

TUA NEWS RELEASE

TAXPAYERS UNITED OF AMERICA

205 W. Randolph St. • Suite 1305 • Chicago, IL 60606 • Phone: (312) 427-5128
• www.taxpayersunited.org • E-mail: jared@taxpayersunited.org

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Contact: Jared Labell (773) 766-4947
(312) 427-5128

Chicago Teachers Union Threatens Strike

For the children or the tax dollars?

CHICAGO — Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) President, Karen Lewis, and Vice President, Jesse Sharkey, [warned](#) CTU members this past Monday to begin saving at least twenty-five percent of their pay “to weather what could be a protracted strike.” This Thursday, November 5, CTU will conduct “an official ‘practice’ strike vote and contract poll in all CPS school buildings,” further setting the stage for an actual strike in the coming months.

Taxpayers United of America’s (TUA) director of operations, Jared Labell, calls CTU’s brazen threat to strike both wildly misdirected and counterproductive for solving the financial fiasco in the Chicago Public Schools, Illinois’ most beleaguered school district.

“Karen Lewis led CTU’s last strike in 2012, declaring it a victory for teachers and students. But even by CTU’s standards, it’s difficult to see how they consider thousands of laid-off teachers and employees, plus dozens of shuttered schools in the interim three years a success, and that’s all prior to the newly proposed cuts by CPS CEO Forrest Claypool, which would take place in early 2016,” said Labell.

CTU has prepared for a possible strike since their contract expired June 30.

Revived talk of a teacher walkout comes mere days after the Chicago City Council approved Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s historic three-quarters of a billion dollars tax increase, which included an unprecedented property tax hike totaling \$588 million dollars to fund the [Chicago police and firefighter pensions](#), and pay school construction costs. But even with the historic property tax hike and other fee and tax increases, the infusion of taxpayer dollars will not approach the [billions of dollars](#) needed to correct Chicago’s financial footing.

Yesterday, the [Chicago Tribune](#) reported that nearly three dozen Chicago high schools are less than half full, which represents an extremely costly problem for CPS in terms of property holdings, maintenance, and administration, but it is simply business as usual for the government unions and their fellow travelers. Every once in a while, however, even they will admit that the system is unsustainable when held to the same standards as found in the free market:

"You have to administer a building, whether a school has 20 kids or 2,000 kids, you got to have a principal. School districts have a lot of fixed costs," Charles Burbridge, executive director of the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund, said during a recent meeting of the Tribune's editorial board.

"It's like, I often say, look at school districts, and essentially they're like a hotel chain. If you're not running 80 percent capacity and utilization of your hotels, you're going out of business," he said. "Well, CPS is not running 80 percent capacity in its hotel, and it can't go out of business."

“The fact is, CTU leadership have been awful stewards of the Chicago Public Schools and their students. The union bosses continue to push for raises and lax performance evaluations in the face of [abysmal academic progress](#) for students, ballooning debt, and profligate spending, all the while resisting reforms to their bureaucratic fiefdom and their lavish taxpayer-funded pensions,” said Labell. “And I don’t think CTU will win over many parents of students by approaching the situation as they have. The Chicago Public Schools are basically a government monopoly, top-heavy with exorbitant salaries, gold-plated pensions, and redundant bureaucracy, but they don’t seem to reconcile that with the financial reality average students and families are facing.”

Chicago teachers receive an average salary of about \$70,000 annually for nine months of employment, while the per capita income for Chicagoans is less than half of that, and nearly a quarter of the city is below the poverty level.

“My heart goes out to the least affluent families in Chicago, who have little choice in competing educational alternatives. These families are forced to hand over their hard-earned money in the form of property taxes to fund the vast government-education empire housing Chicago’s children like prisoners,” said Labell.

“Perhaps taxpayers should counter CTU’s threat of a teacher strike with a taxpayer strike. If CTU and CPS are not onboard to enact significant structural changes to the heavily indebted and liability-laden district, then Chicagoans should stop enabling them with taxpayer dollars, like one would stop funneling whiskey to a drunk. The question is how badly Chicagoans will feel once the party is over and the well is dry, because either way, the hangover is coming. It’s only a matter of when,” concluded Labell.