

RMT pocket guide to winning the Political Fund Ballot 2024

**YOUR UNION
YOUR VOICE**



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*This booklet and Political Fund posters and leaflets can be can be downloaded from the RMT website or ordered from info@rmt.org.uk
www.rmt.org.uk*

Message from Mick Lynch

RMT members need a political voice. Politicians make decisions which affect the lives of union members at work and at home. We need to be able to influence those decisions. For that we need to keep our Political Fund.

Under anti-trade union laws unions with Political Funds such as the RMT are required by law to hold a full postal ballot of all their members every ten years to confirm that they want to keep the Political Fund.

A Yes vote is vital so that the RMT can continue to campaign effectively on behalf of members.

It is important that members understand that the Political Fund Ballot is not about affiliation to any political party. It is about allowing the union to continue to campaign effectively on the issues that matter to the members - such as jobs, pay, working hours, pensions and health and safety legislation. Without the Political Fund we will not be able to run effective campaigns on the issues that affect rail, tube, bus, maritime, offshore, road freight and taxi members.

This Pocket Guide is designed to help you make the case for a yes vote. The campaign will be won in the workplace. Workplace Reps and activists along with local officers and branch officials are the most important link with union members at work. There is nothing as effective as face-to-face campaigning and only you can deliver that. **You** are the key to persuading members to vote YES.



Mick Lynch
General Secretary

What is the Political Fund?

The law says all unions must have a separate Political Fund if they want to spend money campaigning on issues that have a political content.

The RMT Political Fund is formed by deducting money from members' union subscriptions. This is known as the "political levy" and amounts to just £3.12 a year, or 26p a month.

Under anti-trade union legislation unions are required to hold a ballot of all members every ten years to keep the right to have a Political Fund.

The Political Fund is used to campaign to try and influence decisions made on the issues that matter to RMT members. It could be about pensions, employment rights, safety at work, privatisation and jobs. On all these and other issues the Political Fund allows us to run political campaigns to defend and advance our members interests.

The ballot is not just about the RMT's national Political Fund. It is also about the right of RMT branches to retain their own Political Funds. If we do not have a national Political Fund then it will be unlawful for branches to hold their own Political Fund.

The RMT last held its Political Fund ballot in 2014 when the vote was 96% in favour of maintaining the fund. We will commence our ballot on **16th September 2024 and will close on 21st October**. RMT is campaigning to make sure that a majority of those members who vote, return a YES to keep the Political Fund.

It is important that all members understand that the Political Fund and political levy is not about affiliation or support for any political party. The Political Fund is used to allow the union to run political campaigns and lobby politicians on the bread and butter issues that affect RMT members.

If we don't have a Political Fund we cannot campaign effectively on the political issues that affect our members. We will lose our political voice. We will be fighting with one hand behind our back.

Your Political Fund is vital to defend the rights we have already won. It is essential to have a Yes vote to keep on campaigning for new rights for RMT members.

RMT successes using the Political Fund

Many of the laws and conditions we now take for granted have been achieved by long hard campaigning using the Political Fund. Our campaigning and lobbying has helped win:

- **Campaigns to protect jobs and conditions**
- **Support for public ownership**
- **Trade union rights and recognition**
- **Health and Safety legislation**
- **Opposition to minimum service levels**
- **More holidays and time off work**
- **Protection against discrimination and harassment**
- **More rights for parents at work**
- **Protection of pensions**

Defending Members' Rights in the Future

RMT are still campaigning hard to improve our members' rights and working conditions in the future. The need for us to campaign politically has never been more important.

Using the Political Fund we are currently campaigning on a number of issues including:

- **Better pay, conditions and pensions**
- **Improved safety at work**
- **Repeal of anti union laws and for a new deal for workers**
- **Rights and jobs for seafarers - no more P&Os!**
- **Public ownership of public transport**
- **Increased investment in public transport**
- **Improved offshore safety**
- **Safer hours for road transport workers**
- **Against deregulation of the Taxi trade**

What happens if we lose our Political Fund?

If we lose the Political Fund then, quite simply, we will not be able to campaign on any of the above issues. Big business interest and organisations that are against advancing our members' rights will have a huge advantage over the Union. They are not required to have a Political Fund and can spend millions of pounds lobbying against the interests of our members. Without our Political Fund we will be seriously weakened. We will be fighting with one hand tied behind our back.

How the Ballot will take place

The RMT will commence our Political Fund ballot on 16th September 2024. RMT is campaigning to make sure that a majority of our members vote YES to keep the Political Fund.

How the ballot will take place

- Ballot papers will be sent to all members' homes unless members request that they are sent to another address. The ballot will open on 16th September 2024.
- Ballot papers will be sent out by the Independent Scutineer, Civica.
- To vote, members must complete the ballot paper and post it back in the pre-paid envelope to arrive by the close of ballot date of 21st October 2024
- The question on the ballot paper is worded according to the law:

The resolution is that the political objects set out in section 72 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (reproduced overleaf) be approved as an object of the Union.

Do you vote in favour of the Resolution?

Members should vote yes to keep the Political Fund

- If a member is eligible to vote but has not received a ballot paper by 27 September, they should contact RMT Freephone **0800 376 3706** or email info@rmt.org.uk.
- Branches and members will be informed of the result.

"Talk to Ten"

Join the Campaign for a Yes Vote

In the run up to the ballot the union will be urging members to vote YES through the RMT News, the website and by emails, text messages, and social media.

We will also be sending out posters, leaflets and stickers to activists and branches so these can be distributed at the work place.

