YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE.

Be sure to cast your ballot in this critical primary election on Tuesday, March 17.
Politics, it means your life! Really?

DANIEL J. MONTGOMERY
President

How many times have you heard a colleague say, “I hate politics!”? I’m sure you’ve had the experience when you’re talking to a friend about why they should vote for our endorsed candidate, or for the local referendum; when they blurt out, “Oh, I don’t know—they’re all so crooked!” These responses, and similar ones, can be a real challenge to us as we try to change our workplaces, our communities, and indeed our world, for the better.

In my local, we used to hand out a brochure to new members about our COPE program. It had the subtitle in big, bold letters, “Politics, It Means Your Life.” Yeah, just your life. But the handset actually did a nice job of listing some of the areas we take for granted that are heavily influenced or completely determined by some form of politics. Here are just a few:

- State revenue provided to your district, college, university or public agency, and limitations on revenue from entities that can raise
- Your rights to collectively bargain and to have evaluation or job protections, including union representation and dismissal procedures
- Class sizes, textbooks used, and quality of education received
- Interest rates you pay
- Type of local elections
- Whether you have parks and libraries
- The police and fire protection you have
- The quality and safety of your streets
- The list goes on, of course. In fact, we seldom pause to take stock of how deeply politics affects every inch of our and our loved ones’ lives, and our daily experience in the world.

When we do think about this reality, I think it’s easier to motivate ourselves and others to be more involved. And it doesn’t mean you have to become the world’s leading climate activist, or your union’s top political officer (although those would be great!). It means we owe it to ourselves and others to spend a little time becoming more educated about the issues and candidates. Your union helps you do that.

In this issue, you’ll find our list of preferred candidates, based on our extensive PAC process that involves hundreds of IFT members. Use it! Share it!

And as we move ahead in this critical year, stay tuned into your union communications. We must pass the Fair Tax for our state to thrive—too much of what we want and depend depend on hinges in the balance. And there are important local and state elections. Oh, and it’s a presidential year—what many believe to be the most important presidential election in our lifetimes. Is there a better time to volunteer to work a phone bank even evening, or walk for a candidate or the Fair Tax in a neighborhood canvas on one crisp fall morning?

After all, “it means your life.”

Daniel

Write to me at emaildan@ift-aft.org to share your thoughts.

Our union, our future: Tackling racism in our union

MONIQUE REDEAUX-SMITH, Ph.D
IFT Union Professional Issues Director

As a labor union, the IFT is committed to fighting for economic justice, and that fight cannot be separated from the fight for racial justice. Since our nation’s beginning, racism has been used to exploit labor. And while racism has morphed and taken different forms over time, the essential playbook has not changed. Just as in colonial times, racism serves divisions between working-class people and helps maintain the power and greed of an elite few.

Racism is systemic, not just individual. It is a system of power and exploitation that advantages people perceived as white while disadvantaging people of color. We see those advantages and disadvantages in every segment of life and in all our institutions, including schools. We are exposed daily to both explicit and subtle messages of white superiority, which influence our thoughts, perceptions and decisions, even when we are unaware. Hence, we must commit to doing the difficult work of rooting out manifestations of racism in ourselves, our locals, and our organization.

The future of the labor movement depends on our ability to build solid coalitions across diverse communities of working-class people.

At the 2019 Convention, IFT leadership recommitted to the fight for racial justice by approving several resolutions that include building awareness around issues of racism and bigotry, supporting initiatives that center people of color (i.e., Black Lives Matter at School Week), advocating for a more diverse staff and leadership, and integrating the interests and concerns of underrepresented groups more fully into IFT’s organizational, political, and legislative agendas.

Achieving these goals requires work at every level of our organization. One way the IFT is building awareness around issues of race is through professional development offered through the Union Professional Issues Department (UPID). In collaboration with the American Federation of Teachers, UPID has designed a course, The Union Response to Student’s Stress and Trauma, available through IFT’s Union Leadership Institute (ULI). This three-day training-of-trainers includes an in-depth discussion of historical trauma, the ways in which racial biases impact us and manifest themselves in our practice, and strategies we can use to combat these biases to create trauma-informed, restorative school spaces.

In addition to these educational opportunities for members, the IFT staff, officers, and executive board are also engaging in learning sessions around race, diversity, and inclusion. Continually assessing our internal governing and decision-making processes is vital to ensure that we are not replicating the same kinds of injustices we claim to be fighting in the world at large. To help with this internal analysis, a taskforce with representatives from the IFT officers and executive board, staff, and administration has been created to develop continuous education sessions, craft goals and outcomes for increased diversity and inclusivity within the IFT, and assess our progress as we move towards becoming an anti-racist organization.

We were all born into a racist society. Though it is not our fault, racism is all of our problem and dismantling it is all of our responsibility — both those who are victimized by systemic racism and especially those who have benefited from the purposeful exclusion and marginalization of people of color.

We have seen how collective activism has worked to shift political agendas to advance the interests of working people. We have the capacity to break down the barriers that exclude, isolate and dehumanize — but it will take continuous effort, commitment, and struggle. Luckily, we are the labor movement and fighting back is what we do. We encourage you to join us in the movement for racial justice as we carve out a new path forward and fight for the future we all deserve.
It’s time for Illinois to do the right thing. It’s time for a Fair Tax.

This November, Illinois voters will be asked to make some critical choices. In addition to voting for candidates who share our goals and values, we’ll be deciding if the state should change to a fair tax system that would protect middle-class families and make the wealthiest pay their share.

A majority of IFT members believe the answer should be YES.

