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## Wonder Women - March, Official Women's History Month



Approximately 50 percent of the world's 7,784,456,081 humans are female. The Illinois Education Association, is composed of at least 72 percent women, 20 percent men and 8 percent non reporting. Seven out of our last ten SEA presidents have been women. And over 70 nations have had women lead their nations (Chandrika Kumartunga, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Angela

Merkel to name a few). It is impossible to dispute that women have played every bit as vital of a role in history as men. However, as recently as the 1970s, women's history was all but ignored in school, and virtually ignored in most K-12 public school curriculums.

Incited by this inequity, in 1978, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women initiated a "Women's History Week". The local Women's History Week activities met with tremendous response, and dozens of schools planned special programs for Women's History Week. Over one-hundred community women participated by doing special presentations in classrooms throughout the country and an annual "Real Woman" Essay Contest drew hundreds of entries. The finale for the week was a celebratory parade and program held in the center of downtown Santa Rosa, California.

Amidst positive pressure from activists and congresswomen, President Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8th, 1980 as National Women's History Week. And only a few years later, in 1987, March was declared as Women's History Month into perpetuity.

This year's national March celebration of women has been historic in its own right due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hopefully you have been able to find a way to help our students continue to conceptualize the power of women in our world, their profound impact on our society and the Wonder Woman in themselves. If by chance you have not, never fear... there seem to be plenty of days ahead to accomplish that mission.



## [COVID-19 and Beyond - Riders on the Storm -](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has entirely altered the way that every one of us perceives life in just a few mere moments. Funny how tragedy can do that. However, in the wake of every disaster rise heroes in our communities, doing amazing things that remind all of the power of humanity to overcome even the most ominous obstacles. You may have not seen it if you don't subscribe to the local paper (which I highly recommend) , but people in Springfield and the surrounding communities are stepping up and staying strong. Our local State Journal Register veteran reporter, Steven Spearie has covered three such events.

The first story to surface was one [in the SJR on the Springfield Families Helping Families Facebook page](#), established by our SPS Board of Education Vice President, Scott McFarland. Through this platform and the help of many selfless people like Jill Handy and Katharine Eastvold of Springfield and Erin Campbell of Chatham, hundreds of necessary food and health related items for families in need (because of the COVID-19 pandemic) have been provided. Additionally, they were able to [establish micro-pantries](#), where people can donate or pick up what they need (one downtown at 422 S. 5th Street). You can join this group digitally at. There are 7,000 people already on board. What a success story!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SpringfieldHelp/>

The second positive story to surface was a spotlight on how [our colleagues are reaching out to students and families in this new "remote learning" realm](#). The story took a close look at how our SEA professionals established creative online teaching across the board at Pre-K, third grade, middle school ELA, and high school AP, math and German. Our fellow professionals, Carrie Servough, Ben McKinney, Jill Friday, Rachel Johnson, and Eric Koepell (from ELC, Fairview, Washington Middle School, Southeast High and Springfield High) were positively showcased. In addition, parents with kids at Butler, Grant and Lincoln Magnet also commented positively on their teacher's online prowess and support to their families. As icing on the cake, Springfield teachers [were mentioned specifically by the State Superintendent, Dr. Carmen Ayala, in her last memorandum sent out last Friday](#).

The [last positive piece was on our old SPS186 Webmaster of many years, Dave Heinzl](#), and his unique effort to keep people positive and spread a message of hope. [He and the District parted ways back in 2014](#). And, as they say, you can't keep a good man down. Dave decided that what he might do is to create home made signs that attempted to capture the right message for the time we were all navigating and distribute them to those who might support it. "Everything will be ok," is what it reads. You can see them all over the Historic West Side Neighborhood of town (Fayette, Lawrence, Macarthur, Washington and the surrounding side streets). What a concept... what a positive guy.

Unfortunately, we will all have some tough times ahead, as the confirmed cases multiply wildly. We know that there is a distinct possibility of losing some good people we know and love along the way. Hopefully through it all, we can figure out a way to stay supportive and stay strong and remember, as in the end of every tragedy, everything WILL be ok.



## CENSUS 2020 - The Number of the Day is You - The 2020 Census

counts every person living in the US and its five US territories. It provides critical data that lawmakers, business owners, teachers, and many others use to provide daily services, products, and support for you and your community. Data collected in the next few weeks and months will be used to determine congressional districts, and hundreds of billions of dollars of federal funding for firefighters, school funding, bus routes, fields and community centers



and a myriad of other supports essential to our local communities. Please take part in it and ensure that every member of your household, your family and friends, and street is counted. We won't get another shot at this for **TEN** more years.

