What the new evidence-based funding formula will mean for your district

After considerable debate and multiple attempts, Senate Bill 1947 was passed by lawmakers and signed by Governor Rauner in August. Now called Public Act 100-0465, the law creates a new evidence-based formula for funding Illinois schools. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is using the law’s formula to determine how to distribute about $350 million additional funds statewide. Now districts - and our local unions - are working to determine how the formula will impact our schools.

The IFT strongly supported many components of the legislation, which looks at critical regional factors before establishing an “Adequacy Target” for each school district. The Adequacy Target indicates how much money each district needs to educate its students well, then the formula determines each district’s ability to provide those funds. The difference between the two is the amount the state must provide to close the funding gap.

The graph (see page 3) illustrates how the additional $350 million in the law will be distributed, with the neediest districts receiving new dollars first.

continues on page 3
When I taught high school English, my seniors had to complete a research project. At the beginning of my career, I told my students to grab a stack of index cards and head to the library, where they would flip through the card catalog and rows of reference books, Facts on File, the Periodical Index, and Microfiche! These were reliable sources. If you could find it in the library, you could trust it.

Years later, students began asking if one of their sources could be a website. Then, they asked if they could use two. Soon, all their citations were online. The internet made far more resources from around the world instantly available to them, but gave them no guidance on the credibility of sources. In fact, the explosion of media made it far harder for students to tell the authoritative from the irrational. Suddenly, an uncle’s internet rant could seem as credible as the Encyclopedia Britannica.

We had to spend much more time teaching students about credibility and how to determine a valid source.

It reminds me of a recent CNN ad that shows a picture of a red apple on the screen. The narrator says, “This is an apple. Some people may try to tell you it’s a banana. They might scream ‘Banana! Banana! Banana!’ over and over and over again. They might put BANANA in all caps. You might even start to believe that this is a banana. But it’s not. This is an apple.”

Or, as I said to my students: “Opinions differ. Facts do not.” This isn’t to say we shouldn’t constantly ask questions or have strong opinions, but we can’t have an honest or productive discussion about anything - including politics - if we don’t all agree upon the facts first.

So in this edition of Union Link, we’re focusing on establishing what is known. You’ll find our opinion as well, but it is based on the facts we’ve researched and confirmed to be true.

You’ll learn about the Evidence-Based Funding model for school districts, a system that relies entirely on data (facts!) to more equitably fund our schools. You’ll read about the upcoming Janus case and get clear answers to some frequently asked questions. And you’ll see that we’ve endorsed a candidate for governor, a choice our elected leaders made based on detailed questionnaires, interviews, local surveys, and a poll to gather your input.

We may not always agree or vote the same way, and that’s OK. That’s democracy. But the facts matter.

I’ll leave you with one recent example.

Governor Rauner said that he is not to blame for the budget crisis, because he’s “not in charge.” Others have said that it was his fault, because he vetoed funding bills that didn’t include political poison pills. But it’s an indisputable fact that Illinois has existed for 200 years, and we’ve had a budget for 198 of them.

That’s an apple. The last three years have been bananas.
This equitable distribution of resources is what our union and other education advocates have long fought for to address Illinois’ worst-in-the-nation status for funding high-poverty districts like Chicago, East St. Louis, and many others.

While the state will prioritize the neediest districts first for funding, no district will lose money under the formula. A Base Funding Minimum amount, which will take General State Aid and other grants into account, will be recalculated each fiscal year for every district to ensure funding remains adequate. New state funding going forward will be in addition to what districts currently receive.

The result? **A fair distribution of resources to address Illinois’ funding inequities.**

While the law’s equity components are great strides forward, there are significant flaws that could have negative impacts on districts.

**Our union strongly opposed the addition of a voucher-style program to the bill that Governor Rauner demanded as a condition of signing it.** The “Invest in Kids Tax Credit” gives businesses and wealthy donors a tax credit for contributions to private school scholarship funds. The program will cost $75 million per year in each of the next five years and rob public schools of students and resources.

Finally, the bill also reduces the current physical education requirement, allowing districts to offer physical education (PE) just three days per week instead of five. Under some circumstances, students may opt out of PE entirely.

The IFT will closely monitor how the formula is applied to ensure that every district benefits from these changes, as promised. It is our hope that the law will do what was intended - move Illinois away from an inadequate, inequitable school funding system and towards one that will help every district meet the educational needs of its students.
Rauner has harmed Illinois. Here’s how.

