

STATE VOCATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Vocational Instructor

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



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IMPORTANT REMINDER: CHECK YOUR CERTIFICATION!



You are responsible for maintaining your certification. You will not be reminded when it is expiring. If your certification expires, CTECS will drop you to substitute pay and you will be required to pay back time you were not certified and paid as a teacher. You will also have to repay any sick days and health insurance from that time.

New Year... Same Fight

by Makenzi Hurtado, SVFT President

This year brings many changes to our union. Paul Angelucci retired and Bob Riccitelli was voted our new Vice President. On February 4, we will hold an election for our new Executive Union Representative. This role is a vital part of our union. The Executive Union Representative's responsibilities include overseeing the entire discipline process, administrative leave, and contract violations. They are responsible for all grievances and arbitrations for our union. They also support staff in DCF investigations. Bob has held this role for over 10 years and, while serving as Vice President, he will also ensure a smooth transition for our new Executive Union Representative. **Please take time to read the candidate statements on page 2 of the newsletter and their fliers in your mailbox.**

Despite these changes to our union leadership, our work and focus stays the same. This year we continue to focus on negotiating for our new contract, while protecting our current contract language. Our current contract language is strong, but it needs to be respected and followed. With new district leadership, we are taking time to share concerns that we have on contract language that is historically ignored or trampled. It is imperative that members share with us when the contract is being violated so that we can address it. Please do not assume that we know. Let your building representatives know immediately and you are always welcome to follow up with me and Bob. If you are unsure, reach out! We are just a text, phone call, or email away.

I know that all members are concerned about the time it is taking to negotiate our new contract. I want to assure you that we are meeting regularly with management and continue to negotiate the issues that were brought to us by members. We are focused on issues that affect all members and small groups of members. We want to strengthen our contract so that the working conditions of all members improve. When I am able to share, I will through email and meetings with members. As of now, I do not have updates on SEBAC. Progress has been slow and our interactions with administration have been frustrating. We expect to start having actions that we will need members to participate in when the legislative session begins. **Keep checking your email. I will send updates when I have them.**

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Today and Everyday

"In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right to work.' It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights.

Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone...Wherever these laws have been passed, wages are lower, job opportunities are fewer and there are no civil rights. We do not intend to let them do this to us.

We demand this fraud be stopped."



"Our weapon is our vote."



SOLIDARI-TEA

Makenzi will bring her tea and you bring yours!

Join Makenzi for an informal discussion on the work she is doing and share your experiences in the district. While this is an open forum, I ask that you limit personal questions that can be asked through email, text, or phone call.

We will meet the last Monday of every month at 4pm on Zoom (shared via email).

Save the Dates: 1/26, 2/23, 3/30, 4/27

Executive Union Representative Candidate Statements

PLEASE READ!

Election Date: February 4, 2026

I have taught in the Vo-Tech, CTHHS, CTECS district for sixteen years, and for the majority of those sixteen years I have served as a building representative. In this time, it has become increasingly frustrating to watch as the district's ability to function has been compromised. Instead of addressing glaring and obvious inadequacies the district typically offers platitudes and professional development.

We, as a union, have negotiated and agreed upon a contract. Instead of honoring these terms, there are many who circumvent, intentionally or otherwise, contractual language. If I am elected to the position of Executive Union Representative, I will work to ensure our contractual rights are strictly maintained.

We have a right to work in safe schools that have clear and discernable rules pertaining to a school's operation, including fiscal transparency, and the discipline of students. If teachers are held to a contractual standard, so should other employees in our district. We should not have to wonder if we will have supplies for a shop or classroom because a bill has not been paid. We should not have to accept a hostile workplace, where teachers are criticized for reporting violent and harassing student behavior.

We do not need an anonymous survey to know the district is in a precarious position. What we need in this uncertain time is common sense and applied logic. If I am elected to the position of Executive Union Representative, my intention is to do just that.

In Solidarity,
Eric Klotz

Colleagues,

When I joined CTECS in 2005 after fifteen-plus years in industry, I knew I'd be joining a union, but didn't think much about it. You work hard, you follow the rules—you're good, right? Well, not necessarily. While I've worked with some excellent administrators, we've all witnessed favoritism, inequities, intimidation, and other administrative misconduct.

Since 2017, I've served on multiple SVFT and AFT committees and as building representative in two schools. Every grievance I've initiated has won, driving meaningful changes. These include stronger contracts, hiring practices that prioritize members first, and financial compensation. My strength in analyzing language to leverage inconsistencies and build strong arguments gets proven results for our members.

