Chicago Takes Labor Day to the Next Level
Luncheon, Parade, and Festival Demonstrate Labor’s “All for Better” Commitment to Chicago
As we reach the end of the year, it is important for us in the Chicago labor movement to take stock of our accomplishments in the past year and look ahead to the fights to come. In 2019, we saw significant change in Chicago, with a new governor and mayor taking the helm at the state and the city, respectively. We have worked hard to build relationships with Gov. JB Pritzker and Mayor Lori Lightfoot, educating them on the important issues facing working families.

We also achieved several successes on the picket line, in the legislature, and in the courts. Union members went on strike to fight for working people, resulting in stronger schools, more rights for workers in higher education,
better care for hospital patients, and decent treatment for the working class. At the state, labor successfully passed major legislation including a $45 billion capital bill, raising the state minimum wage to $15, and outlawing so-called “right-to-work.” At the city, the CFL worked to pass the Fair Workweek Ordinance, one of the strongest predictive scheduling ordinances in the country. And at the national level, unions continue to battle the Trump Administration to ensure workers’ rights are respected and protected.

The Chicago Federation of Labor gives thanks to each and every worker who has marched a picket line, called a legislator, made a phone call, or talked to a neighbor about the importance of unions. Our strength is in our people, and our people are the hardest working in the world. Together, there is nothing we cannot accomplish.

Now we must look ahead to 2020. Of course, the Presidential election will dominate the political conversation. But we cannot overlook the other major statewide issue on the ballot, the Fair Tax. Illinois is one of just a handful of states with a flat state income tax, resulting in one of the most unfair tax systems in the country that relies too heavily on property taxes. The Fair Tax asks the wealthiest to pay their fair share, ending decades of shaky finances, budget cuts, and underinvestment in Illinois. This means better schools, more infrastructure investments, and a stronger social safety net for our state’s most vulnerable. The Fair Tax does this while providing tax relief to 97 percent of all Illinoisans — if you make less than $250,000, you won’t pay an extra dime.

For too long, the wealthiest and corporations have gotten a sweet deal while the middle class in Illinois got a raw deal. The Fair Tax finally fixes years of financial instability, putting Illinois back on track once and for all. Just as you have worked hard this year to make 2019 a success for the Chicago labor movement, please join me in talking to your coworkers, friends, and neighbors about the need for the Fair Tax in 2020.
Chicago Teachers Union Back in Classrooms after 11-Day Strike

On Oct. 31, the Chicago Teachers Union reached a landmark Tentative Agreement for a new contract with Chicago Public Schools after an 11-day strike.

“This historic agreement recognizes and values the voice and experience of Chicago educators, and turns the page and provides a new pathway for CPS and our rank-and-file members to do right by students and families,” CTU President Jesse Sharkey said.

“This deal will move us closer to ensuring that our most vulnerable students receive the instruction, resources and wraparound services they need to thrive. This contract will put a nurse in every school, a social worker in every school and provide a real solution for thousands of homeless students in Chicago.”

CTU rank-and-file members voted to ratify the contract in mid-November, triggering the implementation of the new five-year deal for the city’s teachers.

Beyond adding wraparound services for students, the agreement will also provide significant improvements to the CPS staffing pipeline and increase city funding for school sports and new equipment for student athletics.

CTU Vice President Stacy Davis Gates said the agreement “will move us one step closer to smaller, enforceable class sizes, equitable pay for educators and paraprofessionals, and more support for our English Language and special education students.”

Five additional instruction days were added to the school calendar for 2019, despite 11 days being lost to the strike, the longest teachers’ strike in Chicago since 1987.

SEIU Local 73 Reaches Agreement with Chicago Public Schools

After nearly 17 months of negotiations and a seven-day strike, the members of SEIU Local 73 overwhelmingly voted in favor of a new five-year contract with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) on Oct. 30, winning substantial pay increases, significant improvements in working conditions, and more resources for students.

The new contract is retroactive to July 1, 2018, and expires on June 30, 2023. SEIU Local 73 represents 7,500 Chicago Public Schools support staff, including special education classroom assistants (SECAs), bus aides, custodians, and security officers.

The newly ratified contract is a start in creating a pathway out of poverty for many of the workers that Mayor Lightfoot called “chronically underpaid.” For example, under the current contract, it would take 17 years for a new SECA to reach $40,000 per year. Under the new contract, beginning in 2023, SECAs can reach $40,000 in one to two years.

“This is a victory for working people in Chicago and shows what is possible when we unite and take action,” said Dian Palmer, President of SEIU Local 73. “The lowest-paid support workers who are the backbone of our schools are going to see raises that mean their families won’t have to struggle as hard living in an expensive city where costs keep going up.”

