



# UPDATE

American Federation of Teachers Local 604, AFL-CIO

[www.aftlocal604.org](http://www.aftlocal604.org)

December / January 2020-21

**The Sunday Times (London)**  
*Sleepy Joe wakes up America*

**Irish Daily Mirror**  
*Donald Dumped*

**Chicago Tribune**  
*Finally, Biden*



After an election season that seemed to go on forever with television stations packed with political ads, Americans finally have a President-elect in Joe Biden and a history-making Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, who will be the first woman and minority to hold this office.

Throughout the world, newspapers and other media outlets reacted to the race that has Biden leading the popular vote, 80,952,796-74,083,912, 178 and winning the Electoral College, 306-232. Military provisional ballots are still being counted.

The bitter contest revealed that the country is more divided than most thought and showed a defiant President who refused to concede while giving false hope to his base.

In Illinois, Biden won by roughly 650,000 votes. Two tough defeats that are difficult to swallow include Supreme Court Justice Tom Kilbride's attempt to retain his Illinois Supreme Court Seat and the Fair Tax Amendment.

These two setbacks had one common element, connection to the Speaker of the House, Mike Madigan. Misleading advertisements laced with mistruths about both ballot issues portrayed a connection to the speaker and reinforced a belief that Madigan has been in power too long.

The cries for him to step down from this leadership position are growing. According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Governor J.B. Pritzker and senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, the top three Democratic elected officials, "are now calling for state House Speaker Michael Madigan to step down as chair of the Illinois Democratic Party."

With all of this tension, overall, candidates support by AFT Local 604 did extremely well. In addition to Biden, Durbin was reelected to the U. S. Senate, and Robin Kelly (IL 2), Marie Newman (IL 3), and Bill Foster (IL 11) were successful. On election night, Lauren Underwood, (IL 14) trailed ice cream baron Jim Oberweis, who declared victory. However, after the mail-in ballots were counted, the first-term representative has won 51% of the vote and had an almost 5,000 vote lead.

In the Illinois Senate, Michael Hasting (19<sup>th</sup>) and Patrick Joyce (40<sup>th</sup>) retained their seats. Winner for the first time were John Connor (43<sup>rd</sup>), who replaces retiring Pat McGuire, and Joliet 86 teacher Meg Cappel (49<sup>th</sup>) who replaced Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant.

After winning, Meg said, "As a special education teacher, IFT member, and union representative, I know firsthand, the joys and struggles of our profession and will work relentlessly to be a voice for all of our students, families, teachers, paraprofessionals, and all other educational professionals. I am extremely grateful for the support of all our AFT/IFT members throughout the state, and especially by one local, AFT Local 604."

In the House, 9 of 14 endorsed candidates won: Debbie Meyers-Martin (38<sup>th</sup>), Janet Yang Rohr (41<sup>st</sup>), Lance Yednock (76<sup>th</sup>), Anne Stava-Murray (81<sup>st</sup>), Barbara Hernandez (83<sup>rd</sup>), Stephanie Kifowit (84<sup>th</sup>), Dagmara Avelar (85<sup>th</sup>), Larry Walsh (86<sup>th</sup>), and Natalie Manley (98<sup>th</sup>).

In addition, all six candidates for Will County won. Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, County Executive; James W. Glasgow, State's Attorney; Kevin Blackburn, Auditor; Karen Stukel, Recorder of Deeds; Laurie Summers, Coroner; and Andrea Lynn Chasteen, Circuit Clerk.

Bertino-Tarrant said, "The leadership skills I have learned as an educator will serve me well in my new role. I believe there is no better practice that builds a framework for serving in public office. I am grateful for Local 604's continued support."

Finally, Corinne Peirog became the first woman chair of the Kane County Board.

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*We're exhausted; we're ecstatic; we're depressed*

# Now, how do we heal?



Bill Briggs

Elections have consequences. Just look to AFT Local 604 where three issues faced our members for the last two years, maybe longer. For me, the Presidential race occupied most of my thoughts, but a close second was a tie between the Fair Tax and the retention of Supreme Court Justice Tom Kilbride.

