



A Union of Professionals

1274 Newsline



North Suburban Teachers Union – Local 1274, CFL, IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

October 2012

Election 2012: The Choice is Clear

As the 2012 elections draw near, the choice between the two candidates for president is stark. It's time, once again, to remind ourselves of who is *really* on our side – as educators, union members and citizens.



The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) recently launched “Educators for Obama” to highlight the differences between President Obama

and Mitt Romney when it comes to public education. Here are just a few:

- Obama provided funding, through the stimulus bill, to save thousands of jobs in education and he has proposed additional funds to prevent future devastating cuts. Romney, on the other hand, dismisses the importance of smaller class sizes and suggests that we have too many teachers and other public employees.
- Obama opposed the anti-union attacks in Ohio and Wisconsin. Romney supported them. As governor of Massachusetts, Romney tried to eliminate collective bargaining rights for thousands of state employees.
- Obama made higher education more affordable by increasing the number of Pell grants from 6 million to 9 million. Romney

supports a budget plan that would cut Pell grants by 1 million over the next 10 years.

“All the talk about we need smaller classroom size, look that’s promoted by the teachers unions to hire more teachers.”

- Mitt Romney



For a more complete comparison of Romney and Obama, go to the link on the new NSTU website: www.nstu.org

And let's not forget Congressional and state races. Educators need a supportive Congress, and the future of our pensions could very well hinge on who we elect to Springfield. For more on candidates endorsed by the IFT, please see page 2.

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Who Should You Vote For? The Best Local Candidates of 2012

The candidates below have been endorsed by the Illinois Federation of Teachers and the Local 1274 COPE committee based on their voting records, responsiveness to teachers, interviews and questionnaires.

Tammy Duckworth Illinois 8th Congressional District



The redrawn 8th Congressional district is located in Chicago's west and northwest suburbs - as far west as Elgin, north to Wheeling and south to Lombard.

Tammy Duckworth is well known for her advocacy for veterans. She was one of the first women to pilot a Blackhawk helicopter in combat missions in Iraq, where she lost both legs in an RPG attack. She ran for Congress in 2008 against Joe Walsh, narrowly losing the race against one of the most conservative members of Congress.

A supporter of teachers unions, Duckworth also stands for increased investment in early childhood education, opposes vouchers for private schools, and supports Pell grants for higher education.

www.tammyduckworth.com

Brad Schneider Illinois 10th Congressional District



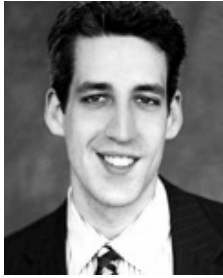
Listed as a "toss-up" or sometimes "leaning Democratic," the 10th District is located in the northern suburbs of Chicago in Cook and Lake Counties.

Brad Schneider entered politics for the first time in the March primary in a four-way contest for the democratic nomination, defeating his three rivals to win a chance to face incumbent Robert Dold in the general election. He is the founder of a management consultant firm and emphasizes the importance of helping "local businesses succeed and working families thrive."

On education, he says: "Rather than blaming our problems on teachers and stripping their rights to lobby for themselves, we should be empowering them with the best tools available."

www.schneiderforcongress.com

Daniel Biss - 9th State Senate District



With our support, Biss won his election to the 17th Illinois House district in 2010. This year, he is running for the seat of retiring State Senator Jeff Schoenberg. A former math professor, Biss has a close working relationship with Local

1274. Last year, he cast a crucial vote on a poisonous pension bill that was defeated in a House committee on which he sits.

Robyn Gabel - 18th House District

Gabel was elected to this House district in 2010. In her first term as a house member, she compiled an excellent IFT voting record of 87% on IFT and has been a steadfast supporter on pensions and other issues.

Lou Lang – 16th House District

Lang, a longtime representative from the Skokie area, and a Deputy Majority Leader in Springfield, has pledged to stand with teachers and support staff on the unconstitutional pension “reform” legislation likely to resurface after the elections.

Ann Williams (D) - 11th House District

A former Assistant Attorney General, Williams has served in the Illinois House since 2011. She has a close working relationship with local leadership, calling upon them for advice and guidance on education and labor issues.

