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Fighting for school choice

By Matt Paprocki, President and CEO, Illinois Policy Institute

Roni Facen is the principal of St. Francis de Sales High School on Chicago's South Side. All of her students are attending on a scholarship – yes, 100% of them. Not a single student is paying full tuition.

If it weren't for the Invest in Kids tax credit scholarship program, many of these kids wouldn't have had the opportunity to attend this Catholic high school.

"Our kids here in this community deserve it," Roni said. "They deserve the opportunity to choose where they go to school and be provided with the best education possible. And they shouldn't have to be bused 45 minutes away from their community to receive that education. They deserve it right here."

There are currently 9,600 students who depend on the Invest in Kids tax credit scholarship program to attend a private school of their choice.

Thousands more are on the waiting list. Invest in Kids is Illinois' only school choice program, but lawmakers – under pressure from teachers unions – shamefully omitted it from their 2024 budget.

Nearly 80% of 11th-grade Chicago Public Schools students cannot read or perform math at grade level. Half of CPS students missed at least 18 days of school last year.

SAT scores were on average 23 points lower in reading and 25 points lower in math among Chicago students compared with the rest of the state.

This is why it's so important that diligent students have the chance to escape schools that aren't serving them and receive a quality education elsewhere.

Invest in will expire on Dec. 31, so state lawmakers need to get to work and put children and families before politics. They gave themselves a raise in January – and Pritzker signed it into law – and they're even demolishing and redesigning the Stratton Office Building in Springfield for more than \$50 million.

That cost alone could have covered most of Invest in Kids for another year. Last school year, the state issued about \$58.5 million in tax credits for the school choice program, and that was Invest in Kids' largest year.

TAKING CANDY FROM A BABY



Do you know what also cost \$50 million? Invest in Kids.

It's not that lawmakers think it's unaffordable – they just haven't made it a priority. Together, let's change that.

In this issue of "The Rail," you'll read:

- **A report on the Invest in Kids tax credit scholarship program, which the General Assembly refused to extend.**
- **The truth about the 2013 school closures the Chicago Teachers Union doesn't want you to hear.**
- **An analysis of why one-third of SEIU workers reject union membership.**
- **A breakdown of union radicalism five years after Janus v. AFSCME.**
- **A feature on our summer interns, who are eager to soon receive the mantle of defending liberty.**

I am pleased to announce that former Chicago Public Schools CEO Paul Vallas has joined the Illinois Policy Institute as a policy advisor. I look forward to all the great work we'll accomplish together.

With your continued support, we can ensure lawmakers do the right thing and renew Invest in Kids during the fall veto session.

Thank you for your commitment to restoring Illinois' freedom and prosperity.

In liberty,

Matthew



Matthew T. Paprocki
President and CEO
Illinois Policy Institute

Welch, Harmon get millions from teachers unions before blocking school choice for poor kids

It's a simple choice for Illinois' top legislative leaders this fall: listen to the over \$1 million each got in campaign cash from teachers unions, or back the futures of 9,600 low-income students with a tax credit that is barely a blip in the \$50 billion state budget.

By Mailee Smith

Bose Clodfelter's son, Jordan, was in public school for four years, but not doing very well.

"There was a lot of bullying going on and a lot of overcrowding in the classroom. Because of the larger-sized classroom, he wasn't given a lot of attention, and he didn't excel really well," she said.

"So we pulled him out and decided on private school. And immediately we saw the change in my son: his grades, his personality, just everything improved."

It was a sacrifice, but then the family hit a rough patch. Her husband was laid off. Her father was murdered. Her sons only were able to stay in school because they received scholarships through the Invest in Kids program. It was a blessing, but there was no guarantee they would receive it for a second year.

"My son was nervous. We were all nervous, and we got on the computer and we were waiting in line. We prayed, and we were in shock when we managed to get it. [My son] said, 'Wow, we got it,' and I said, 'Yeah. We got it,'" Clodfelter said.

But Illinois Senate President Don Harmon and House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch have the Clodfelter family nervous all over again. State leaders failed to include Invest in Kids in the fiscal year 2024 budget, so it ends this year.

