

2023 SPFE Public City Council Candidate Questionnaire
(CONFIDENTIAL– DO NOT CIRCULATE)

Please limit the following questions to a yes or no response.

1. The Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) believes parents, educators, community members, and students should be at the center of decision making around educational policy. However, increasingly out of state millionaires with a vested interest in pursuing a corporate education reform agenda have poured money into political races with the goal of removing local voices from discussions about our children’s education.

- a. **Will you and your campaign reject contributions and independent expenditures from wealthy donors who live outside our community and from market-based education reform organizations?**

	YES	NO
Isaac Russell	X	
Saura Jost	X	

2. Despite recent increases, public education statewide is severely underfunded, and has not kept pace with inflation. Currently, the DFL holds the House, the Senate, and the Governor’s office, and has proposed a massive increase in education spending, including indexing education funding to inflation.

- a. **Will you endorse, support, and campaign on fully funding our public schools?**

	YES	NO
Isaac Russell	X	
Saura Jost	X	

3. **Do you support a moratorium on all new charter schools opening in St. Paul as well as a moratorium on any expansions of charter schools already in St. Paul?**

	YES	NO
Isaac Russell	X	
Saura Jost	X	

4. **Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions and will you fight to protect them?**

	YES	NO
Isaac Russell	X	
Saura Jost	X	

Please limit your response to 150 words or fewer for each part of the questions below.

1. **What is the value of public education for you and for the city of Saint Paul?**

Isaac Russell I am entirely a product of public education, from pre-K through graduate school. For me, public education is the framework that our social and civic societies are based on. It is an opportunity offered to every child in our country regardless of socioeconomic, ethno-cultural, or language background.

In my youth, I struggled with homelessness, food insecurity, and poverty. For me, public schools were part of the community that helped me realize I am not limited by the circumstances that surrounded me. My teachers saw a struggling student that brought the struggles of home into school, and they reached out to me and sacrificed their own time to give me the help I needed to be successful.

There are many children in our city that face these challenges and need a dedicated teacher that recognizes their potential. I hope to help children like me realize what they can be.

Saura Jost Public education is a shared investment that we make in the future of all our children and thus our city's future. As a system, it promises that all our young people deserve a chance to learn, grow, and become their best selves. We know the transformative potential of our schools for our students and families. For me, my public-school education was transformative and influential. I am who I am and where I am today because of the experience and education I received from SPPS. It allowed me to excel in STEM, learn the value of public service and the power of organizing, and make connections that will last a lifetime. Our schools are one of the main reasons we decided to raise our children in St. Paul, and I know others feel the same - we share pride in what SPPS does for our children, our communities, and our future.

2. An endorsement from SPFE is only given to candidates that show they are a champion for public education. We do not endorse in all races.

a. **What are your direct connections to SPPS, SPFE, and/or public education?**

Isaac Russell As mentioned above, I am a product of public education for my entire academic career. Housing insecurity led me to attend 15 different schools throughout my K-12 education, and public teachers were instrumental in my life.

I also worked in the MN Senate for nine years, and I worked extensively on E-12 in Senator Kent's office. I supported efforts to increase funding to public education, stop school vouchers, tax credits for private school tuition, and to protect responsible teacher licensure requirements.

I have also spoken with several classes with African American youth at Highland Park Senior High about the challenges we collectively face as men of color. I've spoken with youth in SPPS schools about my racial equity work at the Center for Economic Inclusion and how they can become more civically engaged.

Saura Jost I'm a proud SPPS graduate, and our 4-year-old will be entering SPPS this fall. My older sister also attended and worked in SPPS. My mother's first career was as an English and earth science teacher. I have other family members and friends who are current or past SPPS teachers and staff. I'm also an adjunct professor at the U of M, where I teach engineering to architecture students. I am on the board of a mentoring program that includes students in SPPS. I know the impact that my teachers had on me as a mentor, and I try to bring that to my students. I also have several public-school teachers come to support me at caucus this year, including some of my former teachers and friends. I've done my best to listen to and understand their concerns so that I can be an advocate for our schools on the Council.

b. What is your definition of a “public education champion”?

