Questions and Answers About AFT’s Endorsement of Hillary Clinton

Q: Has the American Federation of Teachers made an endorsement for the Democratic presidential nomination? Why?

A: Yes. On July 11, 2015, the 45-member AFT executive council, on behalf of its more than 1.6 million members, endorsed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination.

When considering an endorsement for president, the AFT assesses which candidate shares our values, has the support of our members, and is strong and electable.

Hillary Clinton has a proven record in leading the fight for high-quality healthcare and high-quality public education for all, starting with our youngest children. She was an original co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act, and she has a deep and long record on economic and social justice issues—from voting rights to immigrant rights to worker rights—earning a 100 percent AFT voting record during her time in the U.S. Senate.

Hillary Clinton has pledged to work with educators, telling the AFT, “It is just dead wrong to make teachers the scapegoat for all of society’s problems. Where I come from, teachers are the solution. And I strongly believe that unions are part of the solution too.” (AFT executive council meeting, June 2, 2015)

Hillary Clinton shares our values, has the support of the membership, and is the strongest candidate to win in 2016. She has earned the endorsement of the AFT.

Q: Is the endorsement only for the Democratic nomination? What about the general election?

A: Yes, the endorsement is for the Democratic nomination. The endorsement for the general election will be made by the delegates to the AFT convention, which will be held in July 2016 in Minneapolis.

Q: Did the AFT consider any of the Republican candidates?

A: The AFT only considered those candidates who responded to our candidate questionnaire and to our invitation to meet with our executive council. No Republican candidate responded to our invitation.

Q: The AFT represents more than 1.6 million people. What process did the AFT use in determining which candidate to endorse?

A: The AFT conducted an extensive process of researching the candidates’ positions on the issues and engaging members to hear their thoughts about the issues and the candidates, including:

- The AFT sent all candidates (both Democratic and Republican) a candidate questionnaire and invited those who completed the questionnaire to speak before the AFT’s executive council. No Republican candidate completed a candidate questionnaire.
• The AFT executive council, comprised of elected vice presidents and the AFT officers, met with and interviewed Hillary Clinton, Martin O’Malley and Bernie Sanders and analyzed their position on the key issues.

• Most important, the AFT asked its members directly about the issues that matter to them and their opinions of the candidates through two polls, including a survey that reached out to more than 1 million AFT households; the “You Decide 2016” online forum; emailing e-activists to get member responses on the issues of importance to them; conducting multiple telephone town hall meetings; and having rank-and-file members ask questions directly of the presidential candidates during the June executive council meeting.

• Additionally, the AFT commissioned a scientific survey of members by Hart Research Associates. The results of the survey provide a clear picture of where AFT members stand.
  • First, by an approximately 3-to-1 margin, AFT members prefer that a Democratic candidate win the presidential election over a Republican.
  • 79 percent of Democratic voters support the AFT making a recommendation in the primary.
  • Among those voters, Hillary Clinton is preferred by members by a margin of more than 3-to-1 over her nearest Democratic competitor.
  • Furthermore, Hillary Clinton holds a better than 11-to-1 advantage as the “Democrat with the best chance to defeat the Republican candidate.”

Q: Why endorse now in a contested primary?

A: This is not a step the AFT has taken lightly, but the 2016 presidential election is already underway. There are important issues facing this country, and the debate on those issues is taking shape. In order to best affect the debate, the AFT and our members must engage now.

Not only do the members support the AFT making an endorsement in the primaries, but the timing is right for an endorsement. We need to engage now to ensure that our members, their families and those they serve have the strongest possible voice in the election.

While we will never outspend our opponents, we have a collective voice and energy that they can never match. And those strengths can help shape the debate, help Hillary Clinton win the election, and help us reclaim the promise of a better America.