It’s easy to understand why. Just imagine an Illinois with fully funded schools, colleges, and universities. With enough high-quality teachers to properly staff our classrooms and reduce class sizes. And, with well-funded state programs and human services for our neediest citizens. We know these are things our state desperately needs.

A Fair Tax can provide them. At the same time, it would give more than 97 percent of Illinois taxpayers a tax break (or no increase). Only those earning more than $250,000 a year would see any increase, with millionaires and wealthy corporations taking the hardest hit.

Thirty-three states, including Iowa and Wisconsin, currently have this type of tax. Illinois is one of only four states that mandates a flat tax in its constitution — in short, Illinois is an outlier.

Under our current flat tax, lower- and middle-income families carry the state’s tax burden, and our state has about $7 billion in unpaid bills. We also have a structural tax deficit that simply does not bring in enough revenue to pay the bills. If the Fair Tax doesn’t pass, the only alternatives are to raise taxes on everyone, likely by 20 percent, or implement drastic cuts in vital state spending. That is unacceptable.

A Fair Tax is not only the best option to solve our state’s fiscal woes, it is the right thing to do for kids and communities.

To enact the Fair Tax, voters must pass a constitutional amendment on November 3. Between now and General Election Day, we urge you to spread the word to family and friends about how a Fair Tax would help us all.

It’s time for Illinois to invest in schools, higher education, and vital state services. It’s time for a Fair Tax.

The FAIR TAX MATTERS TO ME because as a first generation college student, I’m living under debt from the generations before not funding higher ed. And now I’m serving college students who are struggling under even more debt with even fewer resources.

KRISTI BARNWELL
LOCAL 4100

Illinois has a poor tax structure. And what the Fair Tax does is give us a tax structure that works for everybody instead of dumping it all onto the property tax. If you want to fix the property tax, the first step is to pass the the Fair Tax.

DAVE SEILER
LOCAL 2296

The Fair Tax would help me and my community. Many of us are barely making it with our wages. We pay so much in taxes, it’s hard for some of the people to have their own homes and afford their bills. We need to balance the way the system works.

BARBARA OUTTEN
LOCAL 1220

A Fair Tax would help our community and our schools get the social workers, the counselors, the repairs on the buildings, the materials, the latest technology, all of that stuff that Chicago schools are missing.

STEPHANIE COLLINS
LOCAL 1

WATCH IN THE WEEKS AHEAD FOR MORE INFORMATION AND WAYS YOU CAN HELP MAKE A FAIR TAX REALITY.
Members weigh in on IFT's 2020 candidate endorsements

IFT members know what’s at stake in November 2020. From ousting Trump/DeVos to passing a Fair Tax constitutional amendment in Illinois, we have important work to accomplish. That is why it’s critical that our union supports candidates who will stand up for workers’ rights, protect employee pensions, and invest in the public education and services that benefit all Illinoisans.

In the **March 17th Primary Election**, the decisions about which candidates our union is endorsing were not made lightly, and they were made from the ground up. The IFT and our local unions worked hard over the last few months to ensure every member had the opportunity to have a voice in these important decisions.

During December and January, regional PAC committees held meetings throughout the state. IFT members conducted interviews and reviewed voting records, position papers, questionnaires, and other information about candidates for the Illinois Legislature and Congress. More members and locals participated in these meetings than ever before. Regional PACs then forwarded their endorsement recommendations to the statewide PAC, which met in late January to finalize a list of endorsements before sending it to the IFT’s elected executive board for approval.

The complete list of IFT endorsements for the 2020 Primary Election is on the next page. Tear it out and take it with you to the polls, or print it from the IFT website.

Your vote is your voice. Be sure to cast your ballot in this critical Primary Election on March 17.

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<th>U.S. SENATE</th>
<th>ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</th>
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<td>Richard Durbin (D)</td>
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<td>CD 3 Marie Newman (D)</td>
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<td>CD 40 Patrick Joyce (D)</td>
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<td>CD 49 Meg Loughran Cappel (D)*</td>
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**REGISTER**

First, check your registration status at [ift-aft.org/vote](http://ift-aft.org/vote).

Standard voter registration closes 27 days prior to an election, but you can still register or update your registration (due to an address or name change) with Grace Period Registration.

In-person Grace Period Registration is available through Primary Election Day at select sites. Check with your County Clerk’s office or visit [ift-aft.org/vote](http://ift-aft.org/vote) to learn where and when you can take advantage of Grace Period Registration.

**VOTE**

Don’t wait to cast your ballot! Early voting for the primary is open now through March 16. Check your County Clerk’s office or visit [ift-aft.org/vote](http://ift-aft.org/vote) to find out where and how to vote early.

ELECT LEADERS WHO ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING PUBLIC EDUCATION, STATE SERVICES, AND ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS.
VOTER REGISTRATION
Standard registration closes 27 days prior to an election. In-person registration is available through Election Day at select sites.

EARLY VOTING
Ends Monday, March 16

ELECTION DAY
Tuesday, March 17

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
Contact your local union office to find campaign volunteer opportunities in your area.

VISIT IFT-AFT.ORG/VOTE FOR MORE INFORMATION.

events

ILLINOIS PRIMARY ELECTION DAY
March 17

REGIONAL UNION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
March 21 | Fairview Heights, IL

UNION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
WORKSITE LEADER TRAINING
April 25-26 | Westmont, IL

GREAT LAKES UNION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
June 22-26 | Delavan, WI

THE UNION’S RESPONSE TO STRESS & TRAUMA
JULY 15-17 | Peoria, IL
JULY 121-23 | Westmont, IL

inside

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