The contract is also a victory for schools, especially for special education students. For the first time, SECAs will have self-directed prep and planning time scheduled throughout the school year. The contract will also support SECAs’ dedication to special education students, protecting them from being used as utility workers and from being used for the general student population rather than their assigned students.

“I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish together for the sake of our families, our students and our schools,” said Jonathan Williams, a SECA at Wilma Rudolph Learning Center and a member of the bargaining team. “We want to provide our kids the education they deserve in an environment that is clean and safe. This contract will help us to better serve and advocate for our students.”

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Affiliate News

Read more on these topics at www.chicagolabor.org/news.
students and will help us support our families.”

The agreement comes after 97 percent of support staff voted to authorize a strike in June after working without a contract since June 30, 2018. Tired of the disrespect and seeking a path to a better life for their families and better support for students, members went on strike Oct. 17 along with members of the Chicago Teachers Union.

Submitted by SEIU Local 73

Sinai Health System Workers Reach Contract Agreement, Averting Strike

Sinai Health System and Sinai workers represented through SEIU Healthcare Illinois reached a tentative agreement on a new contract for workers at Mount Sinai Hospital and Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital. Following a marathon late night bargaining session on Thursday, Nov. 7, ahead of the strike workers announced for the following Monday, Sinai and Sinai workers represented through SEIU Healthcare settled on a fair contract that will lift standards for workers throughout the Chicago-area hospital industry, a workforce that is largely black and brown and female.”

Karen Teitelbaum, President and CEO of Sinai Health System, said, “We applaud the hard work of the negotiating teams from both Sinai and SEIU to reach an agreement that will allow us to take care of our caregivers and continue to work together to meet our mission — improving the health of the individuals and communities we serve.”

Upon ratification, the new contract will lift many of Sinai’s bargaining unit workers to a new starting base wage of $15 an hour. Currently, 55 percent of hospital service workers in the Chicago area make less than $15 an hour. The agreement will also provide decreased costs for health care coverage for Sinai workers, as well as improved staffing levels and enforcement.

“After 18 years on the job, I’m getting my first decent raise and we’re getting better staffing levels,” said Connie Jackson, a CNA at Mount Sinai Hospital. “That makes a big difference to me, to my community and to the patients we serve. We’re lifting up wages for workers on the West Side and we’re improving care for patients in our communities too.”

After reaching the agreement, workers called off the strike that was scheduled to begin on Monday, Nov. 11, after the union provided its 10-day notification to Sinai on Oct. 31.

Submitted by SEIU Healthcare

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.

In Memoriam

The Chicago labor movement lost a trailblazer and tireless leader of workers in the hospitality industry with the passing of Geraldine M. “Jerre” McPartlin on October 16, 2019. She was 91.

McPartlin began her career in the labor movement as a Business Representative for the School Lunchroom Employees Local 129 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (H.E.R.E.) Local 1 in 1976. From her first day on the job, she took on the tough fights and dedicated her life to the working families of the union she represented.

She quickly rose to the rank of Vice President and Financial Secretary of Local 1, servicing thousands of unionized workers in the hospitality and food service industries, as well as International Organizer.

In November 1981, McPartlin was appointed as the first female board member of the Chicago Federation of Labor’s Executive Board. She went on to become the first woman to be appointed First Vice President of the CFL in 1985 and was elected First Vice President for the first time in 1986.

In 1995, McPartlin was honored as the CFL’s “Woman of the Year” for her leadership and dedication to strengthening the Chicago labor movement.

McPartlin remained active, never afraid to put herself on the line, until her retirement at the age of 83. In 2009, she joined two hundred members of UNITE HERE Local 1 and community supporters in an act of civil disobedience on the Magnificent Mile. As she was waiting on the police bus to be processed, she treated her fellow arrestees with her lovely singing voice.

McPartlin was also a tireless community leader devoting her time and efforts unselfishly to many worthwhile causes for several decades, including Misericordia and Mercy Home for Boys and Girls, among others.

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On Labor Day, Chicago’s Unions Show They Are “All for Better”

Luncheon, Parade, and Festival Mark a Week of Celebration

As the hometown of the American Labor Movement, Chicago has long been at the forefront of celebrating workers on Labor Day. This year, the Chicago Federation of Labor led a week of festivities spanning the city, from its annual Labor Day Luncheon to the Labor in the Pulpit program in more than 100 houses of worship.

