

Legislative Director Report: North Cook County/Lake County

Gerri Songer – *June-August 2021*

Wednesday, June 2, 2021

Attended Lake County Dems' State of the State via Zoom featuring our Lake County Democratic legislators and Congresswoman Robin Kelly. Other participants included Senator Julie Morrison, Senator Melinda Bush, Senator Adriane Johnson, Rep. Joyce Mason, Rep. Rita Mayfield, Rep. Jonathan Carroll, former Rep. Mary Edly-Allen, Rep. Daniel Didech, Rep. Sam Yingling, Rep. Bob Morgan, Lake County Board Chair Sandy Hart, Lake County Board Member Julie Simpson, Waukegan Park District Commissioner Anton L. Mathews, Waukegan Park District Commissioner Marc L. Jones, Lake County Sheriff John Idleburg.

[Rep. Jonathan Carroll](#) introduced the end isolation and restraint time-out legislation. Elijah's Law (Epi Friends - fighting against food allergies), supports HB3914 requiring state agencies to take action to combat discrimination against employees in a protected class.

[Rep. Daniel Didech](#) spoke about Ethics Reform, preventing legislators who are no longer in office from lobbying people they just worked with. Worked to establish an End Fossil Fuels date of 2035. Voted to pass bill requiring public and private schools to comply with health regulations established by the Illinois Department of Public Health. General Assembly will work to open IL Constitution to ban Right to Work laws.

[Rep. Joyce Mason](#) - pension fund fully funded. Education obligations were met. Restoring veterans benefits in IL.

[Rep. Rita Mayfield](#) supported Comprehensive Sex Education, parents can opt out; supports Parental Notice of Abortion Act (PNA); HB 156 requiring all schools to provide menstrual products in bathrooms, and Clean Energy Jobs Act. Addressed digital divide - up to \$50 rebate from State for internet. Women's Equity and Immigration. Public notices in primary language.

[Rep. Bob Morgan](#) - TeleHealth, including behavioral health. Budget passed. Evidence-Based Funding fully funded. Worked on protecting the right to vote and increased access to voting.

[Rep. Sam Yingling](#) - worked on IL Access to Justice, making justice system more equitable and accessible; enhanced Trust Act to protect immigrants; capital funding to rescue Adlai Stevenson home.

[Senator Melinda Bush](#) - opposes attack on Roe v. Wade, supports Women's Reproductive Health Rights

[Senator Adriane Johnson](#) - supports Affordable Housing, TeleHealth, and Tax Advantaged Zones for Green Energy Businesses

[Senator Julie Morrison](#) - passed Fair Map and balanced budget, supports Clean Energy Bill

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Attended and presented (unofficial capacity) at the School Holiday Celebration hosted by the *Northern Illinois American Muslim Alliance* (NIAMA). This Zoom event celebrated two important Ramadan-related school bills that were recently passed by the Illinois House and

Senate. This legislation was introduced by Representative Dan Didech and Senator Ram Villivalam at the behest of NIAMA.

- **HB169** allows for holidays for Muslim students for the two Eids and religious holidays.
- **HB160** will give exemption from physical education classes to students while fasting for religious reasons.

Elected officials joining the celebration included Congressman Sean Casten, Sen. Adriane Johnson, Rep. Dan Didech, and others.

Wednesday, July 6-10, 2021

Attended AFT TEACH 2021 (*Together Educating America's Children*) via Zoom, AFT's signature professional learning conference. TEACH 2021 focused on ensuring students' freedom to thrive.

Sessions addressed one of the five key areas:

1. Recovering and rebuilding academically from the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Social emotional learning
3. Student and educator well-being
4. Creating anti-racist classrooms, schools and districts
5. Civics throughout the curriculum

Participated in an invitation-only kickoff lobby event (see attached legislative priorities) with Congressman Sean Casten's staff to discuss school re-openings and the *American Rescue Plan*, along with upcoming priorities like the *American Jobs Plan*, the *American Families Plan*, and key spending plans. Took part in event debriefing with AFT staff.

Sunday, July 25, 2021

Attended *Ice Cream Social Town Hall* at Horizon Park in Wheeling hosted by Senators Julie Morrison and Adriane Johnson. Constituents were invited to share concerns about Illinois issues and to hear the Senators discuss what's happening in Springfield. Sen. Morrison indicated that Shared Governance legislation is currently being drafted, which allows for one teacher to participate as a non-voting member on school and college boards to serve in an advisory capacity.

Saturday, August 7, 2021

Attended party to support Rep. Dan Didech and Lake County Treasurer Holly Kim's 2022 General Election campaigns at O'Toole's in Libertyville.

This event was hosted by:

Rep. Jonathan Carroll, Rep. Rita Mayfield, Rep. Joyce Mason, Rep. Bob Morgan, Rep. Sam Yingling, Sen. Melinda Bush, Lake County Board Member Julie Simpson, and others.



A Union of Professionals

AFT Lobby Day Background Information

Thanks for American Rescue Plan

- The support provided by the **American Rescue plan** has been invaluable in my district as we work to safely reopen schools and support my community. It has been a scary time, and the extra resources in the bill for mitigation, staffing, and addressing students' social and emotional needs as they return are critical.
- As important as the American Rescue Plan is, more is needed to continue to recover from Covid, and address the historical lack of investments and inequities this country faces.
- That is why the **American Jobs** and **American Families** plans proposed by President Biden, along with his historic **K-12 investments** proposed for Fiscal Year 2022, are so critical to building back better and spurring our recovery.

