

## ANNUAL REPORT ON STATE OF LOCAL

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To begin with – Elections Matter! They matter on the local, state, and federal levels. The State of this Union has been somewhat secured by our local political engagement. However, the State of this Union – and the incomes and benefits of AFT faculty – are imperiled by the results of State House and U.S. Congressional races and the presidential election.

Local 1650 supported two successful candidates for the Board of Trustees, candidates who are fair minded and respect the professionalism of College faculty – and support our right to collective bargaining.

### 1650 Internal Challenges

This is very much needed for several reasons. First, we have an autocratic College President, who dismisses at best, and insults at worst, those who question his highly questionable behavior.

We have a College President who has publicly described faculty as “bullies” and not motivated by student success, faculty as intellectually less than he because of the number of degrees he holds, faculty as “overpaid and underperforming” and who actually gained income through the Union’s \$29 million in contract concessions to help save the College. The list could go on.

Again, all of this comes from the HFC President – the only full-time employee who took no cuts in compensation to save the College and who, in fact, received pay increases during the College’s fiscal crisis.

More recently, President Jensen provided his Cabinet members with retroactive bonus” compensation, in addition to wage increases, to offset their contract concessions – but only after he refused to do the same for full-time faculty. Those sacrifices continue, while his wages go up and he “consults” for profit off campus. So much for leadership by example!

### State Government Threats

Secondly, at the State level, Republicans continue to control State government, even after they gutted tenure for K-12 teachers, denied K-12 teacher payroll deduction of union dues, passed “Right to Work for Less” legislation, taxed pensions, and enacted “hard cap” health insurance premium cost shifts to employees, including HFC faculty,

in addition to pursuing an agenda to dismantle the Michigan Public School Retirement System – and the list could go on.

Moreover, elements of that Republican majority in Lansing are also intent on “Wisconsinizing” Michigan by rescinding PERA and stripping collective bargaining rights from all public employees – including HFC faculty. Imagine yourself at the tender mercies of the current administration absent a collective bargaining and a contract.

### **Federal Impact on HFC**

Third, at the federal level, Republicans gained the presidency and tighter control of Congress. The President hopes to strip the collective bargaining rights of federal employees – which will only give impetus to States to do likewise.

The President has also demeaned virtually every immigrant group, women, POWs, the judiciary, the media, and those embracing the Muslim religion in particular. He demeans today’s immigrants, just as previous generations demeaned the immigrant Irish, Italians, Poles, Catholics, and other “others.”

All of this led the 1650 Executive Board to introduce a resolution at the AFT Convention, which passed unanimously, in opposition to Islamophobia and attacks upon the very immigrant community and students we serve.

This also led the 1650 Executive Board to request of the HFC Trustees a recommitment to the safety of our students and community members, who rightfully feel threatened by the inflammatory rhetoric, “alternative facts,” and religious intolerance, xenophobia, misogyny, and homophobia, of the “alt right.”

The Federation proposed a discussion of “Sanctuary College” principles and policies and held a College and community forum to solicit input. Yet Dr. Jensen and his staff publicly critiqued the proposal, which was a work in progress, at a Trustees’ meeting, even though the matter was not on the agenda.

Fourth, U.S. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan is intent on dismantling Social Security and Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act, which has been attacked with virtually the same deceptive rhetoric as Social Security and Medicare were attacked when first introduced and have been ever since by far right oligarchs. Mr. Ryan and the Republican Congressional majority would reduce Social Security benefits and replace the current defined benefit Medicare system with a fixed voucher system, subject to the vagaries and ideologues of each state government.

Time does not permit citing the security threats posed by the President demeaning NATO and other longstanding allies. Nor does time permit considering the personality and ideological parallels between the current U.S. President and current HFC President.

### **Reasons To Hope and Engage**

Is the future of this Union – and the future of unions nationwide – in peril? YES, but there are reasons to hope and reasons to engage politically in the fight to save the labor movement and middle class.

First, we have a five year contract – which protects wages, hours, conditions of employment – and shared governance – from an autocratic, non-collegial, inordinately defensive College President, who relies on

threats and insults when questioned – and who has repeatedly tried to “end run” Local 1650 contract provisions and membership in the 1650 Bargaining Unit.

Second, there is a movement afoot in the nation – consisting of: (1) those who actually grasped candidate Trump’s inflammatory rhetoric during the campaign; (2) others who are now shocked, as his very highly publicized agenda is enacted; (3) those shocked by his attacks on the judiciary and media; (4) those who naively believed the President would ever release his tax returns; (5) those who heard him encourage Russia to hack Secretary Clinton’s emails; (6) those who recall the attacks on the Secretary’s private email server and then recently witnessed the President and Japanese Prime Minister deal with the Korean missile launch in a very public setting; (7) those who see the inexperience and chaos reflected in the selection of his Cabinet. This list could go on.

The rise of a grass roots democratic movement, the protections afforded by an independent and respected judiciary, and the existence of an unfettered media may well contain the domestic and international excesses of the President.

Yes, this Union’s and the nation’s future are at stake when we vote. They are in danger when politicians appeal, not to the better angels of our nature, but rather to the very worst. They are in danger when we do not engage politically in campaigns, lobbying efforts, and the exercise of free speech. Yes, elections do matter!

John McDonald  
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