"No" to disadvantaged kids. But they certainly said "yes" to teachers union bosses.

Those unions put over \$1 million into Welch's campaign coffers and did the same for Harmon

– both of whom sent their own children to private schools. Teachers unions bosses were also very clear they wanted Illinois' only school choice program dead.

The majority of Illinoisans support educational choices and the Invest in Kids Act, which provides a 75% tax credit to donors who provide private school scholarships for low-income students. There are 9,600 students helped by the program, and thousands more on the waiting list.

The Clodfelters and other families still have a glimmer of hope: state lawmakers can vote to revive the program during their fall veto session. So state leaders have a choice: invest in the futures of students such as Jordan Clodfelter, or listen to the cash from teachers unions.

Harmon, Welch each received over \$1 million in campaign donations from teachers unions

Teachers unions – including Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers and Chicago Teachers Union – have funneled millions to the campaign committees of Harmon and Welch.

Statehouse leaders each get over \$1M from teachers unions

Donation from teachers unions to Illinois Senate President Don Harmon since 2002 and for Illinois House Speaker Emanuel 'Chris' Welch since 2012.

Illinois Senate President Don Harmon	Donations (since 2002)
Illinois Federation of Teachers	\$592,847
Illinois Education Association	\$291,340
Chicago Teachers Union	\$101,400
other locals	\$30,280
Total	\$1,015,867

Illinois House Speaker Chris Welch	Donations (since 2012)
Illinois Federation of Teachers	\$427,940
Illinois Education Association	\$363,800
Chicago Teachers Union	\$160,750
American Federation of Teachers	\$200,000
Other locals	\$31,270
Total	\$1,183,760

Table: @illinoispolicy • Source: Illinois Sunshine • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Since 2002, the “Friends of Don Harmon” campaign committee has received at least \$1,015,866 from teachers unions and their political action committees, according to Illinois Sunshine.

The “People for Emanuel (Chris) Welch” has received even more, with at least \$1,183,760 funneled into the committee since 2012 from teachers unions and their PACs.

Despite Illinoisans’ overwhelming support for the program, lawmakers under the leadership of Harmon and Welch failed to act, and the act will sunset, or die, at the end of 2023.

That’s exactly what the teachers unions want.

Teachers unions fought to kill Invest in Kids Act

Teachers union bosses don’t want parents to have options. That is clear in their efforts to kill the Invest in Kids Act.

For example, IFT called on their followers to “keep the pressure on lawmakers to sunset” the program.

CTU, the largest affiliate of IFT, also called on lawmakers to kill the program and has advocated for years against educational options for kids.

Invest in Kids allowed about \$50 million in income tax credits to donors. In a state with a budget of about \$50 billion – with an additional \$350 million added to the \$8.3 billion in public school funding – that tiny fraction was treated by union bosses like a threat to public education’s very existence when in reality it is a lifeline for 9,600 disadvantaged students trying to break the cycle of poverty. IEA celebrated the seeming demise of the program – and the end of educational options for low-income families – when the legislative session ended and Invest in Kids had not been extended.

Or, as The Wall Street Journal paraphrased IEA’s stance, “to hell with the 9,000 kids already enrolled” – and with what the majority of Illinoisans want.

Most Illinoisans support giving kids and families access to more educational

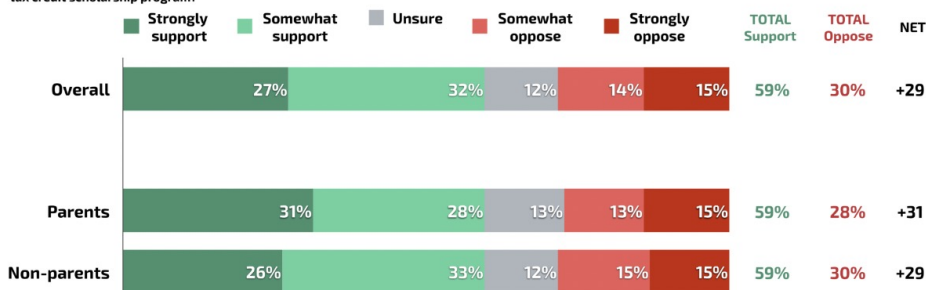
62% of Illinoisans support school choice, and 59% support the Invest in Kids Act.

options, according to polling from Echelon Insights in partnership with the Illinois Policy Institute.