Isaac Russell A public education champion is someone that prioritizes the needs of our youth in public schools and supports our teachers proactively. This means showing up in community when our educators need support and representing the importance of public education when decisions become difficult. A champion is someone that will take the issues that are important to educators and advocate fiercely for them, as well as being a reliable partner.

Saura Jost A champion for public education is willing to be a vocal, visible partner in advancing the transformative power of our schools. A champion understands the value of a public-school education for our children, families, and city, and that the potential and prosperity of our city is dependent on robust public schools. A champion understands the importance of special education and ELL funding, early childhood options, competitive pay and benefits for teachers and staff, smaller class sizes, and improving the student-counselor ratio. It is certainly important to be an advocate for what our schools need, but the partner piece is of particular importance to me. It means having someone that listens to concerns from stakeholders, receives feedback on processes, shapes the agenda, and then stands shoulder-to-shoulder with those stakeholders to get what our students, families and educators need, and doesn't settle until the job is done.

c. Why are you seeking an endorsement from SPFE?

Isaac Russell I believe in our public schools. Seeking an SPFE endorsement is my way of publicly demonstrating that belief, and also making a promise to build and maintain a strong relationship with the union and its individual members.

Without public education, I would not be where I am today. My family did not have the resources for private school. Given the struggles my family endured, these private schools would have most likely not have picked me to attend. For people of color that have come from the same marginalized communities as I have, we need a healthy public school system fully funded to provide quality education for our youth. This is my opportunity to pay the benefits I received from public education forward.

Saura Jost Our public schools matter to me and to the future our city is building together. Politically, I believe that a strong accessible public education for all is the basis of a democratic society. Personally, the impact public schools had on me, the impact they will have on my son, and the impact they have on all our children cannot be understated. SPFE is the voice of our professional educators, and they share my vision that all children deserve to have a world-class education and experience in our schools. As a young person, I benefited immensely from all that SPPS provided and want to be a partner to SPFE as a city council member so we can work towards the shared goal of ensuring all our students have this opportunity. To provide that experience, our teachers and staff need support from elected officials that have their backs.

d. How do you envision working in partnership with SPFE? What does that look like when we disagree?

Isaac Russell Partnership with SPFE means having the same goal of fully supporting our public educators while relying on the values of shared power and accountability. This means that our partnership requires frequent, clear, and honest lines of communication that allows us to confront the issues we face prior to decision being made, not after.

Shared accountability means that we are accountable to each other and the students we hope to better serve. When we experience points of disagreement, we need to communicate early and often to find ways to resolve differences and move forward to our shared goal.

Shared power means that we harness the community of educators, students, and parents to bring important issues that support education and families to the consciousness of the city. I can't promise we will always agree, but you will always hear from me long before decisions must be made so we can work together.

Saura Jost I envision us keeping clear lines of communication open. When there is an issue that touches on education, I want to turn to SPFE for advice as a critical stakeholder, regardless of whether I receive this endorsement. Similarly, I want to trust that when there is an issue on the city's agenda that SPFE has a stake in, I want to actively hear about it, too. When there is communication, we can shape our city's agenda together to accomplish our shared goals. In the event of a disagreement, that's still valuable feedback in shaping policy. I think disagreements can be helpful in encouraging more discussion and understanding towards goals. I will always listen respectfully, and if I fall short of expectations, I want to be held accountable.

3. The rampant growth of charter schools in the city of Saint Paul has caused great harm to our public schools and our communities. Per the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) the, the [number of charter school programs has grown to 81](#) in just the city of Saint Paul. This rise has led to the [resegregation of schools and communities](#), and includes a Saint Paul charter school that has been [under investigation since 2019](#) for investment practices.

