

Illinois Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

ift-aft.org [facebook/iftaft](https://facebook.com/iftaft) [@iftaft](https://twitter.com/iftaft)

OUR UNION OUR FUTURE

When members come together with one powerful voice, we positively impact our professions and our communities.

WHAT'S A UNION?

Simply put, a union is a group of workers who come together to advance their common interests with collective power. A union is not an outside organization or a third party; it is a democratic organization run by its members who make decisions and set direction on their own behalf.

Over many years, the collective action of union members has had a substantial impact on wages, benefits, equality, and workplace protections. In fact, unions have played a pivotal role in securing important gains that benefit **everyone**, though we may take them for granted.

So whether or not you're a member, unions have played an instrumental role in fighting on your behalf!

Strong unions mean strong communities because unions help **all** workers, not just their members, earn higher wages. For example, an average worker in a "right-to-work" state makes about \$6,000 less per year than he or she would in a free bargaining state.

As the inequality gap between the very rich and very poor widens, unions today have become more important than ever for middle-class families. And by promoting equal pay for equal work, unions help reduce inequalities and close the wage gaps faced by women and people of color.

Unions also help protect members' rights and voice in the workplace, as well as the ability to advocate for those they serve.

**WE'RE
STRONGER
THAN EVER.**



“

We are thrilled! Today the teachers of the **Old Town School of Folk Music** have honored the institution's rich history by voting to form a union with the Illinois Federation of Teachers. We've known all along that the Old Town School teachers form a strong and passionate community, but it's so exciting to see that truth in action through this vote to unite so we can strengthen the school as one collective body.

Lindsay Weinberg | Teacher of piano, guitar, and voice
Old Town School of Folk Music

THE IFT PROVIDES MEMBERS WITH:

A POWERFUL VOICE ON THE JOB

Union workers have the right to negotiate with their employer over things like wages, benefits, and working conditions. Together, you have more power as a united group than you would as individuals, whether at the bargaining table or a public forum. Union members use their powerful voice to advocate for important issues like smaller class sizes, academic freedom, safe schools and workplaces, and other matters that have a positive impact on education, public services, and our communities.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Beyond your local union, you have the backing of 100,000 members in 200+ locals across Illinois, 1.5 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, and more than 10 million members of the AFL-CIO nationally. As one of the largest labor unions in Illinois, IFT has strength in numbers and a history of affecting positive change from the workplace to the Capitol.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS

IFT supports you through this process by which working people negotiate and secure fair contracts with their employers. IFT has helped thousands of members secure economic gains and other improvements for themselves and those they serve.

A CONTRACT

You have a say. IFT members elect their bargaining team, negotiate terms, and democratically vote to approve their collective bargaining agreements (contracts), which provide fair wages, benefits, work rules, and job security. Once bargained, you and your colleagues vote on the resulting employment contract, providing the structure for a positive workplace environment.

PROTECTION & SUPPORT

The IFT is an experienced partner at the bargaining table and works with members to win both economic gains and other improvements for our locals. But the union does more than help to bargain the agreement. We also help ensure that the terms of that contract are enforced. The IFT provides support to help protect you against employer discrimination, questionable behavior, unfair labor practices, and more. If your employer does violate the contract, the IFT provides assistance to resolve the problem if needed.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

IFT provides professional development training to enhance members' workplace and leadership skills. Through the union's popular Union Leadership Institute program and other opportunities, IFT members have access to hands-on training at convenient locations around the state on topics ranging from community and political engagement to collective bargaining.

LOBBYING AND POLITICAL ACTION

IFT empowers you to make your voice heard by legislators on key issues that impact members, education, and public services. Our experienced team tracks legislation, keeps you informed, and arms you with the resources you need to influence public policy.

CONSUMER BENEFITS

IFT and AFT offer members savings on a wide range of consumer benefits and services, as well as scholarship programs to help members, their children, and their students pursue higher education and career advancement opportunities.

COMMUNICATIONS

IFT keeps members informed and engaged through *ift-aft.org*, social media, email alerts, and our quarterly newsletter, *Union Link*. Our team also works closely with the media to ensure our members' perspective is included in news coverage and provides customized training for locals and councils on a variety of tactics.

RESPECT.