IFT members know best how to provide high-quality public education and services. It starts with professional respect and real investment in schools, higher education, and state and local government. For K-12 schools, those investments must include expanded early childhood learning opportunities, broad and rich curricula, safe school and community environments, wraparound services, meaningful professional development for educators, and time to focus on learning - not testing.

In higher education, it means economic security for those who teach and do research, and an academic environment that thrives on a robust, free exchange of ideas.

For state services, investment must include additional resources, increased staffing, and ending the efforts to privatize our work.

The IFT and our local unions have long demanded that elected officials embrace this common sense vision for Illinois.

But for three long years, Governor Bruce Rauner has stood in the way of what is best for education, working men and women, and our communities. Rauner frequently claims to be “pro-worker” and “pro-public education,” but his record tells a different story.

Rauner uses bait-and-switch tactics to say things that may sound good, but actually have horrible consequences for IFT members and those we serve. There are many examples.

### FACT

The Janus case pending in the U.S. Supreme Court is just one. Governor Rauner initially filed this case, which would eliminate fair share fees and force our unions to represent “freeloader” workers who benefit from the union-negotiated collective bargaining agreement - but don’t pay dues. It’s a clear effort to diminish union resources and take away our voice and protections on the job.

### FACT

Rauner says he wants a state university system that is “second to none,” but repeatedly refused to sign bills that would have provided funding for MAP grants, public colleges, and universities. Since Rauner was elected, funding for public higher education has been cut by more than 35 percent, and enrollment has decreased by more than 40,000 students. Those students will likely never return to Illinois to contribute to our state and grow our economy.

### FACT

The governor claims he delivered “historic education reform” and secured the “highest levels of funding ever.” In reality, he vetoed school funding reform, issuing a message that blamed students for their poverty and sparked regional divides in our state. He finally signed a more equitable funding model, but only after demanding that a $75 million private school tax credit program - a backdoor voucher scheme - be included.

### FACT

Rauner says he supports teachers, and his hand-picked members on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) claim to want input from practitioners when they debate education policy. Yet the Governor and ISBE have endorsed a “business-based” method of accountability that relies on high-stakes tests and meaningless statistical calculations for growth that are irrelevant to teaching practice. In addition, the governor’s plan sub-contracts school improvement supports to outside vendors. Under Rauner, the new accountability system (which is scheduled to start in 2018-19) will essentially be No Child Left Behind 2.0.
RAUNER IS MOVING OUR STATE IN THE WRONG DIRECTION, BUT WE CAN TURN THINGS AROUND IF WE EACH DO OUR PART.

HELP YOUR UNION STAY STRONG

1. Protect yourself and your rights on the job by signing a new union card.
2. Speak with your colleagues about the issues worth fighting for.
3. Forge alliances with parents, students, and community partners.

WORK TO ELECT A NEW GOVERNOR IN 2018

1. Register to vote.
2. Educate yourself and your colleagues about the candidates and their key positions.
3. Talk with family and friends about how Governor Rauner has harmed education, public services, and our communities.
4. VOTE in the Primary on March 20, 2018 and General Election on November 6, 2018.

By working together to elect a new governor, we can better advocate for policies that allow public education and services to thrive in Illinois, including:

- Full funding of the new school funding formula to provide smaller class sizes, more wraparound supports, and increased professional learning;
- Implementation of an ESSA accountability system that supports schools, respects educators, values local union-administrator collaboration, and reduces standardized testing;
- Fair evaluations for professional educators; and
- Progressive revenue that taxes the wealthier at a higher rate than working families and results in increased funding for public higher education and vital state services.

If reelected, Rauner will continue his obsessive attack on our unions. By building power together, we can stop him and move our classrooms and communities forward.
Members of the Waukegan Professional Support Staff Council give back to their community each Thanksgiving.

Waukegan PSRPs help fill stomachs - and hearts - at the holidays

For the fourth year in a row, the members of the Waukegan Professional Support Staff (WPSS) Council (Local 504) came together to give back to their students and community over the holidays.

Transportation services, employment assistance, childcare, and more; many of the children whose families rely on Staben House attend Waukegan public schools.

