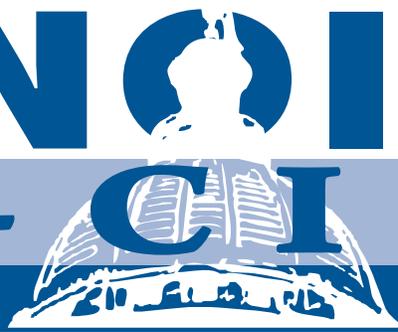


# ILLINOIS AFL-CIO

NEWS UPDATE - 09/03/20



## Labor 2020 Mobilizing Union Households

*Virtual Phone Banks Launch; Local Union Mail Hits*

With two months until the election and nearly three weeks from the start of early voting, the Labor 2020 program is mobilizing working families to vote for the Fair Tax Amendment and candidates that stand with unions.

The State Federation phone bank, running since early August, is now augmented with virtual phone banks staffed by volunteers from home or office. Nearly 9,000 contacts have been made, with significant ramp up anticipated after Labor Day.

More than 40 unions are participating in the Labor 2020 local union mail program – with locals and regional bodies contacting more than 300,000 members via customized direct mail pieces. Following up the local union mail will be the Illinois AFL-CIO mail program that will hit more than a half million households.

### Local Union Digital Canvass

Through a tool created by the Illinois AFL-CIO, local unions will be able to canvass members free and easily through a Labor 2020 text and email survey. This part of Labor 2020 will launch after Labor Day. If your local would like to participate, please contact Bill Looby at [BillL@ilaf-cio.org](mailto:BillL@ilaf-cio.org).



### Vote By Mail / Early Voting

As part of the ongoing mobilization effort, Labor 2020 is pushing for banking your votes through vote by mail and early vote alternatives. Early voting starts Sept. 24 – the same day VBM ballots are mailed.

Here are some steps to follow to access the voting by mail:

- Registered voters who have voted in the last two years should have received a Vote-by-Mail application in the mail.
- To access the application online, you may request the application directly from their County Clerk's office or through the Illinois State Board of Elections website at <https://elections.il.gov/electionoperations/VotingByMail.aspx>.
- Vote-by-Mail applications must be returned by Oct. 29.
- Vote-by-Mail ballots must be postmarked no later than Nov. 3.

## Illinois AFL-CIO Responds to Exelon Announcement on Nuclear Generating Station Closures

“The Illinois AFL-CIO, representing the thousands of working men and women and their families and communities who would be directly affected, is deeply disappointed and concerned about today’s announcement by Exelon of planned closures of the Byron and Dresden nuclear plants in northern Illinois.

Our state has many economic challenges today. The coronavirus pandemic has only made those challenges more real, and working families are struggling across Illinois.

Energy is an important part of our lives. When we turn the lights on, we expect them to come on and stay on at a reasonable price. The nuclear energy at these and other Illinois plants is critical to the safe, reliable and affordable power supply we all enjoy today. Not only would these plant closures devastate the communities and families employed there directly, we all will pay a steep price from losing access to the high-quality, affordable power the plants produce.

We cannot afford to let these nuclear plants close. We stand ready to work on a clean energy policy for Illinois that preserves these critical jobs, and supports the affordable and reliable energy we have today and need for a successful tomorrow.”

*Have a Happy & Safe Labor Day!*

Call 217.544.4014 For More Information On These And Other Issues Important To Working People - [www.ilaf-cio.org](http://www.ilaf-cio.org)



LIUNA362afl-cio

# Q & A with Senate President Don Harmon



In this week's focus, we met up with Senate President Don Harmon for a question and answer session:

## ***Where did you grow up?***

"I grew up in Oak Park in the very same house I live in today. My parents bought that house when I was six months old and I bought

it from my mom right before our second child was born during the same fall I was first elected to the Illinois State Senate."

## ***Where did you attend school?***

"I attended St. Giles in Oak Park, St. Ignatius High School, Knox College, and then eventually the University of Chicago for law school and business school."