I've worked successfully with a variety of administrators and believe collaboration is the best first step. Positive relationships make difficult conversations possible. However, I'm also willing to go to battle, and those who know me can attest that I don't back down—and I don't quit. While I've faced retaliation for this, I accept that risk. **Positive working conditions for educators create optimal learning environments for students.**

Our SVFT leaders have strengthened our union, but members want changes. SVFT leadership must become more proactive than reactive, amplify member voices—academic, trade, and student support—and increase visibility, transparency, equity, and member advocacy. If elected Executive Union Representative, these are my commitments to us all.

Please reach out with any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

In solidarity,
Melanie Perry
General Education Department Head
Platt Technical High School
ms.perry103@gmail.com

Labor Management Committee Meetings

→ Do you have concerns that are not related to our contract language?

Four times a year, our Labor Management Committee (one trade teacher, one academic teacher, and one support service teacher) meet with management to bring forward issues that are affecting members across the district.

Please share your concerns with your building representatives or Makenzi, so that we can represent you in the room. This year our meetings are scheduled for:

September 15, 2025

January 13, 2026

March 18, 2026

May 13, 2026

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like ... Propaganda

By Melanie Perry, Platt Tech General Education Department Head

How seasonal messaging masks a coordinated attack on collective bargaining

Recently, some of our members received a Christmas-themed “Letter from Santa” encouraging them to ‘save money’ by stopping union dues payments while still benefiting from union representation. Despite the holiday imagery, the underlying message is far more Scrooge than Santa: self-interest at the expense of our greater community of educators.

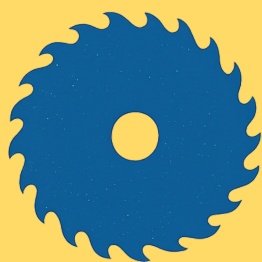
This mailing was sent by the Freedom Foundation, a pro-management national organization that opposes unions. Teachers’ unions are a primary target of the Freedom Foundation because we are among the strongest advocates for fair wages, comprehensive benefits, due process, safe working conditions, and public policies that support well-funded public schools. Make no mistake about it—the Freedom Foundation does not care about educators, students, or public education. To the contrary, the outcomes it seeks would make teaching and learning in our schools demonstrably worse.

Union dues are a shared investment that allow educators to act collectively at the local, state, and national levels. They fund negotiations for strong contracts, wage increases, and fringe benefits. They support grievance representation and legal defense when members face contract violations or unjust disciplinary action. They provide professional learning opportunities for members. Through our work with our parent organizations, AFT Connecticut and AFT National, members benefit from large-scale collective strength, legal advocacy, and political influence that no local union or individual educator could ever wield alone.

Strong unions do not happen by accident. They exist because members choose to invest in one another and in the profession we share. The protections we rely on today were built by the educators before us who stayed united and contributed together. Union dues are what make collective bargaining, member support, and political advocacy possible. Our strength is, quite literally, in our numbers.

Monthly Virtual Mentor Sessions for New Trade Teachers

This year, the SVFT will be hosting monthly virtual meetings for new trade teachers, facilitated by Jamie Lamitie. These sessions are open to any trade teachers in their first few years of teaching. Each meeting will highlight a different topic, while leaving time for open discussion and questions.



THE FIRST CUT FORUM

The **First Cut Forum** is a place to build your teaching “toolkit”, connect with colleagues, and get the support you need as you start your journey in trade education.

Mark your calendar! 6pm Meetings

Reminders will be sent out in advance with the Zoom link, making it easy to join. We will use the same link every month.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87103483988?pwd=3zwhYVJjG4UeFNboavlFCINoTRrpvE.1>

February 9—AI Tools

March 16

April 20

May 18—In Person Meet & Greet

Important Reminder

Tuition Reimbursement is still being paid. Lillian Rivera Hick’s email address is tuition.reimbursements@cttech.org. If Lillian does not respond that your email is received, please check that you used the correct address.

Calendar

- 1/13** Labor Management
Rescheduled from 12/16
- 1/14** Executive Council
- 1/15** Hartford Aero Health & Safety
- 1/19** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Day
No School
- 1/26** Solidari-TEA
- 2/4** Executive Council
- 2/4** Executive Union Representative Election
- 2/5** Vinal Health & Safety
- 2/9** The First Cut Forum
- 2/19** Stratford Aero Health & Safety



Honoring
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr
Today and Everyday



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

Vocational Instructor

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

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Executive Union Rep Vacant
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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.