



**AFT Washington
Retiree Chapter
Local 8045R**

Retiree Newsletter

A Union of Professionals

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Here we go again!

**By Ross Rieder
Chapter President**



*Ed. note: This is our second article on the proposed charter-schools initiative. In our last issue (July/August 2012), **Michael Kischner** explained why teachers should not be the only ones opposed to that initiative.*

Washington voters have a fourth shot to vote AGAINST the Charter school industry in November. They were right the first three times, and I urge another **NO vote**—this time on **Initiative 1240**.

Privatize public schools? You must be kidding. Cutting budgets, demonizing teachers, and trashing their unions help make “bad” schools a self-fulfilling prophecy. It’s corporate-driven propaganda that tells us that charters are the answer.

I still remember what Al Shanker said long ago about school innovation: “The one innovation no one has tried yet [to improve education] is adequate funding.” Amen!

Charters are privately run but PUBLICLY funded—a diversion of public money to for-profit, corporate coffers. That’s bad policy.

Inside this issue

Reaching Out to Local
Treasurers & Prospective
Retirees

Mary Hale on Politics and
the Courts

J. Kaye Faulkner: The
Green River Strike

Lucy Macneil on the
Retirement Decision

Marcia Barton on
Communities & Public
Schools

Roger Carlstrom on Being
Right and Winning

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According to **Linda Sutton** in a July 11, 2012 post on the website “Schools Matter,” “Teachers at charters don’t have anything that helps keep qualified educators in education as a career.” She argues that “Low wages, no prep time, minimal (if any) benefits, and definitely no tenure” are the norm. “Any teacher can be fired,” she says, “at an administrator’s whim. And, you can be sure there are many administrators who play favorites and fire anyone who disagrees in the least with anything they do.” By “Tweaking and presenting charters again and again and again and again,” she argues, “the corporate charter movement hopes to fool enough people so they can edge their way into our state.”

An article in the September 2012 issue of *Labor Notes* argues that “Charter schools are not public schools.” As an example, the article cites the school district’s experience in Philadelphia, where the “district found ‘significant barriers to entry’ at 80% of the publicly funded, privately run charters up for renewal last spring. At two-thirds of schools reviewed, obstacles included 24-page applications, drug tests, and English-only applications.” The article goes on to say that “In a process more grueling than that of many colleges, one school required a student’s most recent standardized test scores, five pages of short-answer questions, a hand-written essay, three recommendations, and an interview.”

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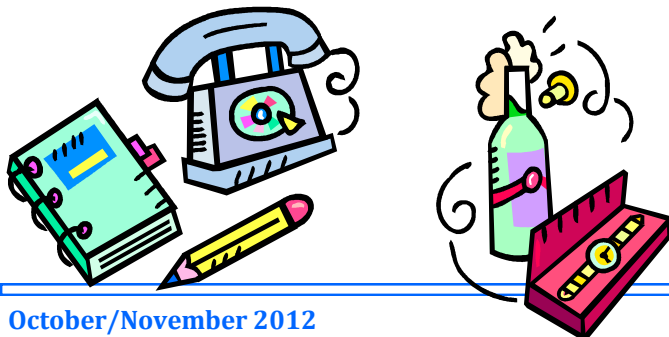
For more background on this issue, Sutton suggests that you "go to Dr. Kathy Emery's [website] <http://www.educationanddemocracy.org/> and read her dissertation and articles." Her book *Why Is Corporate American Bashing Our Public Schools*, Sutton says, "remains one of the best in explaining the origins of the present state of education." I suggest you buy your state legislator a copy, see that she or he reads it, and then give a test afterwards.

We're reaching out to local treasurers and people contemplating retirement

Our chapter executive board is presently developing a two-part program whereby

- we will ask local treasurers to change the status of any member who retires from "working" to "retired active" on the treasurer's membership report to the national AFT, and
- we will let union members who may be contemplating retirement know that (a) upon their retirement, if their local treasurers report them as "active retired" to AFT they automatically become members of the AFT Washington Retiree Chapter, and (b) even if the treasurer does not so report them, they may apply for membership in the chapter.

If you happen to know local members who are contemplating retirement from one of our locals or who have recently retired, we would very much appreciate your passing this information on to them and your letting President **Ross Rieder** know (ross241@aol.com) so we may get in touch with them.

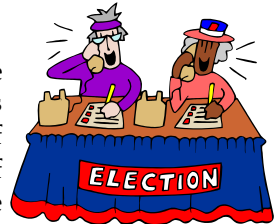


Political education moves forward, unlike the courts By Mary Hale Chapter Treasurer



AFT Washington's **Committee on Political Education (COPE)** met again in late August to consider additional post-primary election candidate endorsements and campaign contributions. COPE's recommendations were adopted by AFT Washington's Executive Board in late September. Check out **AFT Washington's** website for an update on these endorsements (<http://wa.aft.org/index.cfm?action=cat&categoryID=559E3C78-738E-42A6-9DCD-C174522891BA>).