- a. **Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) recently made the decision to close or combine several schools due to declining enrollment. Out of control growth of charter schools has led to the disastrous result of more “seats” available than there are school-age children in the city. Unlike charter schools, SPPS must be available to serve all children. What is the role of the City Council in supporting SPPS?**

Isaac Russell The direct role of the city council vis a vis SPPS is largely a financial one—raising revenue and directing funding streams. Beyond that, the role of a council member and the council as a whole is to be a strong advocate for SPPS. This means showing up and being present when public school issues are at hand, and generally supporting the students, families, employees, and communities that make up SPPS.

Saura Jost Our City Council should support the mission of our public schools. The decisions the school board and city council make go hand in hand in supporting this mission through their impact on our schools’ communities. Many issues touch on educational success such as public safety, housing and economic stability, transportation, and health. City council can support SPPS by supporting programs for our youth such as partnerships between schools and parks/rec centers, libraries and/or community centers, and affordable childcare. City council can provide funding to SPPS by expanding our property tax base through more housing, exploring alternative revenue options, or directing funds we receive from other levels of government towards these goals. SPFE is a critical stakeholder that should be involved at all levels of government, so that we get the input for how we can shape policy to best impact our children, their families, and our SPPS teachers and staff.

- b. **Saint Paul Public Schools provides more than classroom education for students and families. Robust, well-funded public schools help to create stable communities, increased property values, and play a vital role in desegregating our city. What specific steps will you, as a member of the City Council take to slow charter school growth AND support enrollment in SPPS?**

Isaac Russell

We need to ask ourselves a couple of hard questions: *why* has enrollment in charter schools increased more than sixfold over the last 20 years, and why is enrollment in district public schools decreasing?

We cannot begin to tackle the issues of charter school growth and SPPS’ declining enrollment without answers to these questions. This is not a criticism or attempt to side-step a direct response.

We know we can slow the growth and expansion of charter schools with financial tools, such as restricting the use or availability of conduit bonds. But without knowing both the push and pull factors that have driven this change in the educational landscape of our city, such measures don't get at the underlying causes.

Saura Jost To slow charter school growth, we must pause and study the impact of charters. I want to make sure we understand the steps SPFE recommends for charter school accountability and equity so that charter schools are not given an unfair leg up - they should be subject to the same reporting requirements as public schools. Also, we need to make sure that we are taking steps to regulate the unique nature of charter schools, by ensuring that we have full information about their financial management. Since charter schools are partially publicly funded but not publicly run, we need to be cognizant of their impact on the ability to fully fund our public schools. I am also interested in creative solutions regarding bonding and zoning policy. We can support enrollment by supporting our communities, city livability, and equity as described above.

- c. **Will you advocate and support a comprehensive study on the impact of charters schools in our communities (including segregation, tax base, land use, and neighborhood impact) and steps to address the harms done by unchecked charter school growth? Who would you partner with for this study? Who would you include as stakeholders?**

Isaac Russell

I would advocate for such a study, insofar as it did not replicate existing comparable data available from reputable sources. Much of this research has been done in recent years by organizations like the Center for School Change.

Everyone who lives in St. Paul is impacted by public preK-12 education, whether they themselves attended SPPS schools, are SPFE members, have children of their own in district public schools, live near a school campus, or are simply residents who interact with current and former students in their everyday lives.

Much the same can be said of charter schools. It is therefore critical that we include stakeholders from across the spectrum of many segments of our population: proponents of charter schools, proponents of district public schools, independent education experts, residents who live near schools, families, former students, current students, non-educator school staff, local policymakers, community leaders, and more.

Saura Jost Yes. We need to take an honest look at our charter schools, which means fully understanding the ways in which our community has been impacted by them. In St. Paul, we have many racial and economic disparities across homeownership, transportation, education, and employment, and studying the impact of charter school growth would be essential in addressing any harms done. As an engineer, I understand that comprehensive, inclusive problem solving is essential to developing solutions that will work for all. This means we need full data collection to understand the problems we are trying to solve. To me, stakeholders would include students, parents, and teachers and staff of public and charter schools, City Council members, school board directors, legislators involved at the state level, and data professionals and academics who are able to advise on what information needs to be collected.

