

**2022**  
**American Federation of Teachers**  
**CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

*for Candidates for the U.S. Senate  
and U.S. House of Representatives*



*A Union of Professionals*

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**American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO**

**Reclaim Our Future: Fighting for the Promise of a Better America**

The American Federation of Teachers fights for a better life for all and for the next generation to do even better. We fight for good jobs and the right to a union; for high-quality and well-resourced healthcare, public services, and public schools and colleges; to counter discrimination and division; and to protect the right to vote, the integrity of elections and our imperiled democracy.

The AFT's more than 1.7 million members work every day for this freedom to thrive, and we are on the frontlines of our country's healing and progress.

- Healthcare professionals are carrying us through the deadliest pandemic in a century.
- Public employees are delivering vital services that communities rely on.
- Educators and school staff are working with families to help students catch up and recover—to support students academically, emotionally and socially. Just as they worked to safely return to in-person learning, educators are looking forward: They yearn for post-pandemic normalcy and are working tirelessly to prepare our kids for bright futures.

Our members must be respected and supported, especially now as their work is harder than ever, with increased stress, staff shortages, and political interference and attacks.

As professionals and as a union, we care, we fight, we show up and we vote. We choose hope and aspiration over fear and division. It is time to turn the aspiration that unites everyone in our richly diverse country—the aspiration for a better life for ourselves, our children and our communities—into action.

We have prepared this questionnaire to gauge your views on issues of concern to our members. We hope you will take this opportunity to share your vision for preserving our democracy, protecting our most vulnerable, and strengthening our economy and our communities. A strong democracy allows for disagreement and debate on issues, and we recognize that candidates may not necessarily agree with the AFT 100 percent of the time. ***We encourage you to use the comment section at the end of the questionnaire to share your thoughts or address any issues or concerns you feel the AFT and its affiliates should consider.***

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## 1. DEMOCRACY AND VOTING RIGHTS

Anti-democratic forces are working to limit voting rights, interfere in vote counting and even manipulate the outcome of elections. This dangerous activity makes clear the need for urgent corrective federal action to protect the right to vote and our democracy.

*Do you support the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore federal preclearance requirements for states with a history of discriminatory laws?*

Yes, I support.  No, I oppose.

*Would you support overarching legislation for federal elections that would supersede restrictions enacted at the state level?*

Yes, I would support.  No, I would oppose.

*Would you support a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United?*

Yes, I would support.  No, I would oppose.

## 2. BUILD BACK BETTER PLAN

The Biden administration's Build Back Better plan would be transformational by making investments that would help nearly every working family. Key provisions of BBB would expand accessibility to and affordability of healthcare, prescription drugs and child care; provide for universal pre-K; and invest in recruiting and retaining educators and healthcare workers.

*Do you support the provisions of the Biden administration's Build Back Better plan, including the provisions lowering the costs of prescription drugs, healthcare and child care, and providing universal pre-K?*

Yes, I support.  No, I oppose.

*Do you support the investments of the Build Back Better plan to help recruit and retain educators and healthcare workers?*

Yes, I support.  No, I oppose.

Workforce development, particularly in the human services sector, is a campaign priority.

## 3. HEALTHCARE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

While the Affordable Care Act has successfully expanded access to healthcare, we can no longer avoid the rising cost of healthcare coverage, or the inequities of the U.S. healthcare system. More needs to be done, including expanding access and eliminating the excise tax on some employer-provided healthcare plans that penalizes working Americans.

*Would you support legislation that moves the nation to universal healthcare coverage?*

Yes, I would support.  No, I would oppose.

*Do you support lifting the restrictions for Medicare to negotiate drug costs with pharmaceutical companies?*

Yes, I support.  No, I oppose.

This is a priority.

*Would you support expanding access to Medicaid coverage for people living at or below the federal poverty line?*

Yes, I would support.  No, I would oppose.

*Would you support repealing the excise tax on employer-provided healthcare plans?*

Yes, I would support.  No, I would oppose.

## 4. SAFE NURSE STAFFING LEVELS

The AFT is the second largest nurses union in the country. We, and our members, have seen hospitals cut their staffing levels to dangerous levels, creating a staffing crisis that compromises patient care and is causing droves of healthcare workers to leave the profession.

*Will you support federal action establishing minimum safe-staffing levels for nurses to ensure that patients receive the safe quality care they deserve?*

Yes, I will support.       No, I will oppose.