CFL Labor Day Luncheon

The celebration began on Aug. 28 at the CFL’s Labor Day Luncheon, the official start of Labor Day in Chicago. This year’s luncheon, held at McCormick Place’s Skyline Ballroom, was the largest in event history, with more than 1,200 attendees.

“Chicago is the home of the Haymarket Affair, the Pullman Strike, the Little Steel Strike, the Garment Workers Strike, and so much more rich history that gave birth to the labor movement in this country and propelled it forward,” said CFL President Bob Reiter. “Each year we carry this legacy with us as we seek to advance the cause of working people and fight for justice and equality for all in the Chicagoland area.”

Reiter also introduced the “All for Better” theme for the next year of CFL activities. “When workers thrive at work, they thrive at home. When unions succeed, standards are raised for all workers. And when we all work together, everyone in Chicago benefits. The labor movement is truly All for Better.”

Planning has already begun for the 2020 CFL Labor Day Luncheon, scheduled to be held on Wednesday, Sept. 2 at McCormick Place.

Labor Day Parade and Eddie Fest

The following Saturday, Aug. 31, the Chicago Federation of Labor invited labor and community members to celebrate workers at the Southeast Side Labor Day Parade and the inaugural Eddie Fest.

The Southeast Side Labor Day Parade, founded in 1959, was a Labor Day staple for decades before its decline in the early 1990s. In 2015, Alderwoman Susan Sadlowski Garza revived the parade with the support of unions, local businesses and community members.

Under bright blue skies, the 2019 parade included more than 100 entries, highlighting the breadth and strength of the Chicagoland labor movement. Led by the Chicago Federation of Labor, the parade celebrated union pride, solidarity and community togetherness.

Formerly known as the Friends of Labor Festival, Eddie Fest is a free community festival celebrating the working people who power Chicago. The festival was named for Ed “Oil Can” Sadlowski, honoring his legacy as a leader of the working class. At age 26, Sadlowski became the youngest president of the Steelworkers Union Local 65, representing 23,000 workers. Sadlowski’s lifelong commitment to the labor movement helped democratize union elections and give rank-and-file workers a stronger voice on the job.

Held at Calumet Park at the end of the Southeast Side Labor Day Parade route, Eddie Fest included food trucks, vendors, a silent disco with Chicago’s top DJ’s; fireworks, kid zone and hours of live music. Musical acts included Crucial Conflict, Life Band, Mr. Funnyman, Rocks Off, Tony Chicago and many more.

“Both the Eddie Fest and the Southeast Side Labor Day Parade are fantastic, family friendly opportunities to celebrate our movement,” said CFL President Bob Reiter. “I look forward to these events being a staple of Chicago’s Labor Day celebrations for years to come!”

Labor in the Pulpit

Finally, over the entire Labor Day weekend the Chicago Federation of Labor led its annual Labor in the Pulpit/on the Minbar/ in the Minbar program. Held annually in partnership with ARISE Chicago, the program connects the labor movement to congregations across Greater Chicago to spread a message of solidarity between faith and labor communities.

This year, union members spoke in 112 different religious services. They emphasized recent workplace victories, such as Chicago’s Fair Work Week Ordinance, and supporting the fight to give all workers a voice on the job.

Participating for his third year, CFL Secretary-Treasurer Don Villar spoke at St. James Church in Bronzeville, telling congregants, “Faith grounds us in the vision that, no matter if you work on a computer, or hang drywall; no matter if you’re in a class room, conference room, or factory; no matter if you are union or non-union; no matter if you are an immigrant or native born, you should be able to return to a nice home with a full table each night and time to nurture your soul and families.”

SAVE THE DATE

LABOR DAY WEEKEND 2020

CFL Labor Day Luncheon
Wednesday, September 2, 2020

Labor Day Parade and Eddie Fest
Saturday, September 5, 2020

For more information, visit chicagolabor.org
ABOVE LEFT: CRUCIAL CONFLICT PERFORMS AT EDDIE FEST.

ABOVE RIGHT: DJS SPIN AT THE EDDIE FEST SILENT DISCO.

RIGHT: CFL PRESIDENT BOB REITER ADDRESSES ATTENDEES OF THE 2019 CFL LABOR DAY LUNCHEON.

BELOW LEFT: THE CFL FLOAT IN THE SOUTHEAST SIDE LABOR DAY PARADE.

BELOW RIGHT: SECRETARY TREASURER DON VILLAR SPEAKS AT ST. JAMES CHURCH IN BRONZEVILLE AS PART OF THE LABOR IN THE PULPITS PROGRAM.
United for the Holidays

The Chicago Federation of Labor and the United Way of Metro Chicago are preparing for the annual United For the Holidays, a festive holiday event that provides new toys, books and cold weather accessories to families in need.

