**Proviso Teachers Council (Local 571) Case Study**

**Constituency:** K-12 Teachers

**Unit Size:** 300

**Problem:** Members of the Proviso Teachers Council of Local 571 and President Maggie Riley reached an Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on COVID-19 safety related issues with the new superintendent of Dist 209 in August 2020. The MOA explicitly stated that teachers could work safely from remote locations while students were learning remotely. In early October, the superintendent gave just two weeks notice of his demand that teachers return to buildings to provide instruction from their classrooms, despite the dramatically rising case numbers in the community and the facts that students were still not in attendance. The superintendent did not bargain this change with the union. The union immediately filed an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge.

Upon returning to the buildings as directed, teachers found filthy classrooms, inadequate availability of PPE, no heat in one high school building, and lack of hot water to clean and sanitize. In addition, the superintendent visited the teachers in their classrooms and removed his mask, showing no concern for the pandemic or the health of the educators. A grievance was filed to address the unsanitary and unsafe conditions.

**Goal:** The union was seeking to win a legal decision that forced the district to comply with the original MOA and continue to allow teachers to work from safe remote locations.

**Organizing**: The union kept its members informed of the superintendent’s directive to return and advising them that the union had taken immediate legal action to protect members’ health and safety.

On the day of the return to buildings, teachers organized “check in” lines at each of the three high schools, standing outside the doors, socially distanced awaiting entry in the morning. Each member asked the administrator present for PPE before entering the buildings. The action made a powerful statement that members were complying with the directive but expecting safety to be prioritized as agreed to in the MOA.

**External communications:** Working with the field service director and IFT’s communications department, the council issued a press release to Chicago area media to call attention to the unsafe conditions teachers were being forced to work in, as well as to the fact that the district was in violation of the standing agreement between the parties.

**Press statement:**

[https://c762f3cd-45f3-45ff-afbc-9ed8df287a9b.usrfiles.com/ugd/c762f3\_010f12cdab514473809223f03baf3eff.docx](https://c762f3cd-45f3-45ff-afbc-9ed8df287a9b.usrfiles.com/ugd/c762f3_010f12cdab514473809223f03baf3eff.docx%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

**Coverage:**

WBBM (radio)

<https://mms.tveyes.com/MediaCenterPlayer.aspx?u=aHR0cDovL21lZGlhY2VudGVyLnR2ZXllcy5jb20vZG93bmxvYWRnYXRld2F5LmFzcHg%2FVXNlcklEPTgwMDc0OSZNRElEPTE0MDEzNTg1Jk1EU2VlZD0xMzI5JlR5cGU9TWVkaWE%3D>

WBEZ

<https://mms.tveyes.com/MediaCenterPlayer.aspx?u=aHR0cDovL21lZGlhY2VudGVyLnR2ZXllcy5jb20vZG93bmxvYWRnYXRld2F5LmFzcHg%2FVXNlcklEPTgwMDc0OSZNRElEPTE0MDE0MDY3Jk1EU2VlZD03OTUzJlR5cGU9TWVkaWE%3D>

WGN (TV)

<https://mms.tveyes.com/MediaCenterPlayer.aspx?u=aHR0cDovL21lZGlhY2VudGVyLnR2ZXllcy5jb20vZG93bmxvYWRnYXRld2F5LmFzcHg%2FVXNlcklEPTgwMDc0OSZNRElEPTE0MDE0MDY3Jk1EU2VlZD03OTUzJlR5cGU9TWVkaWE%3D>

NBC 5

<https://mms.tveyes.com/MediaCenterPlayer.aspx?u=aHR0cDovL21lZGlhY2VudGVyLnR2ZXllcy5jb20vZG93bmxvYWRnYXRld2F5LmFzcHg%2FVXNlcklEPTgwMDc0OSZNRElEPTE0MDEzNjI2Jk1EU2VlZD0xNTk5JlR5cGU9TWVkaWE%3D>

WBBM (web)

<https://www.radio.com/wbbm780/news/local/teachers-cry-foul-when-district-209-tells-them-to-return>

Village Free Press

<https://www.vfpress.news/articles/breaking-news/proviso-teachers-union-files-unfair-labor-practice-complaint-against-d209/>

Chicago Tribune

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/ct-proviso-teachers-covid-reopening-complaint-tl-1029-20201021-3krmtqq3vjbfrav7ywvidhnozu-story.html>

Forest Park Ground News

<https://ground.news/article/rss_2959_1603242890829_1/proviso-teachers-union-files-unfair-labor-practice-complaint-against-d209>

Forest Park Review

[https://www.forestparkreview.com/News/Articles/10-20-2020/Proviso-Teachers'-Union-files-Unfair-Labor-Practice-complaint-against-D209/](https://www.forestparkreview.com/News/Articles/10-20-2020/Proviso-Teachers%27-Union-files-Unfair-Labor-Practice-complaint-against-D209/)

**Outcome:**

The situation is ongoing and teachers are continuing to teach from Proviso buildings at this time. However, the union won a huge initial victory on November 5 when the IELRB granted the union injunctive relief, essentially authorizing the IELRB to take the case to the Circuit Court on the union’s behalf. Such a decision bodes well for an ultimate victory. The case is expected to be heard in that court as early as the week of November 9.