To find your district, go to:
www.votesmart.org

Laura Fine - 17th House District

This is crucial race for the IFT and Local 1274. Fine, as an instructor of political science at



Northeastern Illinois University, is a member of the IFT. In addition, the 17th district is a swing seat that has been held for the last two years by Daniel Biss, whose door has always been open to the local union. It is important to keep

this seat in the hands of a legislator sympathetic to the needs of educators, students and parents.

Heather Steans - 7th State Senate District

Steans has served in the Illinois Senate since 2008. Despite concerns about her family connections with the charter movement, her voting record on IFT issues is 89%. Last year she was very helpful in resolving problems when a recertification glitch threatened some teachers with lapsed teaching certificates.

Ira Silverstein – 8th Senate District

The 8th district represents much of the area served by Local 1274 members – Skokie, Lincolnwood and Morton Grove. He has represented the district since 1999. His father was a teacher and he has always supported more funding for education. He voted no on the most toxic recent pension reforms in Springfield.

For all endorsements go to: www.ift-aft.org

The CTU Stands Firm

On September 10th, 26,000 members of the Chicago Teachers Union walked off the job after lengthy contract negotiations broke down. Chicago is the third largest school system in the country, and Rahm Emanuel is its highly visible mayor, so it's hardly surprising that the strike, which pitted teachers against the mayor, quickly became the focus of intense nationwide media scrutiny.

Throughout the strike, teachers showed remarkable grit and unity, picketing and rallying enthusiastically on a daily basis. There are two main reasons for this remarkable solidarity: the efforts of the union to unite its members and the efforts of the mayor to divide them.

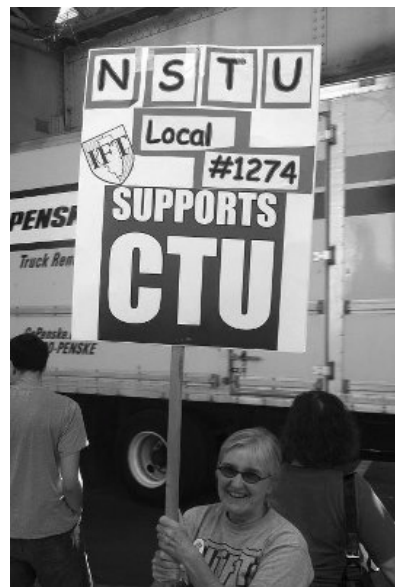
Beginning almost two years ago, the CTU launched a "contract campaign" and began creating organizing committees in every school. While this was happening, the mayor actually helped the CTU mobilize its members with his belligerent tactics: cancelling raises, appointing a school board full of charter school zealots and imposing a longer school day without providing for teacher input or higher pay.

In May of this year in a show of strength, the CTU put 6,000 teachers in the streets of downtown Chicago. In June, 92% of their members voted almost unanimously for a strike authorization, easily overcoming the 75% hurdle established by the passage of SB7, championed by Mayor Emanuel. In July, an independent fact finder, also provided for in SB7, sided with the CTU on the issue of the school day, saying teachers should get a substantial raise in return for a longer school day, undercutting the mayor and the Chicago Board of Education.

When the teachers walked back into their classrooms on September 20th, they did so having won major concessions from Emanuel and the school board. Some highlights of what they won:

- Raises of 2-3% per year over the length of the contract, with steps and lanes.
- No merit pay tied to student test scores.
- Test scores to count no more than 30% in teacher evaluations, the minimum required by state law. (The school board wanted 45%.)
- A CPS Hiring Pool requiring that one-half of all CPS hires be displaced or laid off teachers.
- 512 additional "special" teachers in art, music, physical education, world languages and other classes, enriching education for students.

For more detailed information about the tentative agreement, and for commentary from bloggers and reporters, go to the CTU website at www.ctunet.com. ■



Above, staff at Niles North High School show their support for the CTU by wearing red, as did many other Local 1274 members throughout the area. Local 1274 also supported the CTU with a financial contribution and by attending a Saturday rally. Shown on the left, Susan Dobinsky, a member of the NTFT Executive Board.