Sixty-two percent of Illinois voters polled said they support school choice.

By 29-Point Margin, Illinois Voters Support The State's Invest In Kids Tax Credit Scholarship Program

Q. In 2017, Illinois created the Invest in Kids Tax Credit Scholarship program. This program allows for low-income and working-class families to apply for scholarships to send their children to the non-public school of their choice. These needs-based scholarships are funded by private donations from businesses and individuals in exchange for a state income tax credit for the individual or business who provided the donation. Do you support or oppose the tax credit scholarship program?



In addition, 59% of Illinoisans also support the Invest in Kids tax credit scholarship program.

If most Illinoisans support the Invest in Kids Act, why did Harmon and Welch let it die?

Money talks. The teachers unions have it. Thousands of low-income families do not.



Mailee Smith is the senior director of labor policy and the staff attorney at the Illinois Policy Institute.



Vallas: the truth about the 2013 school closures the Chicago Teachers Union doesn't want you to hear

In 2013, Chicago closed 50 nearly empty schools. Since then, the CTU has barred charters and other schools from using these empty buildings to provide schooling options for local students. After railing against these school closures, CTU leadership locked students out of full-time, in-person learning for 17 months during 2020-21.

By Paul Vallas

For Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson to connect the public safety struggles of today to closing 50 virtually empty schools over a decade ago is particularly disingenuous, especially considering his peers at the Chicago Teachers Union kept students out of classes for 17 months.

Many of the closed schools would not be empty if CTU leadership had not forced former Mayor Rahm Emanuel to block public charter schools from inhabiting those campuses. This, even though charters were willing to pay rent and enroll the few community students who had attended the schools when they were closed. There are 114 public charter schools in the Chicago Public Schools district that are effectively barred from renting any of the closed schools. They also face unfair financial obstacles to even sharing any of the dozens of largely empty buildings.

Charter schools educate more than 54,000 children in the CPS district. In CPS, 1 in 4 high school students and 1 in 10 elementary students attend public, nonprofit charter schools. More than 98% of the attendees are students of color and 86% receive free or reduced lunch. Severely limiting their ability to access taxpayer-funded public buildings is a blatant form of discrimination. It constitutes educational redlining.

The CTU should also be made to account for their opposition to expanding public charter schools to include "alternative schools," such as university-run schools for dropouts, which are authorized by the state and could have restored many of the closed schools to productive use. The CTU opposed legislation which would have

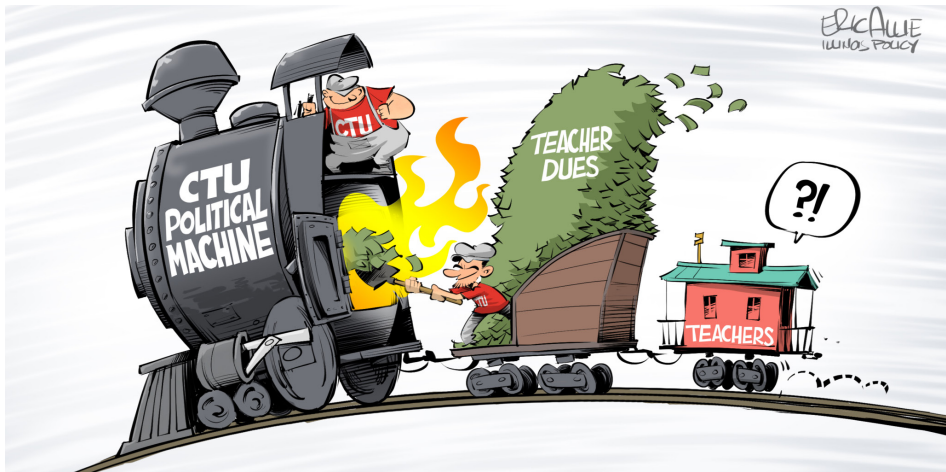
authorized the state to award charters to such alternative public schools. Chicago had an at-risk population of over 46,000 young adults ages 16-24 who are out of school and are currently unemployed in 2021, the University of Illinois-Chicago Great Cities Institute reports. Most are in this predicament because of the CTU-driven failure of the very school system that now offers little in the way of programs to help them recover.

