Restoring a Chicago Institution

Chicago Federation of Labor and several affiliated unions join a coalition to purchase the iconic Chicago Sun-Times
Every four years, the national AFL-CIO holds a convention to elect its national officers and to set the agenda for the broader movement. The 2017 convention was held in October in St. Louis, Mo. I attended on behalf of the CFL, along with Secretary-Treasurer Bob Reiter and Director of Legislative and Political Affairs Bridget Early. (Read more on page 10.)

The theme of the convention was Join, Fight, Win Together. As we look ahead to the 2018 election, this is the theme we need to carry through both locally and statewide. In Illinois, we have repeatedly seen what happens when we do not elect local, statewide and national leaders who support the interests of working families over big corporations. Our focus for the 2018 election starts with the Illinois gubernatorial race and goes all the way to down to our county officials and local municipalities.
Recently, the Illinois General Assembly attempted to override Governor Rauner’s veto of anti-Right-to-Work zones legislation. This legislation would have made it illegal for local municipalities to establish their own right-to-work zones. While it is already illegal for local municipalities to set up RTW zones, since federal law only grants this power at the state level, suburbs like Lincolnshire disregard common sense interpretations of labor law. The General Assembly’s override would have solidified a municipality’s inability to set up local RTW zones. Unfortunately, the House needed 71 to override, and each time, they only had 70 votes. During the first override vote, Representative Michael McAuliffe, a Republican who receives support from organized labor, voted present. Several other Republicans said they did not like the language in the bill that allowed village leaders to be charged with a Class A misdemeanor if they set up a RTW zone. Legislators went back and removed the misdemeanor language and brought it up for vote again. It passed in the Senate and lost in the House again by one vote. Once again, Rep. McAuliffe voted present. Representative Jerry Long, a member of the Teamsters union from Streeter, voted against the veto override. Our response should be analogous to AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka’s comments at the 2017 convention that the newly adopted Worker Bill of Rights is a litmus test for elected officials. (Read more on page 10.) Anyone who abstained or voted against the override does not deserve the support of organized labor. The 2018 election is labor’s chance to vote out Governor Rauner and any elected officials who do not stand with us. The Illinois AFL-CIO endorsed JB Pritzker for governor in July, and the CFL strongly supports this endorsement. Mr. Pritzker has a vision for Illinois that will restore and rebuild social services, invest in our children’s education and create economic opportunities for our communities. If organized labor is going to win this election, it is time for people to show up and turn out to get others voting for like-minded candidates. Otherwise, Illinois will suffer the same fate as its surrounding states.

The AFL-CIO convention brought new life to the movement as we continue the fight on the ground. I hope that as we gear up for the 2018 election, you all are ready to stand with the Chicago Federation of Labor to elect the candidates who are willing to fight for us.
Operating Engineers Local 150 Raises $500,000 for Military Families

In August, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150 President-Business Manager James M. Sweeney presented a check for $500,000 to the Navy SEAL Family Foundation at Local 150’s charity golf fundraiser, the James M. Sweeney Classic. The event drew more than 500 golfers to four golf courses in Lemont, and the check was presented to retired SEAL Captain Mike Argo, who serves on the SEAL Family Foundation’s Board of Directors.

“The union construction industry is proud to support military families,” said Sweeney. “Veterans make up a large portion of our workforce, and we welcome returning veterans to our industry with open arms. These men and women have done so much for us, and we are honored to come together to support their families.”

Annual Mass Remembers Fallen Workers

On Saturday, Sept. 9, the Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trades Council once again hosted its annual All Faiths Memorial Service at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Darien, Ill. Union members, labor leaders and their families gathered to remember those union members who passed away over the last year. The Mass is intended “to pay tribute to members of our affiliated organizations who died during the past year, pay particular honor to those killed on the jobsite, and for the spiritual needs of Labor and their families.”

Originated by Father Joseph Donahue who came from a family of lathers and was considered the Chicago and Cook County Building Trades Chaplain, the All Faiths Memorial Service celebrated its 77th year. The Mass was previously held at two other churches in Cook County, but due to non-union work being done, it was moved to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church almost 20 years ago and is now being celebrated by the current chaplain, Father Tom Byrne.