## ***What was your first job out of college?***

"I worked at Arthur Anderson doing computer consulting, even though I was an English and economics major. I actually learned the computer language Cobol which people may have heard of recently because all of our unemployment insurance systems are written in this very old language. It shows you how much work we have to do in modernizing our systems."

## ***When did you start getting involved in politics?***

"Right about the time I was in law school at the University of Chicago. I volunteered for the U.S. Senate race for Carol Mosley Braun and the Governor of Arkansas Bill Clinton in 1992. I then met with my State Senator, Phil Rock, to talk about what I could do locally and received some assignments. I asked him if I could re-charter the Young Democrats of Oak Park, which had gone dormant. He looked at me over his reading glasses and said alright kid, go ahead."

## ***And when did you first run for office?***

"After the redistricting cycle and Phil Rock announcing his retirement as committeeman in 2000, I decided it was time to throw my hat in the ring after spending about eight years volunteering in local politics myself. I was fortunate to spend the first two years of my term getting to know then State Senator Barack Obama."

## ***What was your very first job?***

"My very first job was delivering the Chicago Daily News

after school with my friend Mark across the street. We split the route. I was seven or eight years old and I strapped the bags to the handle bars of my Schwinn Stingray and I could still take you on the route. That was also one of my first petition drives, we walked my old paper route."

## ***You play guitar, how did that start?***

"A buddy played the Beatles Red Album for me and it was like 'oh my God the world changed'. I badgered my mom to let me learn how to play the drums and she was having none of that, so I wanted to try the bass. One of my cousins had passed down a really beaten up, low-end guitar, but I really wanted to play it and finally convinced her. I signed up for lessons my freshman year of high school at Walles Music across the street from what is now my district office on North Avenue. And Daytripper was the first song I ever learned. My sisters still make fun of that riff because I just played it over and over and over trying to master it."

## ***What can Illinois do to continue progress on civil rights?***

"We've had several moments in American history where we had a reckoning on equality and we're in one again right now. That can be painful, but it's also a chance to fix things and get closer to that more perfect union we all desire. Organized Labor has been the leading institution in the United States for protection of civil rights and combatting discrimination and I look forward to working with members on updating our civil rights laws. I've worked on this issue since I was elected and I look forward to doing so again in the next session."

## ***Why is passing the Fair Tax amendment so important?***

"There are few things Illinois can do that are more important than ensure the defeat of Donald Trump, but passing the Fair Tax constitutional amendment is at the top of that list. There are only 10 states in the country that do not allow progressive taxation of income and Illinois is one of them. Working people should not pay the same rate of tax as the wealthy. After Covid-19, restoring Illinois is going to be even harder and we need the people who were the least impacted and have the most invested in Illinois to pitch in their fair share for the rest of Illinois. We need members of organized labor to talk to their friends, family, work colleagues and more to convince them to vote yes on the Fair Tax amendment."

("Harmon" continued on page 3)

(“Harmon” continued from page 2)

### ***How do you see the COVID-19 recovery?***

“This is going to be very tough and we’re going to need everyone to pitch in to fully recover. First, we have to get past the health crisis and that involves rapid scaling of new testing techniques. I’m hopeful about developments at U of I for rapid testing. We will then need a vaccine and that will take a great deal of time before herd immunity reduces the risk of infection. Once the health crisis is under control, the economic recovery can begin in earnest and we need massive help from the federal government. Our state and local governments have to balance their budgets and tax revenue dropped dramatically during this recession. Electing Joe Biden and countless other AFL-CIO supported members is vitally important to the health and welfare of our state, because we’re going to need fiscal stimulus to jump start the economy. I am excited about renewable energy investments that can be made in all parts of Illinois and should involve union labor to transform our economy.”

### ***You sponsored legislation to mitigate the Janus decision. Where do we go from here?***

“The Janus ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court was a terrible decision. It upended decades of legal precedent and it’s entirely designed by billionaire corporate CEO’s to break the solidarity and strength of organized labor. We have work to do to combat it. The Senate passed legislation clarifying dues deductions, protecting personal information, and affirming the right to collectively bargain. We also need to do the hard work of talking to union members about the benefit of full membership and to resist the propaganda coming from billionaire-backed, right-wing think tanks. I also plan to strongly press our federal representatives to work with a Biden administration to appoint a strong NLRB and pass federal laws to promote organized labor.”

