

Connecting you
to your union,
because **together**
we are stronger.

SPRING 2014



Illinois Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

link UNION



IFT members and students win special education class size victory



IFT members rose up and spoke out
from every part of Illinois.

The advocacy and activism of IFT members made all the difference in January when the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) tabled its dangerous proposal to eliminate statewide special education class size limits.

It was the third time ISBE sought approval of the proposal, which would have allowed local school districts to determine the ratio of special v. general education students in any classroom, as well as eliminated the requirement for a paraprofessional to be present in many classrooms with special education students.

Just as before, IFT members rose up and spoke out from every part of Illinois. You sent thousands of e-mails to policy makers

to send a strong message that big classes are a big mistake for our students, parents, teachers and PSRPs. Thousands more of you spread the message on social media to your friends and family to ask them to help stop this harmful plan in its tracks, and it worked.

The media heard the message loud and clear, too. From the *Chicago Sun-Times* to the *Quincy Herald-Whig*, news outlets described how the ISBE proposal would hurt kids and education, and they highlighted IFT members' incredible efforts to stop it. Those messages even carried across the country and appeared in the *Washington Post*.

If the proposal resurfaces in the future, it is clear that IFT members will take the lead in doing what is right for kids and education once again.

2 **Our Path Forward**
President Montgomery explains the real agenda behind "right-to-work"

4 **I am IFT**
Members take the LEAD to reclaim the promise of public education

5 **2014 Primary Election**
Learn who the IFT endorsed and other important election information

10 **Why You're Under Attack**
The fight for the middle class is real. Find out who is behind it



We will not be fooled by “right-to-work” lies

Daniel J. Montgomery
President

In the last couple months, you may have received mailings or calls from the National Right to Work Foundation (NRTWF), a group funded by billionaire CEO’s like the Koch brothers and multi-million dollar corporations. They are NOT new on the scene, but they’re becoming more aggressive than ever.

so-called “right-to-work” laws. They are spending hundreds of millions to push their anti-worker, anti-middle class agenda in legislatures across the country. Sadly, our neighbors in Michigan and Indiana are the latest states to pass so-called “right-to-work” legislation. Illinois is their next target.

plans or employer-sponsored health insurance.

- **Communities lose jobs** when wages are lowered by “right-to-work” laws. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that eight of the top 12 states with the highest unemployment rate are “right-to-work” states.

They want to: eliminate collective bargaining; silence our voices as advocates for public education and services; **take away our pensions; restrict our workplace rights; privatize education and public services; and give tax breaks to corporations and the rich.**

The NRTWF works closely with the American Legislative Exchange Commission (ALEC). Despite their positive rhetoric, their goals are clear. They want to: eliminate collective bargaining; silence our voices as advocates for public education and services; take away our pensions; restrict our workplace rights; privatize education and public services;

“Right-to-work” is simply *wrong* for all of us. **We must educate and engage our colleagues, family, and friends on this critical issue, and we need your help.**

There are many simple things we all can do to spread the truth about the danger of so-called “right-to-work” laws.

- **Talk about the issue.** Bring it up at your next union meeting, face to face. Discuss it during coffee with friends. Post about it on social media. Tell everyone you know why “right-to-work” is *wrong* and how unions help keep our communities strong.
- **“Return to Sender.”** Encourage anyone who has received letters from NRTWF to mark them “Return to Sender” and drop them in the mail. They’ll know we support our union, and they will have to pay the return postage!

NRTWF has launched a new campaign called “Teacher Refund” to try to weaken our collective strength by trying to convince us to give up our democratic rights as union members. They want to silence our voices on the job and in Springfield so that corporate interests can pass laws that take away our ability to advocate for our students and citizens, our professions, and the best interests of our communities. In other words, they are trying to bust unions, destroy the middle class, and make their cronies in the 1% even richer.

and give tax breaks to corporations and the rich.

Unbelievably, they still claim that “right-to-work” is good for workers and communities. The truth is that “right-to-work” should be called “right-to-work-for-less.”

Here are the facts:

- Workers in “right-to-work” states **earn about \$1,500 less** per year than workers in other states. The disparity is even higher among women and people of color.
- Employees in “right-to-work” states are less **likely to have pension**

- **Ask members, family and friends to sign the “I’m not fooled” petition at wrongforeveryone.com/take-action**
- **Show your solidarity.** Wear union gear, post “Proud Union Home” signs

We know their true agenda, and we will not be fooled.