## 5. HEALTHCARE WORKER SAFETY

Healthcare and social service workers are nearly five times more likely to experience workplace violence injury than workers in any other sector of the economy.

*Would you support federal legislation or Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards to ensure all hospitals and healthcare facilities have strong and effective violence prevention programs?*

Yes, I would support.       No, I would oppose.

Due to insufficient safety standards in healthcare facilities, more than 400,000 healthcare workers have been infected with COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic.

*Would you support a legally enforceable OSHA standard to protect healthcare workers against infectious diseases?*

Yes, I would support.       No, I would oppose.

The mental strain of healthcare workers during the pandemic is real. Since March 2020, nearly 1 in 5 healthcare workers have quit their jobs. Congress has provided short-term funding to begin to address the crisis, but the moral injury that healthcare workers experience is a long-term problem.

*Will you support federal funding for the mental health programming and support that our frontline caregivers need?*

Yes, I will support.       No, I will oppose.

## 6. HEALTHCARE WORKER PIPELINE

The COVID-19 pandemic has shattered the nation's healthcare workforce, with people leaving the sector in record numbers. To rebuild this critical workforce, we need to increase access to training and education programs. One way of doing this is through investing in nursing programs and loan forgiveness.

*Would you support increased loan forgiveness for students enrolled in healthcare professional training programs?*

Yes, I would support.       No, I would oppose.

[Loan forgiveness for workers in high-demand sectors such as health care is a campaign priority.](#)

*Would you support increased funding for the Health Resources and Services Administration's Title VII and Title VIII healthcare workforce programs?*

Yes, I would support.       No, I would oppose.

## **7. SAFE IN-PERSON LEARNING**

Educators and parents agree that being in school is essential to children's mental, social, emotional and academic well-being. Since the earliest days of the pandemic, the AFT has advocated for safe in-person schooling with layered mitigation measures. Through using best practices, we can make sure every public school is a place where parents want to send their children, educators want to work, and students are able to thrive.

*Do you support in-person learning plans and safety procedures to minimize COVID-19 transmission in schools and provide the resources needed to keep everyone in our schools safe?*

Yes, I support.       No, I oppose.

## **8. INVESTING IN PREK-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION**

### *TITLE I and IDEA*

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, particularly Title I, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act help ensure that the school districts serving the most disadvantaged children and communities have the resources necessary for children to learn. These programs provide funding for the hiring and retaining of educators, school nurses and guidance counselors; class-size reduction; and community schools, bilingual education, literacy programs and more.

*Do you support increasing and ensuring adequate funding for ESEA and IDEA to help ensure that all children receive a fair, equitable and high-quality education?*

Yes, I support.       No, I oppose.

### *COMMUNITY SCHOOLS*

Community schools are hubs of well-being and support for children, families and communities. By anchoring the schools in the daily life of the community, trust is built and obstacles are removed to get kids and families the support they need and to help take care of the whole child.

*Do you support federal funding for an accelerated expansion of community schools to reach a nationwide total of 25,000 schools?*

Yes, I support.       No, I oppose.

### *EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION*

Early childhood education and child care programs like Head Start, Early Head Start, preschool programs and full-day kindergarten increase the likelihood that young children, from birth to age 5, will have the language and literacy foundation on which later school success is built.

*Do you support increasing federal funds to help provide universal access to noncompulsory early childhood education and care programs for children from birth to kindergarten?*

Yes, I support.

No, I oppose.

### *SCHOOL SAFETY*

Our collective responsibility is to ensure that our schools are safe and welcoming places for teaching and learning—and that students can focus on learning and not the trauma of violence or avoiding violence. Investing in peer counseling, wellness programs, violence intervention initiatives and other supports is essential.

*Do you support federal funding for community-based intervention and prevention strategies?*

Yes, I support.

No, I oppose.

*Would you support funding to provide every school with a mental health professional?*

Yes, I would support.

No, I would oppose.

## **9. FREEDOM TO TEACH AND EDUCATOR SHORTAGES**

Teachers and other school workers are leaving their profession at the highest rate on record. In fact, all 50 states started the school year with teacher shortages. This crisis has two major roots: deep disinvestment in public education, including compensation, and the deprofessionalization of teaching.

*Will you support federal funding to help recruit and retain educators, including paraprofessionals and school-related personnel, counselors, bus drivers and maintenance workers?*

Yes, I will support.