The outcome—I felt great only about Joe Biden being elected the 46<sup>th</sup> President of these United States; that's only 33%. That means both the Fair Tax Amendment and Justice Kilbride lost, and even more disheartening, the results were not even close.

As the news that NBC had declared Joe Biden the winner over Donald Trump hit the airwaves Saturday, Nov. 7, four days after the election, I switched from the Indiana-Michigan football game to MSNBC to see reaction all over the country and the world. For the most part, joyous celebrations spread throughout the country; church bells rang in Paris, and fireworks were shot off in London.

But that was not the entire story. Over 70 million Americans probably felt the same way I did four years ago when I woke up around two in the morning, turned on the TV, and saw that Trump had just been declared the winner, the 45<sup>th</sup> President. I was defeated, not able to believe the words that were so clearly spoken. I wondered if this was the end, and I imagine many Trump supporters feel that way now, too.

It would be easy to gloat that the man who rarely spoke the truth, spread hate, and was obviously threatened by strong women had lost his bid for reelection and the popular vote for the second time. A self-imposed burden had been lifted, and I looked forward to hearing President-elect Biden speak later that night.

Then, I realized for me that the most important result of the elections would be how could Biden help to heal the obvious reality of the campaign: we are a divided country.

Throughout the campaign, this office sent out over 20,000 letters of support for candidates who, in our opinion, have the backs of public educators. To emphasize this reasoning, we supported Hillary over Trump. We lost, and the result was Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education! This travesty saw her supporting charter and religious schools while ignoring public schools.

*Slate* wrote, "You gleefully ignored a court order and continued to collect loan payments from students at a defunct, fraudulent for-profit university—16,000 times, including wage and garnishments for tax seizures."

For some time, I have known that not all of our members are in agreement with our endorsements. This time, I received two unsigned letters from the same person. Like Trump, the author used bold markers to let me know how he/she felt. Phrases, like "F..k the AFT for their propaganda and pushing the Democratic narrative!" and "What the hell is wrong with the AFT?!? No to Communism!" were sent to me. No, I wasn't surprised, nor did I feel threatened.

During his speech that gave me so much [HOPE](#), Biden said, "The Bible tells us, 'to everything there is a season: a time to

build, a time to reap, and a time to show and a time to heal.' This is the time to heal in America."

He went on to say, "I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide but unify. Who doesn't see red states and blue states, but only sees the United States. And I'll work with all my heart with the confidence of the whole people, to win the confidence of all of you...Let this grim era of demonization in America begin to end here and now.

"The refusal of Democrats and Republicans to cooperate with one another, it's not some mysterious force beyond our control. It's a decision we make. And if we can decide not to cooperate, then we can decide to cooperate."

On the surface, it seems so easy. Think about our classrooms and how as educators, daily we teach kids how to get along, how to listen more than talking, and how to work out problems to the betterment of the group. But then reality hits home; we are working with adults, and many of these elected officials are more concerned about their careers than what is best for the country.

But I think of the Obama poster—red, white, and blue—simple, yet so powerful: his image and the word [HOPE](#). To begin the healing process, we have to [HOPE](#) that adults will act like adults. Is that so difficult to imagine? Maybe, but I'm taken back to another part of Biden's speech.



With his down-home style, he simply said, "Folks, as I said many times before I'm Jill's husband. And I would not be here without the love and tireless support of Jill and my son Hunter and Ashley, my daughter, and all of our grandchildren and their spouses and all our family. They're my heart. Jill's a mom, a military mom, an educator.

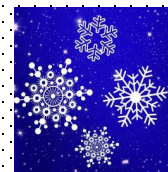
"And she has dedicated her life to education, but teaching isn't just what she does. It's who she is. For American educators, this is a great day for y'all. You're gonna have one of your own in the White House. And Jill's gonna make a great first lady."

He understands; he gets it. And again, I had [HOPE](#)!