“As union members, we can’t think of a better way to show our commitment to our kids and our community than by supporting local residents at the Staben House, especially during the holiday season,” said WPSS President Deborah Phelps.

Cuts in federal funding under the Trump administration have hurt the Staben House, so the help WPSS members provided was more appreciated than ever. The union members purchased groceries and cooked a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, and helped the children make holiday crafts and play games.

Hand-knitted hats and gloves were also provided for the kids and parents.

“At the holidays and every day, we are grateful for the chance to give back to the community we love,” Phelps added.

“It is truly an honor for our union members to organize and participate in this event year after year, because we know that when we help each other, the entire community becomes stronger.”

- Deborah Phelps, President of the Waukegan Professional Support Staff Council (Local 504)
University of Chicago graduate workers vote to join IFT

In a historic vote in October, more than 2,200 graduate employees at the University of Chicago (UC) voted decisively - by a 2-to-1 margin - to join the IFT and American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

“Graduate workers across the nation are building power by organizing unions, and the grads at the University of Chicago are helping to lead the movement,” said IFT President Dan Montgomery. “They know that union membership puts them in a powerful position to create positive change and improve the university experience for the students they serve. We congratulate them on their important victory and are proud to welcome them into our statewide family.”

This win will undoubtedly help boost the organizing efforts of graduate workers around the country. Currently, the AFT is working to help graduate employees at Brown, Cornell, Georgetown, Northwestern, and Princeton Universities, among others, join the union.

The Graduate Students United (GSU) victory came after a tough, decade-long fight. GSU was founded in 2007. Since then, members have sought union recognition from a resistant UC administration that claims graduate workers are not employees and has actively blocked their attempt to organize.

In 2016, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) formally classified teaching and research assistants at private colleges as workers, finally clearing the way for GSU to hold the historic election.

“Our overwhelming victory is a testament to our long-held belief: Graduate workers perform unquestionably valuable work and are the backbone of the University of Chicago,” said Claudio Gonzáles, a third-year UC student and graduate employee. “We have exercised our democratic right and have elected to sit at the table when decisions are made that affect our lives, and also the lives of our students and those in the broader community.”

AFT President Randi Weingarten praised GSU members for their determination.

“I am so proud that the University of Chicago graduate workers came together to fight for this union and worked very, very hard against all the obstacles to win - and win decisively. They get in their gut that a union gives them voice to make a difference in their lives and the lives of their students. The grassroots passion that animated their struggle was apparent from the beginning, and for 10 years they stood strong to achieve this historic victory.”

GSU will immediately move to bargain a first contract with the university administration.

Read More
To learn more about this initiative, visit ift-aft.org/gsuwin.
Election 2018: Ensuring every member’s voice is heard

This election year will be a critical one, and it starts with the **Primary on March 20.** Elected officials make important decisions about public schools, services, and our workplace rights - so it’s important that we vet their positions and support the candidates who best reflect our members’ input, values, and best interests.

To ensure that every member has a voice in those decisions, IFT and our local unions have been working harder than ever to keep members informed and involved in the process.

**THE IFT PAC PROCESS**

Over many years, the IFT has developed and refined a transparent, democratic Political Action Committee (PAC) process to help determine the union’s endorsements for Congress and the Illinois General Assembly.

The 18 Regional PACs and one Statewide PAC convene before each Primary and General Election to determine their endorsement recommendations. For Election 2018, they began meeting in December and will continue through the end of January. (See the schedule of remaining meetings below, and plan to attend the PAC meeting in your region!)

The process works this way: The Regional PACs use incumbent voting records, candidate responses to IFT questionnaires, and interviews to determine where candidates stand on important issues. After considering this data, they make endorsement recommendations to the Statewide PAC, which reviews them and forwards them to the IFT Executive Board for final approval.

**STATEWIDE POLLING**

In November, the IFT conducted a scientific poll of members to learn how they feel things are going under Governor Rauner’s leadership and how our union should approach the upcoming election. Highlights of the statewide survey appear on the next page.

**LOCAL UNION OUTREACH**

Across the state, locals and councils are also making sure they know where members stand on the issues and the candidates, particularly for governor. Several local unions conducted their own membership surveys and held meetings to discuss election-related issues. Many others, including the Chicago Teachers Union (Local 1), hosted forums and special events to provide an opportunity to speak with candidates and understand their positions.

