‘Tax the Millionaires’ Campaign Launches Across the State

In eight cities across California, educators and other concerned citizens joined together on Feb. 6 to launch the Millionaires Tax Initiative, unfurling banners across freeways during morning rush hour to announce the proposition. That was just the beginning of a campaign to garner support for an initiative that asks millionaires to pay their fair share of taxes – 3-5% more – to help fund public education and vital public services.

Now the campaign is turning to signature gathering to qualify it for the November ballot. "California's fate is in our hands," said Guild President Joanne Waddell at the banner drop. She explained that the Guild is joining a growing movement working to pass the ballot initiative and will be calling on members to gather 20 signatures each.

The initiative calls for people who earn in excess of $1 million annually to pay 3% more in taxes on any income over their first million, and those making $2 million a year to pay an additional 2%. The initiative could raise about $6 billion a year, with 60% going to education, 25% to senior and disabled services, 10% to public safety, and 5% to the rebuilding of roads and bridges.

Due to the current recession, coupled with two decades of tax breaks for the rich, the state of California now suffers an annual budget deficit of $10 to $14 billion dollars. Vital public services have been slashed ($20 billion over the

‘February Surprise’ Means $149 Million Shortfall for Colleges

Already struggling with $415 million in cuts over the past year, California community colleges were told in mid-February that they face an additional $149 million in cuts. The unexpected announcement further complicates already austere college budgets. The latest cuts, which amount to an additional $135 per student reduction, mean tens of thousands more students will be turned away from the state’s community colleges. For Los Angeles’ nine campuses, the latest cuts amount to just over $13 million, bringing the District’s grand total to $51 million slashed from our funding this fiscal year alone.

Chancellor La Vista told the LA Times that the District would likely spend down its reserves to offset the cuts, but will also be considering a hiring freeze. Around the state, community college faculty and students should expect more class cuts, layoffs, elimination of summer school and more borrowing by the colleges just to cover costs. Even before these latest cuts, colleges have seen their budgets slashed by 23% since 2008 and reduced enrollment. These cuts come at a time when the economy is still fragile and economically strapped students need more help, not less.

Why more cuts now? Two reasons -- less than expected student fees ($107 million) as well as "triggered cuts" due to a shortfall in property tax revenue ($41 million). "It makes you wonder what the legislators were thinking when they raised fees by $10 a unit," said Guild President Joanne Waddell. "Clearly, they thought students would pay the additional amount, but they couldn’t pay – they sought financial aid, so now there’s a shortfall. And our elected officials haven’t learned – this summer fees will go up another $10. Their actions are simply out of touch with reality."

"The K-12 system receives a guaranteed backfill and so should we," said Waddell. "This was a promise to our colleges. The state Department of Finance miscalculated, and we’re paying the price."

But we are not taking this lying down. The Guild is engaged in a strategic campaign to convince the legislature to backfill the shortfall. Here’s what you can do:

1. Phone or visit your legislators’ district offices and ask for their support for a backfill of the short-
Fighting for California’s Future

Welcome back! I hope you had time to relax and recharge during winter break. Symbolically and in reality, whether you’re a biologist or a theologian, spring is a time of renewal and regeneration. Perhaps this will be the semester in which you add a new technology tool to enhance your courses or try a new method of instruction to refresh your course. All over the District, faculty are developing and implementing instructional innovations — contextualizing, immersing students in math, forming cohorts — and the evidence is clear: Faculty efforts are leading to student success!

Unfortunately, fewer students have the opportunity to experience that success.

Despite the increased demand for community college education, as our packed classes demonstrate, we are serving fewer and fewer students. The LACCD has cut 7,500 sections or about 225,000 to 300,000 seats, since 2008. Those empty seats are enough to fill the Hollywood Bowl 16 times.

You have had to personally say, “Sorry, I’m not adding any more students” over and over again in those first days of the semester. (If you need help saying, “my class is full” in the future, go to www.aft1521.org, scroll down to “Dear Student, My class is full…”).

And this week the situation deteriorated as we learned of additional cuts to be absorbed in this year’s budget. Had enough? Ready to fight back? See the article on the “February Surprise” on page 1.

The Guild is not sitting idly by watching California’s promise of access to low-cost, high-quality education for all who can benefit from it slip away. It’s our state, our future, our fight — and we have joined forces with a strong and growing coalition of unions and community groups that believe we need a permanent fix to save public education and vital social services. That solution is the Millionaires Tax Initiative. (See the article on page 1.)