Airport Workers Win High Wages Thanks to New City Ordinance

September was an important month for 8,000 airport workers at Chicago’s Midway and O’Hare airports in the fight for higher earnings and a union. SEIU Local 1 was the driving force behind Chicago’s City Council unanimously passing an ordinance requiring private contractors to abide by new labor standards before being licensed by the city.

Contractors will be required to increase the employees pay to $13.45 beginning in July 2018, a significant increase from $11 per hour as previously held. Additionally, the new ordinance states that contractors must enter into “labor peace agreements” with any union that would like to organize its employees. In the agreement, the employer will remain neutral during the campaign to organize, meanwhile the union will not participate in “economically disruptive” actions such as boycotts or strikes.

“It’s a win-win-win-win for airport workers, passengers, the city and the airlines,” said SEIU Local 1 President Tom Balanoff.

Women Build Nations Returns to Chicago

Approximately 1,700 women attended the 2017 Women Build Nations conference that was held in Chicago for the second straight year. The conference is for women who...
The Day Before Graduate Students at the University of Chicago voted recently with the Leo Perlis
Award recognize the efforts of UAW members on winning this prestigious award.

University of Chicago graduate employees have voted decisively for a union by more than a 2-1 majority in a history-making vote

The National Labor Relations Board announced that graduate assistants voted overwhelmingly to recognize Graduate Students United as their exclusive collective bargaining representative, 1,103 to 479, in October.

Graduate employees work with students every day. They understand what their students need better than most. With a union, they will have the voice they need to push for improvements to the classes they teach and the research they conduct.

Founded in 2007, GSU has fought for healthcare, child care, stipends to match Chicago’s cost of living, funding to finish degrees and a regularized pay schedule.

GSU, which re-affirmed its affiliation with the Illinois Federation of Teachers, the American Federation of Teachers and the American Association of University Professors in 2016, will immediately move to bargain a first contract with the university administration.

Claudio Gonzáles, a third-year student in mathematics, said: “Our overwhelming victory is a testament to our long-held belief: Graduate workers perform unquestionably valuable work and are the backbone of the University of Chicago. We have exercised our democratic right and have elected to sit at the table when decisions are made that affect our lives, and also the lives of our students and those in the broader community.”

To read the full story, visit https://www.ift-aft.org/news/2017/10/19/university-of-chicago-graduate-workers-win-union-vote

Submit your stories

Unions and their members are doing great work throughout our communities, and we want to hear about it.

Email your stories (200 words or less) and high-resolution photos (300 dpi or greater) to info@chicagolabor.org.

The CFL reserves the right to edit stories for content and space allowance.
Restoring a Chicago Institution

In December of 2016, former 43rd Ward Alderman Edwin Eisendrath and Chicago Federation of Labor President Jorge Ramirez ran into each other at a Christmas party. The two began discussing the status of the newspaper industry, and in particular, the state of Chicago’s historically working-class driven paper, the Chicago Sun-Times.

Over the course of the next seven months, Eisendrath and Ramirez, along with a group of unions and individual investors, developed a bid that was accepted over the competing bids and secured ownership of the Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Reader and straightdope.com on July 13, 2017. Separately, the newly-formed group also purchased Answers Media, a full-service digital communications company.

“This is a historic coalition of workers and like-minded investors who represent a cross-section of the Chicago population, coming together with one common goal: to preserve independent media entities in Chicago and protect their journalistic integrity. This effort amplifies the diversity of voices and perspectives of Chicago stories both locally and nationally,” said Ramirez, who serves as Chairman of the Chicago Sun-Times.

This acquisition is meant to be a stepping stone to rebuilding proper representation and coverage of the working-class community, delivering news that means the most to their lives and can help them make informed decisions in their day-to-day lives.

The Union Advantage

What makes this coalition affective is when labor organizations have strong representation within companies—through both its workforce and on the board of directors—labor organizations can play an important role in decision making and corporate governance. Across Europe, workers vote for representatives to serve on the board of directors or work councils. These representatives understand worker efficiency and how to help companies stay viable. Labor unions ensure the companies are investing in professional development, ultimately making the businesses better places to work.