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2018 PRIMARY IFT PAC MEETING SCHEDULE

**2018 PRIMARY IFT PAC MEETING SCHEDULE**

Take part in the process by attending your Regional PAC meeting!

Call 217-544-8562 to RSVP and confirm your PAC region and meeting time.

**PAC REGION A** | Tuesday, January 9
Senate Districts: 2, 6, 20
House Districts: 3, 4, 11, 12, 39, 40
Chicago Teachers Union Center
1901 W. Carroll Ave., Room 130 | Chicago, IL

**PAC REGION B** | Thursday, January 11
Senate Districts: 7, 8, 9
House Districts: 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
Chicago Teachers Union Center
1901 W. Carroll Ave., Room 130 | Chicago, IL

**PAC REGION C** | Wednesday, January 17
Senate Districts: 10, 28, 39
House Districts: 19, 20, 55, 56, 77, 78
Ram Restaurant & Brewery
9520 West Higgins Road | Rosemont, IL

**PAC REGION D** | Tuesday, January 9
Senate Districts: 1, 3, 5
House Districts: 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10
Chicago Teachers Union Center
1901 W. Carroll Ave., Room 131 | Chicago, IL

**PAC REGION E** | Wednesday, January 10
Senate Districts: 51, 52, 53
House Districts: 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106
IFT Champaign Office
2902 Crossing Court, #B | Champaign, IL

**PAC REGION F** | Tuesday, January 16
Senate Districts: 13, 15, 17
House Districts: 25, 26, 29, 30, 33, 34
Chicago Teachers Union Center
1901 W. Carroll Ave., Room 130 | Chicago, IL

**PAC REGION G** | Wednesday, January 16
Senate Districts: 4, 11, 12, 16
House Districts: 7, 8, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32
Chicago Teachers Union Center
1901 W. Carroll Ave., Room 131 | Chicago, IL

**PAC REGION H** | Tuesday, January 16
Senate Districts: 55, 58, 59
House Districts: 109, 110, 115, 116, 117, 118
Quality Inn & Suites
2600 W. Main St. | Marion, IL

**PAC REGION I** | Tuesday, January 16
Senate Districts: 3, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
House Districts: 25, 26, 29, 30, 33, 34
Chicago Teachers Union Center
1901 W. Carroll Ave., Room 130 | Chicago, IL

**PAC REGION J** | Thursday, January 11
Senate Districts: 22, 27, 33
House Districts: 43, 44, 53, 54, 65, 66
Local 1211 Office
2010 East Algonquin Road, Suite 214 | Schaumburg, IL

**PAC REGION K** | Thursday, January 11
Senate Districts: 38, 40, 43, 49
House Districts: 75, 76, 79, 80, 85, 86, 97, 98
AFT Local 604 Office
1520 North Rock Run Drive, #1 | Crest Hill, IL

Visit ift-aft.org/legislative/PAC to check for possible date or location changes.
After months of extensively vetting candidates and gathering member input, the IFT Executive Board in December voted to endorse JB Pritzker in the March 20th Democratic Primary Election.

“We are proud to endorse JB Pritzker for governor,” said Dan Montgomery, IFT President. “For two decades, JB has been working to advance early childhood education, expand school breakfast programs, and fight back against bigotry and hatred. As governor, we know he will continue standing up for our students from their first day of school through college graduation.”

The elected Executive Board represents IFT members in local unions around the state. Before deciding to endorse Pritzker, they conducted multiple interviews, reviewed the candidates’ records and responses to questionnaires, conducted a scientific statewide poll of members (see highlights on this page), and heard input from IFT locals, many of which conducted surveys and held candidate forums of their own.

Pritzker has also received the support of the Illinois AFL-CIO and Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, among others. He stands in stark contrast to Governor Rauner and his anti-union agenda.

“Unlike Bruce Rauner, JB respects workers and wants to work together to find solutions to our state’s problems. While Rauner made deep cuts and caused a crisis, JB believes that to increase funding for our schools and services fairly, Illinois needs a progressive income tax where the wealthy pay at a higher rate than those who can least afford it. We’re confident that JB, along with his running mate Juliana Stratton, will put working families first and put Illinois back on track,” added Montgomery.

Pritzker said he is proud to have the IFT’s support.

