

## **IAFF Endorsement Philosophy**

The IAFF believes, respects and celebrates the absolute right of every IAFF member to vote for the candidate that he or she feels best represents and embraces that individual's views and political philosophy. No one, including your union, has a right to tell you how to vote.

Similarly, the IAFF will never criticize any member for his or her choice of candidate. We recognize that there are many issues that are important to all IAFF members – beyond fire service and labor issues, and the IAFF respects its members' right to vote for candidates who have not won the endorsement of the IAFF or your local affiliate.

However, just like IAFF members review the history, positions and platform of each candidate and make a decision based on that information, so does the IAFF.

This union views candidates through a very narrow focus. Decisions are predicated on how candidates stand on fire fighter and labor issues, such as collective bargaining rights, protection of fair labor standards (FLSA) and overtime rights, pay fairness and equity for federal fire fighters, presumption of disability for federal fire fighters, funding for first responder initiatives, full funding of the FIRE Act and SAFER programs, protection of pension and Social Security benefits, and protection and extension of health care benefits for active and retired members, to name a few.

These are the types of issues that IAFF FIREPAC focuses on when making decisions on whether or not to support a candidate. IAFF FIREPAC does not and will not base its decisions on issues such as Second Amendment rights, reproductive rights, the environment or other social issues that many of our members hold firm beliefs about.

The IAFF has one mission: to improve the lives and livelihoods of professional fire fighters. We know that one of the most important ways we represent our members is in the legislatures at all levels of government – because that's where most of the decisions are made that have an impact on our members and their jobs. That's why we play hard in politics – so that we help get people elected who will push our legislative agenda forward.

In that role, this union is an advocacy group similar to the NRA, Christian Coalition, Sierra Club, Chamber of Commerce, National League of Cities, etc. Our range of issues is very specific. No one should expect or accept it if the NRA based endorsements on fire fighter bargaining rights. Likewise, no one expects the Christian Coalition to base its support of candidates on funding the FIRE Act or SAFER grants. Consequently, no one should expect the IAFF to base its endorsement on anything other than its specific set of issues.

While you may personally disagree with an IAFF endorsement and believe that another candidate better represents your own viewpoint on issues important to you, please be mindful that the IAFF endorsement is about the candidate's stance on fire service and labor issues. And, just like the IAFF respects your right to vote for the candidate of your choosing, we ask for the same respect concerning the IAFF's duty to make its endorsement based on fire service, employment, safety and health and labor issues that directly affect our members' lives and livelihood.

In any union, association or even political party, when an organization endorses a particular candidate or a specific position on any issue, not everyone who is a member is in agreement. In fact, almost every time an endorsement is made, there is disagreement – but it's usually based on personal political

leanings or how one values certain issues. People are entitled to and respect their right to disagree and express their own opinions.

Politics within the IAFF is an issue of mutual respect. The IAFF respects its members' right to vote for whomever they choose, and we hope you respect the IAFF's right to endorse candidates, regardless of party, who have demonstrated their support for the IAFF and professional fire fighters. The IAFF also respects the right of state and individual affiliates to endorse the candidate they believe will best represent their membership at the state and local level.