

## Let parents strike, too

By Joy Pullmann

September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

The Chicago Teachers Union's strike has left 350,000 pupils out of school and caused turmoil for nearly every family in Chicago. The central problem is the union's ability — and willingness — to hold city officials, taxpayers, parents, and students hostage.

It's the same threat a kidnapper makes: We've got your kids.

The only difference is that, in this case, the union and member teachers already have your money. They just want more.

To even the playing field, here's an idea: Let parents strike, too. If the right to strike exists, it ought to apply equally to everyone. Otherwise, a strike is just a form of extortion.

What does a strike mean? The ability to negotiate what goods and services you will trade. Unlike CTU, parents and taxpayers can't negotiate over curriculum, what schools require of the teachers and students, the structure and length of the school day, how much they will pay for school, and which school a child will attend.

Clearly, some of these things are in need of a little negotiation from the taxpayer and student side. Chicago spends almost \$16,000 per year per student enrolled in government schools, according to the Cato Institute. That's enough to pay two-thirds of tuition at the University of Chicago Lab School, where President Barack Obama previously sent his daughters, and enough to pay full tuition for every Chicago child to attend 64 of Chicago Magazine's top 70 private schools. Tuition at most of these schools, for the elementary years, runs between \$3,000 and \$8,000.

Despite spending much more than most top Chicago private schools, Chicago public schools generate terrible results. The system's fourth graders scored significantly lower than the national and big-city averages in reading on the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress. Chicago fourth and eighth graders also scored significantly below the national and big-city averages on the math test.