“I look forward to working with IFT members to strengthen public education and services in Illinois and ensure strong neighborhood public schools in all of our communities. I’m proud to support the labor movement and the rights of IFT members to collectively bargain and retire in dignity.”

Pritzker earns IFT endorsement for governor

StayInformed
To stay up-to-date on Election 2018, including IFT’s legislative endorsements, visit ift-aft.org/vote.
In early 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear a critically important case for all working men and women. As a union member, you may understand how this case could harm workplace rights and weaken our collective voice. But you probably know family, friends, non-union workers, or even new union members who don’t understand how this case could hurt employees in non-union jobs too. From fair share fees to the Koch Brothers, this article is designed to help you easily explain why this case matters to every one of us.

HERE ARE THE KEY FACTS ABOUT JANUS V. AFSCME COUNCIL 31.

WHAT IS JANUS V. AFSCME COUNCIL 31?
Simply put, this court case is an attempt to weaken unions and make it more difficult for middle-class Americans to join together and advocate for themselves and our communities. Funded by wealthy right-wing donors like the Koch Brothers, the case is attempting to ban a union’s ability to collect fair share fees.

WHAT ARE FAIR SHARE FEES?
When a majority of employees at a workplace choose to be represented by a union, the law requires that union to represent every employee. Those who join the union pay dues towards the costs of union-provided services, including contract negotiations, legal representation, and more. Since employees who choose not to become members still receive the salary, protections, and benefits provided by the union contract, they can be required to chip in towards the cost of securing and defending those benefits by paying a percentage of the dues rate. This is called a “fair share” fee. Fair share fees are a long-established practice that has been reaffirmed as Constitutional for more than 40 years. Fair share fees are permitted by law in 24 states, including Illinois. The Janus case seeks to outlaw them nationwide and allow for “freeloaders,” employees who enjoy the benefits of a union without paying their fair share.

CAN ANYONE BE FORCED TO JOIN A UNION OR SUPPORT UNION-ENDORSED POLITICAL CANDIDATES?
No. Do not be misled! The fact is, no one is ever required to join a union, and no one can be forced to pay fees to support political candidates. Any member who does not want to contribute to union-endorsed candidates can redirect the portion of their dues that go towards political expenditures. Employees can also choose not to join the union and pay fair share fees instead. By law, fair share fees cannot go towards political expenditures. Nothing in the Janus case will change that.
WHO IS BEHIND THIS LAWSUIT?
The well-funded attack was started right here in Illinois by Governor Bruce Rauner as part of his ongoing contract dispute with AFSCME Council 31. When a federal court decided that he did not have standing to bring the case, Rauner and his network of special interests found one state employee - Mark Janus - who was willing to add his name to the legal challenge so it could proceed.

I’M NOT IN A UNION. WHY SHOULD I CARE?
If those behind this case get fair share fees outlawed, some employees who benefit from the gains made by the union will not have to pay anything towards the cost of maintaining them. As a result, unions will have fewer resources, and working people will have a less powerful voice.

If unions are weakened, these fair, commonsense benefits and protections could be eroded over time. That would harm everyone.

Janus v. AFSCME Council 31 is the latest attempt by powerful interests to eliminate one of the last checks on their control - the freedom of working people to join together and fight for equity and opportunity for all, not just the privileged few.

HOW UNIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Unions fought for the five-day work week, overtime pay, the minimum wage, sick days, child labor laws, healthcare benefits, and other things many of us take for granted. Today, unions continue to be a voice for fairness in the workplace.

Unions help all workers - not just their members - earn higher wages. In states that restrict fair share fees, the average worker earns about $6,000 less per year than in strong union states.

Unions advocate to keep workplaces safer and healthier for everyone.

Unions promote equal pay for equal work, helping to reduce inequalities and close gender and racial wage gaps.

Unions advocate for things like small class sizes and adequate education funding that benefit our communities.

Print And Share
Download the IFT fact sheet at ift-aft.org/janus to print and share this important information.
UPCOMING EVENTS

IFT PRESIDENTS’ CONFERENCE
January 19-21, 2018
Holiday Inn & Suites
East Peoria, IL

UNION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
WINTER SESSION
February 10-11, 2018
IFT Headquarters, Westmont

WORKSITE LEADER TRAINING
Visit IFT-AFT.ORG/WSL to view
course dates by region.

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