# Community colleges adapt to Covid-19 World

By: Robert Marcink, Joliet Junior College



Community colleges throughout the region and state continue to adapt to the disruption caused by the spread of COVID-19.

This fall, Kankakee Community College and Joliet Junior College have delivered instruction remotely, with some exceptions for lab work that must be done face-to-face. Programs like nursing, automotive, culinary and welding have continued lab work with strict adherence to COVID-19 recommendations. Both are located in the state's COVID-19 Region 7.

Waubonsee Community College, which is in Region 8, has offered a variety of options for students, from face-to-face, to hybrid, to completely online.

The local community colleges are approaching spring much like they approached the fall. JJC and KCC will continue to operate primarily online, with labs being offered in courses where face-to-face labs are essential.

JJC nursing students should also be returning to clinical settings in the spring, such as hospitals and other healthcare institutions. As of Nov. 21, Waubonsee was still planning to offer courses in a variety of formats.

KCC Faculty Union President Steve DePasquale described Kankakee's plan, which mirrors JJC's.

"Any class that can be totally online, should be," he said. "Others that can't, should be hybrid or some other form."

As local community colleges have scrambled to find the right formula for instruction as the COVID facts on the ground evolve, community colleges across the state have seen significant drops in enrollment.

An Oct. 19 article in the *Chicago Tribune* indicated that the state community colleges were down about 14 percent for the fall. Those numbers do not reflect late-start, eight and 12-week classes, however, and some of the numbers for individual institutions were evolving when the article was published. But the premise of the article was correct—enrollment has fallen significantly.

As of Nov. 16, JJC was down almost 13 percent in credit hours and Kankakee, according to DePasquale, was down about 20 percent. The most recently reported numbers had Waubonsee down about 13 percent.

Studies conducted at various state community colleges

indicate that some students are taking a "gap" year because they do not want to begin their college career learning remotely. Other factors affecting enrollment are students' dislike of remote learning and, importantly, a digital divide.

Some students simply do not have adequate technology at home to learn remotely, while others have siblings at home who are learning "synchronously" and must be online throughout the day. Colleges like JJC have tried to bridge that technology gap by providing tablets to students in need and offering Wi-Fi hotspots.

Despite the drop in enrollment revenue, JJC has thus far avoided furloughs of employees, but other cuts have been made to reduce costs. DePasquale said cuts and some furloughs have already come to Kankakee, however.

"They have avoided cuts to the academic area," Kankakee's DePasquale said. "(But) all other areas of the college have been cut, and they are running out of places to cut."

DePasquale said the Kankakee administration has already had two meetings with faculty union leadership in which they have "laid out a pretty dire looking scenario."

"Cuts are coming," he added, "and they want to know what role faculty can play in that."

At JJC, the hiring of replacements for retired and retiring faculty has basically been put on hold. The positions have not been cut, but only the most essential ones—faculty positions that must be filled to support a program—are being filled at this time. DePasquale said KCC is also only replacing faculty who absolutely need to be replaced.

The failure of voters to pass the Fair Tax on Nov. 3 has also caused community colleges to scramble because administrators were hoping to see increased funding from the state in 2021.

"What precipitated our meeting with the administration was the Fair Tax failing," DePasquale acknowledged.

The pandemic also had a negative effect on Waubonsee's faculty union negotiations.

Continued on page 8

# ***Your rights under the workers' compensation act***

*By: James M. Ridge, attorney at law*

## **What to do if you get injured on someone's property?**

**I**magine you are walking down the aisle of your local grocery store, as you've probably done a thousand times before, and the next thing you remember is lying flat on your back in excruciating pain. As you try to pick yourself up, you feel a stabbing pain in your back and notice that your clothes are wet. Can you sue? Sure, anyone can file a lawsuit. But will you win? Oftentimes, it depends on what you do next.