NTFT and NTSS Win New Contracts

After months of difficult negotiations, the Niles Township Federation of Teachers (NTFT) and the Niles Township Support Staff (NTSS) both reached an agreement on new contracts in the wee hours of September 20th.

Over the spring and summer, the two sides were far apart on issues such as salary, insurance, leave and retirement, and progress was slow. The pace speeded up only as the two unions faced the possibility of a job action.

Earlier in September, teachers and support staff gathered en masse at the district offices during contract negotiations, wearing union tee shirts, clearly signaling their solidarity and support for their negotiating teams. Shortly after, yard signs saying “We Support District 219 Teachers and Support Staff” began springing up around the district, to the consternation of at least some school board members (see photo below).



As negotiations continued to drag, union leaders called a general membership meeting for the day following the scheduled negotiations session of September 20th. The negotiating team intended to update members on progress, and expected to ask for a strike authorization vote. Signs had been prepared for an informational picket planned for the morning of Friday, September 22.

Fortunately, after a session that ended at 5 a.m., both sides signed a tentative agreement that held the line on most issues and advanced the line on others. Members of both unions ratified the new agreements at their general membership meetings on September 21st.

Issues on which the two unions held the line include compensation, health insurance, retirement enhancements and leave policy, despite some increases in premiums and copayments, as well as changes that will save the district money on early retirements. Leave policy was left intact, and all members of both unions are guaranteed new money in each year of their contracts.

In new language, District 219 employees will now have a day care center at Niles North High School, adding to the existing center at Niles West. And, for the first time, the NTSS won some protection from outsourcing.

From the beginning, the school board seemed determined to divide the NTFT and the NTSS by offering contracts of differing lengths, meaning that the two unions would face separate negotiations in the future. To prevent this from happening, the two unions are determined to merge before the next contract, which far from dividing will create a bigger and stronger union. ■

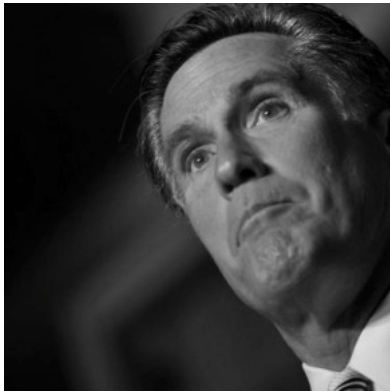


Above, members of the NTFT and NTSS pack the school board meeting at district offices.

From the President

In Solidarity with the CTU

Within hours of the onset of the strike by the Chicago Teachers Union, Mitt Romney issued a press release expressing his ‘disappointment’ with the union for “turn(ing) its back on...the hundreds of thousands of children relying on the city’s public schools...” He went on to state that “teachers unions have too often made plain that their interests conflict with those of our children...”



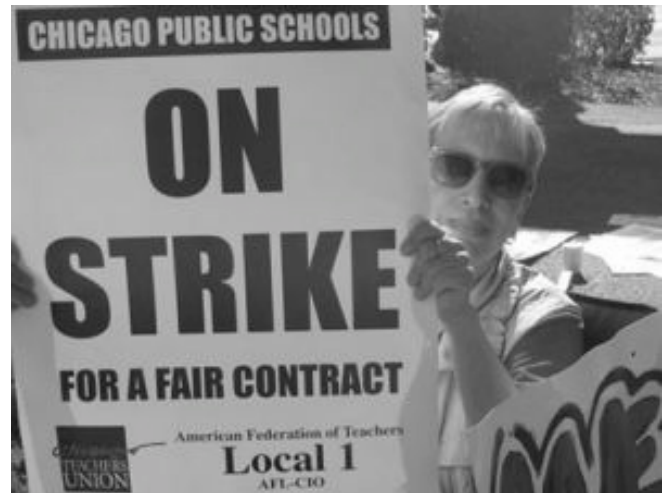
Romney’s statement not only demonstrates the depths of anti-unionism that pervade the new Republican party, but it makes plain his disregard for the work that we

do as teachers and support staff in our nation’s public schools. His statement is truly emblematic of the topsy-turvy world in which we now find ourselves, where those of us who have dedicated our entire careers to children are now scapegoated as the root of all problems in public education.