The campaign will be won at the workplace, through RMT reps, activists and branch officials explaining to members the importance of voting YES in the Political Fund.

As well as helping to distribute posters and stickers, we are asking you to help by "Talking to Ten" RMT members to make sure that they are aware of the need to vote for YES.

You should also promote the campaign in your union Whatsapp groups.

Research shows that once members are aware of the issues they are very supportive of the Political Fund.

Just remember the four key arguments for the Political Fund:

1. **The Political Fund is not about affiliation to political parties. It is about the union being able to campaign on the bread and butter issues that matter to our members in the workplace.**
2. **The Political Fund has already allowed the unions to win campaigns to protect jobs, pay, conditions and pensions and to win concessions on such issues as employment rights, hours at work, pensions and health and safety.**
3. **In the future the political fund will be used to defend and advance these rights and to support other campaigns, such as job security and better terms and conditions, public ownership and investment for public transport, travel facilities, opposition to outsourcing, repeal of anti union laws and a new deal for workers.**
4. **If the union doesn't have a Political Fund, we won't be able to effectively campaign on any of these issues. The employers are not required to have a political fund and spend millions lobbying against your interests. Without the political fund we will not be able to speak on your behalf. We'll be fighting with one hand behind our back.**

In the next section we have listed answers to questions that members may ask.

And remember if you need help or more information, call the RMT helpline 0800 376 3706 or email info@rmt.org.uk

Frequently Asked Questions

Q What is the Political Fund?

A The law says that unions must have a separate Political Fund to spend on political campaigning. This could include a newspaper advertising campaign in support of public services, lobbying for better legal rights for workers, calling for better pensions or holding a rally to protect jobs. Members choose whether or not to contribute through a 'Political Levy'.

Q How much is the Political Levy?

A The political levy is £3.12 a year or 26p a month.

Q Shouldn't unions concentrate on defending members' rights at work?

A That's exactly what the union does - seeking wage improvements, negotiating better terms and conditions, defending jobs, representing you at legal, medical or disciplinary hearings. But the decisions and laws made by politicians affect members' interests at work. For example pensions, employment rights, jobs and public services are all affected by political decisions. So unions must be able to campaign in the political arena.

Q Who decides how the Political Fund is spent?

A The elected RMT National Executive Committee decides how the money is spent. The NEC is accountable to members through the elected Annual General meeting. This democratic accountability ensures that when money is spent, a clear benefit can be seen for the union's members.

Q But doesn't all the money go to political parties?

A No. The union spends some of its Political Fund to support the campaigns of political organisations and politicians who support our policies. This ensures the voice of members is heard within the law-making process and to bring influence to bear. The vast majority of the fund, however, is used to campaign on the bread and butter issues that affect members at work. This ballot is not about affiliation to political parties - nor is it about what we do with the Political Fund - we are just voting on the basic right to keep it.

Q Why are we having a ballot?

A Under a piece of legislation introduced by the Conservative Government in 1984, unions not only have to ballot their members to set up a Political Fund but also have to vote every ten years on whether or not to keep the Political Fund.

Q If I vote Yes does it mean I have to pay more?

A No. In fact, every member has the right to opt out of paying into the Political Fund whenever they want. A Yes vote just means that the Union keeps its Political Fund, so you keep your right to choose.

Q If I don't pay the political levy, why should I vote Yes?

A Voting Yes means that those members who wish to pay into the Political Fund can continue to do so. It does not mean you begin to pay into the Political Fund. Every member of the Union, political levy payers and non-payers alike, has a vote to decide whether or not to keep the Political Fund working for members. If you don't want to contribute to the Political Fund, you don't have to - you have the right to opt in or out of paying the levy whenever you want. It is important, though, that you vote, and that you vote YES, so that all members can benefit from the Union's political campaigning.

Q Who can vote in this ballot?

A All members of the Union, whether they pay the political levy or not.

Q How do I vote?

A The ballot paper will be sent to your home unless you ask for it to be sent to another address. You should read the ballot paper and vote YES if you agree to keep the Union's Political Fund. It must be posted back to the Independent Scrutineer. A pre-paid return envelope will be included with the ballot paper.

Q What if my ballot paper doesn't arrive?

A If you have not received a ballot paper by 27 September, you should contact RMT Head Office by ringing the helpline 0800 376 3706 or email: info@rmt.org.uk Have your membership details to hand.

Q Is it a secret ballot?

A Yes, completely secret.

Q What happens if the union loses the ballot?

A If we lose the Political Fund then, quite simply, we will not be able to effectively campaign on any of the important issues that affect our members in the work-place. Big business interest and organisations that are against advancing our members' rights, will have a huge advantage over the Union. They are not required to have a Political Fund and can spend millions of pounds lobbying against the interests of our members. Without our Political Fund we will be seriously weakened. We will be fighting with one hand tied behind our back.

Q I'm not really interested in politics. Why should I vote Yes?

A Because the law defines many ordinary campaigns (such as campaigns for better laws, better pensions, better public services and better health and safety laws) as having a 'political purpose'. A Yes vote keeps your right to choose whether or not to contribute to the Political Fund.

Q What can I do to help the campaign?

A To help your union win a yes vote, you can talk to as many of your colleagues as possible urging them to vote YES.

Notes

YOUR UNION YOUR VOICE

Campaigning for RMT members

- Better pay with reduced hours
- Pensions
- Defending jobs
- More rights at work
- Improved health and safety



to keep your
Political Fund

The ballot opens on
SEPTEMBER
16th
Ballot papers
must be
returned by
21st October



www.rmt.org.uk