This despicable organization is spewing misinformation and outright lies about

Union Link is published four times a year by the Illinois Federation of Teachers.

500 Oakmont Lane,
Westmont, IL 60559.

Phone: 630/468-4080
www.ift-aft.org

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to *Union Link*, 500 Oakmont Lane, Westmont, IL 60559.

MEMBERS:
To change your address, notify your local union treasurer.

GOING GREEN:
Union Link is printed on recycled paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and printed with environmentally-friendly soy-based inks.

© 2014 ILLINOIS FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFT, AFL-CIO

Daniel J. Montgomery
President
Chief Operating Officer

Karen GJ Lewis
Executive Vice President

Marcia K. Campbell
Secretary-Treasurer

Aviva Bowen
Director of Communications

Beth Camplain
Media Director

Amy Excell-Bailey
Media Director

Kenzo Shibata
Media Director



in your window or on your lawn, or make stickers or buttons for your colleagues. Name one day a week “Solidarity Day” at your school or worksite and wear IFT blue or your local’s color. Be creative and be proud!

Most importantly, be politically active and encourage others to do the same. Electing candidates for office who support workers and our professions is the best way to fight off attacks on our rights. Participate in a regional IFT Political Action Committee, get involved in an IFT LASR (Local Action for Statewide Results) committee, volunteer on a campaign, and VOTE!

Together, our union is a powerful force for good in Illinois. We cannot allow right-wing billionaires to take away our collective ability to make a difference for kids and communities. By standing together, we will expose the lies of “right-to-work-for-less” and fight off greedy corporate attacks on our rights and professions.

As your president, I thank you for what you do every day on behalf of our students and citizens.

In solidarity,

For more information on why “right-to-work” is WRONG for Illinois, visit wrongforeveryone.com.

E-mailDan

I'd love to hear from you!

Send your thoughts about “right-to-work” or anything else on your mind to me at emaildan@ift-aft.org.

After 18 months of bargaining, more than 1,000 faculty, students and others at **University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)** held a two-day strike on Tuesday, February 18th and Wednesday, February 19th. UIC faculty did not want it to come to this, but the trustees' proposals continue to short change both faculty and students. **UIC administration continues to hike tuition to the point it has amassed hundreds of millions in profits each year and more than a billion dollars in reserves, yet refuses to pay professors what they're worth. Many members of the faculty who teach first-year students only make \$30,000 a year!**

More information about the strike and the status of current negotiations can be found online at uicunitedfaculty.org. You can also search news on social media using the hashtag #UICStrike

Read **"I am IFT"** in every issue of **Union Link** to learn how your fellow members are Powering Forward.

i am {IFT}

Taking the LEAD to Reclaim the Promise

Several IFT local leaders took a road trip to Washington, D.C. in January to help reclaim the promise of education by advancing the goals of their local unions and the IFT by taking the LEAD at the first AFT Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) conference.

Diverse teams of leaders from around the state represented our union from locals and councils large and small, including: **Chicago ACTS, Local 4343**; **Cahokia Federation of Teachers, Local 1272**; **Illini Bluffs Federation of Teachers, Local 3810**; the **Morton Council of the West Suburban Teachers Union, Local 571**; and the **Peoria Federation of Teachers, Local 780**. Leaders from Texas, Minnesota, Michigan and Ohio also participated.

LEAD is an innovative new AFT program designed to help unionists increase their ability to think strategically as they approach problems, and to put systems in place to address their issues with a focus on end results and our union's vision.

"This first LEAD conference gave all of us as union leaders the opportunity to meet with one another and other unionists from around the country to talk about the common issues we are all facing," said **Teresa Gresham, president of Local 3810**. "Then we focused on creating a strategic plan to address our concerns, from increasing community engagement to fighting privatization threats."

Working alternately in national, statewide, and local teams, participants were tasked with developing a campaign to executive over the next 12-18 months aimed at reclaiming the promise of public education by engaging the tenants of solution-drive unionism. (Read more about them in the Sept./Oct. 2012 edition of *American Teacher* at aft.org) Our local



▲ Among those in the IFT local and council teams who attended the AFT LEAD conference were leaders from the Illini Bluffs Federation of Teachers, Local 3810. From left to right: Jason Carr, Vice President; Teresa Gresham, President; and, Rachel Roderick, Community Outreach Coordinator.

and council leaders will receive support and resources from IFT and AFT every step of the way and will meet again this summer and fall to check-in on progress and plan next steps.

