, spent 19 weeks on German bestseller lists, and sold to 22 countries. Their second thriller, *THE ILLUMINATION*, 2009, sold to seven foreign countries.

Karen has also written two nonfiction books detailing the Italian immigrant experience. Her critically acclaimed solo work, *TRAPPED: The 1909 Cherry Mine Disaster* (Atria Books, 2002) was among the Chicago Tribune's 2002 Favorite Books and has been optioned for film. *UNTO THE DAUGHTERS: The Legacy of an Honor Killing in a Sicilian-American Family* (St. Martin's Press, 2007) was nominated for a 2008 Michigan Notable Book Award.

Her first short story, "DOWN UNDER," appeared in *CAST OF CHARACTERS*, the 2012 anthology from Fiction Studio Books. She has also written for Primo Magazine.

Tintori has a B.A. in journalism from Wayne State University, lives in Michigan, and holds dual U.S.-

Italian



citizenship. All Writers Center readings are free and open to the public. Copies of Ms. Tintori's work will be available for sale and signing.

If you have any questions about this or other Writers Center activities, please contact Rachael Stewart (847/214-7578, rstewart@elgin.edu).

A pre-reading dinner with the author will be held at 5:30 p.m. For reservations, please contact Rachael Stewart at rtecza@elgin.edu.

Do We Practice What We Teach?

By Maria Luptak

Over my 18 years at Elgin Community College, I have frequently heard instructors complaining about students: “They don’t read the syllabus”; “They don’t come to class prepared”: “They are disruptive or disrespectful”: “They don’t stay on task.” But over the past few months, I have started to do some self-reflection with regard to these comments and have had to ask myself, “Do I practice what I teach?” That’s a question that I would like to challenge all of us, as faculty, to ask ourselves

First of all, we complain about students not reading the syllabus. We tell students that they need to read and understand the syllabus and that this is an expectation in college. However, how many of us have actually read our syllabus (contract) and tried to understand it? How many of us have asked questions (after reading the contract) about items we didn’t understand?

Next, there is the issue of personal responsibility. Many of us address personal responsibility and/or due dates in our syllabi. For example:

Late Work: Part of your participation grade is having your homework done on time. Because most of the daily homework is designed to prepare you for the next class session, daily homework cannot be made up. Late essays can be turned in late, but they will lose a full letter grade for each late day. Missed quizzes may be made up outside of class at the discretion of the instructor.” In the COL101 syllabus, it states: “If you are unable to meet a due date, contact your instructors ahead of time to discuss your situation. No one can assist you without your proactive communications. It is unacceptable to miss assignments due to problems using D2L.

We expect our students to turn in their work on the published due dates. Shouldn’t we hold ourselves to this same expectation? And if we don’t, shouldn’t we expect some sort of penalty? If we don’t allow our students to use technology as an excuse, should we allow ourselves to do so?

Another item that all of us have in our syllabi regards acceptable behavior in the classroom:

Behavior Policy: Students are expected to be respectful of themselves, the instructor, and each other. This means that behavior that violates this policy will not be tolerated. Making derogatory comments about other people, falling asleep in class, interrupting someone else who is speaking, disrupting classroom activities, yelling, acting in a way that can cause injury, harassing others, and behaving in any disrespectful way may result in the student’s withdrawal from class. Cell phones: In order to remain respectful of the instructor and the other students, cell phones must be turned off before entering the classroom. Students should neither check messages nor text message while in class. Any student displaying this behavior will be asked to leave the class.

Do we turn off our cell phones when we go into a meeting or workshop? Do we text? Do we fall asleep, interrupt one another, make derogatory comments about each other, or behave in any disrespectful way? How do we behave when we are in our classrooms?

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...Practice Continued

Participation is also a frequently included item in our syllabi.

Participation: *In addition to your number of absences, you will receive a participation grade based on, but not limited to, your attitude, preparation for class, attention to class lectures, contributions to class discussions and activities, and your behavior during class. Your individual voice is of great value to all of us, and it is only through articulating your opinions that we will get to know you. If your presence in class reflects an “I don’t care” attitude, this will affect your grade. A consistent and caring approach to small and large group discussion is necessary for an “A” or a “B.”*

Are we participating actively in meetings in workshops or are we off task (doing other work, texting, talking)? What grade would we give ourselves?

So, how about email? Many of us have statements such as “**Student email:** Students are required to use student email accounts to contact the instructor.” Do we read our email? How many times have we deleted an email without reading it? How many times have we skimmed an email and not read it carefully enough to understand all

that it says? How many times have we not responded to email?

Finally, there is the question of records and personal responsibility. I look at my syllabus, and it states:

Important Grading Information: *It is your responsibility to check your record throughout the class to ensure grades are correctly recorded. To check the status of any assignments, log into your RDG 091 D2L course then click the “Grades” option in the blue toolbar at the top of the screen. Any questions about your grade should be brought to my attention immediately either during office hours, through email, or in person.*

How many of us have checked our records? Have we gone to HR to look at our files in the last year to make sure that everything is up to date? Do we check our paystubs and contracts? Do we keep a record of what we have taught so that we know what our status is? Have we checked our lane and step information to make sure that it is accurate?

There is an old saying, “Practice what you preach.” I challenge all of us to ask ourselves, “Do we practice what we teach?”



ECCFA
Unity

SUPPORT THE ECCFA

ECCFA members can show support for the ECCFA Negotiating Team by displaying the ECCFA Unity sign on office doors. It is important to display the sign during the negotiating process to show unity and support for the union. In fact, it is not only important to show unity during negotiations, but all year round. The sign can be downloaded from the ECCFA website, eccfaculty.org, under the Membership tab.

2013-2014 ECCFA Senators

ADLR/SSCT

Ellie Swanson

BUS/SSCT

Gary Norden
Roger Ramey
David Reich

CABS

Jessica Carpenter
Cindy Hutman
Christina Marrocco
Pat O'Brien

HP

Michele Brynelsen
Kimberly Tarver

LVPA

Howard Russo
Joel Peck

MSE

Lauren Anderko
Mary O'Sullivan

UAF Senators

Rick Bonnom--UA2
Mary Elfring--UA2
Dan Kocher--UA2
David Lawrence--UA2
Marcia Luptak--UA2
Loretta McCallister--UA2
Warren Peto--UA2
Alisa Smith-Riel--UA1
Cathy Tomasik--UA2
Baudelaire Ulysse--UA2
Scott Vaszily--UA1
Cassandra Watson--UA1
Jessica Wedemeyer--UA1

**Sentinel
Calendar**

November 11

Deadline--November 7

December 9

Deadline--December 5



2013 Senate Meetings

October 23--C120

November 6--C120

November 20--C120

November 28--C120

December 4--C120