## **Boards and Commissions**

On August 31, the Governor made several appointments to various state boards and commissions. Terrence Healy, Vice President of LIUNA and Illinois AFL-CIO Executive Board Member was appointed to the Illinois State Board of Investment. The Governor also announced the reappointment of Anastasia Palivos to the Pollution Control Board.

State Boards and Commissions have a tremendous influence over the lives of working people in Illinois. These Boards and Commissions decide on key initiatives that provide worker organizing rights, energy policies, infrastructure projects, and workers’ compensation benefits.

The Illinois AFL-CIO is dedicated to the appointment of labor members to the State of Illinois Boards and Commissions. The Illinois AFL-CIO is requesting that union affiliates inform the state federation of Board and Commission vacancies and appointments to assist appointment and confirmation efforts.

Please send information to Illinois AFL-CIO Legislative Director & Staff Attorney Magda Derisma at [magda.derisma@ilaf-cio.org](mailto:magda.derisma@ilaf-cio.org).

**VOTE  
FOR  
YES  
FAIRNESS**

**Under the Fair Tax, 97% of Illinoisans would pay the same or less in state income taxes**

## **Fair Tax Support Gathering Steam**

Illinois AFL-CIO President Tim Drea participated in a Labor Day virtual media event highlighting the broad and diverse support for the Fair Tax Amendment from labor organizations. Drea was joined by other state labor leaders including, among others: Bob Reiter (Chicago Federation of Labor), Greg Kelley (SEIU HCII), Dan Montgomery (IFT), Steve Hughart (IBEW 702), Bill Hamilton (UAW 1268) and Nancy Aleverio (NNU).

Passage of the Fair Tax Amendment is a top priority of the Illinois AFL-CIO this election. For the first time in decades, Labor can achieve the long-sought goal of making Illinois income tax more fair by forcing the wealthy to foot more of the bill. All income over \$250,000 will be taxed at a higher rate, while anyone under \$250,000 will stay the same or have taxes lowered. Retiree income is not taxed in Illinois and it will not be under this amendment.

More than 125 unions have signed on in support of the Fair Tax Amendment thus far.

# Illinois Workers Compensation Commission

The Illinois AFL-CIO and its affiliates have been fiercely advocating for workers' compensation coverage expansion for essential workers. On June 5, Governor Pritzker signed HB 2455 into law, expanding workers' compensation coverage by creating a rebuttable presumption that essential who contract COVID-19 did so because of their employment.

The Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission (IWCC) has updated the of Frequently Asked Questions on their website to answer questions about the impact of COVID-19 on workers' compensation claims. Below is a list of the updated questions and answers:

## ***Frequently Asked Questions regarding COVID-19 Workers' Compensation Claims***

The IWCC has received several questions about the impact of COVID – 19 on workers' compensation claims. The following Frequently Asked Questions are meant to generally address these concerns but should not be construed as legal advice. If you believe you have a workers' compensation claim, you may wish to seek legal advice.

### ***What is an "occupational disease?"***

According to the Occupational Diseases Act, "the term 'Occupational Disease' means a disease arising out of and in the course of the employment or which has become aggravated and rendered disabling as a result of the exposure of the employment. Such aggravation shall arise out of a risk peculiar to or increased by the employment and not common to the general public." (820 ILCS 310/1 (d))

### ***How can I prove that I contracted an occupational disease while working?***

According to the Act, "a disease shall be deemed to arise out of the employment if there is apparent to the rational mind, upon consideration of all the circumstances, a causal connection between the conditions under which the work is performed and the occupational disease. (820 ILCS 310/1 (d))

### ***What if I was also at risk outside my workplace?***

According to the Act, "the disease need not to have been foreseen or expected but after its contraction it must appear to have had its origin or aggravation in a risk connected

with the employment and to have flowed from that source as a rational consequence." (820 ILCS 310/1(d))