Targeting the teachers of the Chicago Public Schools is particularly shameful because they represent ground zero for both the societal ills that plague our schools and the misguided attempts by so-called reformers to fix them.

Due to social and economic conditions beyond their control, Chicago teachers face the challenge of educating large numbers of children who come to school every day ill-prepared to learn: 86% are from low income families, 16% have limited English proficiency, and many literally risk their lives by crossing gang boundaries to come to school. And yet Chicago public schools do not have full-time nurses, social workers, or psychologists. Over 100 schools have

no library. Many schools do not have a single full-time art or music teacher, and offer no recess or physical education for students.



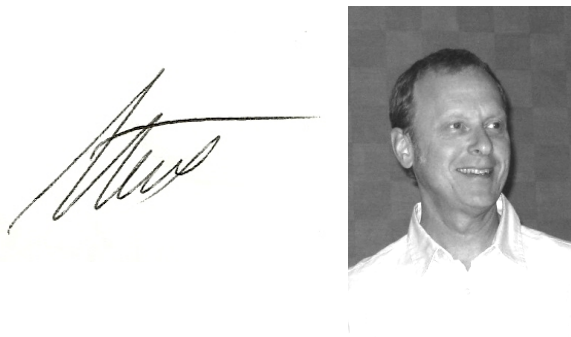
For years teachers have been fighting for increased resources to help them do their jobs while advocating for improvements in the social safety net so that more of them can come to school prepared to learn. And what answers do the so-called reformers have for solving these problems? School closings, school turnarounds, building more charter schools, and evaluating teachers based on their students’ standardized test scores.

They have already succeeded in weakening rights of tenure and seniority, now they turn their sights toward eliminating our career ladders (the steps and lanes that recognize increased expertise and advanced education), replacing them with a low starting wage for new teachers along with a vague promise of some kind of non-compounding merit bonus. The CTU and the NTFT are just two of many unions across the state that fought off such attempts at the bargaining table.

I find it interesting that school districts and so-called reformers are quick to point out the importance of having a quality teacher in every classroom yet they only seem interested in achieving that goal by removing job security, rather than by taking measure to entice the best young graduates into the profession.

Through their recent job action, the CTU stood up to a combative and blustery mayor and to the so-called reformers whose agenda he so fervently pushes.

That is why we at Local 1274, along with teachers and unionists from around the state and around the world, stood behind our brothers and sisters from the CTU during their battle for a fair contract – because their fight is our fight. Many of the challenges that they face are our challenges as well; the rest may be our challenges of tomorrow.



Above, Local 1274 members Lyndy Massoth, Elise Gould, and Ron Dornseif at this summer's AFT Convention in Detroit.

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Local 1274 Welcomes New Field Staff Director

Debra Takehara recently joined Lenny Nieves in our Skokie office as our new Field Staff Director.

Takehara began her union work as a bookkeeper and office clerk in District 69, where she led the effort, with the help of former Field Staff Director Kathy Shaevel, to create a union for the PSRP staff. She helped write a constitution and bylaws, was elected president and was the chief negotiator of their first contract. She has extensive experience in organizing, bargaining, and unfair labor practices.

In 2009, Takehara was offered an organizing position with the IFT. She has worked on campaigns to organize employees Esperanza Community Services, the PSRP employees at Deerfield/Highland Park High Schools, and the faculty at UIC and the UIC College of Medicine, among other things.

“My work with Kathy Shaevel and subsequent experience with other Field Service Directors has taught me that dedication to every union member is at the core of Field Service work,” said Takehara.



Above, Takehara with her two sports-loving sons.

Support Staff: Want to learn more about the IMRF retirement system?

Join us to hear from an IMRF representative

Monday, October 29th
4 p.m.

Romona School Auditorium
600 Romona Road
Wilmette

30-40 minute presentation
followed by
questions and answers

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