Many people think that if they get injured while on someone else's property, the owner of the property is automatically liable for their injuries. However, this is not true. Before the property owner can be held liable for damages, the injured party must prove negligence. In order to establish negligence, the injured party has the burden of showing that the property owner either created an unsafe/hazardous condition or knew or should have known of its existence. So how can you do this? Here are a few pointers to help prove your case.

First, it is extremely important to identify the hazardous condition that caused you to fall before it is gone forever. Without identifying a hazardous condition, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to prove your case. For example, if your clothing is wet, look and see what you fell on. Touch it. Try to identify where it came from. Look for a container that may have fallen. Take a picture of the floor or hazardous condition with your cell phone camera. Look and see if there are overhead security cameras that may have captured what happened. Time is of the essence in preserving this kind of evidence, as the video images are often erased after a couple of weeks. Also, obtain the names, addresses and phone numbers of anyone who may have witnessed what happened.

Most importantly, you should get an attorney involved as soon as possible. Your attorney will be instrumental in helping to preserve crucial evidence and guiding you through the process of recovering on your claim.



For more information on your rights contact:

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## 2021 Union Scholarships

Information will be out soon on the scholarships....

1. Union Plus Scholarship Program
2. Chicago Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship Award
3. Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship
4. IFT Robert G. Porter Scholarship

Go to: [www.ift-aft.org/scholarships](http://www.ift-aft.org/scholarships) to keep an eye out for the new scholarship information. Should be out by January 2021

Also, in the next UPDATE (Feb), there will be information on AFT Local 604 Scholarships...

1. Jacqueline B. Vaughn Memorial Scholarship
2. Paul O. Johnson Scholarship.

You can go to [www.aftlocal604](http://www.aftlocal604) to get information. New information will be out in January 2021

The Celebration of Lights in LaSalle's Rotary Park is back, and it's bigger and brighter than ever! If you should go, be sure to look for the LaSalle/Peru Township High School Teachers display of Santa sitting at a desk! If you attend, it's donation only. Well worth the trip!

Photo by Todd Stachowiak



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Upcoming Events

Any questions, please call us at  
815/725-0402

## Members responses on the effects of Covid-19 and their job

*The hardest part of dealing with trying to teach during the COVID pandemic is the inability to teach.* Instruction can be delivered remotely or in person or in a hybrid format. But, that is not teaching. Teaching involves assisting a student to move from where they are toward where they need to be. This is not only in the curricular lessons, but the life lessons as well. With remote learning, there is no way to gauge where a student is in relation to the curriculum or to life. The answers they give to concrete, objective measures can keep me out of hot water with ISBE, but it can't tell me how my kids are actually doing. The in-person model is almost more frustrating because I have them right here with me, yet there is no time to really dig in with them or even get to know them to build that essential trust level because we have to keep moving and make up for what was lost in the spring. I know we are doing the best we can under the given circumstances and that safety must come first. However, understanding that and liking it are two different things.

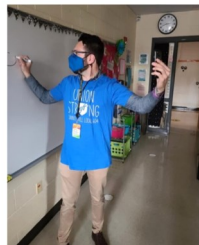
The absolute best part has been the communication, problem-solving, collaboration, and collegial support that has been shown by the teachers of Local 604, our staff, our Administration and Board of Education. Everyone has pulled together with a "We can make this work!" attitude. From looking for solutions to the sharing of ideas to teaching and learning from each other of new technologies, programming, and processes, this has been a team effort. Mr. Jay McCracken, Mr. Brent Ziegler, and Mrs. Anne Johnson have led us with safety and sanity as well as followed our lead with ideas. Covid has helped our educational family grow closer and stronger. This is one trend I hope remains.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Whitmore  
President of LaMoille Federation of Teachers Local 604

