

Vocational Instructor

Local 4200A~AFT, AFTCT, & AFL-CIO



IT PAYS TO BE TAUGHT BY A VO-TECH TEACHER!

Volume MMXXV Issue 3

March 2025

Updates

by Paul Angelucci, President

There are four weeks for most, five for Wolcott, but I hope you make it to spring break with enough gas in your tank to enjoy it! I want to give you a number of updates. SVFT Full Time Officer school visits start Monday the 17th. Makenzi, Bob, and I will be at each school for a union meeting. Please stop by while we'll share info and stick around for any questions you might have. Dr. Pritchard shared with us they have hired council to negotiate with us so we should start soon. During the SEBAC meeting it was shared that all 36 unions are currently at the table now and all are going slow. That being said, our contract sunsets August 31st, 2025. Keep in mind our salaries will remain the same, but tuition reimbursement will be frozen until a contract is agreed upon. As for the Health & Pension Deal, which expires on July 1st, 2027, SEBAC is in talks with the Governor's office and will likely make a deal in '27 regarding its future. The AFT CT Legislative lunches are taking place around the state. On the weekends of March 22nd, March 29th, and April 5th, we have a number taking place. This info is in this newsletter. Please join us and invite your legislators as well. I had a great conversation with state Rep Greg Haddad, who is including CTECS in a bill for student loan relief.

The effects of the last two plus years of having Dr. Solek as Executive Director unfortunately is still being felt and will be felt for some time. There is progress being made by Dr. Pritchard. There is a new head of HR, a Dr. Hiedi Gray, who is filling Erin Ryan's position. Gennaro DeAngelis is starting as Chief Financial Officer, a position that is sorely needed in our agency. Dr. Pritchard also shared there should be a selection made for a permanent Superintendent by the first week of April. These address a number of complaints we've had. Also the process of uploading CTECS board meetings right after they're held is a welcome addition for full transparency. The '25-'27 state budget is out. CTECS is basically flat lined. What I mean by that is they took our old budget, added the deficit of \$12 million and set us at \$211 million. Thanks to the lack of advocating during the Solek years that number doesn't speak to rising costs, stagnant dept. budgets for over a decade and many more costs that weren't addressed. This budget doesn't get voted on until the end of June, and we'll testify where we can.

I also want to thank the members that stepped up and gave testimony for the first time. Sarah Fennessy from Prince, Marc Couture from Wright testified for Special Education funding. Sara Bruno from Platt gave testimony on continuing funding for GreenStep. Rich Benedict from Platt submitted testimony for automatic posting of certain State positions. Makenzi and I have also been testifying on these issues and our budget. We will continue to watch the bills and testify where we need to.

I want to close by again inviting you stop down when we're in your school with any questions you might have, and I'm always available by cell call or text 203-627-0710

May General Membership
May 7th, 2025 - 5PM
A. I. Prince Technical High School

Executive Council members will be in person.
General Membership is encouraged to attend in person.
All participation will be in person.
We will live-stream for members that cannot attend, but we will not interact virtually.

A link will be sent to RSVP for planning purposes.

HAPPY SOCIAL WORK MONTH!

MARCH 2025



SOCIAL WORK
COMPASSION
+ ACTION

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Improving Our Union Starts With You!

by Makenzi Hurtado, Vice President

May 2025 is an exciting time in our union. We will have the opening of committees, building representative elections, delegate elections, and officer elections. Committees, building representatives, and delegates serve two year terms. Officers serve three year terms. Every six years, we can have a big changeover! If you have ideas on how to improve our union, our district, or your building climate, I encourage you to volunteer for one of these positions.

Building Representatives: Ideally there is one academic building representative and one shop representative in a building. There are many roles for a building representative. Reps are the voice of union members in a building to administration. They are also the voice of their building in the Executive Council. It is also their responsibility to share information from the officers back to the buildings. Reps have the opportunity to protect the contract from the building level and address working conditions for union members with their building administration. You do not have to have any experience to become a building rep and you do not have to be tenured, but we do recommend it. You must be a member in good standing (dues paying) for a year before running for rep. You must be elected by your building members. We train all of our reps when they are elected and provide support as needed.