Criticizing Emanuel over closing near-empty schools is particularly hypocritical given the catastrophic consequences of closing school campuses after COVID-19 struck. CTU leadership was the force behind Chicago's indefensible, catastrophically long shutdown of its schools, ostensibly because of COVID-19. That shutdown lasted long after guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, plus the experiences of parochial and other private schools, demonstrated in-person learning was safe.

School closings had a direct impact on student academic performance as state test scores, already abysmal pre-pandemic, plummeted after 2019.

In 2022, only 11% of Black students read at grade level and nearly 6% were proficient in math.

Only 17% of Latino students were reading at grade level and 11% were proficient in math. Meanwhile University of Chicago Crime Lab analysis points to significant increases



Two years ago the union illegally walked out on students over COVID-19 protocols, giving parents just hours to scramble for a back-up plan after the union decided late one night not to show up for in-person classes the next morning.

in crimes against and being committed by school-age youth. From 2019-2021, shooting victimizations for children 17 years and younger increased by more by 50%. More than 90% of the youth victims were not enrolled in school at the time.

The union’s behavior during COVID was part of its claimed “new gospel” of strike power that spread across the country after CTU’s 2012 strike. That gospel was developed and implemented by the militant Caucus of Rank and File Educators, who came to power in 2010. Since then, the CTU has gone out on strike twice and illegally walked out three times.

CTU-forced school closures did not just impact teachers, children and parents. Their policies will have decades-long impacts on every aspect of the city. While middle-class and affluent families may opt for charter and private schools as a solution, the poorest and most vulnerable children, overwhelmingly Black and Latino, will remain hostages in a failing system. The children who never catch up will grow into developmentally stunted, undereducated adults who will struggle to participate in the labor force and be plagued by low-paying jobs, increased government dependency, social dysfunction and a disproportionate risk of joining a new generation of criminals who prey upon communities, including their own. The quality of life throughout the city will continue to decay.

Yes, Mayor Johnson, school closures did have a devastating impact on Chicago’s children and their families. But it was the CTU leadership’s forced shutdown of the system for 17 months that devastated lives, the full damage of which will never be repaired.



Paul Vallas is a policy advisor at the Illinois Policy Institute.

One-third of SEIU workers reject union membership

It could be because less than 22% of SEIU HCII's spending is on representing workers – what should be the core purpose of the union.

By Mailee Smith

At least one-third of workers represented by the Service Employees International Union Healthcare Illinois-Indiana, or SEIU HCII, don't seem to think the union's services are worth their money.

The union's website claims it represents more than 91,000 workers in four states, but its most recent report to the U.S. Department of Labor revealed it has fewer than 60,000 members.

How can a union represent more workers than are members? State or local government workers don't have to be members of the union representing their workplace if they don't want to be members. Workers can choose not to be members when they are hired, or they can opt out of membership later.

In this case, SEIU HCII's spending practices give a clue as to why one-third

of workers represented by the union don't want to be members.

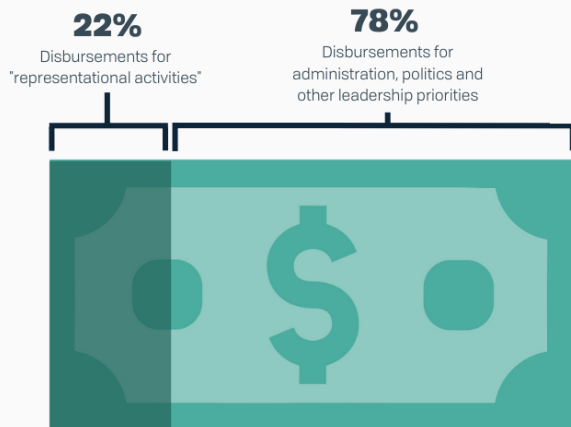
SEIU HCII takes anywhere from \$264 to \$1,260 a year from its members' paychecks, according to its report with the U.S. Department of Labor. It collected over \$34.5 million in dues from its members in 2022.