4. The COVID pandemic will have a long-term impact on the city of Saint Paul. In addition to loss of life, many of our social safety nets were brought to the breaking point. Many people, especially our students, are still dealing with the after-effects, including disrupted learning, mental health crises, and financial losses. Essential workers, once lauded by lawmakers for staffing our hospitals, keeping our schools going, our cities running, and our grocery stores open are now facing criticism for rising costs – while corporations made some of the highest profits ever seen.

a. **One of the biggest challenges our community faces is the lack of access to reliable, high-speed internet and devices – this existing challenge was exacerbated during COVID. What steps can the City Council take to make free, high-speed internet available across the city?**

Isaac Russell Our reliance on technology and its use as a means of communication has moved well beyond what our public digital infrastructure can provide. Residents of St. Paul deserve digital equity: your zip code should not determine the availability or attainability of internet access. This issue is usually brought up in terms of rural access to broadband, but we cannot forget that while urban areas allow for more access to the internet, not everyone is able to purchase access to private networks.

It is time that the city council begin planning city-wide public broadband in earnest.

Saura Jost Reliable high-speed internet access has rapidly become a necessity for connectivity because of COVID. Other cities have successfully been able to create city-wide WIFI networks, and this is certainly an option worth exploring. As a short-term solution, we could do more as a city to provide programs for low-income families to receive grants for internet access or look into providing them with mobile hotspots or fiber optic internet in their equitably targeted areas. I know this is being worked on at the Federal and State levels, too, so I am open to meeting with other policymakers to find out how we can work together to make high-speed internet affordable and available to all our families.

b. **It is possible that we will experience another pandemic. What actions can the City Council take now, to prepare for that possibility? How will you protect and support the public sector workers that keep our city functioning during a public health crisis?**

Isaac Russell We must listen to qualified public health experts who now have important information about the course of pandemics. We also understand how pandemic responses affect students, teachers, parents, and public sector workers.

If we face another pandemic, we must rapidly respond with financial resources, safety equipment, and other supports to public workers on our front lines. The City Council must immediately convene meetings with our public sector leaders, determine the gravity of the situation, and develop a set of steps necessary to keep frontline workers safe as they work. We will have to prioritize protective equipment and safety protocols so workers know their health is protected. We cannot ask them to continue working with the added danger of contracting a COVID-19-type illness without proper protocols and PPE in place.

There must also be an enforcement mechanism to ensure compliance with all public health regulations, whether temporary or permanent

Saura Jost To plan for a potential pandemic, we could utilize joint working groups and city agencies to formalize the lessons we learned from the pandemic so we have a comprehensive plan that can be immediately implemented if needed.

Before and during a potential pandemic, we know that we must support our many essential workers and provide and enforce safe and sick time, paid family leave, and prevailing wages, to name a few. During a pandemic, we could provide hazard pay and/or shift personnel hours to cover emerging needs. We can also provide more affordable childcare for our pre school-age children to support our working families. We could train volunteer emergency medical service workers that could step in during a pandemic to assist our Fire/EMS department. We can expand the coordination of St. Paul – Ramsey County public health to prepare our council for a pandemic, support medical workers and inform the public.

5. Saint Paul, like many cities, is struggling to balance the increased needs of community against increasingly tight budgets. The solution has often been increases in property taxes and fees. Mayor Carter is currently [seeking a sales tax increase](#) to help cover the cost of necessary improvements to our roads and parks. While Saint Paul residents are often willing to take on the additional financial burden to care for our city, many are at the financial breaking point, this system is ultimately unsustainable, and has the most damaging financial impact on our citizens that can least afford it.
 - a. **Wealthy corporations saw some of their largest profits during the pandemic, while our residents struggled financially. Will you encourage the City Council to revisit the use of PILOTs (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) to ease the tax burden on our residents? Will you support a percentage of a PILOTs to be dedicated to funding SPPS? What steps will you take as a City Council member to pursue PILOTs?**

Isaac Russell It is very true that we are facing a tight city budget. I have spoken with many residents that are frustrated with the unsustainable course of our city revenues. I think we need to look at many options to raise the revenue needed for the city we want for our future. This includes PILOTs.