WATCH FOR UNION LINK IN YOUR MAILBOX OR READ ONLINE ANYTIME.

- » Member highlights
- » Local news
- » Important dates
- » Legislative updates
- » and other news you can use

ift-aft.org/news/categories/union-link

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

Advocating for our members is the IFT's top priority. That's why we work to elect legislators in Springfield and Washington, D.C., who will stand up for the best interests of our members, our professions, and those we serve.



Make sure you prepare yourself in advance of the election and if you're not already registered to vote, register today.

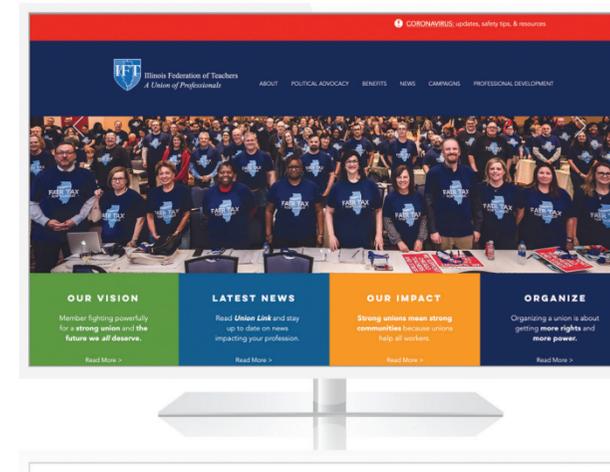
TO VOTE IN ILLINOIS

- You must be a United States Citizen
- You must be 18 on or before the date of the election
- You must live in your election precinct at least 30 days prior to Election Day

TO REGISTER ONLINE, YOU WILL NEED:

- An Illinois driver's license or state ID
- The last four digits of your Social Security number

Visit ift-aft.org/vote for additional voter information and resources.



OUR SITE IS BRAND NEW!

VISIT IFT-AFT.ORG TODAY



Easily access information important to you from any device.

- » COVID-19 resources & stories
- » Voter information center
- » Fair Tax campaign hub
- » News, and more!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING DESIGNED FOR YOU

Training that helps you stay on the cutting edge of your profession and be effective in your local union is an important benefit of union membership. That's why the IFT offers a wide range of training opportunities designed to fit **you**. No matter what job you do or what role you serve in your union, as an IFT member, you have access to high-quality, meaningful training that will enhance your skills.

UNION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (ULI)

The IFT's ULI offers a wide variety of courses designed to enhance your leadership skills.

Courses are taught by experienced union members and veteran IFT staff who understand your needs and the issues you face each day.

Courses vary, but core programs include:

- Introduction to Collective Bargaining
- Effective Grievance Administration
- Treasurer's Workshop
- Boot Camp for Union Leaders
- Worksite Leader Training
- Building and Sustaining Union Power

AFT LEAD (LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT) PROGRAM

The IFT, in partnership with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) offers the LEAD program to help local union and council teams establish strong relationships with their members and the community. This action-oriented program builds stronger unions through a campaign process supported by strategy-building and leadership trainings where teams assess their challenges, determine how to strategically overcome them, and develop an effective action plan.

AMBASSADOR TRAINING

The IFT Member Ambassador Program helps members learn how to better communicate with their neighbors, colleagues, and the media. During a one-weekend, hands-on training, Member Ambassadors learn a variety of skills, including developing a clear and persuasive message, using social media best practices, working with the press, and much more. Members in all job categories are urged to participate, but availability is limited and approval of the local/council president is required.

For current professional development locations and dates, visit ift-aft.org/professionaldevelopment.

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES TRAINING AND SUPPORT

IFT members are experts in their fields and uniquely qualified to train their colleagues. After completing an IFT Train-the-Trainer course, members are armed with the skills and materials they need to conduct professional development programs in their locals.

IFT members have instructed many programs in their own locals and councils, including:

- Empowerment in Evaluation
- Informing Instruction: Student Learning Objectives
- Quality Induction & Mentoring in Support of Novice Teachers
- Mentoring the Early Career Teacher
- Restorative Justice Practices
- Student Debt Train-the-Trainer
- The Union's Response to Students' Stress and Trauma
- Workplace Safety for Students

WORKSITE LEADER (WSL) TRAINING

The WSL program helps union activists be effective worksite leaders in their workplace. By informing and engaging members, WSLs play a critical role in growing and strengthening their locals and the IFT.