Committee Members: Right now we have ten committees: Budget, Constitution & By-Laws, Grievance & Arbitration, Health & Safety, Labor Management, Sick Leave Bank, Trade Advisory, Political Action, Contract & Negotiation, and Minority Teacher. All of these committees have different time commitments and different needs in terms of members. We worked very hard last term to diversify these groups across all experiences and backgrounds and we would like to continue to see more new members. Committee members are chosen by the Executive Committee and voted in by the Executive Council, but we will be calling for volunteers.

In order to serve on a committee you must meet one of the following criteria:

- Has served or is currently serving as a building representative
- Has served or is currently serving on other committees
- Provides necessary expertise
- Balances representation on the committee between trade and academics
- Is available to attend all meetings

If you are interested in serving on a committee and want to learn more, please reach out to Paul or Makenzi.

Delegates: Delegates represent SVFT in our parent unions like AFT Connecticut and AFT National. Based on our size and dues, we are able to have 25 delegates for AFT Connecticut and 13 delegates for AFT National. These delegates attend conventions and vote on behalf of our membership. The more delegates we have the more voting power we have. Delegates all attend trainings that help us improve as a union and as a district. Delegates must be a building representative or serve on two committees.

In April's newsletter, we will share a timeline for all of these positions and the method for announcing or sharing your interest. If you have any questions about the responsibilities and expectations, please reach out. 860-371-6382 or mhurtado@svft.org.

I want to hear from you!

Helping Out? Maybe Not.

by Bob Riccitelli, Executive Union Representative

As teachers we always want to do what is best for our students. As the old saying goes "the road to Hell is paved with good intentions". Sometimes we act on a request but don't think about the long term effect of our actions on ourselves or colleagues.

Most Central Office consultants will ask our members to cover a class or shop at another school. At first this may seem like a logical request. But stop and think about the long term effects. Your class will not have the instruction or supervision they need one, two, or three times a week. The class you are covering is only getting one, two, or three days of instruction after not having a teacher for an extended period of time. Plus, you now have double the amount of students to worry about. I seriously doubt the two schools are in the same place in the curriculum, so you are planning twice. The students may not have had any structure in the covering school, so you may have discipline issues. Grading? Commute? What if it gets to be too much? Can you just stop? Have you now set a practice that will affect your fellow teachers? Will your actions give Central Office the right to just assign a teacher two schools, even if they are unwilling?

If you really want to help out the other school, all we ask is that you talk with us first and let us negotiate a stipulated agreement to protect you and your union siblings' rights.

AFT CT 2025 Regional Legislative Meetings



This is an opportunity for members and area legislators to have informal discussions on AFT CT legislative issues.



NEW LONDON
March 22, 12-2:30PM
Lighthouse Inn - New London



STAMFORD-NORWALK
March 29, 12-2:30PM
Odeen's at Oak Hills - Norwalk



MIDDLETOWN
April 5, 12-2:30PM
Red Fox Restaurant - Middletown



DANBURY
March 29, 12-2:30PM
Craft Kitchen & Bar, Danbury



NEW HAVEN
April 5, 12-2:30PM
BAR - New Haven



CENTRAL
April 5, 12-2:30PM
Gobi Mongolian Grill - Southington

For more information call 860-257-9782 or email at jvigue@aftct.org



SVFT 2025 Scholarship Program

The State Vocational Federation of Teachers Local 4200A is pleased to notify you of twelve (12) \$1,000 scholarships available to members' children who are currently high school seniors and planning to further their education or to begin work in their trade in the fall of 2024.



Include the following:

1. A completed application form
2. An official school transcript
3. One letter of recommendation from a teacher or community leader who knows you well enough to attest to your achievements and/or potential
4. A resume listing accomplishments, contributions and achievements in school, your community, and any other extra-curricular activities that are indicative of future success
5. A letter of intent in 250 words or fewer describing why you are applying for a scholarship and how the funds will be used
6. A response to **one** of the following prompts in essay format in 250-400 words. Essays will be run through an AI and plagiarism checker. Choices:
 - A. Interview someone in a union and write about how it has benefited their life and family. Make sure to share the union that they are a member of.
 - B. How do you see the roles of unions evolving in the future?

Please note: The 2024 scholarships will be awarded on the basis of vocational or academic promise. Applications must be received on time and complete to be considered.