Yet just 22% of the union's spending is on representing workers, according to the same report.

And while the workers SEIU HCII represents may earn \$17.25 an hour as personal assistants or \$33.91 for a whole day as child care providers, the union's own top employees all earned six-figure salaries in 2022.

Then there are other questionable spending practices, such as the hundreds of thousands of dollars the union spent on hotels, airlines and food, all for unspecified purposes.

SEIU HCII SPENT JUST 22 CENTS OF EVERY \$1 ON 'REPRESENTATIONAL ACTIVITIES' IN 2022



Source: SEIU HCII, 2022 LM-2

@illinoispolicy

Whether it's SEIU HCII's failure to represent workers well or some other reason, one thing is clear: more than 31,000 of the workers it represents have rejected membership with the union.

Each spring SEIU HCII files a report called an LM-2 with the U.S. Department of Labor. In that report, SEIU HCII details how it obtained and spent money in the previous fiscal year.

Less than 22% of SEIU HCII's spending was on representation.

The union's most recent report shows it spent very little last year on "representational activities," which the U.S. Department of Labor defines as including the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement and the administration and enforcement of the resulting contract.

SEIU HCII's total reported spending in 2022 was \$47 million dollars. Yet just over \$10 million of that amount was on representing its members. That's less than 22 percent of its overall spending.

The rest was spent on politics, administration and other union leadership priorities.

That's also just one-third of the \$34.5 million it took from members in dues.

Yet representing members is supposed to be the core focus of a union. To put this in perspective, the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance states at least 65% of a nonprofit's total expenses should be on program activities.

While the Wise Giving Alliance evaluates spending by charities, it stands to reason SEIU HCII's spending of less than 22% on representation – the purpose of a union – should be a cause for concern among members.

SEIU HCII's leaders took in six-figure salaries

SEIU HCII's employees are well compensated. The top 10 earners all made over \$118,000 in 2022, with SEIU HCII President Gregory Kelley bringing in more than \$204,000.

There is a stark contrast between the salaries of SEIU HCII leadership and the workers it represents.

For example, the union represents thousands of workers providing care through government-funded programs, such as personal assistants in Illinois'

SEIU HCII's top earners start at \$118K

Name	Position	Total
Kelley, Gregory	President	\$204,884
Janus, Elaine T	Chief of Financial Op.	\$158,450
Glassman, Myra	Vice President	\$145,231
Bland-Durosinmi, Erica N	Executive Vice President	\$145,099
Crawford, Carlissa S	Chief of Op. and HR	\$142,158
Laslo, Margaret	Secretary Treasurer	\$139,822
Jones, Leonard C	Vice President	\$133,493
Angus, Jessica V	Vice President	\$124,333
Arnold, Faith L	Vice President	\$123,585
Hemberger, Dale E	Political Coord.	\$118,614

Table: @illinoispolicy • Source: SEIU HCII, 2022 LM-2 • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Home Services Program or child care providers in the Child Care Assistance Program.

Personal assistants receive \$17.25 an hour as of Dec. 1, 2022, according to SEIU HCII's collective bargaining agreement with the state.

Child care providers receive a daily rate, per eligible child, dependent on the county and the age of a child. A child care provider in Cook County providing a full day of care for an eligible 3-year-old would receive \$40.65 for the day. A provider in Peoria County would earn \$36.59 for the same child, and a provider in La Salle County would earn \$33.91. If the care is less than five full hours, providers receive only a part-day rate.

The most a child care provider can receive is a daily rate of \$47.96 for an eligible child under 2 years of age in Cook County. Personal assistants and child care providers are then pressured by SEIU HCII to be members, handing over at least \$264 a year in dues.

Child care provider and former SEIU HCII member Janice Singleton has explained, "I am paid by the state between \$38 and \$41 per child per day. That comes out to less than \$4 per hour most days since I will care

for children sometimes up to 11 hours. After the day care expenses, taxes and union dues, some days I am not even making minimum wage."