If elected, I would approach my colleagues and explain the importance of diversifying the revenue sources to our city and the need to fund our public schools, who have all endured immense hardships during our COVID-19 pandemic. I think dedicating a portion of the revenue to schools is a strong way to help ease the burden on taxpayers and leave needed property tax capacity available in the future. I support dedicating a portion of PILOTs to schools.

Saura Jost Yes, I think we should revisit PILOT programs, and I'm open to earmarking some of that funding to be for education, especially if the particular entity is education related. I think a good first step as a Council would be to examine quantitatively where the opportunities are for this to be a viable funding stream, and then bringing in stakeholders to discuss what that policy might ultimately look like. This is a common issue I have been hearing about during my campaign from our community as Ward 3 includes many institutions that are currently exempt from property taxes and with rising property taxes, they are concerned they won't be able to make ends meet and would like to see more balance and creative ways of generating revenue.

- b. **TIF districts are used by the city to spur development. TIF districts also result in less funding for SPSS and the city. It is also often unclear on how some projects meet the “But for” test. What are your ideas on how the use of TIF can be restructured to minimize the financial impact on our school district and community, and still support growth?**

Isaac Russell This is a question that is very common in Ward 3. When used properly, TIFs can help build needed housing for people. The problem is TIF districts are increasingly built into a developer’s project under the assumption they will receive the district and never plausibly proving it is needed. We need to enforce the “but for” process before the TIF district is passed.

I think we first need to make sure there is transparency in deciding if we should authorize a TIF district and monitor them over time. Second, I think sticking to tight definitions in “but for” should be followed and possibly refined to ensure adherence. This should be accompanied by clearly defined evidence development would not take place without the TIF. Third, we should allow the ability to opt out of bad TIFs.

Saura Jost While developing parts of our city are important, we need to recognize that TIF are a significant public investment where a large portion of the benefit goes to private developers that are already relatively well-off. For us to use TIFs we need to be more stringent because of the cost and benefits it provides to corporate interests in exchange for the promise of new development. We should try to focus TIF funds on more dense developments and infrastructure that have more property tax potential. We could also consider ways we could capture revenue from TIF developments more quickly. We need to make sure that the “but for” clause is in fact met through a systematic approach that is well documented and communicated clearly

6. Traditionally the city of Saint Paul and SPSS have had an arms’ length relationship. Each has their own budget, and sphere of influence. However, the actions a city takes impacts the daily lives of students and educators, and the desire to be near quality, local, public schools is often a primary factor in how families decide where to live.

- a. **How will you seek out educator and student voice in your decision-making process? What steps will you take to invite SPFE in as a stakeholder? How will you share information with SPFE, parents and students?**

Isaac Russell I will seek out the voices of educators and students by doing the simple task of asking them what they think. This means showing up in spaces where they are and listening. Going into schools and classrooms. Showing up to public meetings, and when there are important decisions that need to be made, convening stakeholders well in advance of those decisions.

This ties back to shared power and shared accountability. A truly inclusive process brings voices together so power can be shared in governance. Accountability is shared by making sure we all adhere to the values we state. When I learn of things that impact our public education and our families, I intend to seek the advice of SPFE so I can carry our shared goals into that council room.