SVFT 2025 Mini-Grant Program

The SVFT is also pleased to announce that up to \$4,000 in scholarship funds are available in the form of **mini-grants** to SVFT members for the purpose of professional growth.

To apply, include the following:

The application coversheet

Respond to the following statements:

Explain how the requested funds will be used.

Explain the expected individual professional growth.

Explain how your growth in this area will benefit your school and/or the school community and/or SVFT.

Flier/information from program and a breakdown of specific costs. We do not accept links to websites.

Successful grant recipients will be required to submit a newsletter or website article explaining how the investment was used for professional growth. The purpose of this grant is to enable members to grow professionally, **outside of the activities funded by CTS-43 or the tuition reimbursement program.**

Applications are available on our website, svft.ct.aft.org

Applications for scholarships or mini-grants must arrive at the SVFT office

no later than Thursday, May 15, 2025 at 3pm.

439 Main Street

Wallingford CT 06492

Announcements of awards will be made on or about June 6, 2025.

Questions may be addressed to the SVFT Vice President, Makenzi Hurtado
860-371-6382 or mhurtado@svft.org

Labor/Management Committee Meeting Minutes

February 18, 2025 – 9:00am

In Attendance:

SVFT: Rich Benedict (Platt), John Hemenway (Wright), Johanna Rios Roldan (Eli Whitney), Paul Angelucci, Makenzi Hurtado, Bob Riccitelli

Management: Freeman Burr (Interim Superintendent), Dr. Nikitoula Menounos, Rafael Palacio

SVFT

SVFT Schedule Survey

SVFT shared data from survey with management prior to the meeting.

John Hemenway: Curriculums are not fully fleshed out so planning takes a lot longer. “Coteaching” tends to happen more in math and English. However, this is not really coteaching because there is no time to plan, collaborate, and grade together. It really seems more like push in support for Special Education and ML support.

Rich Benedict: Teachers in one shop do not have time to meet with each other. Brand new shop teachers do not have any experience teaching. Trade teachers come in with different skills but need time and support with teaching. This means time to work with our coteacher and other trade teachers in the building and district. We need time to work with academic teachers as well.

Johanna Rios: Collaboration looks different for support services but is still a concern. We need more time to work with trade and academic teachers. Trade teachers only get one special education class and need more support as soon as they start teaching.

John Hemenway: One of things on IEPs is it says “coteaching”, but it is really push in support.

Freeman Burr: I will speak to our perspective on special education. Next week we have a meeting set up between curriculum and special education. We are shifting away from modifying curriculum. We are aware of courses being modified to the point that they are no longer the same class. There has been discussions on the accommodations that need to be implemented. Teachers need skills to employ accommodations and understand the difference between accommodation and modification.

Our focus goes beyond the accommodation. Principals were told what they are being held accountable for failure rates, attendance, and evaluations. There needs to be a focus on failure rates with specific groups: special education, MLs, and students in different social economic groups. We will meet with special education in March. April and May PDs will focus on accommodations for all classroom staff. Some special education teachers are saying there is resistance coming from teachers. All staff need to understand accommodations and roles of special education teachers.

In terms of scheduling, we know there are differences between schools. We would like universal standards, but we know some schools have models that they have had for years. We don’t have a systemic plan for scheduling now, but we are prioritizing what we need to do.

Makenzi: We appreciate any support and training that we can get to help our students. We don’t want less failures to mean “lower the standard”. We want the skills and strategies and supports to help our students get to the level that they need to help them succeed. We also need to see students held accountable for the grades that they earn.

Portfolio

Paul: We need clarification. Some principals are sharing that they are keeping their portfolio teachers, some are saying that CO has told them they cannot keep portfolio, some are not sharing anything information.

Niki: We will be going over the list of teachers who are teaching portfolio and what the plan is. If the hire letter says “social studies” they should be teaching social studies. Right now portfolio can be offered as an elective, if the school needs it. In the future, for graduation, the portfolio will now be called “Capstone project”, using the vision of the graduate. There will be a plan, and it is being developed. The district will supply the rubric and it will be pass/fail. It will be a rigorous project that shows the student’s growth over four years. We are reaching out to teachers now to be on the committee. It will be overseen by the trade DH.

Counseling

Admissions

Johanna: It has been very difficult this year with the way communication has been. Information changes every few weeks. Parents and middle school counselors have been very upset.