No, I will oppose.

*Will you support federal policies to help ensure that educators are treated as the professionals they are, with a real voice and agency benefiting their profession?*

Yes, I will support.

No, I will oppose.

Parents and educators agree: We want our kids to have an education that imparts honesty about our nation's history, both the good and the bad. Unfortunately, there are politicians who are stoking fear about our schools and have even passed laws in some states restricting an educator's professional responsibility to teach honest history.

*Do you support the teaching of honest history in public schools?*

Yes, I support.

No, I oppose.

*Will you support efforts to give educators the resources to teach history without fear of reprisal?*

Yes, I will support.

No, I will oppose.

## **10. REIMAGINING PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

We have an opportunity to rethink accountability and assessment. Let's change accountability systems so that they serve teaching and learning goals by measuring what matters, incorporating formative assessment led by classroom teachers, connecting meaningfully to standards and curriculum, and providing timely and useful information for students and families.

*Would you support changing federal accountability and assessment practices to reflect what students know beyond standardized tests, allowing educators and school staff to respond to students' academic, developmental and social needs?*

Yes, I would support.       No, I would oppose.

## 11. "SCHOOL CHOICE" PROPOSALS AND PRIVATIZATION

So-called school choice programs (vouchers, opportunity scholarships, tuition tax credits, education savings accounts) are proven to have an adverse effect on student achievement and drain needed resources away from public schools, which teach 90 percent of our nation's students.

*Will you oppose vouchers and/or other proposals that allow taxpayer dollars to be used for private and religious schools at the K-12 level, either as a limited experiment or as a full-scale program?*

Yes, I will oppose.       No, I will support.

Public charter schools have the potential to be incubators for innovation and collaborative labor-management relationships but should not siphon funding away from school districts or be held to different standards than traditional neighborhood public schools.

*Do you support requiring charter schools to meet the same requirements as neighborhood public schools, including health and safety standards, civil rights requirements, academic accountability and financial transparency?*

Yes, I support.       No, I oppose.

## 12. HIGHER EDUCATION—ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

The AFT believes that higher education is a public good and should be available to all without debt. And we believe federal lawmakers should act to lift the burden of existing student debt from student loan borrowers.

*Do you support federal incentives for states to increase their investments in higher education and to make public higher education more affordable and available without debt?*

Yes, I support.       No, I oppose.

*Do you support federal action for a full or partial cancellation of existing student loan debt, which is now a \$1.8 trillion drag on the economy, of which 90 percent is owed to the U.S. Department of Education?*

Yes, I support.       No, I oppose.



*Do you support expanding the Pell Grant program to limit college loan indebtedness for low- and middle-income students?*

Yes, I support.                       No, I oppose.

### **13. WORKERS' VOICE AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Strong unions are essential for having an economy in which everyone can thrive. All workers, no matter where they are employed, deserve a voice on the job and should have the freedom to join a union and bargain with their employers for better wages and benefits, without harassment or intimidation from management.

*Do you support the right for all workers to join a union and collectively bargain?*

Yes, I support.                       No, I oppose.

*Will you support the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act?*

Yes, I will support.                       No, I will oppose.

*Will you support the Protecting the Right to Organize Act?*

Yes, I will support.                       No, I will oppose.  
*This is a priority.*

### **14. ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND TAX FAIRNESS**

A fair and vibrant economy means everyone, from working- and middle-class Americans to big businesses, pays their fair share of taxes. For far too long, the wealthiest Americans and large corporations have not paid their fair share, leaving education, healthcare and infrastructure sorely underfunded and economic inequality skyrocketing. Comprehensive and progressive tax reform is not only the right thing to do, but a necessary step for economic justice.

*Would you support ensuring that the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes, including reversing the tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations that have increased the deficit and are now threatening cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other vital programs?*

Yes, I would support.                       No, I would oppose.

*Would you support eliminating the cap on state and local tax deductions?*

Yes, I would support.                       No, I would oppose.

*I would support measures to raise, but not eliminate, the cap – such as Rep. Porter and Rep. Malinowski's [SALT Act](#), which would fully restore the (pre-Trump Tax Cuts) state*

and local tax deduction for Americans making less than \$400,000 a year, while increasing the deduction cap for those making between \$400,000 and \$1 million.