Saura Jost I currently have many friends who are educators and parents of SPPS students. My son is also four, and a future public-school student for the next 14 years, so other parents and I connect a lot on education. I'm also proud of the youth outreach our campaign has done, which has included reaching out to current high schoolers. I want SPFE to be a full partner in our city's governance, which means regular outreach on issues, advice on shaping our city's agenda, and getting feedback on programs that are working well, changes that need to be made, and opportunities for expansion. I want to continue to visit schools and build on the people-centered organizing that my campaign has already done to reach out to even more students and parents so that I can hear their concerns, priorities, and feedback.

b. Where do you see opportunities for the city and the school district to partner? How will you invite input from SPFE, parents and students on what those partnerships look like?

Isaac Russell Increased partnership between SPFE and the city is with Parks and Recreation. Our city offers a wealth of sports opportunities and year-round programming for children. Middle and high school students need age-appropriate activities and supervision. Access to engaging programming with adult mentorship can help provide youth with constructive opportunities to learn and grow.

There has been an increase in exposure to college-alternative pathways in secondary SPPS schools over the last decade, but this is something the city could partner and broaden with SPPS. Robust programming that introduces students to skilled trades and other careers is increasingly vital as the cost of post-secondary education continues to skyrocket.

I believe these partnerships will be embedded in shared power and accountability by elevating the voices of the community. I will meet consistently with SPFE, students, and parents in spaces where they convene and seek their input long before a council vote takes place.

Saura Jost The city and school district have opportunities to partner anytime we are working on things that impact our youth and their families. I think that the city can help with supporting our youth through providing opportunities for them outside of the classroom such as partnerships with parks/rec and community programs that I described above. We can also ensure students know about the opportunities beyond their SPPS education through expanding city funded career pathways programs such as Right Track. In addition, supporting our working families helps support our students. Policies like safe and sick time, making childcare affordable and accessible, stable housing, and food security also seem to be natural areas to partner on to allow families to have the stability to participate more. I will invite input on these partnerships from community members by intentional proactive engagement, building relationships, and being responsive, available, and present in our community.

7. In 2018, SPFE joined our institutional partners in calling for elected officials to engage in co-governance and people-centered democracy. As a practice, this means engaging with your partners in all areas of public work, a willingness to be held accountable to promises, and on-going, open communication.

a. **What do the terms co-governance and people-centered democracy mean to you?**

Isaac Russell Co-governance means that we share power and seek to mutually support our joint goals by bringing together various elements of community power. This includes convening community stakeholder groups in a democratic process to build a truly responsive democratic system. The structure of public policy cannot rely on a very small set of people isolated from the communities they serve making decisions without accountability.

People-centered democracy means educating and activating those directly affected by public policy. This means inclusion, honesty, and genuinely seeking to find balance in imbalanced power structures. Large-scale change needs transformative power needs to center equity and people so we can meet in space, identify common challenges, and seek solutions that have the buy in of community. This won't be easy because people disagree all the time, and it tests people in ways they didn't imagine, but it also changes systems in unimaginable ways.

Saura Jost Co-governance means that we are partners in shaping and advocating for a shared agenda. It means frequent, honest, and open communication. When we agree, we identify the best strategies to move forward, and if we disagree, it means respectfully listening to feedback to find areas of commonality to do the same. As an elected official, I expect to be held accountable for being a good partner, so if I am falling short of expectations, I want to hear about it early and often so changes can be made. Principles of co-governance also shape my view of a people-centered democracy. As leaders, we need to listen and be held accountable to the people that trust us to represent them. For me, it means prioritizing our working families over corporate interests and being stewards of the resources that we are entrusted to protect, whether it is our schools, infrastructure, or environment.

b. **What groups and individuals will you look to for guidance?**

Isaac Russell I will look to people that have the same shared goal of an inclusive, equitable, and vibrant St. Paul. I intend to work with people that have different points of view but are driven by the desire to build coalitions and overcome our differences. The challenges public education faces are immense, so I hope to convene at tables regularly with our students, teachers, parents, community leaders, elected officials, school administrators, and whoever else truly wants to strengthen our public school system.