SEIU HCII spent money in questionable ways

SEIU spent over \$317,000 on airlines, car rentals, hotels, catering and restaurants. Some of that was itemized for purposes such as "campaign events" or "member events."

But the union reported no purpose for over \$217,000 of this spending, meaning union members can only guess how the union spent most of that money.

For example, SEIU HCII spent over \$75,000 on airlines, for no specified reasons.

SEIU HCII members unhappy with the union can opt out of membership and stop paying dues

State and local government workers may not agree with the union's spending practices, or they may feel the union doesn't represent them well. Whatever the reason, they don't have to be union members to keep their jobs.

SEIU HCII's mystery spending on food, airlines, hotels

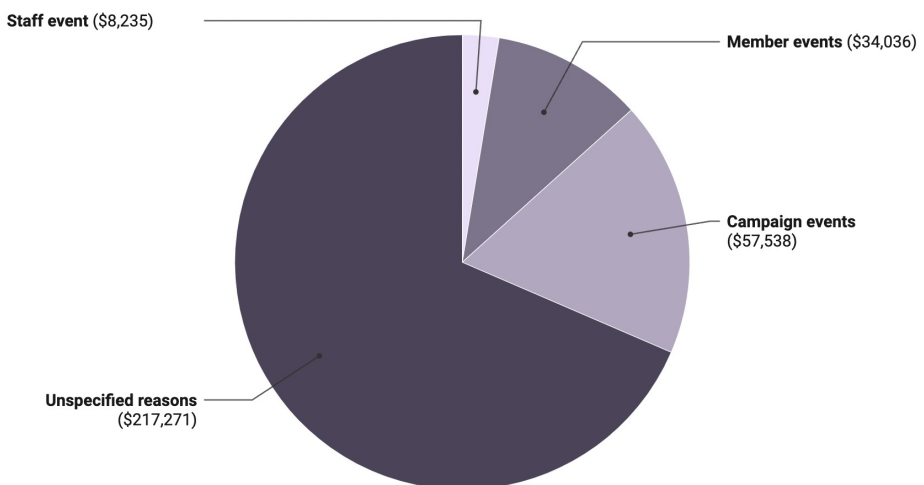


Chart: @illinoispolicy • Source: SEIU HCII, 2022 LM-2 • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)



SEIU HCII members unhappy with the union can opt out of membership and stop paying dues.

As former SEIU HCII member Karena Cozad put it, "There's no benefit to [being in the union.] As far as I'm concerned, union [leaders] seem to be out for themselves."

By opting out of union membership, workers can stop paying dues to the union yet retain all benefits that are provided in the collective bargaining agreement with their government employer. That includes personal assistants and child care providers who are paid by the state.

For more information on how to opt out, visit LeaveSEIU.com.



Mailee Smith is the senior director of labor policy and the staff attorney at the Illinois Policy Institute.



5 years after Janus V. AFSCME, unions are smaller but more militant

The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in favor of Illinois state worker Mark Janus in 2018 gave government workers the ability to stop funding government union politics. Chastened unions could have reformed. Instead, they got extreme.

By Mailee Smith

Five years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Janus v. AFSCME that government workers cannot be forced to fund the political agendas of union bosses.

In their 5-4 ruling on June 27, 2018, the justices declared forced union fees violated the First Amendment rights of Mark Janus and other government workers. The high court concluded workers were free to choose whether to pay the unions in their workplaces.

Janus worked for the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services helping children caught up in their parents' divorce. To keep his job, he was forced to pay thousands to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31.

"The union's fight is not my fight," Janus said. "For years it supported politicians who put the state into its current budget and pension crises. ... That's not public service."

Janus was represented by the Illinois Policy Institute's litigation partner, the Liberty Justice Center, as well as the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation. Their work ended over 40 years of forced government union payments.

Public sector union membership in Illinois has fallen by at least 8.5% as a result of workers being given a choice, according to documents filed with the U.S. Department of Labor by the six largest government unions in Illinois. At least 36,418 fewer state and local government workers pay dues or fees to unions since the Janus decision. Most major government unions in Illinois

are seeing their numbers drop. Only SEIU HCLC can claim an increase in raw numbers, but it negotiates for 91,000 workers across four states and its own documents show at least one-third of those workers have chosen not to be union members.

