

# ILLINOIS AFL-CIO

NEWS UPDATE - 05/24/20

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### Workers Score Huge Legislative Wins in Illinois

The Illinois General Assembly adjourned early this morning following a four-day special session after a two-month hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was an exciting week for the labor movement as workers and their families scored big legislative wins. The Illinois AFL-CIO was able to pass critical legislation that will provide workers with greater access to the resources they need to sustain themselves and their families during these challenging times.

The General Assembly limited the scope of its special session to include new and pending legislative measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, state budget, economic recovery efforts, and the 2020 General Election. The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shortened session timeline created a tough environment for advocates to advance legislative initiatives. Fortunately, the labor friendly legislature included a number of measures advanced by the Illinois AFL-CIO and its affiliates.

The Illinois AFL-CIO is happy to report the following legislative wins:

#### ***Unemployment Insurance Expansion Bill – HB 2455***

The Unemployment Insurance Expansion Bill gives displaced workers more access to unemployment benefits. The Unemployment Insurance Bill provides:

- over \$2 billion in additional federal funding;
- additional seven benefit weeks in state extended benefit plan;
- unemployment benefits for workers who were previously excluded from receiving benefits; and
- employers will not be charged for COVID-19 related unemployment insurance experiences to help the economic recovery efforts.

The full bill can be read here: <https://bit.ly/2yxAVIc>

#### ***Workers' Compensation Bill – HB 2455***

Since the start of the pandemic, the Illinois AFL-CIO and its union affiliates have been hard at work to expand workers' compensation coverage to essential workers who become

infected with the COVID-19 virus due to their employment. Despite employers' attempts to limit coverage, the bill creates a rebuttable presumption that essential workers who contract COVID-19 did so because of their employment. This expanded coverage is also retroactive to the start of the pandemic. This victory will help more essential workers qualify for workers' compensation benefits.

The full bill can be read here: <https://bit.ly/2yxAVIc>

#### ***Vote by Mail Bill – SB 1863***

The COVID-19 virus poses a huge threat to the health and safety of voters for the 2020 Election. As response to the pandemic, the state's Vote by Mail option has been expanded for the 2020 General Election. The State Board of Elections will provide a universal vote by mail application and centralized online portal to apply for a ballot by mail. Application for vote by mail will begin when the legislation becomes law. The Vote by Mail option has been expanded to include, but is not limited to:

- Vote by Mail applications being mailed to voters who early voted or mailed in a ballot in the 2018 general election, 2019 municipal election, or 2020 primary election;
- Vote by Mail applications posted on the State Election website;
- Curbside voting where permitted;
- Secured mail-in-ballot drop off boxes; and
- The General Election Day declared a state holiday.

The full bill can be read here: <https://bit.ly/2WZk3DE>

#### ***Fair Tax Resolution – SJR0001***

The Fair Tax Constitutional Amendment (*SJRCA-01*) proposal will be on the ballot in November during the 2020 General Election. The current tax system in Illinois requires everyone to pay the same flat rate. This places a burden on middle-and-working class families. In a fair tax system, the tax rate is based on your income and ability to pay proportionate to overall earnings. People with higher incomes pay at an increased rate and people with lower incomes pay at a lower rate.

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The Fair Tax Constitutional Amendment will give middle-class workers much needed tax relief.

Illinois' current tax system also does not provide enough revenue to the state in a time when it's needed the most. Fixing the current income tax system will generate more revenue for state and help balance the state budget. A fair tax system gives more money to the middle-class and generates more revenue for the state.

**SJR0001** provides the actual language that will appear on the ballot in November and arguments for and against the measure that will be published and distributed to the voters by the Secretary of State prior to the election.

The full resolutions can be read here:

SJR0001 - <https://bit.ly/3cTeFY5>

SJRCA-01 - <https://bit.ly/2TwTIdW>

### ***Labor Protection Bill – SB 471***

The Labor Protection Bill increased protections for workers across several industries. First, a public safety employee in the process of rehabilitating from a workplace injury, who's recovery efforts have been impacted by COVID-19, will have 60 additional days to recover from their injuries. Second, workers at racetracks and racinos will have the ability to organize and collectively bargain for labor protections. Currently, many of these workers suffer from low-wages, poor working conditions, and are trapped in the cycle of poverty. Lastly, retail and service employees, while performing their duties, will have greater protections under the law against customers who violently refuse to follow their health and safety directives.

The full bill can be read here: <https://bit.ly/36nQX30>

## **Endorse Labor-Supported Fair Tax Today**

### *Illinois AFL-CIO Calls Unions, Leaders To Show Support For Amendment*

The General Assembly passed the ballot language and arguments for and against the Fair Tax Constitutional Amendment this week. To pass the amendment and change the tax code, it will need 60 percent support from voters this November.

