June 28 is Primary Election Day in Illinois. Too often, voters overlook this so-called “preliminary” election, but every primary is critically important! Simply put, each primary election is the first step towards achieving our goal of creating the future we all deserve.

Primary elections do more than allow voters the opportunity to narrow the field of candidates before the general election. They also give the candidates themselves a chance to learn more about the issues that are important to people so they can adjust their priorities and focus as they move on to the general election.

That’s why every election cycle, our union endorses candidates through a democratic and transparent Political Action Committee (PAC) process. Member participation and input in the process is key to determining which candidates share our values and deserve our support.

Earlier this year, members statewide participated in regional meetings to review candidate questionnaires and interview individuals running for elected office in the June 28 Primary Election. Regional PAC endorsement recommendations were finalized by the IFT’s elected Executive Board last month.

You can find the complete list of IFT 2022 Primary Election endorsements on the insert inside. The women and men who earned our endorsement have demonstrated a strong commitment to collective bargaining rights, vital public services and public education, from preK-18.
Members are charting the IFT’s course

The last three years have been the toughest most of us have ever experienced as professionals and union members. We have all struggled with the personal and work-related challenges of the pandemic, of course. But many of us have also experienced difficulty in our unions, workplaces and communities finding common ground with one another on important issues like remote learning and racial justice. In some cases, those differences may have left members feeling alone or broken. But together in our unions, I know we can heal and become stronger than ever.

That’s one reason I’m excited about the upcoming 2022 IFT Convention, which we’ve aptly themed, “Together.” In October, delegates from our local unions across the state will gather in St. Louis (in person once again) to reconnect, highlight our successes, and do the work of the union. Part of that work will be to set the union’s key goals for the next three years. Delegates will also vote on important Convention Resolutions, which reflect our union’s values and guide our work.

Member input is critical to accomplishing these important tasks! To ensure we consider the breadth of member perspectives as we determine our union’s direction for the next three years, the IFT conducted a third-party, scientific poll in February. Diverse members in all four constituency groups – preK-12 teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel (PSRP), higher education faculty and staff, and public employees – answered a variety of questions and voiced their concerns about our union, our professions and our workplaces.

For example, K-12 and PSRP members told us that they are most concerned about COVID recovery, reducing standardized testing, and improving student discipline. Higher education members said they are worried about the continued impact of inadequate state funding, increasing student tuition and fees, and declining enrollment. And public employees are frustrated about outsourcing and loss of positions in state government.

But it wasn’t enough to gather this snapshot of data. To hear from even more members, I traveled with other IFT leaders around the state throughout April and May to host 34 feedback sessions (in-person and virtual). We talked one on one with almost 800 members and leaders. At these sessions, we shared the poll results and got reactions directly from you, our members. It was wonderful to be face-to-face with so many members once again! The information we gathered from these conversations was invaluable. There was remarkable unanimity among us over what we are most concerned about. We hear so much about regional differences and the things that divide us, but I was most struck by what unites us. We all want to improve our schools, colleges and workplaces, and we have much in common when we talk about how to do that.

Talking face to face with you, hearing your experiences directly was both moving and energizing. It makes me so excited to gather for our convention in the fall.

Along with the poll data, your feedback at these sessions is now being used to help IFT local unions and committees develop Convention Resolutions to present to delegates this fall. The approved resolutions will reflect the concerns and requests of our union and set our path forward. The process truly is democracy in action!

I want to express my deep thanks to those of you who answered the poll and/or attended a feedback conversation. You have helped to strengthen our union and drive the important work we do for students and citizens, as well as our colleagues and communities. You make us #IFTstrong.

HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER!

DANIEL J. MONTGOMERY
President

Questions about the nominations process should be directed to David Richmond at convention@ift-aft.org or mailed to Illinois Federation of Teachers, 500 Oakmont Lane, Westmont, IL 60559.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS DUE SEPTEMBER 7
All constitutional amendments must be submitted to the Executive Board 45 days prior to the beginning date of the IFT Convention.

