



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Heather Pilch

Council: Highlands Association of Teachers

Position Sought: Vice President

Member Since: 2002

Leadership Role(s): Council President, Council Vice President, Senator to Local 604, Executive Board Vice President of Local 604

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*):

In my work in union leadership, both at the council level and local level, I have demonstrated commitment to ensuring that the union effectively meets the needs of its members. With over 22 years of dedicated service as a proud member of the union, I believe in solidarity and collective empowerment. I would love the opportunity to continue to advocate for the rights and well-being of fellow members. I believe collaboration and hard work are essential for achieving meaningful progress. I look forward to continuing to foster a thriving and supportive union community. Thank you!



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Alicia Edwards

Council: Valley View Office Personnel

Position Sought: Vice President

Member Since: 2000

Leadership Role(s): President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary

Candidate Statement:

I have been a VVSD employee for 23 years. I am currently working as Executive Secretary. I am currently serving as President for the VVOP Council. I have served 8 years in this position. I have also served at Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

I would like to serve as Vice President on the Local 604 Executive Board. I see this opportunity to contribute to the Local and to continue to help make a difference in the lives of those we serve. I would bring years of experience in contract negotiations, the grievance process and how to win. Onboarding of new members, running council meetings, and executive board meetings. I have attended the AFT, IFT, PRSP, and the President's Conferences and not only have I enjoyed the experience, but implemented ideas and information shared at the conferences to help make our Council better. I have attended many trainings at Local 604. One training was the Constitution Updates. VVOP now has up to date Bylaws. They had not been updated since 1992. Also new in the Bylaws is to have an election committee run the election for Executive Board members. I have excited that is a first under my leadership. As Council President, I attend the Senate meetings and take back information to my council. Looking forward to the opportunity to serve.

Alicia



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Jared Ploger

Council: Valley View Council

Position Sought: Vice President

Member Since: 2006

Leadership Role(s): Vice President-Valley View Council

COPE Chair AFL-CIO District 14

Local 604 Senator

Member of the IFT Racial & Justice Committee

Valley View Council Legislative Chair

Grand Army of the Republic Commissioner-Aurora

CUSD 308 Board of Education Secretary

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*): Pride is the first word that comes to mind in my 18 year career and Union member. Working in various roles in these various leadership roles have helped to expand my knowledge of how Union leadership benefits all. These leadership roles have assisted with providing me a very extensive and unique perspective. Culminating in a very proud moment in which I saw myself as the first ever endorsed candidate by the Union of fellow educators in the District I represent as a school board member.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Margaret Janke
Council: WILCO Council
Position Sought: Local 604 Vice President
Member Since: 2021
Leadership Role(s): WILCO Council Secretary – Current
IACTE affiliate ICTESSPA Secretary – Current

Candidate Statement:

My name is Margaret Janke (“MJ”), a seasoned Certified Veterinary Technician since 2011, brings a wealth of blue-collar work experience and expertise to my unique role as a Career and Technical Education instructor at WILCO Area Career Center. With a passion for nurturing the next generation of veterinary professionals, I was fortunate to be raised in a Proud Union Home by my dad, a retired Carpenter Local 174 member. My strong leadership skills, commitment to professional development, and eagerness to learn make me a strong candidate for the position of AFT Local 604 Vice President, where I aim to advocate for the rights and welfare of fellow educators. I know my dad is smiling down upon my efforts!



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Vicki Leuck Goebel

Council: Tinley Park ESP, AFT Local 604 Field Service Director, AFT Local 604 Retiree Council (current)

Position Sought: Vice President

Member Since: 2004

Leadership Role(s): Tinley Park ESP President (2004-2009); AFT Local 604 Field Service Director (2009-2023); Education & Research Development Instructor (2009-2016); Instructor for Worksite Leader Trainings; Instructor for Constitution & Bylaw workshops; Instructor for Building Rep workshops; AFT Local 604 Retiree Council Treasurer; AFT Local 604 Vice president (2022-present).

