



Who are MTI VOTERS?

MTI-Voters is the political action committee of Madison Teachers Inc. which seeks to identify candidates most likely to advance policies supported by the members of MTI, policies that support MMSD staff and students, and advance the quality of public education in the Madison Metropolitan School District.

The Political Action Committee is known as MTI VOTERS. The Committee consists of the President of MTI or their designee and the Treasurer of MTI, the President or their designee of each of MTI's affiliates, including MTI-Retired, an Educational Support Professionals (ESP-MTI) member selected by the ESP-MTI group, and eight (8) members elected by the MTI General Membership. This member-compromised committee coordinates MTI's political endorsement process and advances recommended candidates to the thousands of MTI members who vote to formally endorse candidates based on those recommendations.

Completed candidate questionnaires will be posted on the MTI website for members and the public to read. Visit madisonteachers.org/elections/ for more updates

Important Dates and Information

Wednesday, September 23, 2026	Please deliver your responses to MTI via email at mjohnson@madisonteachers.org
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Contact Mone't Johnson mjohnson@madisonteachers.org with questions or scheduling concerns.



MTI VOTERS

2026 Fall Election Questionnaire

1. Why are you running for elected office?

I'm running for the Assembly because our democracy is under attack and the cost of living is out of control. Across Wisconsin, people are doing everything right, but stability is always just out of reach. The cost of everything keeps going up, from rent and healthcare to groceries, property taxes, and childcare. And for over a decade, our state government has been more focused on taking away our rights and giving handouts to corporations than it is on actually improving our lives. I'm running to change that.

I don't have the typical background of someone who runs for the State Assembly. Like so many of my neighbors, I am someone who struggles to afford living here. I've experienced homelessness and gone without healthcare for most of my life. I've worked for \$2.33 an hour plus tips in the service industry. And as a transgender woman, I know what it feels like to see your basic rights come under attack by the government. This fight isn't political for me – it's personal. That perspective is missing from the legislature, and it's exactly what I'll bring.

I'm a food service worker, small business owner, longtime comedian, and currently a member of the Madison Common Council. As an alder, I've delivered for our communities. I've secured over \$60 million in affordable housing investments, passed a moratorium on AI data centers, removed credit score from subsidized housing applications, reformed the zoning code so we can build different types of homes, and expanded mental health services through our CARES program. I've seen firsthand how the state legislature constrains local governments and stops us from meeting the needs of our residents.

This moment demands bold action to uplift working people and make life affordable. A living wage, housing as a human right, fully funded public schools, universal healthcare and childcare, strong unions, real protections for our workers, paid leave for all, and so much more.

I believe in a Wisconsin where we take care of each other and we can all afford to live in the communities we love. The people of District 76 deserve a strong voice that will deliver on our shared progressive values. I am running to be that voice.

2. If elected, what are the three priority policies you will work to advance?

1. Lowering the cost of living. Affordability is the throughline of everything I am fighting for. Too many people in Wisconsin are working hard yet still falling behind, all while billionaires and big corporations rake in record profits. As a legislator, I'll fight to raise the minimum wage and tie it to inflation, cap utility costs, fully fund our public schools so we can lower property taxes, and fix Wisconsin's broken shared revenue formula so that local governments can fund essential services without asking residents to raise fees. Affordability also means delivering universal child care and paid leave for all workers, raising teacher pay, and repealing Act 10 to restore collective bargaining rights so that workers have real power to negotiate the wages, benefits, and working conditions they deserve.
2. Affordable housing and healthcare. As someone who has experienced homelessness and gone without insurance for most of my life, these are not abstract issues to me. Healthcare and housing are human rights. In the Assembly, I'll fight to increase WHEDA funding for new affordable housing projects, restore local control so municipalities can build the housing their communities actually need, pass a Tenant Bill of Rights including the right to counsel in eviction proceedings, and make significant state investments in homelessness prevention and transitional housing. On healthcare, I'll champion a BadgerCare public option with lower premiums and greater coverage, full Medicaid expansion, paid family and medical leave, and bold action to cap the cost of prescription drugs and hold big insurance companies accountable for price-gouging Wisconsin

families.

3. Protecting our democracy and fundamental rights. Wisconsin needs to be a firewall, standing up to this authoritarian federal government while strengthening democracy here at home. That means enacting automatic voter registration, protecting early and mail voting, funding clerks and poll workers, getting dark money out of politics, defending our immigrant communities, and enshrining reproductive freedom and LGBTQ+ rights into our constitution. We can't afford to only play defense – we need to advance a positive, proactive agenda that will restore Wisconsin as a beacon for democracy.

3. What are your three most important education issues?

1. We need to fix how Wisconsin funds our schools. We have a constitutional obligation to fund public education, and the Legislature has failed to meet it time and time again. The equalization aid formula still runs on property value assumptions from more than three decades ago, special education reimbursement remains far below the 90 percent that we actually need, and revenue limits have not kept pace with inflation since the 2011 budget. The combined result is the referendum treadmill, where districts are forced to ask local property taxpayers to backfill a state obligation, and where the districts with the least local wealth fall furthest behind. I will fight to increase general aid, raise special education reimbursement substantially, rework the equalization aid formula, and properly weight categorical aid for English language learners and students in poverty.
2. We have to bring the voucher program to a responsible end. Public dollars belong in public schools. The voucher system has created an unconstitutional two tier education system that drains resources from the schools that are required to serve every student. I will introduce and support legislation to freeze voucher enrollment, require voucher transparency on property tax bills, and responsibly phase the programs out. I am not interested in bills that claim to improve or fix the voucher program, because I do not believe in improving a program that should not exist to begin with.
3. We also need to do a better job of recruiting and keeping our educators.

