

2022 STATE OF THE UNION – 1650

Introduction

According to the Local 1650 Constitution and Bylaws, one of the responsibilities of the Federation President is to report to the membership each year on the accomplishments of the Union in the last year and plans for the upcoming one. This report has become known as the State of the Union.

I am honored by you to be entrusted with this important office and the responsibility of being your president. This is a role that I do not take lightly. I take on the task of fighting for your wages, benefits and rights with resolve. In the two weeks since I've been Federation President, I've deeply appreciated your good wishes and support. I am confident that I represent the most supportive and best union membership anywhere. Please reach out anytime with your concerns, questions, and suggestions. In the coming weeks, I will work with your Area Representatives to schedule Zoom meetings to discuss how I can help you in your work.

Since the founding members collectively voted to start a union here in 1966, I am only the fifth elected president of Local 1650. My immediate predecessor and friend, John McDonald, served as president for 43 years. John worked tirelessly for every member of Local 1650 every day he served in this office. He knew that collective bargaining agreements are not self-executing, but must be maintained through collective effort. The Union, you and I, must work to hold the Administration to the terms of the contract and ensure that our rights are protected. While we will continue to discuss ways to honor John's legacy and service as our Local President, the best way to celebrate his life is for all of us to engage in the work of the Union.

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Welcome to New Faculty

We face many challenges this year, but we have great talents that will allow us to meet them. In the contract we ratified 18 months ago, we are finally securing the full-time faculty lines we need to effectively do our jobs and serve our students. I'd like to welcome our newest Local 1650 members and encourage you to become involved in the work of the Union. While your primary focus now is rightly on your teaching responsibilities, I urge you to attend our monthly membership meetings and talk to your Area Representatives about your questions or concerns. Please consider joining one of the Local's committees, some of which you'll hear from later in this meeting. By being engaged with the work of the Federation, we only become stronger. Local 1650 has always benefitted from the active involvement of members in our efforts. True solidarity means we all work together for the common good, and we need all your voices at the table.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to complicate our lives. You should be proud of the innovative ways we have responded to this once-in-a-century health crisis by devising new modes of classroom delivery and creative methods of working with students outside the classroom. We HAVE been the professionals that our community has expected and that should be recognized. As you find strategies to reach your students, you also have the right to expect safe conditions in which to do your job.

This past fall, many Local 1650 members spoke out strongly in meetings and letters to the Board and Administration for more comprehensive COVID mitigation efforts on campus. At a December meeting, President Kavalhuna met with Local 1650 members to hear our concerns. Those discussions prompted the Administration to re-think its decision to disband the Return to Campus Team (now called the Covid Response Team), on which I have served as our Union's representative. We were given a bit more flexibility in our choice of course modalities for the winter semester thanks to our collective advocacy.

However, there's still much more the Administration can do to respond to the ongoing pandemic. As so many of you have pointed out, HFC is not following the CDC's guidelines for institutions of higher education in a number of key respects, most critically its recommendations about social distancing. I can report that the vast majority of Local 1650 members are vaccinated against the virus. We have called for a vaccine mandate for the students we are with each day in our classrooms and offices, and this is something I bring up in every meeting on COVID with the administration and Board members. Please continue to express your professional views on these topics through letters, emails, and other means. Our voices make a difference and are necessary.

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Shared Governance

When Local 1650 was chartered in 1966, the Union's first battle was to protect the faculty role in shared governance, a hallmark of higher education. The founders of this Federation went on strike—the first for any higher ed union in the nation—for this important principle. Since that time, the Constitution for the Faculty Organization, which our Union's founders first drafted, has been protected by the Local 1650 collective bargaining agreement. The faculty voice in recommending academic policies to the College Administration is paramount because we are academic professionals who work with our students every day and know what works and doesn't work. While the Administration has the final say on any policy, they are expected to follow the faculty's recommendations on academic matters unless there is a strong reason not to, which they must explain in writing.

However, shared governance only works when faculty participate in the process. Many of you are already active on Senate committees, which we are all grateful for. From the last year and half of the probationary process onward, every full-time faculty member should be engaged in committee work. Join search committees for new faculty and administrators. Participate in the decision processes of your departments and schools. We not only have a contractual obligation but also a professional responsibility to participate in shared governance at HFC. And don't forget that service on Union committees counts toward your contractual shared governance requirement. This isn't about simply providing input before a decision is made. Meaningful shared governance means that faculty members are involved at every step of the process in offering our professional expertise jointly with the Administration.

Political Efforts

As John McDonald often reminded us, we are all public employees. Local tax dollars and State money from Lansing fund this College and pay our salaries. Elected officials in the State Capital and here in Dearborn largely determine what we're able to do in our professional lives.

Local 1650 has a long tradition of leadership in the political arena. We run the advocacy campaigns for HFC millages. The Federation plays a large role in campaigns for Board of Trustee candidates. We also talk regularly to HFC Board members and our representatives and senators in Lansing. Because of our work, we've been more visible in the political arena than other unions of our size, and it's benefitted us in our professional roles. However, it takes resources to be successful.

2022 is a major election year, with the entire State House and State Senate, plus the governor's office, other executive offices, judicial positions, and many other elected officials on the ballot. Legislative candidates

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will be running in newly drawn districts, which were created by a bipartisan citizens' commission as a result of a 2018 ballot initiative, instead of by the partisan legislature as in the past. Locally, there are two seats up on the HFC Board of Trustees.

We have a good chance of electing pro-public education candidates to the Michigan Legislature this November and Board of Trustees' candidates who will listen to us carefully as they make decisions for this institution. In order to have a meaningful impact on these important races and others, we need resources. Historically, up to 90% of Local 1650 members gave to our Political Action Fund. We are not currently at that high watermark, but I know we can reach it, because these essential resources help elect policymakers who will work with us and not against us.

As you may know, we only use PAF money for races that directly impact our work at the College, and most of it goes to candidates running locally in the Dearborn area. While we have a suggested contribution amount of \$150 per member, we know that individual circumstances may not permit you to give as much, particularly if you're new. Thank you to all who have contributed this year. If you have not yet given, contributions can be made monthly or all at once through our Square online account. Please contact your Area Representative or our Treasurer, Stacey Buchanan, for more information. By contributing, we are collectively using our power to shape the policies at the local and state level to defend our right to organize and be recognized as the professionals we are.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to once again recognize my predecessor and friend. John McDonald's passing has saddened all of us and leaves a huge void in our lives. Yet, I'm certain that John would advise us to move forward. He learned many lessons from the women and men who founded this Local, which guided him during his many years at its helm. And in return, John mentored many of us over the years to ensure that we'd be able to move this Union forward. Now, this work is ours to carry out and we will do it—**Together**.

The charter members of Local 1650 and generations of members since have left a proud legacy for us. As I've said, we are smaller than many AFT Locals, yet our National and State Federations pay attention to us because they know how successful we've been in securing good contracts and professional standing for faculty at our institution. As the new president of the Henry Ford Community College Federation of Teachers, I am proud to serve with all of you to carry forward our great work with the newest generation of members of this Local, and I am excited for the opportunities ahead of us.

Thank you.

Eric W. Rader, President, HFCC-FT, Local 1650
Dearborn, Michigan