[https://2020census.gov/?cid=20003:census%202020:sem.ga:p:dm:en:&utm\\_source=sem.ga&utm\\_medium=p&utm\\_campaign=dm:en&utm\\_content=20003&utm\\_term=census%202020](https://2020census.gov/?cid=20003:census%202020:sem.ga:p:dm:en:&utm_source=sem.ga&utm_medium=p&utm_campaign=dm:en&utm_content=20003&utm_term=census%202020)

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## Fair Tax - Robinhood of Taxation - In the Mel Brooks classic, *Robinhood Men In Tights*, Little John (played by Eric Kramer) once said, "... a toll is a toll, and a roll is a roll, and if we don't get no tolls, then we don't eat no rolls". And if you are like me, and you like "your rolls," it is up to us to help not only our families, but the next many generations to attain theirs too. And, as your IEA Uniserv Director will explain in the following article, this is how it is accomplished.

*Illinois' Constitution is based upon a flat income tax. If we need to raise the income tax rate, it must be raised on everyone. This November voters will have the opportunity to change that. Voting "yes" for a fair tax (progressive tax) will allow the state to increase taxes on those most able to afford it while generating the revenue necessary to pay for schools, police and fire protection. The Pritzker administration and the General Assembly has already set the proposed rates (click to see the rates and an interactive map displaying county residents who will pay the same or less <https://ieanea.org/fair-tax/>).*

*Illinois' state and local tax system is regressive. That means it imposes a greater tax burden on low- and middle-income people than on high-income people, when tax burden is measured as a percentage of family income. Research from the Washington, DC-based Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) shows that Illinois consistently has one of the most regressive state and local tax systems in the country. In its 2018 report "Who Pays?", ITEP found that the poorest 20% of families in Illinois paid 14.4% of their income in state and local taxes. Meanwhile, the top 1 percent of families paid just 7.4%. Illinois' regressive tax system effectively worsens income inequality in the state after taxes. Consider that, before accounting for state and local taxes, families in the top 1 percent of income in Illinois make about 137 times more than families in the bottom 20 percent, and 33 times more than families in the middle 20 percent. But after accounting for payment of state and local taxes, the top one percent in Illinois have net after-tax incomes that are 149 times greater than the bottom 20%, and 35 times more than the middle 20%.*

*Next, the amendment will appear on the November 2020 ballot. The proposed amendment must be approved by a supermajority vote of 60% of those voting on the question or a majority vote of those who cast a ballot for any office in the election. Of course, expect*

*anti-tax and anti-union advocacy groups, like the Illinois Policy Institute (IPI), to wage an expensive campaign to convince voters that the ability to tax the wealthy at a higher rate is unfair. Be better prepared with the following talking points in preparation for sharpshooting from naysayers:*



- *The Fair Tax means asking millionaires and billionaires to pay their share, while ensuring 97% of Illinoisans see no income tax increase.*
- *Only those making more than \$250,000 will see their taxes go up, while many middle and lower-income families will receive a tax cut.*
- *The Fair Tax will generate over \$3 billion in additional revenue that will help the state meet its obligation to fund our schools and ensure we're investing in our children.*
- *Additional revenue for our education system can help lower the burden local communities face to fund our schools, therefore lowering property taxes.*
- *A vote yes on the Fair Tax means only those making more than \$250,000 a year will see their taxes go up. A no vote means that lawmakers will have to raise income taxes on all Illinois residents by 20%, regardless of how much money they make.*
- *It's clear that we need to pass the Fair Tax in November to make Illinois the best state it can be and ensure all its residents can find success here.*

- Sean Burns - IEA Uniserv Director

**Northern Exposure - IEA Representative Assembly -** On March 4, your twelve elected SEA delegates (Angela Koerwitz, and Denise Whiteman [both first time delegates], Corey Bond, LeAnn Divjak, Monique Davis, Kelly Sholtis, Mike Brown, Crysta Weitekamp, Morgan Fretz, Juan Morrison, Tammy Ziemba, and Aaron Graves) attended the IEA Representative Assembly (RA) in Chicago; led and organized by your Region 11 Chair, Angie Meneghetti and Region Vice Chair, Meghan Kapnik. They were present with over 1200 other delegates from local union regions across the state.

