



# WIU Chapter - SUAA Newsletter

Serving the interest of the annuitants and survivors of Western Illinois University

January 2021

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Krista Hayes

## High Hopes for 2021

### Message from the President

I think it is safe to say we are all glad to see 2020 in the rearview mirror and are hoping for a better 2021. We will not be able to gather for our annual Snow Bunny Luncheon, and our Annual Meeting and Dinner is most like in jeopardy also. Before you toss this aside thinking I have nothing good to say, please bear with me. A vaccine is on the horizon for all of us, and we have hope that by Summer 2021 we will regain some sense of normalcy. We may still be a masked crew but that's okay as long as getting together is again possible. That is definitely what is keeping me going through some of these cold winter days.

Your WIU Chapter of SUAA has continued to meet via Zoom and is continuing the work of our great organization. We have had representation, again via Zoom, at all of the meetings that have been held. Nick Pano has continued to keep us updated on what is going on in Springfield, and you will find information from Nick in this newsletter.

I would also like to let our membership know of a scam that has affected some of our members, and interestingly enough it has also affected my household as my husband just found out that he too has been targeted. If you receive or have received a letter or debit card from the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), you should either call or send an email to the WIU Human Resources Office. The phone number is 309-298-1971 and the e-mail address is [HR-Office@wiu.edu](mailto:HR-Office@wiu.edu). The HR Office will be able to tell you the actions that you will need to take if this happens to you. The list of actions required is rather daunting, but please do not disregard this as protecting your identity depends on it.

The board appreciates the support we have been given during this very trying time and looks forward to brighter days ahead. Take care and stay safe.

– Linda Farr  
President, WIU SUAA

## Legislative Update

The 102nd Session of the Illinois General Assembly convened at 12 noon on Jan. 13, 2021. Although there are a number of fresh faces in the new legislature, the partisan composition of the body will be virtually identical to that of its predecessor. The Senate will be comprised of 41 Democrats and 18 Republicans (a gain of one seat for the Democrats) and the House of 73 Democrats and 45 Republicans (a one-seat gain for the Republicans). Thus, the Democrats will continue to enjoy a veto-proof supermajority in both legislative chambers.

Under the rules of the House of Representatives, the first order of business was the election of the Speaker. Except for the years 1995-96, Michael J. Madigan had been elected and re-elected with little or no opposition to this office which he first assumed in 1983. This year, however, the 78-year-old Madigan, who is beginning his 50th consecutive year of service in the Illinois House, failed to win the support of a sufficient number of the Democratic House Caucus members to retain his position. Madigan's standing both within the Capitol and with the public has during the past two years been tarnished by scandals concerning alleged and verified instances of abusive treatment of House employees by members of the Speaker's staff as well as from the fallout from the ongoing federal investigation of corrupt activities involving Madigan's friends and former associates. The "Madigan Era" in the Illinois House of Representatives officially ended on Jan. 13, 2021 with the election of Emanuel "Chris" Welch as Speaker. Welch is the first Black to hold this

office. At this point it is unclear whether the new Speaker will seek to emulate his predecessor or pursue a different course.

With the defeat of the graduated income tax proposal in the Nov. 2020 election, the Governor and General Assembly will have to find sufficient resources to cover the resulting \$4-5 billion shortfall in the state's budget. Both Gov. Pritzker and Democratic legislative leaders appear to be counting on the Biden Administration and a sympathetic Democratic Congress to provide a substantial portion of the financial rescue package the state will require to survive the present phase of its economic crisis.

Since the General Assembly was in recess from May 23, 2020 until Jan. 8, 2021, Gov. Pritzker, as has been the case with his counterparts in other states, has taken the lead in planning and coordinating the Illinois effort to combat the pandemic. His policies and directives in this respect have generated some heated negative reactions from a variety of commercial interests – especially in the food, travel, recreation, and hospitality sectors of the economy – whose businesses have suffered serious losses as a consequence of the restrictions Pritzker has imposed. Educational, religious, health, and social entities have also, in varying degrees, expressed concerns regarding the regulations of their activities. The most vigorous political opposition to the Governor's public health initiatives have come from state legislations and other public officials from the region south of I-80. With the General Assembly back in session, it appears that some legislators will

be seeking greater input into the planning, oversight, and implementation phases of the state's continuing anti-pandemic efforts. But the immediate and highest priority of the legislative and executive branches of state government should be to ensure that Illinois develops an efficient and equitable procedure for the distribution of the anti-virus vaccines as these become increasingly available.

The Jan. 8-13, 2021 "lame-duck override session" of the outgoing 101st General Assembly considered several detailed proposals which could have profound implications for Illinois residents. These measures were originally scheduled for discussion during the Nov. 2020 and the Dec. 2020 Assembly override sessions which were cancelled for health reasons. The package proposed by the Legislative Black Caucus consists of four comprehensive bills dealing with: criminal justice, health care, economic equity, and education. Among the provisions of the nearly 500-page education bill that was passed and forwarded to the Governor by the General Assembly are proposals for expanding the school year, increasing high school graduation requirements, encouraging greater minority enrollments in teacher education programs and reducing the percentage share of institutional matching funding for AIM HIGH student grants at universities such as WIU.

Republican legislators will continue to press for action on ethics legislation to address problems concerning the relationships of lawmakers and their staffs

as well as those of legislative and executive branch employees with lobbyists, state contractors and others with whom they interact. Up to now, Democratic legislative leaders have been successful in sidetracking initiatives in this area.

Last, but no means least in importance, the General Assembly will be dealing with the reapportionment of the state's U.S. Congressional and Illinois General Assembly districts. This process should begin in either late March or April when the state receives its official 2020 U.S. Census data. Since former Speaker Madigan has managed to defeat every "Fair Map" initiative to establish an independent commission to execute the required decennial redistricting, this process will again this year be likely conducted by a legislative commission dominated by the Democrats. During the Madigan era, the Speaker, with his small army of lawyers, demographers, statisticians, and political operatives, had managed to protect and advance his party's political interests. With Illinois projected to lose one or two of its Congressional seats this year, it will be interesting to see whether Representative Madigan will be given another opportunity to work his magic with the new state electoral map.

— Nick Pano

**WIU-SUAA Welcomes Western Illinois University's  
12th President Dr. Guiyou Huang,  
his wife Dr. Jennifer Qian, and their children  
George and Claire!**

**Membership Information**

A reminder for those who may be considering retiring this year: If you are currently a dues deduction member, please remember to contact SURS ([surs.org](http://surs.org)) and provide them with the signature to withhold the dues from your retirement benefit. That is not automatically done for you when you retire, and while you are an active employee the university does the deduction.

If you know of anyone who is interested in joining SUAA, please contact Maureen Marx ([M-Marx@wiu.edu](mailto:M-Marx@wiu.edu)). Also, a downloadable

membership form is available on Western's website at [wiu.edu/suaa](http://wiu.edu/suaa), click on "Membership."

**Member Information Changes**

If you have a change in your home address, email, or telephone number(s), please contact the Alumni Office with this information so that you continue to receive newsletters and other updates from your WIU SUAA Board. Inform information to the Alumni Office at: Tel. 309-298-1914; Email: [A-Association@wiu.edu](mailto:A-Association@wiu.edu); or complete the online form at: [wiu.edu/alumni](http://wiu.edu/alumni) and click on "Update us" in the left column