## 15. SOCIAL SECURITY AND RETIREMENT SECURITY

Workers should have a right to a secure retirement with the ability to live independent and dignified lives after they retire. However, without a renewed commitment to retirement security, our nation faces a retirement income gap that will force many workers to work longer than they should. A meaningful retirement security plan would preserve and strengthen Social Security while creating a structure for all individuals to have access to a pension-like guaranteed retirement plan.

*Would you support legislation to strengthen Social Security in a way that does not cut benefits for any current or future retirees?*

Yes, I would support.       No, I would oppose.

In approximately 50 percent of the states, public employees (including teachers) take part in state pension systems other than Social Security. This results in many public workers having their Social Security benefit unfairly reduced by the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset.

*Will you support expanding Social Security and reforms to the WEP and GPO provision so that retired public servants are not unfairly penalized?*

Yes, I will support.       No, I will oppose.

## 16. IMMIGRATION

Our country's strength has always been built on the simple notion that America is a place where many become one. The AFT supports commonsense, comprehensive and compassionate immigration reform, which is long overdue.

*Do you support a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and their families; for the beneficiaries of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure; and for the 11 million undocumented immigrants?*

Yes, I support.       No, I oppose.

## 17. CLIMATE CHANGE AND JOBS

Americans face the dual crises of climate change and increasing economic inequality. For far too long, the forces driving both crises have created a wedge between the need for economic security and a safe living environment.

*Do you support policies that combine an aggressive emission-reduction strategy with a sound infrastructure, jobs and community resilience strategy?*

Yes, I support.       No, I oppose.

**18. Can you give concrete examples where you have been instrumental in helping organized labor and the broader working class in Vermont.**

*As Vermont's Lieutenant Governor, I have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Vermont's public employees, breaking with party leadership, to object to proposed pension cuts – eventually an agreement was struck which reflected my belief that a pension is a promise.*

*To accomplish this, I have met regularly with the Vermont State Employees Union and the Vermont Chapter of the National Educators Association. I've also held meetings with the AFL-CIO, Operating Engineers, AFT-VT and other unions, keeping an open door, listening, and advocating for workers rights and the needs of working families.*

*As Lieutenant Governor, I've acted on my belief that growing and empowering our workforce must be our state's number one priority. To this end, the policy recommendations in my Recover Stronger report to the legislature and Governor Scott included putting our state's ARPA funds towards expanded access to career and technical education, particularly in the human services sector. My recommendations came out of meetings with nurses and health professionals at Central Vermont Medical Center, Rutland Regional Medical Center, Vermont Technical College, North Country Career and Technical Center, and Gifford Medical Center. I'm pleased that many of my recommendations made to the legislature were incorporated into a historic \$84.5 million workforce and economic development bill passed this session.*

*I have also advocated to make broadband deployment a budget priority. Slow, unreliable internet is a major barrier to education, health care, and economic development in our rural communities.*

*As a proud product of Vermont's education system and the step-mom of an 11 and 13 year old in public schools, I believe that public dollars should be invested in Vermont schools and Vermont teachers. Our public schools should, in turn, use these funds to expand access to early-childhood education, and invest in measures to keep our students safe at school.*

*As someone who has navigated student loan debt for much of my adult life, I am aware of the challenges that this burden presents to Vermonters aiming to buy a home or start a family– I support measures to cancel student debt and invest in workforce training.*

*I've also fought to address our state's child care crisis; our working families cannot reach their full potential unless they have access to affordable, quality childcare. I've also been a consistent champion for paid family and medical leave at the state level and look forward to taking that advocacy to Congress.*

**OPTIONAL: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS**

*As the spouse of a proud TEAMSTER, I have seen firsthand the dignity and security unions afford for their workers. I believe that strong unions build vibrant economies and healthier communities.*

*I also believe that unions are essential allies as we seek to upskill our workforce. Workforce development is a top campaign priority, and protecting workers' right to unionize – first and foremost, by passing the PRO Act – will be a central element of this work.*

*In my 2020 race for Lieutenant Governor, I won a crowded Primary and defeated the Pro Tem of the State Senate by running a grassroots campaign centered on a commitment to show up for working families in every corner of the state. I went on to win a general election against a Republican*

*millionaire, who welcomed over \$300K of national Republican money into the race and outspent me 3 to 1.*

*In this election, I am honored to have strong support from workers, including organized labor. I have received the endorsement of the North Atlantic Regional Council of Carpenters and the American Association for Justice, as well as support from the Air Line Pilots Association PAC.*