Gail Spengler Kolbeck presented on "Mindfulness for Educators" day one, in one of the many break-out sessions. We re-elected our state leadership and NEA directors to lobby in DC. We digested reports from the ESP, Higher Ed, IMRF, Retired, Student IEA, SEPLB and other committees. We discussed the power of grassroots politics, looking carefully through the lens of racial justice, the 2020 Census, and the Fair Tax initiative. Debates and decisions within the delegation helped guide the direction of IEA for the upcoming year. The delegates voted on IEA bylaw amendments brought forward by our fellow union sisters and brothers from across the state, affecting our equal representation in IEA, clearer communications, safety and security of buildings, social emotional and mental health supports, LBGTQ rights, and a host of other meaningful and societally impactful topics. Attached is a link to the IEA bylaws. <https://ieanea.org/about/>.

Please remember, the IEA RA is a great opportunity to network with other educators and education support professionals statewide, and all SEA members are encouraged to run for a delegate spot in 2021. It is awesome and you truly experience the power of the union. Together, we are stronger!

## There For You - SEA Sick Bank -

Sick Bank is a bargained benefit, to assist those teachers who have, for one reason or another, been forced to be absent from the classroom due to illness, beyond the coverage of their accumulated sick days. As per the contract, the Springfield 186 School Board places one day in the Bank for each teacher employed as of the first day of October.

First year teachers are entitled to one Sick Bank day and second year teachers can receive two. Teachers become eligible for full Sick Bank benefits (180 days over their employment with the District) beginning with the third full year of employment. Persons on leave of absence are not eligible for use of the Sick Leave Bank. **A teacher may only draw from the Bank for his/her own illness.** Any teacher currently employed in the District shall be entitled to draw from the Bank provided the following four conditions are met:



- 1. The teacher has used all his/her personal accumulated sick and personal days.**
- 2. For medical leave, the teacher shall produce two doctors' certificates (from different practices) as proof of need. For maternity leave, only the maternity disability certificate from a doctor is needed.**
- 3. The teacher shall have been absent more than three school days in connection with the same illness.**
- 4. Any teacher eligible for disability benefits from Worker's Compensation or a disability insurance program shall, as a condition of acceptance into the Sick Leave Bank, show proof to the Sick Leave Bank Committee that said teacher has applied for benefits from Worker's Compensation. The Bank will supplement the difference between the net value of the disability benefits paid by Worker's Compensation or a disability insurance program and the net value of the teacher's salary**
- 5. less amount withheld for income tax deduction.**

Teacher's are not allowed to have outside employment while on Sick Bank. The Sick Bank committee meets at 4 pm, the first Thursday of each month (August – May) at 1900 W Monroe Board Room. The committee is made up of two teachers named by the Association and an administrator named by the Superintendent. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Sick Bank Committee Chair Marsha Stout at [stout@sps186.org](mailto:stout@sps186.org).

## SEA Elections - Strength of Our Local, Together -

The SEA officer and NEA Representative Assembly Elections were performed last month. I would like to thank Mary Tenant, SEA Second Vice President, for offering to fill the vacancy left when Jerry Lopian, our previous SEA Elections Chair, stepped down. Running an election in a large local is a difficult job. She, and the rest of the adhoc Elections Committee (Kelly Sholtis, Lish Sponsler, Becky Martin, Jerry Lopian, Neil Calderone, Sabrina Lee, Tammy Ziemba, and Kara Clark) along with our IEA Uniserv Associate (Treva Grant) ensured that our elections bylaws and processes were followed and that everyone had the opportunity to run as representatives of the local in an unbiased, respectable and above the board manner.



I would like to extend a personal congratulatory note to Jeffrey Garman, middle school teacher at Jefferson Middle School. He and I both ran to represent the Springfield Education Association as President. Although I won the election, I respect the process and the courage it took for Jeff and others to put themselves out there to run. Having worked in the military, small business world, and private sector, I feel that there are no critics as tough as our educational colleagues (our blessing and our curse). I look forward to working alongside Jeffrey and those who may have cast their votes for him. I will continue to do my best to represent you while maintaining an honest course on where I feel our Union should be on critical personal, building, local and state issues.

