

UNISON's Political Fund Ballot 2014

from 1st – 30th November - Q&A

Time to protect our political voice

What is the political fund?

UNISON's political fund has two components. When members join UNISON they choose whether to pay into the Affiliated Political Fund (APF) or the General Political Fund (GPF). The APF supports the union's campaign work inside Labour and formally affiliates members to the Labour Party. The GPF is used to lobby and campaign to support our members and public services to all policy makers, regardless of party. It is also used to campaign around important citizenship issues and to fund our work against far right groups.

Why is UNISON holding a political fund ballot?

The law requires all trade unions to hold a ballot of members before establishing a political fund, and to ask members every ten years whether they want to retain the fund. The ballots were introduced by the Thatcher Government who hoped that it would undermine the union's ability to campaign for public services and the NHS. Even during the last year the coalition has passed another law to try to prevent unions, charities and other campaigning groups from having a public voice.

When is UNISON holding its political fund ballot?

The last political ballot was held in 2005, when members voted overwhelmingly to retain the political fund. Although we are not required to hold a further ballot until 2015, the NEC has agreed to bring the ballot forward to 2014, to avoid any clash with the UK General Election in 2015. **The ballot will be held from 1st to 30th November 2014.**

How will the ballot be conducted?

Ballot papers will be dispatched with the November 2014 edition of the all member U Magazine which is mailed at the end of October.

Who will be balloted?

The ballot will be of all members in Great Britain whether they contribute to the political fund or not.

Members in Northern Ireland will not be balloted as different political fund arrangements apply there.

The ballot will be overseen and counted by the Electoral Reform Services (ERS) who will act as the official scrutineer.

UNISON Direct will operate a helpline for any queries and issues about non receipt of ballot papers.

Will UNISON be campaigning to retain the political fund?

Yes! The political fund has proved vitally important in funding our campaign activity to secure victories on everything from beating the BNP and the far right, to securing important concessions from government on pay, pensions and working conditions. The NEC has agreed to campaign for an overwhelming **YES** vote.

How can I get involved?

Communications and Learning and Organising Services will be making materials and resources available to help branches campaign at a local level, and show members what's at stake in the ballot. You will see information about these resources and materials later in the summer.

In coming weeks and months Infocus, efocus and U magazine will also be setting out examples and success stories, demonstrating how important the political fund is to ensuring that the voice of our members is heard loud and clear.

Keep Your Voice – Vote YES in the Political Fund Ballot!