To become a WSL graduate participants must complete five courses, including:

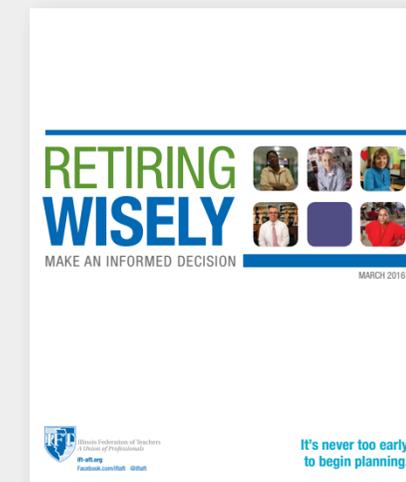
- Union 101
- Communications and Information
- Worksite Advocacy
- Mobilization and Engagement
- Political, Legislative, and Community Engagement

CUSTOM TRAINING

Additional trainings and assistance are available based on local need and demand. Examples of include: campaign and candidate training, social media, legislative issues, and the teacher evaluation process.

HOW IFT HELPS YOU PROTECT YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE

As your union, the IFT is your partner and advocate from your first day on the job until the day you retire – and beyond. By providing you with pension information and resources like the Retiring Wisely online guide, the IFT gives you the tools you need to make important decisions about your retirement.



The guide is designed for active employees considering retirement under one of the following pension systems in which IFT members participate:

- Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) – for state public employees
- State Employees Retirement System (SERS) – for state government workers
- State Universities Retirement System (SURS) – for college and university educators
- Teachers Retirement System (TRS) – for all PreK-12 teachers outside of Chicago

Staying informed and planning ahead for your retirement is more important than ever. Over the last few decades, lawmakers in Springfield shorted or skipped the state's required payments of these pension systems, causing them to be underfunded and putting your pension at risk.

For helpful retirement planning tips, download Retiring Wisely at ift-aft.org/professionaldevelopment.

Many attempts have been made to cut your benefits as a fix for the problem they caused, but thanks to the activism of our members, we have successfully staved off these threats. In 2015, the IFT and our labor partners filed suit and won a major victory for members when the Illinois Supreme Court declared pension-slashing Senate Bill 1 unconstitutional.

The IFT continuously monitors the state pension systems, reviews proposals that may affect your financial future, and works with lawmakers in both parties to seek fair and legal solutions to Illinois' fiscal challenges.

But YOU are the key! Take advantage of the resources provided by the IFT to stay informed and engaged as you plan for your retirement. Then be prepared to hold your elected officials accountable for their decisions by speaking up and taking action!



PAYING IT FORWARD: IFT SCHOLARSHIPS

The IFT supports the continuing education of high school seniors by awarding two scholarships annually. The scholarships were established by the IFT to assist students with pursuing education beyond high school and to promote an understanding of the labor movement in young people that will endure for generations to come.

THE CARL J. MEGEL SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

Honoring AFT President Emeritus Carl J. Megel

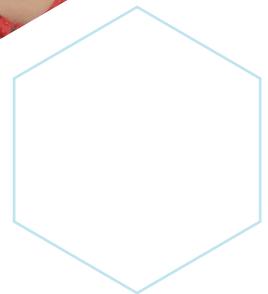
IFT educators have a unique opportunity to help special education students pursue higher education or career training by sponsoring them for the union's Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship.

THE IFT ROBERT G. PORTER SCHOLARSHIP

Honoring late AFT Secretary-Treasurer
Robert G. Porter

IFT provides two annual scholarships to current high school seniors with no less than a cumulative "B" average. Successful applicants must plan to attend full-time at an Illinois public university and maintain at least a "C" cumulative average after graduating.

For more information on these and affiliate scholarship opportunities, visit ift-aft.org/scholarships.



When each of my sons received their congratulatory letter in the mail, I was very proud of them, but **I was also proud in the knowledge that I work with an organization that supports my whole family.** Thanks IFT for helping us realize our goals and dreams!

Laura Kleinhans | PSRP member, IFT Local 571
Mother of three IFT Robert G. Porter Scholarship winners