It’s clear: We’re in a fight for California’s future. From signature gathering to urging our colleagues, friends, and neighbors to vote for the initiative, we have our work cut out for us. We will be calling on you in the coming months to take part in this movement to restore the promise of public higher education. Because you are committed to the mission of California’s Community Colleges, I know you’ll answer the call.

In unity,
Joanne

New Briefs

Guild Activist John McDowell
Appointed to State Commission

Always an advocate for our students, Guild Political Director John McDowell will now have another avenue to make his voice heard. Last month, California Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez appointed him to serve on the California Student Aid Commission. “In a time when access to higher education for lower-income and middle-class Californians is threatened by ever increasing costs, we need educators like John McDowell to protect our state’s financial aid programs,” said Speaker Pérez when making the announcement. “With 25 years of experience fighting for higher education access, John McDowell is the type of leader who will defend the critical programs that make higher education possible for all Californians.”

McDowell, who teaches labor studies and is director and founder of the Labor Center at Trade Tech, was most recently the president of the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), where he developed grassroots action and advocacy programs in support of higher education in California. His appointment to this board is a perfect fit for McDowell, who has long fought against increases to student fees.

“The Governor is proposing to cut $300 million from student aid, just at a time when our students are most in need of help due to the economy,” said McDowell. “The proposal is outrageous and I will oppose it.” McDowell feels it is critical to have members of the Commission who understand the struggle and the financial difficulty community college students face and who will work closely with the Speaker and the other Commissioners to advance the interests of the students served by financial aid.

The California Student Aid Commission is the principal state agency responsible for administering state financial aid programs for students attending public and private universities, colleges, and vocational schools in California.

March 30 is Deadline for Annual Guild Scholarships

The Guild will once again be offering its annual $1,000 scholarships to full-time students in our colleges who have earned a “B” average in 12 units of social science classes. Applicants need to fill out an application and write an essay. Tell your students about this opportunity to receive one of four $1,000 awards to help them pay for their education. Go to www.aft1521.org to download an application. The deadline to apply is March 30.

Emergency Relief Fund
Available to Members

The Guild’s Membership Emergency Relief Fund (MERF) provides emergency assistance to Guild members who have experienced economic hardship as a result of a reduction in their assignments this semester. To determine eligibility and download an application, go to www.aft1521.org.

The deadline to apply is April 13.

Read On
The newsletter of the
LA College Faculty Guild
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Submissions welcome. Deadline is the 10th of each month. Please include a daytime or evening phone number.
Meet Shigueru Tsuha, New Executive Director of Dolores Huerta Labor Institute

When Shigueru Tsuha took over as the new Executive Director of the DHLI last year, he had one mission: to revitalize the organization following the tragic and untimely death of its previous director, John Delloro. Designed to educate LACCD students about the rich heritage of unions, the American labor movement and its proud workers, DHLI has been making some real inroads in the classroom in its short history. Tsuha, a former labor organizer, brings a unique combination of academic and labor experience to the job. Read On caught up with the energetic Tsuha, who recently got his doctorate, and he shared his plans for the organization.

What are your goals for DHLI in the coming year?

To make Labor very visible and real to our students at the colleges and to empower them about the social justice movement. We eventually want to host an entire month of Labor educational activities at each college with workshops, movies, and events so students get a real sense of how labor unions can and have made a difference through the years.

What is your proudest accomplishment with DHLI to date?

Our Labor STEPs program, which we started last year. It stands for Labor Students Educating Peers. We’ve had a few events at different colleges and now we are beginning to build a community of Labor educators in the Institute.

Explain the Labor STEPs program.

We get students involved to host Labor educational events for the entire campus – it might be a speaker, a film and discussion afterwards, or a debate, like we did with the NBA Lockout last year. Students learn leadership skills and how to organize an event; they also learn about Labor. And it solidifies our collaborative faculty teams.

Tell us how your immigrant background has affected you.

I’m Peruvian and Japanese. My parents came to this country from Peru and started working at UCLA in the cafeteria. It wasn’t until they joined the union that their lives began to improve. They got a better salary, they got benefits, they had a voice at work. My father said that without the union, we were basically slaves.

What inspired you to apply for the job?

As a child of service workers, I got to see first-hand the transformative effect of the union. In graduate school I volunteered for AFSCME 3299 as a student organizer and I was a member of a union, UAW 2865, as a teaching assistant. I also helped organize United Students Against Sweatshops. At UC Riverside, I helped set up the Labor Studies program. And before that, I participated in Union Summer as an intern. So I feel I bring a lot of vision and unique experiences to DHLI.