"I'm excited about putting our plans into action, because I know that working together we will reclaim the promise of public education and fulfill our visions," Gresham said. "That's what being in the union is all about."

 Reclaiming the
Promise #ReclaimIt



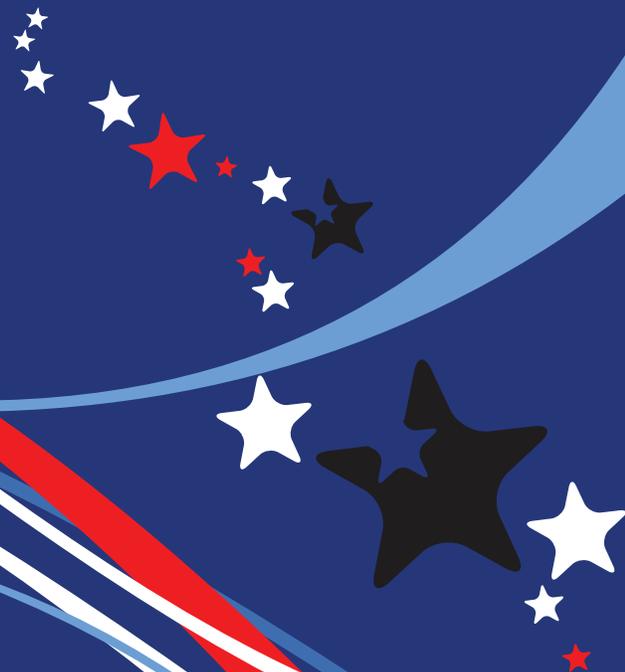
◀ IFT President Dan Montgomery (left) and AFT President Randi Weingarten discuss how locals take the LEAD to engage with their communities at the first ever AFT LEAD conference.

LearnMore

To learn about the AFT LEAD program, visit, aft.org/promise.



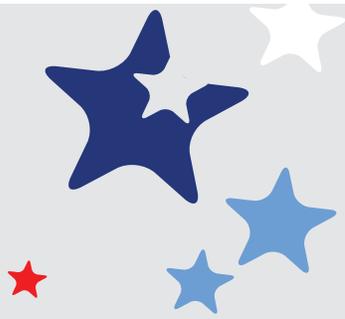
IFT-ENDORSED CANDIDATES



SPECIAL SECTION

IFT Statewide

2014 Primary Election Recommendations



The IFT PAC process: Giving members a voice, putting candidates under the microscope

Nothing is more important to the IFT than advocating for members. A critical way the union does that is by working to elect legislators in Springfield and Washington, D.C. who are dedicated to standing up for the best interests of IFT members, our professions, and those we serve.

That is why the union has worked diligently over many years to develop

and refine a Political Action Committee (PAC) process that involves members at every level of the union. The IFT worked for several weeks to determine which candidates merit the union's support in the March 18, 2014 Primary Election.

Throughout January, IFT members in 18 regional PAC committees representing all areas of the state convened to review candidates and conduct personal interviews. The PACs determined where candidates stand on the issues important to IFT members and whether or not they deserve the union's endorsement.

PAC members use voting records, position papers, questionnaires submitted by candidates, and other information before making recommendations to endorse candidates in their local areas.

A 60 percent or better voting record on IFT issues is the standard threshold for endorsement.

After regional endorsements were decided, the statewide PAC committee met to finalize a list of statewide endorsements for the IFT Executive Board to consider for approval.

The complete list of board approved endorsements for the Primary Election is on the following pages. You can also view it on the IFT website at ift-aft.org.

Your vote is your voice. Be sure to cast your ballot on March 18 for candidates who support the middle class, your workplace rights, and your ability to advocate for the students and citizens you serve.



GetDetails

Visit ift-aft.org/legislative for additional details about IFT's Political Action committees and voter information.