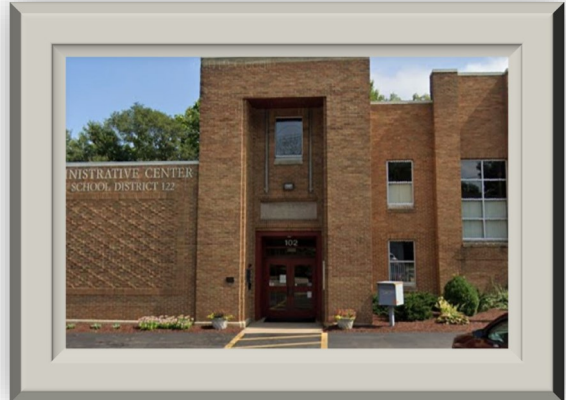
**Great Teacher at work!** Two weeks ago, music teacher, Joe Renardo of Indian Trail Elementary School had to think quick on his feet. While teaching students who were remote using Teams along with students in-person, the electricity went out mid lesson. He knew the in person students were fine to finish up the lesson, but Mr. Renardo wanted his remote students to finish the rest of their lesson too. He quickly grabbed his phone and finished the lesson using the Teams app. A teacher will do anything to reach their students!



Submitted by:  
Jodi  
Tedeschi  
from  
Summit  
Hill 161



## New Lenox Council of Teachers gather at Board Meeting

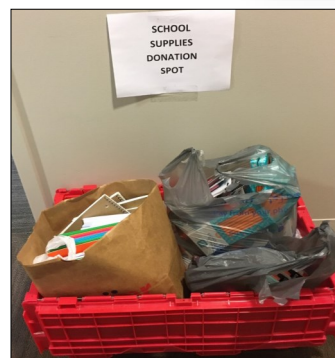


The New Lenox Council of Teachers came together on Tuesday, November 17th at the school board meeting to encourage the District to go from full in-person learning to reinstate their remote learning plan for the health of themselves, fellow non-unionized employees, their students and the New Lenox community.

Educators gathered at the District Office, safely social distancing in parking lot spaces as a stand of solidarity and unity. They were successful in their endeavor and we could not be more proud of these union members and their efforts.

## Waubonsee Council's annual supply drive

Waubonsee's council treasurer, Scott Hollenback along with a representative from the East Aurora district office.



# I'VE BEEN VOTING SINCE 1972 WITH MIXED SUCCESS

BY: BILL BRIGGS

Most, if not all, of our current union members started to vote when they turned 18, but that wasn't always the case. On Mar. 10, 1971, the U.S. Senate voted unanimously in favor of the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18. The House followed suit on Mar. 23. In just over two months—the shortest period for any amendment in U.S. history—38 states had ratified the Amendment.

It officially went into effect on July 1, 1971. The debate, however, on lowering the age began during WW II and grew even stronger during the Vietnam War. With Vietnam, the draft was initiated and put all eligible men 18 years and over into a drawing to see who would serve the country. One cry was that if you could fight for the country, you should also be able to vote.

I remember gathering with all of the guys who lived on the sixth floor of Rhoads Hall at Indiana State University on Dec. 1, 1969, to watch as the Selective Service put 366 blue capsules into a large glass container and draw out birthdates to see who would be drafted first, second, and so on.

The first date drawn was Sept. 14. The later a date was drawn, the better chance that man had of not being drafted. My number was 272, so as a sophomore, I was pretty sure I would be able to finish my college career. Another guy on my floor was not so lucky. His number was under 10; he did not say a word, left the room, and went to his pack his belongings and head home. I have no idea what happened to him.

With a record number of votes cast this year, it peaked my interest on what has happen since I voted for George McGovern over Richard Nixon. The graph that follows will state who ran and how many votes each received along with a little history. To be clear, my candidate did not win the first five times I voted, and in 13 attempts, I have agreed with the electoral college five times.

