

TCAA LUNCHEON MEETING OCTOBER 22, 2019

The Hospitality Program students provided a delicious buffet luncheon with outstanding desserts, served with great politeness and friendliness. The luncheon was enjoyed by all in attendance.

Our guest speaker, Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, Illinois House of Representatives (D) 17th District, stated that she is a member of the Higher Education Committee which reviews all bills affecting higher education and so has a direct interest in what is happening that will affect Community Colleges such as Triton College.

She pointed out that the gridlock of the past 4 years has broken now- as evidenced by the passage of a bi-partisan budget this fall and that with Illinois being a leader in Higher Education, the legislature must work to keep it that way. The 50% cuts in Higher Ed since 2000 is now being reversed. There is a 40% increase in merit scholarships and an increase in financial aid resources. The RISE Act allows student access to financial aid for 2 and 4 year education.

The unfunded pensions are the biggest challenge with a \$134 billion deficit and a bipartisan effort to solve this problem is sorely needed. One initiative is a 2020 resolution to have a tax rate increase to enhance state revenues. If K-12 and higher education are not funded along with social programs usually funded by the state, we will be short changing a generation and have a failure of government. It is necessary that the legislature try to balance the budget and support the younger generation so that we don't leave them with a huge debt. She pointed out that the state has a shortage of qualified teachers and that good teachers are the single most important aspect of higher education so the state needs to work towards providing the needed teachers. She further discussed the problems facing schools and teachers and that the Governor is making proposals to solve real problems with real solutions.

Discussed the problem related to property taxes which are levied locally and cannot be rebated by the state. Seventy percent of property taxes are utilized to finance local schools. The Governor is leading a movement to look at how property taxes can be reduced. She pointed out that school boards must levy enough to avoid falling short during any given school year and that the legislature is looking at ways to solve the problem of property tax relief.

Discussed the proposal for the "Fair Tax" and how it can improve taxing for education. Even if the Fair Tax is not passed, taxes will still be raised to meet the budget needs. She pointed out how funding of Social Services and Medicaid often reduce the cost to state government when it receives support from the U.S. government. Pointed out the need to care for people before problems develop which can increase the cost to the state. She stated that there are many ways money can be spent wisely to save money. She compared IL to the state of Minn which has had a Fair Tax since 2009 and this saved them from a financial crisis.

Discussed how Illinois is a leader in Green Energy and how it is looking at ways to get public transportation off carbon based energy source.

Addressed the question of gun violence - one tack is to include a fingerprint in the gun I.D. permit.

Discussed who the new cannabis legislation is going to address needs of neglected communities.

Responded to question of how opening the Constitution for the Fair Tax aspect of the Constitution will affect the pension clauses. She stated that only a portion of the Constitution will be opened to include the Flat Tax aspect of the Constitution.

A question concerning how the state is handling medical bills payments, she pointed out that progress is being made and the back-log is down to a 3 month wait for payment.

President Mary Jeans thanked Jennifer Gong Gershowitz for being with us today and for the excellent presentation of issues concerning Higher Education.

REPORTS:

Health insurance: Eleanor offered assistance with questions about Medicare and supplemental insurance. Her goal is to help explore options available to those on Medicare.

Treasurer: Ann reported that we have \$2910 and that our main expense is printing/postage for the newsletter and expenses associated with our meetings. She stated that we are receiving dues every month from the people who are using the Dues Deduction.

Membership: Carol stated that we have had some loss of membership due to death or leaving or not renewing membership. Our current total is 152. She encouraged members present to reach out to people who are not currently members to ask them to join.

Special report: Darrell Semmelroth reported on a recently published novel written by Joe English, a former faculty member in the English department, called SCHUGANA which is about an island with people from all over. Stated it is intriguing and has unforgettable characters.

Meeting concluded at 2:15 P.M.

Connie Allekian, Secretary