IFT-ENDORSED CANDIDATES

✓ U.S. SENATE

Richard Durbin (D)

✓ U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Bobby Rush (D) | 6 Michael Mason (D) | 11 Bill Foster (D) |
| 2 Robin Kelly (D) | 8 Tammy Duckworth (D) | 12 William Enyart (D) |
| 4 Luis Gutierrez (D) | 9 Jan Schakowsky (D) | 13 Ann Callis (D) |
| 5 Mike Quigley (D) | 10 Brad Schneider (D) | 14 Dennis Anderson (D) |
| | | 17 Cheri Bustos (D) |

✓ STATE TREASURER

Michael Frerichs (D)

✓ ILLINOIS SENATE

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 24 Dennis Reboletti (R) | 39 Don Harmon (D) | 48 Andy Manar (D) |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|

✓ ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 20 Mo Khan (D) | 42 Adam Johnson (R) | 96 Sue Scherer (D) |
| 26 Jhatayn Travis (D) | 48 Sandra Pihos (R) | 103 Carol Ammons (D) |
| 37 Nichole Serbin (D) | 71 Mike Smiddy (D) | 110 Kevin Garner (R) |
| 39 Will Guzzardi (D) | 77 Antonio Favela (D) | 113 Jay Hoffman (D) |
| 40 Nancy Schiavone (D) | 79 Katherine Cloonen (D) | 115 William Kilquist (D) |

✓ APPELLATE COURT

1st Appellate

(Gordon) Susan Kennedy Sullivan (D)

1st Appellate

(Murphy) David Ellis (D)

1st Appellate

(Steele) John Simon (D)

IFT recommendations for the 2014 Primary Election

The Illinois Federation of Teachers is committed to supporting candidates for public office who are willing to work with our union and our membership to provide the best public services possible. The candidates selected for recommendation may not always support 100 percent of the IFT's legislative and political priorities, but share our goal and approach to improve public education and services.

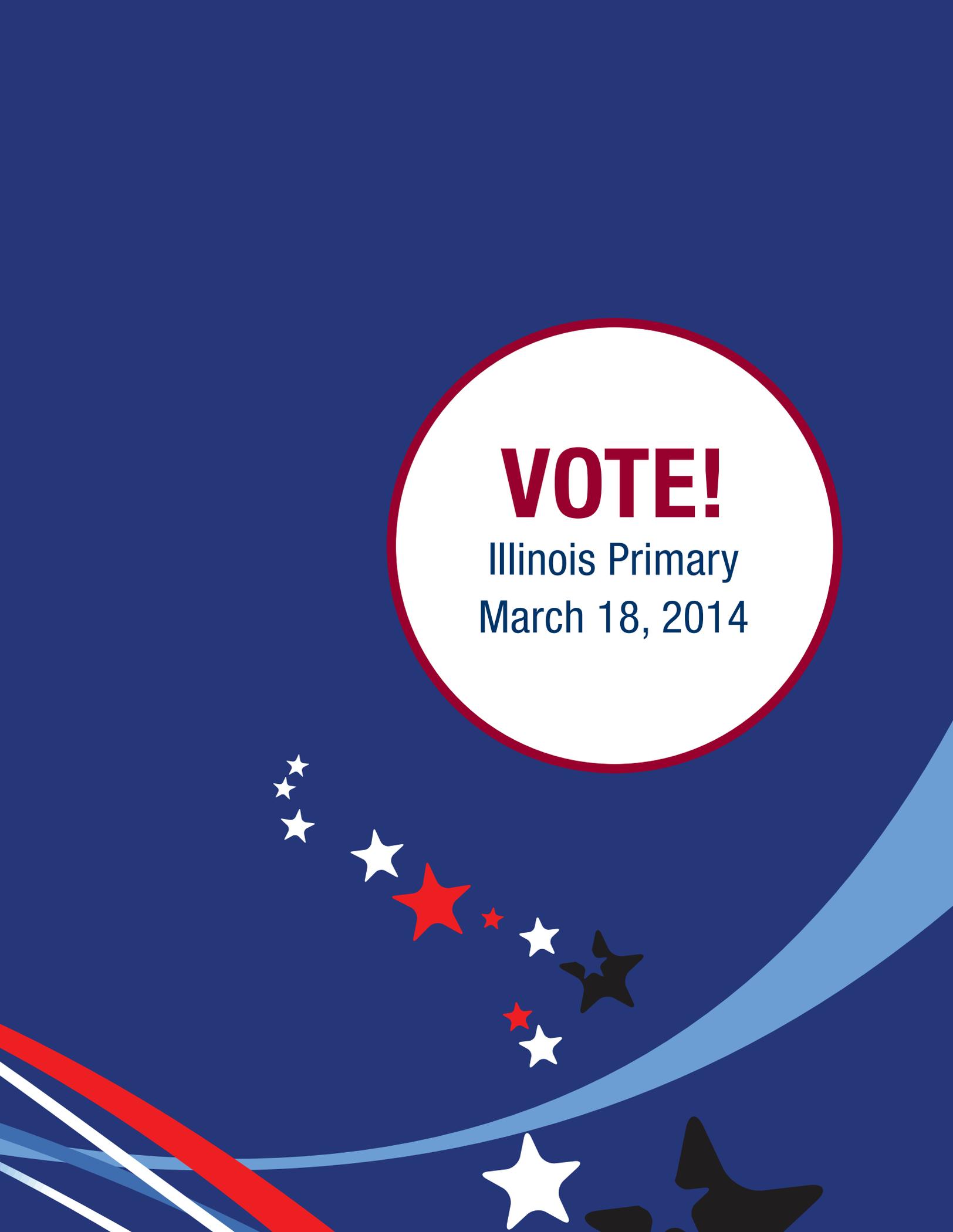
The IFT reviews candidates through a multi-step process that includes surveying on a variety of important issues, regional discussions that are open to all IFT members, and consideration from a statewide Executive Board reflective of our union's diverse constituency.

