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| From the Desk of President Ray Cummings |

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| ***What has our Union Done This Week?***  First, I must say how proud I am to be a member of a union of heroes. It has not been easy getting through this pandemic together and this week more than 97% of our members stepped up to protect the children of St. Louis Public Schools by being vaccinated against COVID.    We are also grateful this week for another milestone in a continuous record of successful ‘wins’ for our members. Locally, AFT St. Louis, Local 420, AFLCIO proposed additional financial incentives on behalf of our members and we are pleased that the St. Louis Public Schools Board of Education took action in the approval of a $750 incentive, raising continuing substitute pay to $200 a day and adding hourly substitute pay during teachers’ planning time.    Nationally the American Federation of Teachers reached a settlement in the “Weingarten v DeVos” student loan lawsuit with the Department of Education-a clear victory for public employees. Our national president Randi Weingarten hailed the “landmark settlement” that provides a loan forgiveness program for public service workers-including educators.    Weingarten filed suit in July 2019 against then Education Secretary Betsey DeVos. This agreement will **"*hold the federal government accountable for its failure to manage the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program (PSLF),” President Weingarten said.***    In answer to the question what has our union done this week?  Our members stepped up to protect the children of St. Louis Public Schools by being vaccinated against COVID. The district honored our request for further financial incentives. AFT had a major legal victory which will help members pay off student loans now and into the future.  It hasn’t always been easy but we are making progress . . . and we are better together.    In Unity,  ***Ray*** |