“Partnering with a news organization that is committed to covering the lives of working people is a way for organized labor to unleash the imbedded value of the Chicago Sun-Times; labor’s ownership involvement will help the paper to more effectively invest in the people of our city,” said Robert Bruno, Professor and Director of the Labor Education Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The combination of union and private investors allows the Chicago Sun-Times to remain competitive; investing in its people and providing the resources workers need to be successful—all while holding its value.

A History in Media

At a local level, the CFL has a long and prosperous history of owning media properties. In 1926, the CFL became the first labor organization to own and operate a radio station company. The objectives of WCFL from the beginning were service to labor, the community and the nation.

Over the course of its 50+ years on air, WCFL broadcasts included a Top 40 music station, all types of forums, lectures, and other cultural programs, as well as special broadcasts that ranged from on-spot coverage of union conventions to presidential addresses.

Next Phase

The Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Reader and straightdope.com website recently moved into a new office, located at 30 N. Racine Ave., in the busy, progressive neighborhood of the West Loop, where Answers Media has been operating for five years. The company plans to lease 26,000 square feet of space in the 75,000-square-foot building. Much of that space will be dedicated to the current staff at both publications, while allowing ample space for when the companies recruit additional team members.

“The Chicago Sun-Times has a rich history of fair, honest and balanced reporting,” said Eisendrath. “We will continue to uphold those values for the future of this paper, while maintaining the editorial integrity that made this paper so great.”

The Chicago Sun-Times is offering special pricing for CFL-affiliated unions and their members. Subscription information is on the facing page.
Get the Sun-Times at a special discount for union members.

SUBSCRIBE TO 7-DAY HOME DELIVERY | $16.99/MONTH
- INCLUDES E-PAPER SUBSCRIPTION -
VISIT > CHICAGOLABOR.ORG/SUNTIMESHOME

OR

SUBSCRIBE TO 7-DAY E-PAPER SUBSCRIPTION | $2.95/MONTH
VISIT > CHICAGOLABOR.ORG/SUNTIMESPAPER
Auto Mechanics Win Four-Year Deal, Ending Seven-Week Strike

Approximately 2,000 Chicago-area auto mechanics, represented by IAM Automobile Mechanics Local 701, went back to work on Sept. 18, after they ratified a new four-year deal with the Chicago New Car Dealer Committee.

“We did it! You did it!” said Local 701 Directing Business Representative Sam Cicinelli to the members. “We wrestled them down, defending each of their moves to where they finally tapped out. They waved the white flag and capitulated to our demands.”

The offer was the fourth since the mechanics traded in their tools for strike signs in early August. The group overwhelmingly rejected three previous proposals presented by the NCDC because of the association’s consistent failure to address several key issues brought forth by the IAM.

The terms of the final agreement mirror the same offer agreed upon by more than 70 individual dealerships who, throughout the strike, broke ranks with the dealer association and, instead, settled interim agreements with the union directly. It addresses several of the union’s key issues, including the mechanics’ number one issue of increasing their base pay two additional hours over the term of the agreement. In addition, the contract addresses the advancement of semi-skilled workers towards a career path, shortens the apprenticeship scale from 10 to 5 years, and provides a more family-friendly work schedule for senior-level Journeymen technicians, among other points.

“The NCDC denied our proposals from day one,” said Cicinelli. “They tried to break this union. They attempted every dirty trick in the book by trying to demoralize you on the line. They tried to fill you with uncertainty while blaming the union for what’s going on. They tried to divide you. But we divided them.”

Cicinelli and the members of Local 701 thank everyone for the support they received from area residents and other union members from Chicago and across the country, including monetary donations to the health care fund, food and water donations, and words of encouragement on the strike lines.
of IATSE Locals 2 and 110 set up and ran the technical aspects of the event. Members of Teamsters Local 727 were on hand to unload and load the trucks. Thank you to Frank Libby (Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters), Craig Carlson (IATSE Local 2) and Steve Altman (IATSE Local 110) for their generous donations to this event.