The Illinois income tax is a “flat” tax, essentially assessing the same tax rate to all no matter the income level. This type of taxation creates an unequal distribution of tax burden – with lower and middle class people paying nearly double the share of income to state taxes.

The labor movement has long sought to even the scales. Now is the chance to make our Illinois Constitution more worker-friendly and we will need all union members to make this history-making change.

The Illinois AFL-CIO Labor 2020 program focuses on passing the Fair Tax. Starting today, you can help by signing up your organization as well as your leadership and staff as individuals endorsing this crucial amendment.

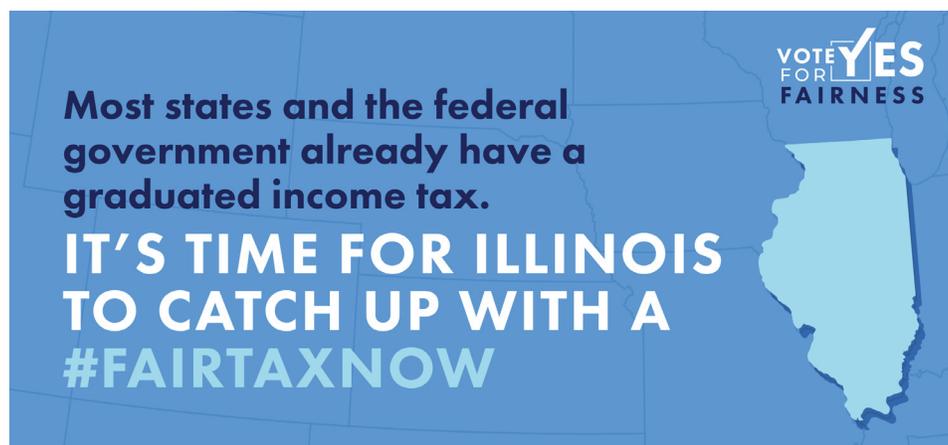
Follow the links below to sign on. It will take just a minute or two.

Organizational endorser form:

<https://www.actionnetwork.org/forms/fairtaxorgendorse>

Individual public endorsement:

<https://www.actionnetwork.org/forms/fairtaxendorse>



## Mendoza-Backed Rule Change Protects Prevailing Wage

On Thursday, Illinois State Comptroller Susana Mendoza helped ensure that the state will no longer invest with investment management firms that own properties in Illinois and do not follow the Illinois' Prevailing Wage Act and other wage protection laws.

Comptroller Mendoza, who sits on the Executive Committee of the Illinois State Board of Investments (ISBI), learned earlier this year that a hotel chain, owned by an investment management firm underwent a significant rehabilitation without paying prevailing wage. Mendoza pushed for a rule that mandates that when ISBI funds are used to purchase real estate in Illinois, those investment firms must comply with a prevailing wage for ISBI-owned properties within Illinois.

The relevant rule now reads: "All investment managers, property managers, contractors, and their subcontractors shall observe, where applicable, all local, state (including Illinois' prevailing wage scale for ISBI-owned properties within the State of Illinois) and national laws, but not limited to, those pertaining to insurance, withholding taxes, minimum wage, labor relations, health and occupational safety."

## Metro-East Unions Provide "Snacks-to-Go" for Hospital Workers

Metro-East labor leaders recently launched a campaign to provide on-the-go foods for overworked healthcare workers who often don't have time for meals.

The "Snacks-to-Go" project was a team effort that included United Way labor liaisons, the Southwestern Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council, the Southwestern Illinois Central Labor Council and several local unions. They collected close to \$15,000 in the first two weeks.

Delivery began May 4 at several of the region's hospitals including: St. Elizabeth Hospital (O'Fallon), Memorial Hospital West (Belleville), St. Anthony's Health Center (Alton), Anderson Hospital (Maryville), Jersey Community Hospital (Jerseyville), Gateway Regional Medical Center (Granite City), Barnes-Jewish Hospital (St. Louis), Alton Memorial Hospital (Alton), Touchette Regional Hospital (Centreville), Red Bud Regional Hospital (Red Bud) and Sparta Community Hospital (Sparta).

The group says they want to be a consistent presence of relief in this time of crisis.



*B. Dean Webb (center), president of the Greater Madison County Federation of Labor, with United Way labor liaisons, Terry Biggs (left) and Nick Dodson (right), stand with donations that poured in to provide on-the-go meals for healthcare workers. Photo by Labor Tribune.*