This year’s event will take place in the West Chicago community, and will serve more than 100 families. Labor unions have provided the most financial support for United for the Holidays the past two years, showing what unions do best – lifting our friends and neighbors who need it most.

The 2019 goal is to build off last year’s record fundraising for the event and provide even more resources to needy families in West Chicago. To donate, please contact Gus Fuguitt, CFL Director of Community engagement at 312-906-2434, or at Gus.Fuguitt@LiveUnitedChicago.org.

Ways a donation can impact a family in need:

- $300 will provide a family with winter coats and a holiday meal;
- $550 will provide a family with winter clothes, including coats, scarves and gloves, along with a holiday meal and transit cards;
- $1,000 will provide two families with winter clothes, along with a holiday meal and transit cards;
- $2,500 will provide three families with winter clothes, a holiday meal and transit cards.

For Photographer Parrish Lewis, Union Membership is Picture Perfect

Many union members have their first introduction to the labor movement through a friend or family member. For photographer Parrish Lewis (IATSE Local 600), that connection was made by Academy Award-winning director Spike Lee.

Lewis bounced between a successful corporate career in IT sales and entertainment photography, his passion, when in 2008 a friend introduced him to Lee, who was looking for a union photographer to help with a project in Chicago. “I took off work and went to talk to Lee. When the meeting ended, I had no idea if it went well or not. But five minutes after I left, he offered me the job,” said Lewis. Lee required a union photographer for the project, and offered to help Lewis join. “Spike Lee got me into my union.”

Lewis already built a name in film-based photography, working with some of the most famous entertainers in the country, including Kanye West, Common, Twista, and
Usher. But the transition to digital photography made it difficult for him to stand out in a field that was exploding with amateur photographers willing to do the work for less.

“The union has helped me stand out,” said Lewis, recounting his battle to set himself apart in a crowded field. “When I first thought about being a photographer, I never thought I would be on the level I am right now. And I know that I still have miles to go, but I am so much further ahead than most people because of my union.”

Though Lewis began his photography business 18 years ago, kept his corporate day job for several years. It wasn't until Spike Lee returned to Chicago in 2014 and asked Parrish to work on the film Chi-raq that Lewis made the decision to focus full time on photography. “Being in the union has set me apart, and it was the best decision I ever could have made. I've gotten to do more print work. I've gotten to work with my favorite celebrities. It feels good to know you have someone fighting for you.”

Lewis worked with the Chicago Federation of Labor on its 2019 Labor Day campaign. “All for Better,” photographing more than two dozen rank-and-file union members from across Chicagoland. The experience reinforced his appreciation for unions. “That pride is big. That union badge is big. It's hard when you're trying to make a living and there are people who aren't willing to pay their fair share, but it's awesome when a group of people come together collectively to make sure everyone is treated fairly.”

Though Lewis is mainly an entertainment photographer, he jumped at the opportunity to work with union members and the Chicago Federation of Labor. “This to me feels like a once in a lifetime opportunity,” said Lewis. Parrish Lewis' work can be found on the cover of and throughout the 2019 CFL Labor Day Solidarity Ad Book, as well as in print and digital work that will be used by the CFL throughout 2019 and 2020.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PARRISH LEWIS, VISIT HIS WEBSITE AT WWW.PARRISLEWIS.COM.
William A. Lee Memorial Scholarships Available for 2020

Each year the Chicago Federation of Labor awards 10 college scholarships, valued at $2,000 each, to high school seniors through the William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship.

The scholarship was created in October 1957 to demonstrate Labor’s commitment to stand in solidarity with students as they continue their educational pursuits. In a letter to CFL-affiliated unions, then-President William A. Lee, wrote, “The Chicago Federation of Labor and its affiliated members have always been dedicated to the cause of higher education and are therefore pleased to provide assistance to the children of union members who wish to avail themselves of an opportunity to attend college.” The scholarship was originally named in honor of the CFL’s first President, John Fitzpatrick. He was president from 1906 until his death in 1946. At the time, four scholarships were awarded to two men and two women who were outstanding students among their peers.

In January 1985, a new scholarship program was approved by the CFL to provide 10 scholarships, at $2,000 each, and they continue to be awarded today. The name was changed to honor William A. Lee, President of the CFL from 1946 until his death in 1984.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE WILLIAM A. LEE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Deadline to Apply:

- Completed applications must be received by the CFL by Monday, Feb. 10, 2020.
- Applications may be dropped off at 180 N. Stetson Ave., Chicago, IL 60601 Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.
- Mailed applications must be postmarked by Saturday, Feb. 8, 2020.
- The funds may be used at any accredited college or university in the United States.