Freeman: We are still under state investigation for our previous practices. There was an agreement to go to open lottery. We had to abolish the safety committees. We were told that we cannot use discipline records.

Counseling will be under one person in the future.

504s

Makenzi: The work load for counselors has increased drastically because of the 504 responsibilities.

There was no training before being given this responsibility. There is no balance in the workload. Also, the counselors are being told to do yearly evaluation meetings when the requirement is every three years. This is because CTSEDS is made for yearly PPTs and shows “out of compliance” for 504s even though they are not. Extremely time consuming and unnecessary.

Freeman: 504 accommodations for us are just as important in our district as any other accommodation. In LEAs they tend to be managed with school nurses. This does not work in our district. We are not changing the 504 model for this year. We can request a 504 meetings with a sending school, but they are not required to hold them.

Freeman: The counselor should not be the case manager for all 504s and they should be transitioning based on the needs. Could be special education, nurse, counselor, school psychologist.

Makenzi: Is this something that can start transitioning this year?

Freeman: Yes.

PAC Meetings

Did not discuss monetary because it is in arbitration.

Rich: The idea is good, but current model is outdated. Trade teachers are not seeing a benefit – no one looks at the minutes from the meetings. Nothing is allowed virtually. One size does not fit all. Same unions and companies get invites to five or 6 PACs and don’t want to go to all of them. Job Fairs are great.

Can you ask trade teachers for feedback on what works and what doesn’t work, create a committee with teachers to develop a new model and allow for flexibility?

Menounos: This year Mr Hussey sent out a powerpoint with examples of flexibilities in the PAC process. There are different types of meetings that are acceptable.

Rich: This was not shared with DHs.

Makenzi: Can this be shared with DHs?

Student Chromebooks

Confusion on who is responsible for what.

Lots of running around.

Now HP and Lenova are also rejecting many claims.

IT shops did not all receive their production funds.

The work is not really part of the IT curriculum.

The process is not working.

Employee Devices and Technology Requests

Not all teachers have devices or adequate devices.

The district provides devices to some teachers and not others.

Teachers are being asked to use their personal devices – phones and computers.

Our attorneys are advising us against using personal devices for work.

Social Media Accounts

Marketing

CTECS

Teacher Certification

12 teachers without certification for over six months.

Bob Sartoris is looking into it.

Many more who are without certification for less than six months.

A. I. Prince Technical High School

Recommending to the State that A. I. Prince become an Alliance District. Their recruitment plan was rejected as inadequate. Steps: Post principal position. Looking for candidates with turnaround experience. Mr. Shooshan has been holding down the fort and Dr. Butkus has been moved as a coprincipal to work on safety, climate, and culture.

Makenzi: What does being an Alliance District mean for Prince?

Freeman: First we need to apply. It could mean additional funding. Need a change in leadership. We need instructional leadership. Efficacy in departments. They will look at the Accountability Index. Performance Intervention Team has been pulled out. The SDE will play more of a role in the interventions that are put into place.

Grade Change Discussion

Move to March 6, 2025 agenda.

Follow Up

Bus Issues

Rich: Quality and quantity of buses has gone down over the past two years. There is less money available to shops, but there are not enough buses for production work. One bus with 6000 miles has already been in the shop 6 times for about 4-5 months (Norwich).

Two electric buses at Norwich don't work.

Most schools don't have charging stations.

Exterior cages don't lock.

Latch for ladders are broken on most buses

Right now, the consultant for several trades is overseeing bus operation and maintenance.

Freeman: Buses are being replaced.

CDLs – There are a lot of questions about whether or not teachers need a C license or B license and if the district will offer classes if people need a different license.

Request: The district send out clarifying information on CDLS.

Supporting Teachers So They Can Support Students

We have requested more support and more training so that we can support the influx of high-needed students. We have not received any.

Johanna: Students who have daily living skills, adaptive skills on their IEPs.

Should be learning how to make a phone call, how to access public transportation, learning about their own medical service and quality of life, etc.

Most schools are reporting that they do not have the number of one-to-ones that they are supposed to have. Also, the one-to-ones need training on being in a shop. The students are being assigned substitutes who do not have any training.

Makenzi: We understand that there are issues with funds, but teachers in academics and trades are sharing that they do not have the resources.