Year	Candidates	Vote totals		Trivia
1972	Nixon v McGovern	Nixon McGovern	47,168,710 29,173,222	Nixon captured 49 states including McGovern's home state of South Dakota
1976	Carter v Ford	Carter Ford	40,831,881 39,148,634	Ford replaced Nixon in 1974 after Watergate. Carter won all states in the South
1980	Reagan v Carter	Reagan Carter	43,903,320 35,480,115	Regan won 44 states
1984	Reagan v Mondale	Reagan Mondale	54,455,472 37,577,352	Reagan's landslide saw him win 49 states while Mondale took his home state of Minnesota and DC
1988	G H W Bush v Dukakis	Bush Dukakis	48,886,597 41,809,074	Bush was the first sitting vice-president to be elected president since Martin Van Buren in 1836
1992	Clinton v G H W Bush	Clinton Bush	44,909,889 39,104,550	Ross Perot was a strong 3 <sup>rd</sup> -party candidate and earned 18% of the vote; Clinton had 43%, Bush 37%
1996	Clinton v Dole	Clinton Dole	47,401,185 39,197,469	Lowest voter turnout since 1924; Perot earned 8% of the vote; first Democratic back-to-back president since FDR
2000	G W Bush v Gore	Gore Bush	50,999,897 50,456,002	Recount in Florida, which Bush won by 537 votes, gave him the election. Bush did not win the popular vote
2004	G W Bush v Kerry	Bush Kerry	62,040,610 59,028,444	Bush earned 50.7% of the vote and 286 electoral college votes
2008	Obama v McCain	Obama McCain	69,498,516 59,948,323	Largest margin of victory since 1984. McCain's vice-president candidate Sarah Palin introduced to the political world
2012	Obama v Romney	Obama Romney	65,915,795 60,933,504	First time where both candidates earned over 60,000,000 votes. Obama had 51% of the vote totals
2016	Trump v Clinton	Clinton Trump	65,853,514 62,984,828	Hillary led in most of the pools until election day. Some consider Trump's win the biggest upset in history, comparable to Truman's win in 1948. Second time this Century that the winner did not have the popular vote
2020	Biden v Trump	Biden Trump	80,952,796 74,083,912	Most stressful election in recent memory





After failing to reach an agreement in negotiations that began in January 2019, the two parties were at an impasse when the pandemic hit in 2020. The faculty then agreed to a two-year contract for 2019-20 that had no step increase but did include a 4 percent raise, with step, for 2020-2021.

That contract ends in summer of 2021, so the two parties will go back to the table in January.

Waubensee faculty union President Nancy Christensen acknowledged that the college has worked with the faculty in other ways during the pandemic.

"In other ways, our administration has been generous, allowing faculty to choose modalities for Fall and Spring semesters and working with tech ed faculty to get those students safely on campus so courses could still be finished," Christensen said.

She said they have also signed some agreements with the administration to help in the oversight of non-tenured faculty, which she characterized as "advantageous to our faculty."

At KCC, DePasquale expressed concern about the drop in enrollment and the likelihood of another potential drop of up to 25 percent in the spring. If that were to occur, KCC's enrollment, 2,200 in the fall, would drop below 2,000. Community Colleges across the state have seen declines in enrollment since the early 2010s, the height of the Great Recession, and COVID-19 has steepened that decline.

The hope across the state is that enrollment will rebound once the pandemic is under control and students can return to the classroom, even as the delivery of instruction continues to evolve now that more students have been introduced to remote learning.

As of mid-November, the colleges were continuing to adapt to the changing environment.

After the positivity rate for COVID-19 reached 18.6 percent in the second week of November, JJC's Mitchell announced that the college would institute stricter restrictions to limit the number of people on campus. Prior to that date, most people who could work remotely were already working remotely.

Stating that "it is incumbent on us to do the right thing and support the health and well-being of our community and state," Mitchell announced that the college would close the campuses to the public on Nov. 16.

Labs were all accelerated to finish before the Thanksgiving break, and all non-essential employees were directed to work remotely.

Arrangements were also made to provide virtual services to support students, with some exceptions being made for testing and other services that must be done face-to-face.

## Next Senate Meeting February 24, 2021 @ 6 PM Meeting will be held on Zoom



IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

## UPDATE



American Federation of Teachers Local 604  
www.aftlocal604.org

Covid Office Hours: 8:00am-3:00pm Monday-Friday

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