The Illinois Primary will take place on March 18, 2014. Additional endorsements will be released in advance of the November General Election.

BeHeard

We encourage you to make your voice heard on Election Day!





VOTE!

Illinois Primary
March 18, 2014

10 TOP

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE REAL BRUCE RAUNER

1
ONE

Just like Governor Scott Walker, Rauner wants to dismantle unions and eliminate pension benefits, but happily reaped huge profits by investing YOUR retirement savings. He wrote about his hatred for unions in the *Chicago Tribune*, while numerous media reported that Rauner made millions in investment fees by managing pension funds for the Illinois Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), as co-founder and former chairman of Chicago's second largest private equity fund (GTCR).

2
TWO

Rauner says he'd "shake up" Springfield, but he's tied to those who shook it down, like a corrupt Blagojevich crony who is now in prison. Rauner's firm owned part of CompBenefits, a company that paid \$1 million to convicted felon Stuart Levine to get city and state contracts by "whatever means necessary, including payoffs." Levine admitted to paying a bribe to get a contract for the company, and while on the payroll, voted to award Rauner's firm a \$50 million contract from the Illinois teachers pension fund in his role as a board member.

3
THREE

Rauner earns \$25,000 an HOUR but called for lowering the minimum wage to \$7.25. As soon as the media exposed this comment, the billionaire scrambled to explain his indefensible position, but more video had already surfaced of him saying he was "adamantly, adamantly" opposed to an increase for the lowest income workers among us.

4
FOUR

Rauner brags about his "average Joe" Carhartt jacket and \$18 watch, but he's no regular guy underneath the costume. The billionaire owns NINE multi-million dollar homes, including a mansion in Chicago suburban Winnetka, two upscale properties in Chicago, and a penthouse in New York City, among others.

5
FIVE

Rauner insists he's a political "outsider," but he played a major role in attempts to dismantle public education. Rauner encouraged Jonah Edelman and his "educational reform group" – Stand for Children – to come to Illinois. The group and its wealthy funders like Rauner bragged about "outfoxing the teachers' unions" and pushed for reforms that would have eliminated collective bargaining and Chicago teachers' right to strike in 2012.

6
SIX

Rauner pulled strings and clouted his daughter into an elite (union) public school in Chicago after her application was rejected. He personally called then-Chicago schools CEO Arne Duncan to make sure that she was offered one of only 300 spots at Walter Payton College Prep, leapfrogging over 7,000 city applicants. Then, Rauner donated \$250,000 to Payton Prep a year later. Rauner lives in wealthy suburban Winnetka, not Chicago.