Over the weekend, delegates to the CFL traveled to over 100 places of worship across Chicagoland to spread the message about the shared connection between the values of the labor movement and the values of religion. (See inset on page 10).

On Saturday, union members, along with their families and friends, descended on Chicago’s 10th Ward for the Southeast Side Labor Day Parade and Festival. The Chicago Federation of Labor marched with a delegation of union members, including CWA Locals 41 and 2450, Machinists Lodge 126, IUOE Locals 150 and 399, and the Chicago News Guild. Dozens of other unions joined the family-friendly parade with their own floats, celebrating America and the labor movement’s history and future. The parade ended at the Friends of Labor’s Labor Day festival at Steelworker’s Park. On Sunday, the fun resumed at Steelworker’s Park for day two of the festival, which included food, drinks and live music. It was a true celebration of union pride and solidarity. Thank you to 10th Ward Alderman Susan Sadlowski Garza and all the unions who brought the parade and festival back to Chicago.

Mark your calendar now to join the CFL at the Southeast Side parade and festival in 2018. Everyone is welcome to march with CFL during the parade. It is a great opportunity to get to know members from other sectors of the movement and celebrate the labor family.

CFL Sponsors Successful 2017 Labor In the Pulpit/In the Minbar/On the Bimah Program

Over Labor Day weekend the Chicago Federation of Labor, in partnership with Arise Chicago, organized its annual Labor in the Pulpit/in the Minbar/on the Bimah program. Through the program, union members and leaders brought a message about the shared connection between the values of the labor movement and the values of religion to places of worship across Chicagoland. Each speaker addressed the congregation for about five minutes on the meaning of Labor Day and how they personally view their connection of faith and work.

This year, the Chicago Federation of Labor recruited volunteers from over 25 local unions and labor organizations to speak at 115 services throughout the city and surrounding suburbs. They spoke to thousands of followers about the issues facing workers today, including attacks on collective bargaining and the right to organize, and the plight of many low-wage workers. They focused on the car wash industry, where workers are regularly underpaid, frequently struggle with wage theft and are often immigrants. The speakers then offered ways the CFL and Arise Chicago are working to fight against these issues and encouraged members of the faith community to join the fight for workers’ rights.

Labor in the Pulpits was started in 1995 by the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues as a way to connect the labor movement to the faith community. Following the success of the pilot program, 20 other central labor bodies began programs within their own communities the following year. Today, it is a national program, happening in places of worship all across the country.

The CFL thanks everyone who volunteered to participate this year, as well as the many unions who encouraged their members and staff to volunteer.

CFL and UNITE HERE Local 1 Lead Session on Workplace Sexual Harassment

Bob Reiter, Secretary-Treasurer of the CFL, and Karen Kent, President of UNITE HERE Local 1, took the stage in August at this year’s United Way/Labor Partnership conference in Portland, Ore. to lead a discussion around workplace sexual harassment.

The session, titled “Barriers to Solidarity: Harassment in the Workplace,” covered the power dynamics behind harassment as well as tools to address harassment and other aggressive behavior.

The United Way/Labor Partnership conference is held each year to reinforce the importance of community in the labor movement and to explore ways labor can further its community engagement through its partnership with United Way. Reiter and Kent shared their insight with United Way labor liaisons and Central Labor Council staff from across the country, reinforcing that sexual harassment cannot be tolerated in the labor movement, whose core values are dignity, respect and trust.