Finally, I want to thank those who again placed their "Yes - Graves" vote in the ballot box March 10. I feel that together, we have been able to accomplish some pretty amazing things in the last two years. [Together](#), we passed through the Janus vs AFSCME Supreme Court decision gauntlet maintaining 99% of our initial membership. [Together](#), we passed a 1% county-wide referendum bringing approximately \$10 million a year to SPS186 schools annually. [Together](#), we repealed the statewide 3% retirement cap, that was stifling retirement for future generations. [Together](#), we reestablished a positive and strong public presence of our Union in the local media (newspaper, radio and television). [Together](#) we rallied and bargained a contract that included autonomy, relief, and benefit/salary increases (for both classified and certified alike) of 3% and 4.25% ON THE SCHEDULE. And together, we have empowered each other and our local building leaders and ARs to tackle a myriad of other long overdue local changes.

Starting after this school year, I will begin my second term as SEA President, and I look forward to continually serving you dutifully in that role, together with all SEA members... Union strong.

[Staffing Timeline Continues](#) - The Teacher Displacement Process is nearing its end, and our most junior and most senior members who either volunteered or were placed on the list have found their new homes. Congratulations! Moving forward, all BOE non-renewed and RIFs will be acted upon by the BOE by April 6 (an annual process). Then, the voluntary transfer process begins. Please refer to the [SEA contract, Article 17](#) to get a complete understanding of how each process works. The human resources staffing timeline for 2020-21 is also included to better define things. However, if you may still have questions please reach out to Aaron Graves or Sean Burns.

## STAFFING TIMELINE 2020-2021 School Year

February 11 - Provide staff allocations to principals.

February 27 - Return staffing to Gina McLaughlin-Schurman by the end of work day.

March 3 - Release all contract-fulfilled, part time and LOA teachers through the BOE. March 16 Recommend to the BOE LOA requests and other clean-up action from the March 3 BOE meeting.

March 16 - April 6 DISPLACED TEACHER PROCESS – (See Article 17.3 B of the SEA contract) – The SEA will receive a list of surplus staff and vacant positions in the District (Singleton rule adherence). April 6 Recommend to the BOE non-renewed and RIF (if necessary)

April 7 - May 8 - VOLUNTARY TRANSFER PROCESS – (See Article 17.2 C of the SEA contract).

May 26 - Last day for displaced teachers to select a position. (Pending use of E-Days)

May 26 - until complete SINGLETON PROCESS – (See Article 17.3 B 13 of the SEA contract) – Staff assignment/reassignment as warranted.

June 30 - Last day for a principal to change a teacher's assignment from within the respective building without the teacher's consent. (See Article 17.3 B 8.b of the SEA contract). Please remember if the assignment is changed after the last day of school, there must be written communication/explanation to the teacher.

NOTE: The HR Department has contacted teachers who are currently on a leave of absence (LOA) from the District to determine their intention for the 2020-2021 School Year. The teacher on a leave of absence has three options: (1) return to work; (2) extend the LOA for a maximum of 2 years or (3) resign their position. Principals will be advised of responses as we are informed of their decision.

## Insurance Update - Digging Back Out - If you take the district health

insurance (and roughly 1850 employees do), you are receiving a bargained benefit. Each individual plan at a billed cost of approximately \$10,095. For each SEA employee, the District pays 94.5% (\$9504.00) of that and the member 5.5% (\$591).

The District is a [self funded insurance plan](#) and has been for a very long time. That essentially means that we all pay into one large pot and then our collective medical expenses and medical insurance management fees are paid back out of

that pot. The good thing about being self-insured is that the control of the plan is at the discretion of the overall plan holder... to change premiums, make plan adjustments, and the like. The bad, is that we have to often make critical financial recommendations based upon people's medical misfortune... a difficult and thankless task.

For years, the District has had an Insurance Committee composed of members of each subentity of the district's employees (SEA, SEIU/Local 15, Springfield Ball Charter Education Association (SBCEA), Springfield Principals Association (SPAA), and PTSP). It serves to give guidance and make recommendations to the Superintendent and the District Business Manager to then take before the Board of Education. Each group allotted a proportionate amount of seats at the table to its number of employees.