Teachers unions – the Illinois Education Association and Illinois Federation of Teachers – lost a combined 9.4% of their members or fee payers.

And AFSCME Council 31 – the union Janus sued – saw an 18.5% drop in membership.

This membership loss means about \$25 million stayed in Illinois workers' paychecks and didn't flow to government union coffers in 2022. But unions have partially offset losses by increasing dues on their remaining members.

The Illinois Federation of Teachers has over 16,000 fewer members and fee payers than it did in 2017, yet the union took in over \$600,000 more in dues and fees in 2022 than it did in 2017, according to reports it filed with the U.S. Department of Labor.

And even though the U.S. Supreme Court essentially took away their forced fees because of their intense politicking, the unions are every bit as political as ever – maybe more so.

Former Chicago Teachers Union employee and current Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson was heavily backed by teachers unions in his mayoral bid, including nearly \$2.3 million from his bosses at CTU. His win means CTU next year will negotiate a new contract with the boss they picked.

Money for politics, but not for members: CTU spent just 19 cents of every dollar in 2021 on representing members, according to its own report. The rest of the cash went to fund politics, overhead and other union leadership priorities.

Declining ranks have also forced unions to find backdoor methods to preserve power. In November 2022, Illinois voters barely passed a new amendment that grants government unions power and authority that trumps state law, all under the oversimplified guise of “protecting collective bargaining as a fundamental right.”

This amendment expanded bargaining to encompass broad, ill-defined terms such as “economic welfare” and “safety at work.” Now that government union bosses know it can pass, unions in other states – Pennsylvania and California, so far – are copying the tactics.

These post-Janus moves reveal a pattern: Unions are broadening their demands

beyond compensation and working conditions to advance their political and social agendas.

For example, the Boston Teachers Union has pushed for “housing justice,” and the Oakland Education Association in California went on strike over climate change demands. Even in Chicago, CTU bosses attempted to negotiate an affordable housing provision into their contract.

Public sector unions’ desperate search for influence demonstrates they’re dedicated to using their political power to push their agendas, even at the expense of their remaining members’ interests. The Janus ruling did not end the influence of unions, but it did push them deeper into social militancy and away from working for workers.



Mailee Smith is the senior director of labor policy and the staff attorney at the Illinois Policy Institute.



Future torchbearers of Illinois

Profiles of our summer interns fighting for a free and prosperous future

One of our goals this year is to win over the hearts and minds of young Illinoisans to the cause of free markets. Our “NextGen” team has been working hard to reach young people through short videos on TikTok, YouTube and Instagram – some of which have gone viral.

We’ve also launched our first-ever student newspaper partnership with the editors of The Chicago Thinker at the University of Chicago. The partnership is aimed at promoting free-market principles among prospective journalists and informing young Chicagoans about the critical policy issues facing the city.

Through this partnership, we’re helping to shape the next generation of Illinois’ politicians and provide journalists with access to experts, original research and a network of free-market thinkers.

In this issue of “The Rail,” we’re featuring our summer interns who are helping us convince young people of the merits of free enterprise and make Illinois a safe, affordable place to live for future generations. They explain what attracted them to the Illinois Policy Institute and why they believe it’s important for young, free-market voters to get involved in policy.

Will Foster - Policy Intern



“As a lifelong Chicago resident, I have seen the struggles my city and state have faced. I admire the Illinois Policy Institute’s data-driven and well-researched work to make life better for everyday people in our state. Even in the face of immense obstacles from entrenched power structures and political machines, the institute maintains an optimistic outlook and preserves hope for a brighter future.”

Will Foster is a rising senior at Columbia University in New York, majoring in political science. While at Columbia, he has served as a judicial intern for Judge Steven J. Menashi of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and he is an executive editor on the Columbia Undergraduate Law Review. He previously served as an editorial intern at Iron Light and a digital apprentice at Iron Light Labs.