### ***Does the Occupational Diseases Act include COVID-19?***

On June 5, 2020, Illinois Governor Pritzker signed into law Public Act 101-0633 creating a rebuttable presumption for first responders and front-line workers who are exposed to and contract COVID-19 in the course of their employment. Specifically, it states that "the injury or occupational disease shall be rebuttably presumed to be causally connected to the hazards or exposures of the employee's first responder or front-line worker employment." (820 ILCS 310/1 (g) 1)

### ***Can my employer challenge this presumption?***

Your employer may be able to rebut this presumption by presenting certain types of evidence as outlined in the Act.

### ***Does the date of COVID-19 diagnosis matter?***

According to the Act, the rebuttable presumption applies to all cases in which a diagnosis of COVID-19 was made on or after March 9, 2020 and on or before December 31, 2020. (820 ILCS 310/1 (g) 4)

### ***Am I considered a COVID-19 first responder or front-line worker?***

According to the Occupational Disease Act, The term "COVID-19 first responder or front-line worker" means: all individuals employed as police, fire personnel, emergency medical technicians, or paramedics; all individuals employed and considered as first responders; all workers for health care providers, including nursing homes and rehabilitation facilities and home care workers; corrections officers; and any individuals employed by essential businesses and operations as defined in Executive Order 2020-10 dated March 20, 2020, as long as individuals employed by essential businesses and operations are required by their employment to encounter members of the general public or to work in employment locations of more than 15 employees. For purposes of this subsection only, an employee's home or place of residence is not a place of employment, except for home care workers.

This information can also be found on the IWCC website: <https://bit.ly/32R6veY>

## Fast-Track Public Infrastructure Grants

On August 19, Governor Pritzker announced a \$25 million initiative to support statewide economic development through the acceleration of public infrastructure projects.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) will issue Fast-Track Public Infrastructure Grants to help jump start key public works projects throughout the state. The Fast-Track Public Infrastructure Grants will be funded through Rebuild Illinois, the \$45 billion capital infrastructure spending package signed into law by Governor Pritzker in 2019.

Many local governments throughout the state have faced revenue shortfalls due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These grants are a much-needed effort to support local governments. The Fast-Track Public Infrastructure Grants will provide

support to businesses, communities, and skilled laborers by restoring public works projects that may have been subject to cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local governments and other public entities are eligible to apply for the Fast-Track Public Infrastructure Grants if they are able to meet shovel-ready criteria and minority business participation requirements of the Illinois Business Enterprise Program. Priority will be given to infrastructure projects in underserved areas. Grant funding will be issued on a rolling basis and award amounts range from \$500,000 to \$5 million.

The DCEO will conduct a series of webinars and outreach to local governments to provide detailed information on the Fast-Track Public Infrastructure Grants.

### Soderstrom Statue Arrives at Labor Memorial Plaza

The Illinois AFL-CIO front plaza renovation is nearing completion after the newly erected Reuben Soderstrom statue was placed last week. The bronze statue of Reuben Soderstrom is the centerpiece of the south half of the plaza which will feature quotes from the man who served for forty years as a leader of the Illinois AFL-CIO.

Engraved brick pavers have been placed and are still available to those wanting to be a part of the plaza. You can get an order form here: <http://www.ilaf-cio.org/events/>

A dedication ceremony is being planned. Watch a time-lapsed video of the placing of the statue can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZUYfqGONdE>



### Blackshere, Powell Honored by Illinois Delegation at the Democratic National Convention

The Illinois delegates to the Democratic National Convention attending a virtual meeting the were shown a video honoring former Illinois AFL-CIO President Margaret Blackshere and former UFCW 881 President Ron Powell.

The meeting was hosted by Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House and Illinois Democratic Party chairman as a kickoff to the virtual Democratic National Convention. Both Margaret and Ron were strong advocates for working families in Illinois and contributed to many laws strengthening worker rights and protections. The video can be seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=murim8H5JK0&t=17s>

34TH ANNUAL

**LABOR &  
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2020 VIRTUAL EVENT

**September 30, 2020**

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