The Importance of Membership Dues

As a non-profit organization, unions are 100% supported by its members’ dues. Union dues are monies paid to support the everyday activities of your union. This money is primarily used to negotiate and maintain contracts, pay attorney fees, and maintain union offices and staff. It also supports many other activities that benefit the members; member trainings, continuing education seminars, publications, professional development and legislative lobbying that focuses on members issues are all paid for using dues. Dues are also required to pay affiliation fees to our parent organizations IFT, AFT and the Illinois AFL-CIO. These organizations use these fees to pay for research, legislative programs, informational meetings, bargaining assistance and organizing activities. Unions do not accept any monies from special interest groups or any other outside sources.

A union’s mission is to support the interest of its members.
In Illinois, bargaining unit members have the option not to join the union, but because those ‘non-members’ still receive all contractual benefits and representation, typically union contracts require a “fair share” dues amount. Once “fair share” is negotiated in your contract, the difference between the cost of “fair share” and full membership dues is the same. In exercising the “fair share” option, those individuals forfeit all voting rights within the union. “Fair share” members will not have a vote in electing officers, representatives, approving your contract or any other facet of local union business. In the field of education, training and library occupations, union members earn on average 27.3% more than non-union members, according to the US Department of Labor.

How dues are assessed:
Whether a flat dollar rate, a percentage of salary or a combination of the two—and the amount of these rates/percentages are local decisions made by you – the members. Members vote on dues at the same time as the ratification of their first contract. Although affiliate dues are set, members can determine the amount that goes to the local.

How will joining the union benefit me?
The IFT is an experienced partner at the bargaining table, winning both economic gains and improvements in the crucial arena of career advancement and opportunity for professional staff.

Below are just a few examples of the benefits our union has successfully negotiated:

- **Protection!** A collective bargaining contract – by working together we can negotiate a stronger contract that protects the rights of members. Without a contract you would not have a well-defined grievance and sanctions process that ensures uniform, fair treatment of employees.

- **Regular Salary Increases!** A collective bargaining contract guarantees yearly pay increases and a pay schedule that rewards years of experience and academic achievement.

- **Increased Benefits!** A collective bargaining contract includes provisions for professional development, sick pay improvements, tuition remission/waivers, bereavement pay improvements, and pension and insurance benefit improvements

- **A Voice!** A forum to discuss and address issues that affect our wages, hours, and working conditions.
Lobbying Power! The IFT assists in getting more funds available to the University for salary increases, sick leave protections, and workplace improvements. In addition, our lobbyists have also affected legislation concerning: pension funding, retirement options, and tuition waivers.

Strength in Numbers! The Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) is a union comprised of 103,000 working women and men in a wide-range of education and public service professions. IFT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, a powerful national union representing more than 1.5 million educators (PreK-12 and higher education), school and university support staff, state employees, and healthcare professionals. We are also part of the more than 10 million-member AFL-CIO. Our union's connection to these organizations and other groups provides strength in numbers and additional resources.

Democratic Participation! As a member you can run for office, vote in leadership elections, take part in the decision making of the chapter; and vote on contracts.