Candidate Statement *(100 words or fewer):*

Since 2004, the driving force in my life has been representing the often-overlooked support staff members. I led the Tinley Park ESP to organize and then led as president for 5 years until moving to a Local 604 Field Service Director where I continued to tirelessly fight for our union members, support staff and teachers alike. These diverse experiences afforded me the opportunity to represent thousands of support staff employees and teachers. I look forward to taking more time in my retirement to continue supporting my Local 604 union brothers and sisters in their fight for better working conditions and improved wages.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Michael Hancock

Council: IMSA Council

Position Sought: Vice President

Member Since: 2019

Leadership Role(s): IMSA Council President (2020-present);
Local 604 Vice President (2022-present)

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*): I helped to organize the recently formed IMSA Council, which I have served as president since its founding. As a council president, I've helped to negotiate two contracts that have provided our members internal equity and transparency in compensation as well as a new retirement incentive. As a 604 vice president, I serve on the defense, scholarship, and Constitution committees, lending the perspective of a longtime educator and new unionist. I believe 604 can best serve its members by recruiting leadership for the local that represents the diversity of our constituent councils in terms of identity and experience.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Therese Hopkins Skwarczynski

Council: Joliet Elementary District 86

Position Sought: AFT 604 Vice President

Member Since: 2005

Leadership Role(s): 604 Vice President(2 years), Council 86 President (6 years), Council Vice President(2 years), Council Secretary(2 years), Building Representative(3 years).

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*):

I was recommended for vice president for our Local 604 by a previous district 86 president and 604 vice president, Mary Ann Stubler. I have had the pleasure of serving as a vice president for the last 2 years on the political action, scholarship, and defense committees. I have learned a great deal working on each of these committees. I have attended the Union Leadership Institute in Wisconsin 3 times where I continued my studies in negotiations and grievance administration. I attended the last AFT conference in Boston, as well as the last IFT conference in St. Louis. I recently attend the IFT president's conference in Springfield. In my role as president of my council, I have negotiated 3 contracts, successfully resolved grievances, and supported many staff members through administrative leaves. I believe our union becomes stronger through the diverse voices and experiences of our members and our dedication to advocating for everyone.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Gerry Mestek

Council: East Aurora

Position Sought: Vice President of Local 604

Member Since: August 1999

Leadership Role(s): Building Rep, (21 yrs), Senator (10 yrs), Convention Delegate (4x), Council President (4 yrs), Vice President Local 604 (8 yrs)

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*):

- ✚ 28 years teaching experience in elementary and secondary
- ✚ 32 years in public sector leadership roles
- ✚ 21 years negotiation experience

I believe the qualities of a good leader are strong moral and ethical values, and knowledge about the profession. Also, one who is able to make difficult decisions that are good of all.

I have proven myself in all my positions as a Union leader, including Local 604 Vice-President.

I ask you to allow me the opportunity again, to be your representative as a Local 604 Vice-President.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Grace Gonzalez

Council: Lockport Township D205

Position Sought: Vice President

Member Since: 2005

Leadership Role(s): Bargaining Team Lead Negotiator for JTHS D204 Office Professional Council for the 2023 Negotiations, JTHS D204 Office Professional Central Campus Representative (2018-2023), Lockport Township D205 Foundation Board Member (2021-Present).

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*):

The reason I am running for Vice President. To bring a voice of solidarity and representation to the AFT Local 604 Executive Board with an Office Professional at the table. As your VP, my duty and obligations would benefit the whole membership. Nineteen years of experience working for teachers, other support staff, and alongside Administration has given me knowledge of what is required to have a successful and rewarding career in education. I have seen firsthand how the shortage of teachers and substitutes can upset the balance at a school and morale. I understand what is required for support staff to be successful in their job, and there needs to be representation of the voices of our most underserved members. I have Union experience as a representative for five years and lead negotiator for the 2023 D204 Office Professional contract bargaining, which will help me in this position.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Vicki Morris

Council: Teachers' Federation of Park Forest

Position Sought: Vice-President

Member Since: 1996

Leadership Role(s): Current Council President, in the past I have served as a council Vice-President and Treasurer, 604 Senator, and 604 Vice-President.

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*):

Leadership and servitude have always been passions of mine. I ask the hard questions and help with challenging issues. I hear concerns, and I try to solve problems reasonably. I have been committed to our Local for over 20 years and have the gift of knowing what has worked in the past and building on the strengths of today. I have worked in Park Forest for 27 years and will eventually retire from there, so I will still be a stable member of the Board, if re-elected. Thank you for your support and I look forward to continuing to serve.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Kristen Ryan
Council: Ohio Federation of Teachers
Position Sought: Vice President
Member Since: Local 604 since 2002 / IFT since 1993
Leadership Role(s): Council President since 1998
Local 604 Vice President since 2006
IFT Executive Vice President since 2019

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*):