ELECTION CERTIFICATION REPORT (DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES) DUE OCTOBER 8
The Election Certification Report listing all delegates and alternates must be received by the IFT Credentials Committee fourteen (14) days prior to the beginning date of the IFT Convention.

NOMINATION PROCESS FOR IFT OFFICER ELECTIONS
The election of IFT President, Secretary-Treasurer, Executive Vice-President and Vice-Presidents will occur at the union’s convention on October 22, 2022, at the Marriott St. Louis Grand.
IFT members strike to win improvements for students and professionals

While work-life for most IFT members largely returned to a pre-pandemic “normal” by spring, for some of our locals, councils, and chapters, it was anything but. This year, many IFT locals faced contentious negotiations with their employer for new collective bargaining agreements. Some, like the Champaign Federation of Teachers (Local 1925) and the University of Illinois-Springfield United Faculty Chapter (Local 4100), narrowly averted strikes with last moment agreements. But despite their efforts to avoid it, some IFT unions were forced to the picket lines to win improvements that will benefit their students, schools, and their colleagues.

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**PROVISO TEACHERS UNION (PTU)**
Maywood, IL

The members of the PTU Council of the West Suburban Teachers Union (WSTU, Local 571) bargained for a year before striking in March. Teachers were on strike for 15 days in their fight to secure a fair contract that prioritizes student needs, improves learning, and helps to attract and retain outstanding educators that District 209 students deserve.

Reaching an agreement was made particularly difficult because the District 209 superintendent and school board leaders frequently refused to bargain for more than two hours at a time and spread inaccurate information to parents and the community. Parents saw through the district’s falsehoods and solidly united behind the teachers. Combined with strong student support, a unified membership, and the solidarity of other IFT members, PTU leaders prevailed at the bargaining table.

The council won a three-year agreement that includes salary increases and language that will help improve student learning outcomes.

**PATTON FEDERATION OF TEACHERS (PFT)**
Riverdale, IL

Teachers and aides in District 133 hit the streets for five days in March after more than eight months of bargaining resulted in little tangible progress. PFT is a council of the Southwest Suburban Teachers Union, Local 943.

Much like their colleagues in the PTU, Patton educators were fighting for critical resources needed to improve teacher retention. Members were also demanding that the board prioritize students by funding long-neglected programs and learning opportunities. “Our students’ programs have been slashed for years, and we’ve been getting by with too little for too long,” said PFT President Sabrina Hawthorne during the strike.

PFT members stayed strong and unified during the walkout, bolstered by support from fellow union members.

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-CHICAGO GRADUATE EMPLOYEES ORGANIZATION (UIC GEO)**

UIC GEO (Local 6297) members tried for more than a year to reach a fair agreement with their employer, but U of I leaders stubbornly refused to agree to provide essential workplace protections or to offer a living wage.

But after six high-profile, high-energy strike days conducted by these well organized and motivated members, the university administration finally compromised on key union demands. The new three-year agreement includes significant pay raises over the life of the contract. For the first time, the agreement also includes a guaranteed tuition waiver and provisions against discrimination and harassment.

Upon ratification of the new agreement, UIC GEO Co-President Jared O’Connor said, “When we fight, we win. It wasn’t easy, but our persistence paid off...We are grateful for the wide support we received from university workers and our labor family, and for our members willing to stand together for our cause.”

Congratulations to the brave and committed members of these local unions who had the courage to fight for what students and professionals deserve. SOLIDARITY!

Nearly 300 educators at Proviso’s three campuses sustained a three-week strike to demand fair pay and more supports for students.

With 19 members, Patton Federation of Teachers is small but mighty. They stood together and won a fair contract and more resources for their students.

“We know we are standing up for what’s right – resources for students, fair pay for educators, and the professional respect we deserve – and we are uplifted by the support we’ve received from parents and our community.”

Sabrina Hawthorne
PFT President
Don’t sit this one out!
The Primary Election is a critical first step in every election cycle, and the upcoming June 28 election is no exception. With multiple convenient ways available to cast your ballot, there is no reason to sit this one out!

