

2023 STATE OF THE UNION – 1650

A Year of Transition

The Constitution for Local 1650 requires an annual report from the President on the state of our union. This one marks my second. The past year has been one of transition for Local 1650. As 2022 began, we had just lost our longtime president, John McDonald. At this time last year, Jeff Morford was serving as Interim President. In February, you elected me to serve out the remainder of John's term, for which I remain humbled and grateful, and I appreciate the opportunity now for a full two-year term. Soon after, Sam Bazzi was elected as our new External Vice President, joining Jeff, our Internal Vice President.

During the fall semester, the Executive Board and Membership unanimously approved amendments to our constitution and bylaws to create a new DEI Officer on our Executive Board, making us, we believe, the first AFT Michigan Local to have such a position. In our November internal elections, you elected Dr. Courtney Matthews to serve as our first DEI Officer. As we begin 2023, we have a dedicated Executive Board of officers and Area Reps to represent you and ensure this union is reflective of its members.

2022 also marked our return to campus after over two years of Covid restrictions. The members of this Local have been consistent in calling on the HFC Administration to do this safely. Within the union there have been spirited discussions about campus protocols. Our Treasurer, Stacey Buchanan, has been a great advocate for all of you on the Covid Response Team. Local 1650 will continue to advocate for safety in our workplace, whether it relates to Covid or other important challenges.

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Contract Talks

In September the Federation entered contract talks with the HFC Administration. While our current contract does not expire until August of this year, we thought it important to begin discussions with the Administration at a time of historically high inflation. Throughout the talks, Local 1650's focus has been on meaningful raises for faculty and equity for our members. While we have not yet reached a deal, our team is optimistic about our chances of doing so before the expiration date on our current contract. We'll continue to keep you updated on the progress of discussions, and when the time comes, will present you with a settlement that we believe reflects our priorities and is fair. I want to thank our incredible negotiating team for devoting many hours to the preparation work that's necessary for negotiations, as well as the weekly sessions with the Administration. They are representing you well.

Building Problems

Over the course of the Fall semester, many of you reported problems in your classrooms and offices. You indicated that your classrooms were dirty, heating was inconsistent (either too high or too low), and that elevators were not in working order. The HFC Administration has a contractual responsibility to provide us with safe and clean work sites. In the coming weeks, we will continue to discuss building problems with the Administration to make sure your classrooms and offices are in the best condition possible for you to do your work safely and professionally. Please continue to keep the Federation updated on problems in your areas and notify the Administration in writing when conditions are subpar.

Shared Governance

This union was chartered in 1966. The founders of Local 1650 focused on shared governance at the beginning and drafted the original Constitution for the College Organization (now the Faculty Organization). They sought, and won, recognition from the HFCC Administration for a strong faculty voice in our system of shared governance.

ALL full-time faculty at HFC have a contractual and professional obligation to be involved in shared governance. Faculty need to serve on Senate and Union committees. As I've said in other settings, the HFC Administration will make decisions whether we participate or not. While the Administration has too often ignored our recommendations, that is not a reason to step back. The more people the Administration has to answer to, the harder it is for them to ignore us. Shared governance can be messy sometimes, but I am convinced that the more faculty who are involved in the crafting of academic policies at this institution, the better this College can serve its students.

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Political Action

It's also important never to forget that we are public employees. Our salaries are paid for by taxpayer dollars. The people who set policy for HFC are elected officials in Dearborn, Lansing, and Washington, DC. Every year, we have important opportunities to influence who are in these positions of authority, and to lobby them on decisions that impact our professional lives. Historically, Local 1650 members have been far more engaged in political action than most other AFT Locals, including those that are much larger in membership. For many years, 90% of Local 1650 members contributed to the Political Action Fund (PAF), which pays for the Federation's political activities.

Unfortunately, we have slipped from those high participation rates in recent years. Covid restrictions meant that PAF solicitation had to be conducted virtually, likely being part of the reason for the decline. However, we are now back in person, and there are also convenient virtual ways to contribute.

Most of our PAF money goes to local races and millage campaigns, which are non-partisan elections and impact us most directly. You can even direct your contributions to these local races. We really need to have adequate resources to fight our political battles. In 2022, we were able to re-elect our strong supporter, Pat D'Ambrosio, to the HFC Board of Trustees. This is the same Board that votes to ratify our contracts.

This year, we must pass our millage measures. Without them, we will face significant budget cuts. If you haven't already contributed this year, please contact your Area Rep and let them know you'll give.

2023 will be a big year. In 2022, AFT Michigan's endorsed candidates for executive office in Michigan were all re-elected, while its endorsed candidates took control of the Michigan House and Michigan Senate for the first time since 1984. We now have pro-public employee and pro-public education officials in charge of State government. Local 1650 will continue to support our statewide union in its efforts to pass legislation that will benefit us and reverse many of the anti-union attacks of recent years.

The Year Ahead

Please stay engaged with your union in the coming year. The union is all of us. Solidarity means we stand together to do this work. I encourage you to come to membership meetings and join union committees. We need your voice to make us stronger and ensure we can get the benefits and respect we deserve.

When calls go out for volunteers for Senate committees or search committees, please consider putting your name forward. Your voice is needed.

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If you see problems in your department or school, talk to your colleagues. Join together as colleagues. Write letters to the Administration, if necessary, and get your colleagues on board. The Administration has a contractual responsibility to respond.

Your union will always have your back.

I'm optimistic about the year ahead and excited to work with all of you.

Thank you.

Eric W. Rader, Ph.D.

President, HFCC-FT, AFT Local 1650

Delivered January 17, 2023