7
SEVEN

Rauner invested in nursing homes that dramatically cut costs for profit, resulting in wrongful death and patient-neglect lawsuits that at one point totaled more than \$2.3 billion in damages. After Rauner's firm GTCR bought Trans Healthcare Inc, the now-bankrupt nursing home chain was sued at least a half dozen times by patients and their families. Attorneys have alleged that Rauner's firm and other investors failed to provide proper funding for care, then shielded their assets to avoid paying damages.

8
EIGHT

Rauner sharply criticizes "pay-to-play" politics, but received millions in state business after donating \$300,000 to former Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell during his campaign. The donation was a clear conflict of interest; Rauner's firm was managing state pension funds at the time. After Rendell was elected, the state doubled its stake in GTCR funds, resulting in an additional \$4 million profit for Rauner. And he has the nerve to accuse union members of bribery?

9
NINE

Rauner loves to bash Democrats, but fails to mention that he's a big supporter of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, his close friend and a sharp critic of the Chicago Teachers Union. While working with Rauner in the late '90s, Emanuel made \$18 million, which helped spur his run for elective office.

10
TEN

Rauner supports "right-to-work" laws that would rob you of your rights to form unions and advocate for the students and citizens you serve. These laws also drive down wages, benefits, and the overall standard of living for anyone outside of Rauner's 1%, who stand to get richer as the income inequality gap widens.

Why our fight for the middle class is real. And why you're under attack.



by Toby Trimmer
IFT Director of
Political Activities

Recently, the *New York Times* ran a disturbing report about the legitimate fears many of us share regarding a rapidly shrinking middle-class America. Make no mistake; there is evidence of economic growth and a boost in consumer spending. But it seems this growth and confidence is being driven only by the top 20 percent of American wage earners. The rest of us – 8 out of 10 American workers – are either continuing to cut back or financially insecure enough to avoid a family meal at Olive Garden.

More troubling is the comfortable profits and growth of high-end businesses. Luxury hotel revenues (hotels like the Four Seasons) grew at a rate almost twice that of midrange lodging companies like Best Western.

Reporter Nelson D. Schwartz, writes:

“As politicians and pundits in Washington continue to spar over whether economic inequality is in fact deepening, in corporate America there really is no debate at all. The post-recession reality is that the customer base for businesses that

appeal to the middle class is shrinking as the top tier pulls even further away.”

The same is true in the restaurant industry. Olive Garden and Red Lobster restaurants throughout the nation are struggling to attract the middle-class clientele that powered their one time leadership in the market. Now, the luxury class of America is more consistently ordering thick cuts of filet at places like Capital Grille, where meals average over \$70 per customer. Darden Restaurants, operator for all three chains, is reportedly pivoting to accommodate their “middle-class” consumers. How? By putting in drive up windows?

Schwartz continues, citing research from Washington University and the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis:

“In 2012, the top 5 percent of earners were responsible for 38 percent of domestic consumption, up from 28 percent in 1995, the researchers found. Even more striking, the current recovery has been driven almost entirely by the upper crust, according to Mr. Fazzari and Mr. Cynamon. Since 2009, the year the recession ended, inflation-adjusted spending by this top echelon has risen 17 percent, compared with just 1 percent among the bottom 95 percent.”

A sustainable economic recovery cannot be achieved with more tax cuts for top earners and corporate board

rooms. Even with claims that these taxpayer giveaways “create and keep jobs,” the evidence is increasingly clear that those jobs bring with them weak paychecks that aren’t fueling a middle class-led nationwide recovery.

What’s more troubling is the lack of visible outrage among the majority of Americans. Take former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich’s well-penned perspective.

“In earlier decades, the working class fomented reform. The labor movement led the charge for a minimum wage, 40-hour workweek, unemployment insurance, and Social Security.

No longer. Working people don’t dare. The share of working-age Americans holding jobs is now lower than at any time in the last three decades and 76 percent of them are living paycheck to paycheck.

No one has any job security. The last thing they want to do is make a fuss and risk losing the little they have.

Besides, their major means of organizing and protecting themselves — labor unions — have been decimated. Four decades ago more than a third of private-sector workers were unionized. Now, fewer than 7 percent belong to a union.”

In Illinois, it’s the billionaires who are “outraged.” The GOP hedge-fund profiteer Bruce Rauner has made destroying our right to organize and communicate as a union the central theme of his campaign for Governor. He suggests that contract negotiations for fair wages, benefits and due process are criminal. The lunacy of it all is, people are buying it!