Many Illinois voters can avoid the crowds and cast ballots now! Early in-person voting began in most Illinois counties on May 19 and will be open through June 27. Early voting is typically conducted at your County Clerk’s office, but check to see where and when you can early vote in your area.

If you prefer a contact-free way to vote, you may opt to apply to vote by mail. While you won’t get that highly sought-after “I voted” sticker, you will receive the same ballot as those who vote at the polls and your vote will be counted.

No matter how you choose to vote, be sure to first review the IFT’s 2022 Primary Election endorsements to learn which women and men have earned our union’s support. These individuals were thoroughly vetted through the IFT’s democratic, transparent Political Action Committee (PAC) process and have demonstrated a strong commitment to collective bargaining rights, vital public services, and public education at every level.

Make your voice heard and make your plan to vote today!

IMPORTANT DATES

Election Day, Tuesday, June 28.

REGISTER

★ First, check your registration status at ift-aft.org/vote. If you need to register, follow the prompts to do so online.


VOTING BY MAIL

★ If you have not received a mail ballot application at your home address, visit the elections.il.gov to apply now.

EARLY VOTING

★ You can also cast your ballot in person before Election Day at select locations. Early voting is open now through Monday, June 27, 2022.

ELECTION DAY

★ If you don’t vote early or by mail, Election Day registration and voting will still be available on Tuesday, June 28, 2022.

MORE AT IFT-AFT.ORG/VOTE

ISBE decides to halt interim testing plan

Over the past year, ISBE had been forging ahead with a plan to increase testing in grades 3-8 and add optional testing for students in grades K-2. In a huge win for students, parents, and teachers, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) decided not to make changes to statewide standardized assessments at this time.

This would never have happened without you and the concerted efforts of the entire IFT! Every member who sent emails, made phone calls, and even testified in Springfield helped the IFT and our education partners stop ISBE’s ill-conceived interim assessment plan.

This victory happened because of our union. IFT was a key player in the fight from the beginning. Last fall, we joined with other education stakeholders to launch “Teach Not Test.” campaign. Our website, teachnottest.org, provides videos and other educational resources about assessments and offers ways to take action on the issue.

As part of our effort to stop ISBE’s plan to increase testing, the IFT also conducted a virtual “convening” of experts and educators in February to discuss ways to make assessments more equitable and meaningful. Last month, we took that message to the media, too, via an online discussion and information session.

We involved PreK-12 teachers, paraprofessionals, higher education faculty and staff, parents, students, school board members and legislators in our campaign to limit testing.

Thanks to your input and action, we have stopped ISBE from moving forward with a plan that would have made a bad assessment situation even worse. But this matter is not over.

In the weeks ahead, the IFT and our Union Professional Issues Department will ensure that educator voices continue to be heard as ISBE considers future changes to the current assessment system. With your support, we will continue to demand that Illinois adopt assessments that are more balanced, more relevant, and more equitable – NOT just more frequent!

Thank you for all you have done to help us win this important fight on behalf of students!

We have a testing regime that has gone too far and is not helping children learn, it’s not helping educators teach, especially right now, post-COVID, when the needs of our students’ recovery are great and pressing … especially for our more underprivileged students.

Stacy Davis Gates
IFT Executive Vice President

Visit ift-aft.org/news and teachnottest.org for updates and additional information.
Members are charting the IFT’s course
President Montgomery stresses the importance of member input as we determine our union’s direction for the next three years.

IFT members strike to win improvements for students and professionals
This year, many IFT locals faced contentious negotiations with their employer for new collective bargaining agreements.

Don’t sit this one out!
Important election information and a complete list of IFT’s endorsements for the June 28, 2022 Primary Election.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
Visit ift-aft.org/professionaldevelopment for upcoming courses, trainings, and webinars.

The information we gathered from these conversations was invaluable. There was remarkable unanimity among us over what we are most concerned about. We hear so much about regional differences and the things that divide us, but I was most struck by what unites us. We all want to improve our schools, colleges and workplaces, and we have much in common when we talk about how to do that.

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Dan Montgomery | IFT President

Feedback session at Association of International Comedy Educators, IFT Local 6612