My name is Kristen Ryan, and I am seeking re-election for the Local 604 Vice Presidency. I live in Princeton, IL and teach in the tiny town of Ohio, IL. I am here to represent the western edge of the Local 604 region and to support the smaller councils who have very different needs than our colleagues in larger districts. I am here to make sure everyone has a voice and can be heard. The diversity of our Local makes representing all the councils a must and I feel I can continue to make sure all the voices are heard and represented.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Michelle Nevin

Council: Lemont-Bromberek Combined School District 113A

Position Sought: Vice President

Member Since: 2000

Leadership Role(s): President of Certified and Support Staff in 113A

Candidate Statement (*100 words or fewer*): For the last 16 years I have been the president of my local council. I have also served as a vice president for Local 604 in the past. I believe I have a wide variety of experience to bring to the table.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Sofia R. Thomas

Council: District 86 Support Staff

Position Sought: Vice President For IFT-AFT Local 604

Member Since: Since 2008 in good standing

Leadership Role(s): Building Rep (2009) Dist. 86 President (2011-2020), Vice President for Paraprofessionals (2020-Present), IFT VP (2023-Present)

Candidate Statement: My name is Sofia R. Thomas and I am hoping to retain my VP position on the IFT-AFT Local 604 board. I have been a member of District 86 in good standing since 2008. Once I learned the odds and ends of being a union member. I set my goals on becoming a building rep. Our union president asked me if I was ready to become the union president. That's when my journey of becoming the District 86 president began. I held that position from 2011 to 2020. I'm currently holding the VP president position for District 86 for the paraprofessionals. In 2023 I was asked if I was interested in being on the IFT-AFT 604 VP board. During my first year on the board I met so many wonderful members from throughout the state. I received so much knowledge from them that I took it back to the members of District 86. I'm forever grateful. TY.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Beth Anderson

Council: Kankakee Federation of Teachers, KSD #111

Position Sought: Local 604 Vice President

Member Since: 1997

Leadership Role(s):

- TRS Board of Trustees (Trustee Representative for IFT)
- President, Kankakee Federation of Teachers
- Local 604 Vice President
- Local 604 PAC Co-Chair
- IFT Vice President
- IFT Vice President for PreK-12 Constituency Council
- IFT PAC Chair for Region M
- AFT Convention Delegate 2024

Candidate Statement (100 words or fewer): In my current role as KFT Council President, I represent both professional educators and clerical staff. When I started my career as a special education teacher, I could not have foreseen the current diminished benefits or lack of support and respect for public educators and public employees. I am running for re-election as a Local 604 Vice President because I am most concerned for the future of our profession and our **earned** pensions. Our work is critical in not only protecting our current members but also our future educators and public service workers.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Yvette Justice

Council: Joliet Township High School District 204

Position Sought: Vice President, Local 604

Member Since: 2002

Leadership Role(s): Union President JTHS Teachers Union, IFT Vice President, and Local 604 Vice President.

Candidate Statement *(100 words or fewer):*

Serving in the leadership roles that I currently hold have allowed me to see just how important it is to be active and hold leadership roles in our union. I am active in our union community, and I have made connections with members of our community that share our perspectives about positive changes in education and the need for reform. I hope to continue to have an opportunity to make an impact.



2024 Candidate Bio



Name: Phil Staley

Council: Local 604 Retiree's Council

Position Sought: Local 604 Vice President

Member Since: 1985

Leadership Role(s):

Current union positions/involvement: President Local 604 Retiree's Council (2023-Present), Local 604 Vice President, (2006-present), First Vice President Local 604, (2019-present), IFT Retirees Committee (2023-present) , Delegate Will-Grundy Counties Central Trades and Labor Council (2023-present), Chair of Local 604 Retirees Committee (2022-present), Local 604 Nominating and Election Committee (2019-present), Local 604 Constitution Committee (2019-present)

Past union positions/involvement: Retirees Council Bylaws Committee Chair(2022-present), Local 604 Nominating and Election Committee Chair, (2019-2022), Local 604 Constitution Committee Chair, (2019-2022), IFT Vice President and Chair of Defense Committee, (2008-2019), AFT Convention Delegate (2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020,2024), IFT Convention Delegate (8 times), President Joliet Township High School Teachers Council 204 (1999-2013), Secretary Joliet Township High School Teachers Council 204 (1997-1998)

Candidate Statement (100 words or fewer): I have submitted my name to run for Local 604 Vice President to continue to work for the members of Local 604, whom I have served as a member of the Executive Board. As the president of the newly formed Local 604 Retiree Council, I believe all members of the local should have representation on the board. As a member of the executive board, I have successfully fulfilled all requests and assignments. I thank all the members of Local 604 for their trust and support for our Local.