What's our threat to him, a man who made about \$1 million a week through investments last year? Well, it's very much what we stand for as a Union of Professionals.

- **We fight for middle-class wages, benefits and opportunity for all workers**, not just those who belong to our union.
- **We fight for well-funded public schools, with well-appointed classrooms and learning opportunities** like art and music that can propel kids into the middle-class.
- **We oppose schemes to divert public tax money into profit-driven education enterprises** in the name of "education reform."
- **We advocate for dignity and economic security in retirement**, and we don't believe that Wall Street bankers and investment hounds put workers' interests ahead of their increasingly fattened wallets.
- **We support a fair tax system to invest in public services that support the common good.** This means asking more from higher income earners and less from lower income earners.
- **We support an increase in the minimum wage** to establish much-needed financial confidence in millions of American homes, increase consumer spending, and strengthen the economy.

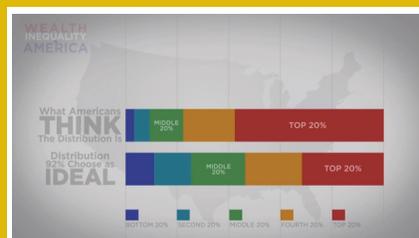
To achieve these goals and many others which the majority of America supports, we engage in the political process. That's a threat to Bruce Rauner and his cohorts of the top one-tenth of one percent. As a self-proclaimed political "outsider" who has contributed

untold millions to influential politicians to help fuel his private, "insider" interests and profits, he's certainly been direct about his intent to destroy the organized voices who advocate for working families in Illinois.

History produces facts. And, the fact is, labor unions have been at the forefront of keeping the robber barons from destroying the American Dream. It's true; it feels like we're losing our grip. But, if each of us decide to tighten our grip just a bit more and pull, we can right the economic ship for millions of Americans.

Learn More

If you want to learn more about the income inequality gap in the United States, watch this jaw-dropping video. It's well worth five minutes of your time.



www.ift-aft.org/news/wealthinequality

We Are One files lawsuit to STOP Pension Theft

On January 27, the IFT and our partners in the We Are One Illinois coalition filed suit in Sangamon County Circuit Court to overturn pension-slashing Senate Bill 1 (SB 1).

Our suit argues that the "pension theft" law violates the pension clause of the Illinois Constitution, which unequivocally states that a public employee's pension is a contract that the state cannot diminish or impair.

In addition to our union coalition, more than 20 individual active and retired public workers from every part of Illinois are named as plaintiffs in the lawsuit. These teachers, police officers, nurses, caregivers, prison employees, firefighters and others are standing up for hundreds of thousands of their peers by **seeking justice to right the wrongs of politicians who shirked their responsibility to uphold the constitution.**

Defendants in the lawsuit are Governor Pat Quinn, other constitutional officers, the state retirement systems and their boards.

The IFT strongly believes SB 1 should not be implemented before a court makes a decision on its constitutionality. To that end, our coalition spent several weeks trying to reach agreement with the state Attorney General and the defendants on a joint request to the court to enjoin the law's implementation. Regrettably, the Attorney General refused. In our filing, we reserve the right to seek an injunction.

Stay Informed

Read the full legal complaint online at weareoneillinois.org. For updates on the pension fight, visit ift-aft.org.

ILLINOIS FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

UNION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

REGIONAL ULI - QUINCY
March 29, 2014

SPRING ULI SESSION
April 26-27, 2014

GREAT LAKES ULI
June 16-20, 2014

For complete course descriptions and
to register, visit ift-aft.org/ULI



A Union of Professionals

Illinois Federation of Teachers
P.O. Box 390
Westmont, IL 60559

Non-Profit
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit no. 40
OAK BROOK, IL



Illinois Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

link UNION

CONNECTING YOU TO YOUR UNION, BECAUSE **TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER.**



Learn.

ift-aft.org

Find out about a variety of education and union topics. Get workplace tips, professional development resources and more.



Participate.

facebook.com/iftaft

"Like" us on Facebook to stay informed and engaged. Find interesting news, post comments, and share with your network.



Tweet.

twitter.com/iftaft

Follow IFT on Twitter. We tweet updates and post thoughts frequently, so join the conversation!



Share.

iftaft.tumblr.com

Find and follow #IFT on Tumblr for interesting, visual content to share.