What are your biggest challenges for the organization?

Teachers already have a full plate with their classes, meetings, student conferences and activism. They don’t need another “chore.” So I wanted to help create something that would integrate easily and not create too much additional work for them – yet make it fun and educational for the students.

Name 3 things faculty can do to help promote labor’s message.

1. Join the Faculty Action Committee. We’re holding Labor Week in April and are trying to create events at each campus.
2. Run their own Labor STEPs project. We have a toolkit on how they can do it.
3. Donate Labor Studies materials to us so we can create a Labor Education Inventory.

Summary of Executive Board Motions

Dec. 13, 2011

• Approved the CFT and AFT convention delegate election timelines and the Guild election timeline
• Charged the Guild’s Bond Issues Task Force to develop other criteria to present to the Bond Steering Committee January 3 and include AFT representation on any decision-making body formed
• Endorsed Anthony Portantino for Senate District 25 and authorized $2,500 to his campaign [note: Subsequent to the meeting, Portantino announced that he will not be running]
• Authorized $1,000 to help Miguel Santiago retire his debt from the Board of Trustees race
• Approved $2,500 for the LA County Fed’s campaign to elect Warren Furutani to the L.A. City Council
• Agreed to pay $500 to re-affiliate with Labor United for Universal Health Care
• Authorized an increase for the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Labor Breakfast from $600 to $750 and approved an additional $2,250 to be a sponsor of the Kingdom Day parade

Jan. 17, 2012

• Approved reimbursement of $5,000 divided among the top 10 vote-getters running for delegates to the CFT convention
• Confirmed the nomination by the Guild president of Armida Ornelas as JLMBC Chair for the term beginning July 1, 2012
• Approved a Contract Interpretation clarifying the term of office of adjunct representatives
• Approved $1,000 to support the two-day LA Trustee Roundup training
• Endorsed Chris Holden for State Assembly District 41 and approved $1,500 for his campaign
• Endorsed Anthony Rendon for State Assembly District 63 and approved $1,500 for his campaign
• Approved $1,000 to help Scott Svonkin retire his debt from the Board of Trustees race
• Supported the Staff Guild, AFT1521A, in its efforts to ensure staff inclusion in shared governance

Busy Semester Ahead for Adjuncts

By Kathy Holland and Phyllis Eckler
Co-chairs Adjunct Issues Committee

The Adjunct Issues Committee (AIC) has been busy going into the spring semester. Co-chair Phyllis Eckler and Guild secretary Deborah Kaye updated the Adjunct Survival Guide to reflect the language in our new contract. Go to http://www.aft1521.org/ and click on the Adjunct Faculty tab for the new Survival Guide. If you need a paper copy, please call the Guild office at 323-851-1521.

One of the changes in the contract involves the Adjunct Department Reps. All adjunct reps elected this spring semester will now serve a two-year term that begins on July 1. All current adjunct reps will continue in their current term until the end of the academic year in June. To become an adjunct department rep, one has to be on the seniority list and have at least one assignment. Once elected, the adjunct department rep will get to vote for department chairs (when there is an election for chairs), attend department meetings, and take part in departmental decision-making. All adjuncts on the seniority list are eligible to vote in the elections for their adjunct department rep.

The AIC has scheduled three regional meetings. The first, at Trade-Tech on Feb. 4, was a huge success. Special thanks to AIC members Angelo Datis and Lou Siegel as well as chapter president Carole Anderson for being great hosts! Valley held its meeting on Feb. 11. Thanks to AIC members Renee Berg and Michael Powelson as well as chapter president Larry Nakamura for their work on the session. The next meeting will be held on March 9 at Southwest. Go to http://www.aft1521.org for more information and to register.

The Guild has created a MERF (Member Emergency Relief Fund) program to help adjunct members who have lost half or more of our teaching assignments. You must be on a seniority list and be a Guild member to apply for the emergency funds (for those experiencing extreme economic hardship) or tuition reimbursement (to help with expenses related to improving your skills). Applications are online at http://www.aft1521.org.

Adjunct Faculty News
Our CBA – the Heart and Soul of a Union

The finishing touches are being put on our 2011-14 collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Soon it will be at the printers and shortly after that, in your home mailboxes. A draft version is posted on the Guild website.