“I think that many members of our generation fail to appreciate the importance of free markets and capitalism to human flourishing. That is discouraging, but it makes our work all the more important. We have a responsibility to seek to preserve the classically liberal values that make our country the greatest in the world.”

John Tasseff - Analytics Intern



“I admire the Illinois Policy Institute’s firm commitment to professionalism. Members of the institute are forward-thinking; in meetings, I have been impressed by the level of forethought put into every research project, data analysis and written article. They consider every impact of every action – how will this project affect our team? What kind of message does this send to readers? Overall, the Illinois Policy Institute is an amazing organization, and its strength lies in the talented individuals who keep it running.”

John is a student at Hillsdale College pursuing a double major in applied mathematics and history.

“I joined the Illinois Policy Institute because I’m interested in exploring how data interacts with public policy, and young free-market voters should be involved in public policy to understand how the process works.”

Matthew Edejer - Development Intern



"I grew up in Illinois and I remember countless times that news reports would run the story saying that Illinois lacked a balanced budget, or even a budget overall. Fiscally, the state has been rudderless for some time now. I was attracted to the Illinois Policy Institute because it is evident that they won't stop until this is changed. Having a watchdog like this will pressure politicians to spend responsibly, which will benefit everyone that calls this great state home."

Matthew is a rising senior at Loyola University Chicago pursuing a dual bachelor's and master's degree in political science. He is a member of the Honors College and Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honors society. Before interning at the Illinois Policy Institute, Matthew interned at a local tax law firm and BallotReady.

"Our government and society are built on participation to make our voices heard, no matter our age. It is always good when young people stand up for what they believe in and not just sit on the sidelines. America was built on the principle of liberty for all, no matter the background. Getting more young people involved, getting out in public and making their voices heard, will allow this wonderful aspect of America to continue."

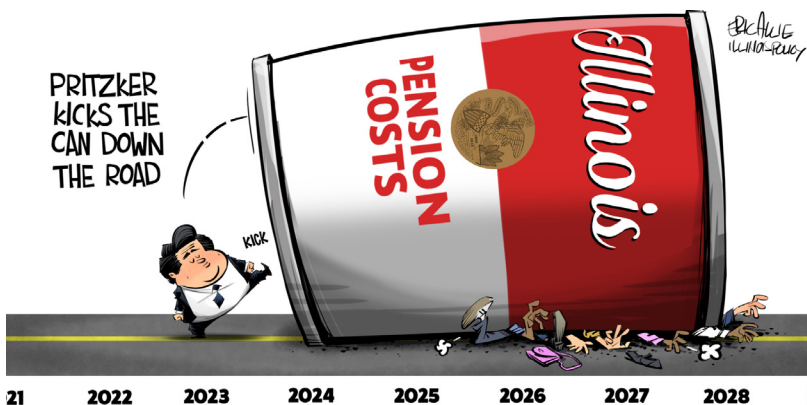
Ian Schlagel - Policy Intern



"As an economics student who is very interested in public policy, I have often observed a disconcerting trend of policy advocacy groups having a blind spot in their understanding of economic laws and incentives. From the beginning, I think what attracted me to the Illinois Policy Institute is that I saw a difference in their integrated understanding of both economics and politics. The Institute is a place where, from the beginning, they understood how these two greatly important subjects intersect and interact at every stage of policy development."

Ian is a rising senior at Hillsdale College studying economics and mathematics. He plans to pursue a graduate degree in economics after graduating from Hillsdale in the spring of 2024.

"Ronald Reagan famously said that freedom is 'never more than one generation away from extinction.' That is as true today as it was when he said it more than 50 years ago. We must ensure the torch of freedom continues to pass from generation to generation, and I believe the best way to prepare for the next handoff is to get involved as soon as possible."



The Rail

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300 S. Riverside Plaza
Suite 1650
Chicago, IL 60606

It's not easy to defeat a status quo system that has been in place for decades.

But that's exactly what we're doing at the Illinois Policy Institute.

Entrenched politicians have rigged our state's political system to benefit themselves and their special interests. They've prospered, while the rest of the state has suffered.



We're building a movement to counter this, and we're gaining momentum.



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