Wisconsin is losing teachers and education support professionals to neighboring states, to better paying districts, and to other professions entirely, and every one of those losses hurts our students and communities. This is a pay issue, a staffing issue, and above all a voice issue. Educators need predictable and regular pay increases, a real path back to bargaining over their working conditions, and enough colleagues in the building to be supported on the job. That means full time social workers, guidance counselors, psychologists, nurses, librarians, and physical education, music, and art teachers in every school. Working as a public school teacher should be treated as one of the most respected and celebrated professions in our state.

4. How does your role relate to public school funding and what changes, if any, would you make to how public schools are funded?

The Legislature is the deciding body when it comes to school funding. It sets general and categorical aid, revenue limits, the equalization aid formula, special education reimbursement, and the size of the voucher programs.

As a local elected official, I've seen the consequences of decisions that our state government makes. On the Common Council, I have watched the legislature shift costs onto local property taxpayers through shared revenue and school funding decisions, forcing districts into an endless cycle of referendums just to keep the lights on. That is a failure of state policy.

There's so much more the state can be doing to invest in public education and meet the promise we made to our children and educators. We need to:

1. Raise special education reimbursement to at least 90 percent. This is the fastest way to free up general fund dollars in every district in Wisconsin.
2. Rework the equalization aid formula, which is built on property value assumptions from more than thirty years ago and no longer reflects where need actually exists.
3. Properly weight categorical aid for English language learners and students in poverty. Schools serving higher need populations should receive the resources those students require.
4. Index revenue limits to inflation so school districts stop losing ground every year by default, and sustain two thirds state funding so local

referendums are no longer a survival mechanism.

5. Freeze voucher enrollment and responsibly phase the programs out, returning those dollars to public school classrooms where they belong.

5. Would you oppose any efforts for the state to take over public school districts or school boards?

Yes, and I will actively fight those efforts. State takeover strips an elected board of its authority, hands a district to an administrator who answers to the state instead of to families, and almost always arrives with charter conversion and the dissolution of bargaining units. Nothing about that arrangement is better for students, parents, or educators.

Wisconsin has already been down this road. In 2015, Act 55 created the Opportunity Schools and Partnership Program to seize schools in Milwaukee, and it targeted a district that the Legislature had spent years starving of resources. That is the pattern every time. Legislators underfund a district through a formula they themselves wrote, then claim that the damage is evidence of local control failing. That's absurd.

Accountability starts with the state meeting its own constitutional obligation to provide public schools with the resources they need to succeed. Fix the equalization aid formula. Fund special education. Stop diverting public dollars to unaccountable private schools. If the Legislature does those things and a district still struggles, the next step should be a partnership with targeted resources, decided with the community rather than imposed on it.

6. If applicable, will you support legislation to restore full collective bargaining rights to all municipal workers?

Absolutely. As a former union member, I know firsthand how life changing it can be to have a union fighting for you in the workplace. With the passage of Act 10, we have seen the profound harm that comes with removing the ability to negotiate a contract in public service careers. Every single worker, including our

educators and school staff, should have a voice in the decisions that impact them on the job.

We need to repeal Act 10 in its entirety. Treating a teacher, a nurse, or a snowplow driver as less deserving of a voice than another public employee is both cruel and unfair, and it has caused real pain to working families across our state – pain that is still being felt today. I support the full repeal of Act 10 and the restoration of collective bargaining over all subjects of bargaining for every public employee. Bargaining should cover wages, hours, and every condition of employment again, including class size, workload, safety, planning time, and discipline procedures.

But we can't stop there. We need to repeal so-called Right to Work, restore prevailing wage and project labor agreements, strengthen workplace safety protections, raise teacher pay, repeal Act 150 to restore the civil service system, and defend the Wisconsin Retirement System from any attempt to privatize it. A favorable court ruling is not a finished job. Litigation can be reversed, narrowed, or slow walked, and Wisconsin has watched that happen before. The durable fix is legislative, and it belongs in the first months of the session.

It also has to cover everyone. Education support professionals, county and city employees, nurses, the people who plow the streets. Act 10 split public servants into two classes with no defensible justification, and stripped the rights of one of them. That division was only ever about which unions were politically inconvenient for Scott Walker. I will fight to undo all of it.

MTI members have waited since 2011. Educators have spent that entire time watching their rights switch on and off depending on which court ruled last. Nobody can plan a career or negotiate a contract on that. The Legislature passed Act 10, and the Legislature has to repeal it.

As an alder on the Madison Common Council, I have always stood with our unions and shown up for organized labor. In the State Assembly, I will do the same. I will fight to repeal Act 10, restore collective bargaining rights, and build a Wisconsin where all workers are treated with dignity and respect. I will always be a strong advocate for the right of every worker to bargain collectively, free from intimidation and retaliation.

7. Do you accept funds from political action committees?

Yes. Our campaign does not accept corporate PAC money, but we welcome contributions from unions, political action committees, and grassroots donors.

Candidate Name: Dina Nina Martinez-Rutherford

Date: 9.22.2026