Please read the contract and keep it handy so you can refer to it when you have questions about your employment with the LACCD and your wages, hours, and working conditions. Article 16 has been completely reorganized for clarity, and there are many changes in Articles 15, 17, 19, and 42, with revisions in other articles as well. Be sure to check the appendix, which contains useful information and forms, including academic calendars, salary schedules, new evaluation forms, and a seniority list template.

The hard part – negotiating the agreement – is done. Now comes the task of educating faculty and administrators about its provisions. To begin to do that, the Guild and the District will hold three regional workshops for department chairs, deans, and vice presidents this spring:

- March 15, 12-5 pm at East
- March 21, 12-5 pm at Valley
- March 28, 12-5 pm at Southwest

Revised language in Article 28 reflects the union’s philosophy of protecting faculty by ensuring that the contract is followed: “A grievance is the procedure to remedy a misinterpretation, misapplication, or violation of a specific item of this Agreement or of a written rule or regulation of the Los Angeles Community College District.” If you believe that a provision of the contract has been violated, contact the Guild chapter president on your campus.

The Guild’s response to a faculty member’s complaint is to carefully review contract language to see if any violation of the agreement has occurred. Sometimes the problem results from a misunderstanding on the part of an administrator regarding contract language, and, in that case, your chapter president will try to resolve the issue before a grievance is filed. The contract is a legally binding document, but it is up to each of us to ensure that it is being followed.

Pension Reform Group Suspends its Initiative

By Sharon Hendricks, Guild Retirement Liaison

California Pension Reform, the group that had hoped to qualify at least one of two pension reform initiatives for the November ballot, announced last week that it is suspending its campaign. The group needed to raise an estimated $2 million to place one of its proposed initiatives before voters and was unable to do so.

Although it looks as if there will not be a pension reform measure on the November ballot, Gov. Brown and the legislature are intent on moving forward with pension reform. The Conference Committee on Public Pensions will meet again Feb. 28 and State Senator Darryl Steinberg has indicated that he would like to accomplish pension reform before completing the budget.

For CalSTRS members, it will probably include the elimination of airtime and changes for both current and future employees regarding what can be counted towards an employee’s creditable compensation. Additionally, it is likely that a cap will be placed on the level of compensation that can count towards the defined benefit for new employees. For questions about retirement, feel free to contact me at shendricks@aft1521.org.

‘February Surprise’

(Continued from page 1)

2. Go to www.facc.org and use the Faculty Association of Community Colleges’ point and click tool to notify your legislator about the shortfall.
3. Tell your friends, neighbors, and colleagues to contact their legislators, too. Share your request on Facebook.

Use these talking points:

- This is funding that the legislature and administration budgeted for our colleges -- we counted on it in building our budgets for the year.
- The deficit comes on the heels of a $313 million reduction and an additional $102 million in midyear trigger cuts imposed in January.
- Unlike K-12 and other public agencies, community college budgets are not guaranteed. If the funding shortfall is not addressed, our district will have to cut hundreds of sections and essential services, denying access to thousands of students.
- The legislature and Governor should act quickly to backfill this unexpected cut.

Join with us and a coalition including CFT, the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), the California Nurses Association, the Courage Campaign, and 25 community organizations, with the coalition still growing. Join us as we rebuild California together. Go to www.millionairesstaxca.com to find out how.

Millionaires Tax

(Continued from page 1)

last three years) with serious consequences for the most vulnerable Californians. The Millionaires Tax would restore some of the program funding that has been lost.

“The top 1% of income earners has doubled its share of total state income over the past 20 years while the top tier tax rates are lower than they used to be,” says Joanne Waddell, Guild President. “It’s time for those who have benefited most from tax cuts in the last 20 years to pay their fair share.”

The Millionaires Tax is supported by the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), the California Nurses Association, the Courage Campaign, and 25 community organizations, with the coalition still growing. Join us as we rebuild California together. Go to www.millionairesstaxca.com to find out how.

What You Can Do to Help Pass the Millionaires Tax

Volunteers are urgently needed for this historic effort! What you can do:

- Help gather signatures. Qualifying the initiative for the ballot is the next step, which will require tens of thousands of signatures. We are asking each member to get 20 signatures of registered voters. Contact your chapter president or the Guild Office to get petitions.
- Talk to your friends and neighbors about the initiative
- Go to the campaign web site to learn more: www.millionairesstaxca.com
- Like us on our AFT 1521 facebook page and share us with your friends

http://www.facebook.com/pages/AFT-Local-1521/