As we shared with you last year, due to a myriad of reasons (rising cost of medical care, skyrocketing prescription costs and multiple members with unfortunate medical circumstances), the fund itself had spent more than was being allocated for the past many years. The plan has been running in deficit since May of 2016. In 2016, the total medical expenses were \$16,814,480 and the plan finalized the year at \$730,572 in the negative. In 2017, there were \$18,733,908 in medical expenses and fees, and the plan \$837,561 in the hole. In 2018, our collective medical expenses jumped to \$22,152,167, and our fund's deficit skyrocketed to -\$2,499,90, thus initiating our large scale and emergency discussions around health insurance openly at union meetings and the District and Memorial partnership (Memorial Choice) to consolidate services and encourage people to use consolidated services. And, after an intense back and forth, last year, between Unions and District over a "District recommended" 20% premium increase across the board, the Board settled on a 10% increase for employees who had any version of a family plan (EE/dependent, EE/spouse, Family) and a 16% increase for members on the single plan. Finally, in May of 2019, the District elected to borrow \$3,000,000, to temporarily fund the plan (at a cost of approximately \$90,000 in annual interest).

In 2019, our collective SPS186 district employee medical expenses were \$21,914,255 (still a fortune, but actually down \$237,912 from the previous year; a historic first). The amount allotted from employee and district contributions, has come up short of that total, but perhaps the meteoric rise in costs has slowed (we can only hope).

Since August, your internal SEA Insurance Committee has met a half dozen times and four times as part of the District Insurance Committee, sorting and sifting through data. We put out an RFP for insurance brokerage (or third party administrators) and after interviewing three providers, voted to keep our current provider, Troxell Insurance. They



were the median priced broker, but seemed to understand our needs best and potentially be able to provide the customer service which we desired as a whole.

The District has been seeking to pay back the deficit in the fund and the \$3 million borrowed as quickly as possible and has been advocating a raise in the deductible on the plan (single from \$1250 to \$1500 and the family deductible from \$3750 to \$4500), increase in the out of pocket expense (single from \$3250 to \$3900 and family from \$9750 to \$11,700), increase the ER copay from \$250 to \$300), increase the OV copay to \$30 and the OV specialist copay to \$50, increase the drug card expense on generic/preferred brand name/non preferred brand name (from \$10/\$35/\$50 to \$15/\$40/\$55), and reduce pharmaceutical benefits. They also have been advocating for health insurance concepts such as [prior authorization](#), member pay the difference and [step therapy](#) and [balanced formulary](#). **HOWEVER, your SEA Union representatives on the Insurance Committee, along with SEIU/Local 15 and the Ball Charter Education Association (BCEA) believe this is not the best course of action, currently.**

We see loss of benefits as a terrible option. And, although we do not want to see any financial increases for members, premium increases are the most predictable, budget friendly and cost effective for the majority of our members. That being, our three groups (SEA, SEIU/Local 15/BCEA) agreed to a 5% increase in premiums across the board, if no other major insurance benefit reductions were implemented (PPI and non-sedating antihistamines exclusion only). These cost increases would look as such:

- Single - \$1.88 per month increase
- EE/Children - \$19.50 per month increase
- EE/Spouse - \$39.02 per month increase
- Family - \$50.04 per month increase
- 2 EE Family - \$10.44 per month increase

This tentative increase in premiums are estimated to generate roughly \$1,095,712 in additional money to the plan per year and along with continued use of Memorial Choice benefits, the reinstatement of our Employee Assistance Program, and continued education of our members to help use our collective medical benefits wisely, it is our hypothesis that our fund can become solvent again, and our annual discussions around this topic will cease to be so contentious.

The plan will be presented to the BOE at the April 6, 2020 BOE Meeting, and you should be able to view that meeting (or any others) [online or on Channel 22](#). Additionally, look for an update in the next SEA Action Line.

\* Additional note. The committee approved a recommendation from the Delta Dental plan of a 3.4% increase in premium and a Delta Vision 0% increase for 2 years.

## March/April Calendar of Events

March 31 - SEA AR Digital Meetings - 2 pm - Pre-K Elementary / 3 pm - Middle School / 4 pm - High School

April 4-13 - Spring Break - NO ONLINE REQUIREMENTS

April 6 & 20 - Board of Education Meetings - 6:30 p.m. - [View Live On Channel 22](#)

April 20 - Elementary Concerns Digital Meeting - Time and Format TBA

## May Calendar of Events

**ALL EVENTS SUBJECT TO RESCHEDULING**

4 & 18 - Board of Education Meetings - 6:30 p.m. - [View Live On Channel 22](#)

11 - AR Meeting - Time and Format TBA