Applicants:

- The applicant must be a senior in high school and graduating in the spring of 2020.
- Either the applicant or the applicant’s parent must be a member in good standing of a CFL-affiliated union.
- To confirm a union’s affiliation status, please call 312.222.1000.
- Applications may be dropped off at 180 N. Stetson Ave., Chicago, IL 60601 Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.
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- The funds may be used at any accredited college or university in the United States.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO DOWNLOAD THE APPLICATION, VISIT CHICAGOLABOR.ORG.

CFL Welcomes AFL-CIO Executive Council to Chicago

CFL President Bob Reiter welcomed the group, saying, “I am proud to show off the hometown of the American labor movement. I hope you will be able to spend some time in our city to see what makes Chicago such a labor town.”

National leaders from across the labor movement attended the meetings and discussed the successes of the Chicago labor movement in the past year, including the defeat of anti-union former Gov. Bruce Rauner, the passage of a statewide $15 minimum wage law, and the banning of so-called “Right-to-Work” legislation by the Illinois General Assembly. “These meetings help us learn best practices for promoting workers’ rights locally while sharing our keys to success with our nationwide partners,” said President Reiter.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council adopted several public statements, including a statement condemning white supremacy and a statement on the importance of the 2020 presidential election.
Labor Teams Up with Community and Business to Launch HIRE360

The Chicago Federation of Labor, in partnership with labor, community, and business, launched HIRE360, an innovative, cross-industry collaboration that will provide sustainable careers for residents and support business ventures for local businesses across the region.

“For the first time, labor, community, and business are coming together to bring good union jobs to all of Chicago’s neighborhoods. I am excited to see the great work HIRE360 will do to strengthen the labor movement while promoting unions citywide,” said Bob Reiter, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor.

HIRE360’s mission is to expand employment opportunities through recruiting, training and placement assistance; invest capital in helping minority- and women-owned businesses grow and thrive; connect area youth, underrepresented populations and local residents with job inspiration and opportunities; and model socially responsible hiring and supply chain accountability in Chicago and beyond.

HIRE360 was built off the success of Access United, which was born from a partnership of the Chicago Federation of Labor, the United Way of Metro Chicago, the Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trades Council, the Construction Industry Service Corporation (CISCO), and other community partners.

Access United helped job seekers explore career options and prepare for the union aptitude test. The outcomes of Access United served as the foundation of HIRE360, with over sixty union apprenticeship placements within multiple industries. The United Way will continue to serve as a valuable partner with HIRE360.

HIRE360 Board of Directors is made up of both labor and industry, including Ralph Affrunti, President of the Chicago & Cook County Building & Construction Trades Council; Charise Williams, Director of External Affairs for the Chicago Federation of Labor; Don Biernacki Senior Vice President of Construction at Related Midwest; and Michael Meagher of McHugh Construction, Vice President of the Chicagoland Associated General Contractors. This partnership will help ensure that both labor and industry will work together to expand employment opportunities throughout Chicagoland.

“For years, labor unions and the development industry have worked to increase diversity in the trades through one-off, unconnected programs. We haven’t made the progress we need,” said Williams. “HIRE360 changes that by bringing together business and labor to create a pathway for underrepresented communities to access these jobs and the support needed to thrive in them.”

HIRE360 will be led by Executive Director Jay Rowell, who brings a wealth of experience, including serving as the Deputy Treasurer of Illinois, overseeing the state’s $31 billion investment portfolio, where he focused on increasing investments by minority- and women-owned firms. Rowell also served as the director of Illinois Department of Employment Security where he created a no-cost HR recruiting program that helped thousands of people get jobs.

To learn more about HIRE360, please visit the website, www.HIRE360chicago.com

2020 CFL DELEGATES MEETINGS

Tuesday, January 14, 2020
Tuesday, February 4, 2020
Tuesday, March 3, 2020
Tuesday, April 7, 2020
Tuesday, May 5, 2020
Tuesday, June 2, 2020
Tuesday, October 6, 2020
Tuesday, November 3, 2020
Tuesday, December 1, 2020

Delegates Appreciation Dinner

All meetings are scheduled to be held at 6 p.m. on the first Tuesday of the month. Please remember to bring your 2020 Delegate card for entry. Dates and times are subject to change. Please check for updates at www.chicagolabor.org.
CFL Delegates’ Meetings
Tuesday, January 14, 2020
Tuesday, February 4, 2020
Tuesday, March 3, 2020

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.

DON V. VILLAR
SECRETARY-TREASURER

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

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