Freeman: Let us know what the equipment needs are and they are will be shared with facilities.

Addressed in first bullet:

Our trade teachers take one class on special education.

In almost every area, but especially student services, the caseloads and responsibilities have drastically increased, but there is not more support or more time. (depending on the supervisor)

Caseloads are not just larger, but the amount of time needed and services needed are more intensive.

Trade teachers have been told that students will be able to graduate with modified curriculums.

We are going to have a much lower percentage of students that are ready for their trade when they graduate.

Labor/Management Committee Meeting Minutes March 6, 2025

In Attendance

Labor: John Hemenway (Wright – Related DH), Johanna Rios Roldan (Eli Whitney – School Psychologist), Jamie Lamitie (Norwich – Electrical DH), Bob Riccitelli, Makenzi Hurtado

Management: Dr. Nikitoula Menounos, Rafael Palacio

Grade Change Discussion

Moved to May 1, 2025 Meeting.

SVFT

Maintenance and Custodial Vacancies

MH: These vacancies are affecting the health and safety of the buildings. Many buildings do not have staffing or overtime to address issues or clean all spaces.

JH spoke specifically about Wright. The climate is not great. There is dirt on the ground when you walk in. You have to help and put your trash in the hallway and the same trash is still there when you come back. There are flies in the building. We don't know when our buildings are closing. Admin was cleaning, sweeping, and trash removal.

NM: What is the shortage at Wright?

JH: We have a BMS that just started. We have one person in the morning and one in the evening. Sometimes the Athletic Director has to close the building.

MH: Teachers are asked to empty their garbage and put it in the hallway. This includes the containers in the girls' bathroom that hold sanitary products.

JH: Staff and student bathrooms are not attended to.

JL: Many good maintenance and custodial staff are seeking alternate employment. They are put in a position where they can't do their job. We lose really good people because of this. They want to fix and clean the building and they are put in a position where they can't. Even if they have the staffing, they don't have the funds to do their work.

MH: It is really important to understand how that these positions do affect student learning and the school climate.

RP: We will need to reach out to Dr. Heidi Gray and Mr. Cavallaro to go over this situation.

Safety – phones, walkie talkies, speaker system

When teachers are calling the main number for emergency or issue, there is no answer.

- Prince Tech example – student fainted – no one answered the phones, eventually a teacher called the trooper's cell phone.
- Norwich example – JL has been tasked with trying to help with the speaker system. I have adjusted the wattage. There are circuits that have been down for two years. We got swatted last year and it makes people nervous about emergency situations.
- Windham – student had a seizure and teacher ended up getting a hold of Criminal Justice DH

When teachers report that the speaker system is not working, it is not resolved. This is especially an issue in shops.

Grasso and Platt have security buttons that are supposed to ring security.

Is there a way to do an all alert?

Cell phones do not work in all buildings and we don't want to have staff using their own phones. Anyone that is leaving campus should have a state approved phone. If you need to call parents or something happens, we should not be using our own phones.

NM: I will email John Woodmansee, Don Poulin, and Rich Cavallaro.

JL: Dr. Menounos, didn't we have a school cell phone at Norwich that a teacher used?

NM: Yes we did.

New Equipment – maintenance contracts, warranties, maintenance schedules

JL: Bullard trade teachers shared concerns about there not being maintenance contract, warranties, or maintenance schedules on new shop equipment.

Platt teachers also said that this is an issue with all of the new equipment in their building. Painting booth has filters need to be replaced on a regular basis. The shop budget can not and should not need to pay for this.

Procedure for Repair Money

How much money is there?

What is the procedure to apply for repair money?

Can this procedure be shared and the timeline?

JL: There used to be QTR in Jewett City to repair tools on contract, but now there is no one.

NM: I will ask Kisha Richardson to send something out.

MH: This affects trades and academics... shop budgets cannot afford repairs.

JH: Big equipment in academics like smartboards. There are 11 year old smartboards and we are told they are "up to standard". But they are not calibrated or don't have sound. The version on Smart Notebook does not work with the boards because they are too old. From the science background, fume hoods, goggle cabinets need bulbs to disinfect, microscopes are all things that we cannot afford to pay for out of our department budget.

JL: If you do not spend your money by December, you lose your money. Even if you saved the money, you can't use it.

NM: The LAN tech gives the response that it is up to par?