AFL-CIO National Convention Wrap-Up

In October 2017, the national AFL-CIO held a convention to democratically elect officers to lead the movement over the next four years. The three top national officers were re-elected to another four-year term: Richard Trumka, President; Liz Shuler, Secretary-Treasurer; and Tefere Gebre, Executive Vice President. In addition, 55 vice presidents were elected from across the labor movement, many of whom represent the members of several of the CFL’s affiliated unions. CFL President Jorge Ramirez was elected to his first full term on the Executive Council, after being appointed to the Council by President Trumka in 2015. Three national leaders who come from the Chicago area, Ironworkers General President Eric Dean, IBEW International President Lonnie R. Stephenson, and UAW President Dennis Williams, were also re-elected to serve another four-year term on the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

Over the course of the convention, the delegates adopted 56 resolutions that will guide the work of the national federation for the next four years. The first resolution, a Worker Bill of Rights, set the tone for the rest of the convention. President Trumka referred to it as a collective bargaining agreement for America and the litmus test for union support of elected officials. Ramirez stood in support of the Workers Bill of Rights, stating, “This resolution is our resolve to fight harder and to win for working men and women. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to union organizing. We are helping working men and women achieve more collectively than they ever could individually.”
Unions Help United Way Raise over $55 Million for Chicago Communities

United Way of Metro Chicago closed out another great fundraising year, raising almost $55 million to improve financial stability, education, health and safety in Chicago’s communities. The labor movement largely contributed to this victory, with union members making donations through employee giving campaigns at their workplace and individual unions supporting United Way through treasury gifts. Additionally, the Union Treasury Gifts raised over $15,000 this year for United Way through donations from over 30 participating labor organizations. The CFL and UWMC would like to give a special thanks to those who participated. See side panel for complete list.

Two Access United Candidates Accepted Into Mechanics Local 701 Apprenticeship

Access United recently helped place two candidates within the Mechanics Local 701’s Apprenticeship Program. Access United works with individuals receiving services through United Way of Metro Chicago on the South and West sides. The program helps candidates identify opportunities in the organized trades and supports them as they apply for union apprenticeships. The candidates, both residents in the Blue Island area, will begin training at the IAM Local 701 Apprentice Training Center before applying to entry-level jobs in local auto shops.

Access United is a partnership between the CFL, United Way, the Construction Industry Services Corporation, and the Chicago & Cook County Building & Construction Trades Council. Since launching in April, three Access United candidates have been accepted into apprenticeship programs, including one candidate who joined the Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters’ Concrete Formers Program.

William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship Applications Available December 15

Applications for the 2018 William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship will be available on December 15, 2017. Applicants must graduate from high school in May 2018.

Each year, the Chicago Federation of Labor awards 10 scholarships, valued at $2,000 each, to high school seniors. The scholarships are awarded to the top five students in the Academic Competition and the five winners of the Random Drawing. The funds may be used at any accredited college or university in the United States.

For more details and to download the application, visit chicagolabor.org/scholarship.

Edgar Fellows Program

Launched in 2012, the Edgar Fellows Program gathers some of the state’s most diverse leaders in Champaign, Ill. for a week of collaboration to tackle some of the foremost ordeals within the state. This year’s 40 upcoming leaders were chosen from a list of 140 nominees ranging from such backgrounds as government, business and non-profit organizations. Among the chosen group was CFL Secretary-Treasurer Bob Reiter.

During the program hosted by the University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs and former Governor of Illinois Jim Edgar, the fellows participate in an extensive training program. Topics of discussion include education, health care and economic development.

“We bring the Edgar Fellows together each year expecting they will discover they have much more in common with each other than they have differences. Each year, we see strangers get to know each other. People who have different viewpoints become friends. They learn about and develop new respect for each other, and they form bonds that we know will serve them and our state well as they advance their leadership careers” said Edgar.
CFL Delegates’ Meetings

Tuesday, February 6, 2018
Tuesday, March 6, 2018
Tuesday, April 3, 2018
No meeting in January 2018

START TIME: 6 p.m.

WHERE: Chicago Plumbers Local 130 Hall
1340 W. Washington, Chicago

Delegates must present their current Chicago Federation of Labor membership card or this notice for admission. We look forward to full representation from your local union to assist the Federation in the development of its policies.

ROBERT G. REITER, JR.
SECRETARY-TREASURER

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Join the CFL in standing up for working people and building a strong middle class.

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Editor in Chief: Jorge Ramirez, President
Editor: Robert G. Reiter, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer
Managing Editor: Nora Cay Ryan
Contributors: Elaine Fleck, Michael Hartge, Andrea Kluger