

Letter To The Editor: Bethalto's Carlson, Edwardsville's Converse, Other Teachers Of The Year Show Support Of Fair Tax On Ballot

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Note: This is a letter signed by Illinois Teachers of the Year, including Jacob Carlson, Illinois Finalist for the Teacher of the Year, who teaches in Bethalto, and Susan Converse, who is an educator in Edwardsville District 7, in support of the Fair Tax. The letter is below.

It is the opinion of the Illinois Teachers of the Year as follows: "The Fair Tax proposes a graduated income tax rate, the kind used in federal taxes and 32 other states, that will enable us to invest in our children and build a strong future for our state."



Such investment is needed today more than ever. COVID has widened the opportunity gaps that already existed between Illinois' wealthiest and most impoverished students. Even as we work to make hybrid or remote learning as effective as possible, we know that countless Illinois students lack access to technology, internet, school supplies and

materials, and even meals. We need adequate funding to eliminate these inequities, the kind we can access through the Fair Tax."

The letter:

In Support of the Fair Tax Amendment:

An Open Letter from the Illinois Teachers of the Year

As members of the Illinois State Teachers of the Year (ILSTOY), we come from all regions of our diverse state. Some of us teach in rural farming communities in southern Illinois, others in large suburban schools near Chicago. In some of our schools, the poverty rate approaches 100%, and in others, poverty is nearly non-existent. We represent blue counties, red counties, and purple counties. And we have been recognized among the top teachers in the state because we are all passionate about advancing the education and well-being of children.



We love our students. We love our schools. We love our communities. And we agree on this: passing the Illinois Fair Tax is vital to all of our students. As educators, we see the impact of years of chronic underfunding for schools, and the disparities in resources from one district to another. We know from experience that each school has unique needs, and that these vary widely from rural to suburban and urban communities. But we also know that regardless of zip code, all students deserve access to the resources they need to thrive. The fair tax is an essential step toward equitable and adequate

funding for all schools, and delivering on the promise that no matter where our students grow up, they will receive a world-class education.

This year, COVID has widened the opportunity gaps that already existed between our wealthiest and most impoverished students. Even as we work to make hybrid or remote learning as effective as possible, we know that countless students lack access to technology, internet, school supplies and materials, and even meals. Now more than ever, we need adequate funding to eliminate these inequities. We must capitalize on this opportunity to ensure that all of our students have what they deserve--properly funded schools and access to high-quality education.

We teach our students about fairness, and yet Illinois currently suffers from one of the most unfair taxing systems in the nation. Because of our outdated tax system, we place a greater burden on low- and middle-income earners than on the wealthy. In its 2018 report “Who Pays?” The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy found that the poorest 20 percent of families in Illinois paid 14.4 percent of their income in state and local taxes--while the wealthiest 1 percent paid just 7.4 percent.

To fix this, the Fair Tax proposes a graduated income tax rate, the kind used in our federal taxes and 32 other states. This plan would cut income tax payments for 97 percent of filers while raising approximately 3.4 billion dollars in annual revenue for public services like schools, health care, and social services--helping to empower working families, drive social mobility, and speed recovery for those hardest hit by the pandemic. The Fair Tax will enable us to invest in our children and build a strong future for our state.

As citizens of Illinois and educators on the front lines working with children, we have been through a lot in the last year. The Fair Tax is the best chance we have at correcting our current budget situation and ensuring that our communities have access to education, healthcare, and other essential services. As Teachers of the Year from every corner of the state, we speak with one voice on behalf of our students: please vote “yes” for the Fair Tax.

Eric Combs, Olney, 2020 Teacher of the Year

Susan Converse, Edwardsville, 2019 Teacher of the Year

Jacob Carlson, Bethalto, 2014 Teacher of the Year Finalist

Lindsey Jensen, Dwight, 2018 Teacher of the Year

Kim Thomas, Peoria, 2016 Teacher of the Year

Steve Elza, Palatine, 2015 Teacher of the Year

Brian Curtin, Schaumburg, 2013 Teacher of the Year

Kevin Rutter, Chicago, 2010 Teacher of the Year

Ruth Meissen, Loves Park, 2008 Teacher of the Year

Jennifer Leban, Elmhurst, 2020 Teacher of the Year Finalist

Maggie Moore, Rockton, 2020 Teacher of the Year Finalist

Rick Coppola, Chicago, 2019 Teacher of the Illinois Finalist

Sara Magnafichi, Elk Grove Village, 2019 Teacher of the Year Finalist

Bill Polasky, Stillman Valley, 2019 Teacher of the Year Finalist

Katherine Whittington, Chicago, 2019 Teacher of the Year Finalist

Bill Farmer, Evanston, 2018 Teacher of the Year Finalist

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