Saura Jost I will look to all our community members, educators, staff, students, our district councils, and neighborhood community organizations. I believe in collecting data from all key stakeholders and partners. I also look to other City Council members, school board members, and other elected officials that I know have worked on education policies in the past. In our campaign outreach, we are connecting with many groups, and are endorsed by a diverse group of organizations to build community that will continue to grow if I am elected.

c. What steps will you take to make sure decisions are made with communities, instead of for communities?

Isaac Russell The first step I will take is showing up in community and listening to what people have to say. All too often, elected officials speak to and don't listen to people. I would do this with regular public listening sessions throughout my community. Second, I want to have regular meetings with people in the education field at tables that are already being convened and establish a new table if we must.

Third, I will not limit myself to speaking with only my community. Ward 3 is a part of St. Paul, and the success of every Ward is our Ward's success. I need to know how I can support them, and that means going into schools, community centers, libraries, and more to include everyone. Lastly, I need folks like you to make sure I am accountable, so always keeping my door open is essential.

Saura Jost Part of the job of the Council is to make sure that communities have their own voices heard. We need to create forums and spaces where we truly listen and consider all ideas, where people are invited to share their vision and help shape the agenda. Essentially, I believe that if a policy is impacting your community, you should have a seat at the table as a stakeholder, and I want to make more of our decisions embrace this way of thinking. I think it also requires us to meet people where they are at - to actively organize instead of passively wait for engagement to receive feedback from all groups, and especially groups that are underrepresented in our policymaking processes. I know I am committed to this organizing, and I've had hundreds of conversations across Ward 3 so far to try to hear from everyone

d. How will you separate your accountability to the public good and your personal feelings?

Isaac Russell I think any elected official must remember they serve at the will of those that elected them. The decisions that are made should be done in deep partnership with community and in a professional way. Shared goals with community are important to maintain, and decisions must be made based on the lived experiences of those we seek to help and the best information we have available.

To effectively advocate for racial equity, I often place my personal feelings aside to make effective policy. I do so by being honest with myself. What am I thinking, how am I feeling, and what do we want to achieve? This requires humbling oneself to the greater good and never forgetting you have to produce results for people and be accountable to your partners.

Saura Jost For me, this is a matter of accepting feedback and not taking data personally. As an engineer, I look at a lot of data, and it doesn't always say the things that you would like it to say. The question for me, in those cases, is how I move forward to accomplish that goal. Public and stakeholder feedback is a datapoint for me - it reflects how people are feeling towards what I am doing, and it gives me an opportunity to identify a problem and take corrective action.

8. What specific steps will you take to protect the right of workers – especially public sector workers – to bargain collectively? How will you encourage all workers to be part of a union, should they choose to?

Isaac Russell I will protect collective bargaining rights by ensuring contractual language in agreements is not changed by council members when ratification is up. It also means advocating for bargaining rights in all spaces, even those not directly affected by the Council. This means supporting workers not covered by the National Labor Relations Act those with non-traditional work arrangements to collectively bargain.

I also will share my personal story. I worked as a project manager in an industrial flooring company after college. I was promised a raise after assuming the position, and I was later terminated after a strong performance review. When asked if my unemployment papers would be signed, I was told no, Wisconsin is a right to work state. I hope this story can encourage people to get needed labor protections and family-sustaining union jobs.

Saura Jost Collective bargaining is a fundamental right protected in the First Amendment. Unions, especially public sector workers, have been responsible for moving our country in a better direction, where we protect and respect our workers and they are paid a living wage. I think we best promote unions by strictly enforcing laws that protect the right to bargain, and make sure penalties are swiftly enforced against those that would seek to hinder our right to freely form unions. As a leader, I think it's important to be visible in standing with Labor to show that union members have our support. We can do this by making sure that our laws protecting our workers, paid family leave, anti-wage theft laws, prevailing wage ordinances, project labor agreements and administrative fees are stringently enforced so that people can see the benefits of joining a union.