As you move forward, we urge you to include funding for the following components from these two important plans:

Invest in Education Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure in schools Congressman Jamaal Browman

- The AFT supports \$100 billion in grants and \$30 billion in bonds for K-12 public school infrastructure, \$12 billion for community colleges to upgrade their technology and infrastructure needs, \$5 billion to **modernize library infrastructure** and \$45 billion to ensure that **students are drinking safe water** at home and school by **replacing lead pipes** (the American Jobs plan takes important steps in most of these areas).
- Provide up to \$50 billion in funding over ten years to **transition school bus fleets to domestically manufactured zero-emission vehicles** while protecting and creating jobs, maintaining workers' rights, and ensuring high road labor standards in their manufacture, operation and maintenance.

Invest in equitable **workforce development, job training programs, and higher education.**

- As more Americans rejoin the workforce or seek out new opportunities in a changing economy, there is a greater need for **skills development opportunities** for all workers.
- The AFT supports President Biden's proposal to invest \$100 billion in workforce development programs targeted at underserved communities to get our students on paths to **trades** and careers before they graduate from high school. Supports should be financial and include **wraparound services, counseling, high-quality training**, and effective **partnerships** between educational institutions, unions, and employers.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Fedrick C. Ingram
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Evelyn DeJesus
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • 202-879-4400 • www.aft.org



- Investments in workforce training should prioritize underserved communities and communities that have struggled in a transforming economy. New **jobs should be created in clean energy, manufacturing, and infrastructure**. This includes apprenticeship and career and technical education programs.
- Higher education must also be affordable and accessible to all. AFT supports President Biden's proposal to **double the maximum Pell Grant** and to make **two years of public higher education free** to students.

Invest in Bridging the Digital Divide Equity Issue - online library resources

- Funds should also be available to bridge the digital divide by achieving **100 percent coverage of high-speed broadband**. Black and Latino families are less likely to be able to access home broadband internet than white families, compounding systemic barriers to opportunity and economic equality.

Invest in Rural Communities

- The AFT supports \$5 billion for a new Rural Partnership Program to help rural regions, including Tribal Nations, by supporting locally-led planning and capacity building efforts, and providing flexible funding to meet critical needs.

Invest in Safe Schools and Communities

- The AFT supports the proposal to fund **evidence-based community violence prevention** programs at \$5 billion.

Invest in PK-12 Education/Teachers

- We are pleased with the proposed historic investments in Department of Education programs, including more than doubling funding for **Title I**, significant increases for **IDEA** and community schools, and increases in additional K-12 programs.
- The AFT supports \$200 billion for **free, universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds**.
- We also support the investments in teachers included in the **American Families Plan** which includes \$2.8 billion in **year-long paid teacher residency programs**, **\$900 million in special education teacher development**, and **\$400 million in teacher preparation programs** at historically Black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and universities and minority serving institutions.
- Also critical is the \$1.6 billion to help current teachers earn credentials for in-demand specialties, such as **special education** and **bilingual education**, and \$2 billion toward **educator leadership programs**, like mentorships for new teachers and teachers of color.

Pass the **For the People Act** and the **John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act**

- It is essential that Congress do everything in its power to ensure that every eligible American can vote in our elections with ease, and that those elections are secure.
- The right to vote is facing greater threats than it has in decades. The groundswell began early this year with the introduction of 253 bills proposing voting restrictions across 43 states as of Feb. 19, according to the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice. That number rose to at least 389 bills in 48 states as of May 14, the Brennan Center reported in June. Further, twenty-eight voter suppression bills have already been enacted in 17 states.
- Protecting the right of everyday people to vote and attacking the influence of dark money in politics are vital to making sure that our democracy works.
- The **For the People Act** would ensure that restrictive state voter suppression laws passed this spring and summer do not go into effect. It would establish new national automatic voter registration and expand same-day voter registration and early voting.
- The **John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act** would restore long-established federal voting rights protections.
- The AFT supports both bills and firmly stands behind the need to enact strong federal protections for voting and good government reforms.
- Without a democracy that works, the challenges we face in making the economy work for the middle class and achieving comprehensive infrastructure investments will not be met.

Pass the **PRO Act**

- We join all of our brothers and sisters from across the labor movement in calling for passage of the PRO Act. While **the House has passed this bill, it is imperative that the Senate follows suit** in the near future so the President can sign it into law.
- Under the PRO Act, **employers would no longer be able to retaliate against or fire workers who support union drives**, or to **engage in endless delays** to prevent newly formed unions from reaching their first contract.
- Public support for unions is the highest in nearly two decades, and nearly half of nonunionized workers would join a union if given the opportunity.
- Why don't American workers have more opportunities to join a union? Because many employers want to keep the balance of power in their favor and have used that power to fight union organizing drives and hack away at the worker protections in U.S. labor laws.
- It is time to end these terrible practices and give American workers more opportunities to join a union by passing the PRO Act.