JH: Yes.

MH: Smartboards also cannot be moved because the company that installed them has to move them.

Follow Up

Counselling – admissions, 504s

MH: Have any directives gone out to transition case managing off of the counselors?

NM: No.

JRR: In regards to 504 coordinating, there has been an increase in what we need to do. We were given a directive that we need to amend all 504s. We meet in the spring to amend them. Now they want us to amend so that it is on our letterhead. This is not as simple as cutting and pasting. This is clerical work that takes away from actually servicing our students.

We also have more counseling hours, more testing.

NM: What has changed? The paperwork or the caseload?

JRR: Both. The yearly 504 meetings are new. They are not a Federal or State requirement. They are

district requirement. The number of students I have has increased. The amount of services and support needed has also increased.

PAC Meetings

Trade DHs did not receive the power point that Dr. Menounos discussed, so they were not aware of the flexibilities. Can CO send out information on new flexibilities to all trade DHs?

NM: I met with the trade unit last week. PA 97136 “craft committee” addresses the law. We do this for our accreditation process and trade reauthorization process. PAC meeting minutes needed for these. We are looking at making the one in the Fall for everyone the “formal” meeting. The meeting in the Spring could be “informal” or regional PAC meetings in the spring.

JL: We do not think that the minutes are actually being used for reauthorization or curriculum because no one is asking for them and no one is opening them. PAC committee members have dwindled because the people attending don’t see value either. They don’t think their voices are heard.

BR: In the past, DH was required to invite consultants. Is that the case?

Yes, but sometimes they are double booked.

MH: We do think it would be beneficial to allow a virtual option. It gives the industry people a lot more flexibility and we get the same amount of information.

CTECS

High Tech Trades

In the system the numbers are very low across the district. We are looking at the shops that have zero. We are looking at a case by case. We are trying to bolster our new programs.

Construction Trades are booming.



presents to our members retiring under the Teachers Retireemet Board:

TEACHER Pre-Retirement Webinar

April 5, 2025 SATURDAY

9:00am - 11:00am Zoom



Come understand your retirement plan and make sure you're making the right choices!

- There is no fee associated with this webinar.
- Link to webinar will be emailed, so please make sure to spell your email accurately when registering.
- Make sure to select the April 5th Webinar option:

SCAN or CLICK to register



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Calendar



3/12 Executive Council Meeting

3/13 Grasso Health & Safety Visit

Full Time Officers begin their Building Meetings on 3/17! Look out for information from your building representative on when and where those meetings will take place. We want to share information, but we also want to hear from you!

3/28 SKILLS DAY

4/9 Executive Council

4/10 Health & Safety—Kaynor

Vocational Instructor

*is the monthly newsletter of the
State Vocational Federation of Teachers*

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Vice President Makenzi Hurtado
Executive Union Rep Bob Riccitelli
Treasurer Emily DelPiano
Secretary Jamie Lamitie

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Wallingford CT 06492
(203) 793-7996

REMINDER!

Check your certification.
Make sure it is not expired!

svft.ct.aft.org

Any information you need is on our website!
Do you have suggestions for additions to our website?

Email our Secretary, Jamie Lamitie:
jlamitie@svft.org

Future Articles

We would like to have a “School Shout Out” article and a “Member Spotlight” article in each newsletter.

Invite us to attend an event or share something from your school that makes you proud.

What else do you want to see in the Vocational Instructor? Please let us know!

Email Jamie at jlamitie@svft.org

SVFT Mission Statement

The SVFT is an organization of professional educators that promotes excellence through the mutual adherence to policies, documents, and procedures negotiated with the CTEC. We work to guarantee that the contract is followed and positive working conditions are maintained. This organization shall be to provide a safe and positive teaching environment for all by:

1. Maintaining the integrity of the contract, the Vocational Technical High School System, and the solidarity of the union.
2. Ensuring all members are protected by the contract and equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to make them successful.
3. Protecting the jobs of our members and strengthening our system.
4. Providing members opportunities to further their education and receive quality professional development.
5. Responding quickly to the emerging changes to the workplace and technological challenges.
6. Handling all interactions with fairness and integrity.
7. Striving for productive, open communication between the SVFT leadership and our membership.
8. Building and improving relationships with our union affiliates and local labor councils.