



ILLINOIS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

HOW YOUR UNION WORKS FOR YOU

The members of IEA make up the largest union in Illinois and that means a massive and powerful alliance of professionals with one strong voice and one common goal: to provide a high-quality, equitable education to all Illinois students.

Educator Rights and Responsibilities

As a public education employee, your union, as your exclusive bargaining representative, has the legal right to negotiate the terms of your employment. Your contract is the basis for most of your employee rights. It spells out your working hours, evaluation process, work/life benefits, job responsibilities and school safety. Your IEA Uniserv Director (UD) supports your local representatives as they negotiate contracts representing your – and ultimately your students’ – best interests. Because our working conditions are our students’ learning conditions.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) protections

- Your personal information is protected by law, thanks to the IEA. It is illegal for school districts to provide your private information, even when someone files a FOIA to get it.
- In 2019, the IEA helped pass Senate Bill 1794 into law. It says:
No employer shall disclose the following information of any employee:
 - a. the employee’s home address (including ZIP code and county);
 - b. the employee’s date of birth;
 - c. the employee’s home and personal phone number;
 - d. the employee’s personal email address;
 - e. any information personally identifying employee membership or membership status in a labor organization or other voluntary association affiliated with a labor organization or a labor federation (including whether employees are members of such organization, the identity of such organization, whether or not employees pay or authorize the payment of any dues or moneys to such organization, and the amounts of such dues or moneys); and
 - f. emails or other communications between a labor organization and its members.

Workers’ Rights Amendment

The IEA worked to make sure the right to collectively bargain was added to the Illinois Constitution. Voters passed the Workers’ Rights Amendment this November. It means our right to collectively bargain our wages, pensions, hours, working conditions and so much more are now protected and enshrined in the Illinois Constitution.

Collective Bargaining

In 1983, the IEA worked with the General Assembly to pass the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act (IELRA) which gives Illinois educators the right to organize and collectively bargain. Prior to the IELRA, it was illegal for educators to go on strike. During that time, if IEA locals did vote to go on strike, members would often end up in jail – just for using their voice to advocate for a fair contract. The IELRA created the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board (IELRB), which is the state agency charged with administering the IELRA. Some of the methods the IELRB employs to protect the educators’ rights to collectively bargain and organize are investigating unfair labor practices and assisting in mediation and arbitration.

Salary

- Your local union uses its strong collective voice to advocate for salaries that compensate members based on their years of experience and education, which helps make sure we are attracting and retaining the best educators for our students. Unionized workers make 20 percent more than nonunion workers. And unions mean there’s no wage gap for women, people of color and other minority groups.
- The IEA successfully worked to repeal a 3% salary cap that was put into place in 2018. As a result of this legislation, teachers would likely have been denied extra compensation for after-school work that benefits students, such as coaching, directing plays, tutoring in the evenings, taking classes toward advanced degrees and, therefore, devaluing the continuing education of our educators and ultimately harming students. In addition: Reducing benefits to educators will make the already serious Illinois teacher shortage even worse. At a time when committees are being formed to try to figure out how to keep graduating seniors from fleeing the state and choosing instead to stay at Illinois higher education institutions, this action will drive professors away from the profession. This would have done serious financial harm to the teachers of this state who devote their careers to teaching the next generation of students, impacting their salaries, by limiting salary growth to no more than 3 percent, when rates of inflation hover around 2.5 to 3 percent each year.

Nonmembers

If you decline to be a member of your local union and the IEA, you will no longer have a voice within the union and in accordance with the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act you will not be able to individually bargain with the school district, which means not being able to negotiate your wages, healthcare and retirement benefits.

Working Conditions

We are in the middle of crisis in our classrooms. Illinois has a severe teacher shortage, education employee shortage and substitute shortage. With fewer adults in our schools, working and learning conditions are impacted. The IEA is working to make education a more attractive profession through legislation and other avenues. In the meantime, we are also advocating for those of you in the classroom and in our schools to make sure you don't get overloaded, overburdened and burned out. This is a crisis and we need to be doing everything we can to fix it for our educators and for our students.

IEA defends your profession by partnering with other education stakeholders and policymakers to ensure educational reforms are in the best interests of students and their teachers.

Being a member of the IEA means you have liability insurance. Legal Services has your back, protecting your employment rights and providing you \$1 million of professional liability insurance.

- In your work as an educator you are frequently exposed to situations that may give rise to legal actions which can involve your personal liability. If a student or a student's parents file suit against you, the Educators Employment Liability (EEL) policy will provide you with insurance protection for the vast majority of cases. The program also reimburses you for damage to your personal property in assault-related incidents.

Health Care Benefits

- IEA Looks out for your quality of life, ensuring your contract provides for work/life balance and good, affordable healthcare.
- In 2022, the IEA passed a law to help support staff and teachers who had exhausted their sick and personal time because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The law provided COVID administrative days for all employees to use for any COVID-19 related reason and also offered paycheck protection to hourly employees in the event their school should close. Education is the only profession that received COVID administrative days.

Pensions and Retirement Security

- IEA leaders and staff are vigilant in protecting your pension and retiree health care benefits to you at no additional cost.
- The IEA Supported the creation of the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) and State Universities Retirement System (SURS), driven and managed by teachers to ensure your income in retirement.
- IEA fights for your future income by legally challenging legislation designed to reduce your retirement benefits.

Student Debt/Finances

- Due to efforts by the NEA, over 360,000 educators and public service workers have received \$24 billion in student loan forgiveness through the Limited PSLF Waiver put in place by the Biden administration. While the Limited Waiver expired on October 31, 2022, PSLF is still available for educators and other public service workers. Significant permanent improvements have been made to the program, so that more educators can receive the debt forgiveness they were promised.
- NEA has partnered with a company called Savi to offer an online student debt navigator tool, free for one year for NEA members. Sign up to receive personalized advice from student debt experts and gain access to Savi's e-filing function, which helps eliminate the common mistakes that bar many applicants from receiving forgiveness.



Learn more about the student debt navigator here

Stretching Your Paycheck

- With inflation at its highest rate in 40 years, it's more important than ever before to use special member benefits to offset the cost of your IEA dues.
- IEA members can register on the Members Only section of the IEA website and scroll down to Discounts and Deals where they can save their dues dollars and more.
 - Insurance – NEA complimentary life insurance – no- cost life and accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) coverage.
 - Additional insurance – supplemental life, disability, long-term care, pet, home, auto and other policies at specially negotiated rates.
 - NEA Auto Buying Program – low-and-no-haggle prices on new and used cars from certified dealers.
 - NEA Car Rental Program – preferred rates from major rental companies.
 - Low-interest and reward credit cards – two options available.
 - Home financing – mortgages, equity loans and lines of credit. Other loans – education and personal. Visit the IEA website, ieanea.org, or NEA Member Benefits at neamb.com to take advantage of all of these discounts and more.
- My Deals app – a free app (for Apple and Android) that locates deals and coupons (because My Deals is available only to IEA-NEA members, first register your membership on IEA's website to receive your required mobile access code).



Scan here to download the My Deals Mobile App to learn more.