Phone Banks. I strongly urge you to join other union members in making calls in support of labor-endorsed candidates. If calling is not your thing, please consider spending a few hours doorbelling. For more information about when and where you can help, please contact **Kristin Elia**, AFT Washington State Affiliate Political Organizer, at kelia@aftwa.org or 206-430-0553.



Attorneys working on behalf of **TRS1** and **PERS1** pensioners now anticipate that it will be 12 - 18 months before retirees in these two pension plans will know whether they'll receive the July 2011 COLA increase denied them. A lawsuit challenging the 2011 State Legislature's decision to deny the COLA increase was filed in the fall of 2011 by three labor groups. Multiple hearings on this issue before a Thurston County judge have been scheduled and rescheduled. Once the judge delivers a decision (and don't hold your breath), that decision will undoubtedly be appealed to the State Supreme Court by the losing side (either the State of Washington or the three labor groups appealing on behalf of their TRS1 and PERS1 pensioners).



Retiree Newsletter

There's more than one way to get someone's attention

By J. Kaye Faulkner



Ed. note: Kaye Faulkner has written articles previously for the Retiree Newsletter regarding his experiences as an organizer for WFT and AFT. Here, he describes his experience with his first strike. The approach followed by the faculty, he says, was suggested by AFT National Representative Vinnie Russell.

In the late 1970s, full-time faculty members at **Green River Community College** were angry. They had spent the better part of six years trying to get "educator" management to deal with the problems of part-time faculty. These instructors (many youthful) taught alongside their full-time colleagues, but at considerably lower pay. They were without desks, much less offices. They had to deal with the questions and problems raised by their students as did their fulltime colleagues. They were consistently hired back, but could never plan on it. Management "educators" waited for the last possible moment to rehire them.

The faculty's efforts through their union to address these problems met with intransigence by management, and management refused to work with the union. A strike appeared to be the only way to get management's attention.

The faculty voted to strike, and the vote was overwhelming: 92% in favor. That number was important because it represented the number who would show up on the picket lines as well the probable eight percent who would and did cross.



Eventually, management served letters to all the faculty, demanding that they show up for work at 8:00 on a given Monday morning or be fired for insubordination.

In response, over the weekend, union leadership and the faculty developed a plan to show up on Monday in squads of 16 people, each under the leadership of a steward, and march into the administration complex.

The strike went inside!

Students were eager to learn about what was going on. Instructors talked about the reasons for the strike in their classes. When the news media asked, faculty said they were still on strike. Management was confused—and had to pay faculty too, because the faculty had shown up for work as directed. Eventually, management saw virtue in bargaining, and the union was able to negotiate long-needed work-rule changes on behalf of the faculty.

Thus, were management "educators" educated.

You will know when it's time to retire!

By Lucy Macneil



When I started working at Everett Community College in 1972, I remember thinking that if I worked there until I was 65, I would have worked there 41 years. It seemed an eternity away—nearly twice as many years as I had already lived. I never thought about what I would do when I retired—it seemed like getting

married; you retire and live happily ever after. I was pretty young then.

Over the years, I learned some things about retirement, at first from my faculty colleagues, and, later, when I worked as a Human Resources administrator.

(continued on page 4)



(continued from page 3)

Over the years, I have talked with a lot of faculty who were thinking about retirement, especially those in the Teachers Retirement System, when they got close to 30 years of service. Two things have stuck with me: first, that if people can't decide whether or not to retire, they aren't ready. My experience tells me that they will know, unequivocally, when they are ready. The second thing I learned is that when people make the decision to retire, they immediately look five years younger, and when they actually retire, ten years melt away.

In my early years at Everett, I came across an actuarial study looking at longevity by career. I remember that the research showed that Boeing engineers often died within five years after retirement, while school teachers were living longer than anyone else. I can't remember whether the study or I drew the conclusion that engineers didn't know what to do with themselves, but that teachers had always had interests outside of work. I may have made that part up, but I have believed it all these years. And knowing as I do the busy and fulfilling lives of many of our colleagues, I think it's true.

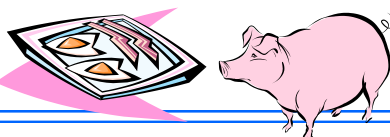
Lucy Macneil served as librarian at Everett Community College from 1972 until 1985 and then as Director of Personnel from 1985-1990. From 1991 until 2006, she served as Dean/Vice President of Human Resources at Bellevue Community College and then from 2007 until 2011 as Special Assistant to the President. She retired in 2011. She was an officer in Local 1873 (including President) and was WFT Secretary from the late 1970s until she can't remember when!

Let us consider communities and their public schools

By Marcia Barton



Once there was a pig who did not know about bacon. Or so goes the story, according to **Randall Jarrell**. That innocent pig has been on my mind lately.



Think of **Craig T. Nelson's** fervid exclamation, so entertaining to **Jon Stewart**: "I've been on food stamps and welfare, and did anybody help *me* out? No!" Stewart could have added, just to enhance the comedy, that Nelson had also been neglected by the public universities he attended in Arizona and Washington.

Education, like other public institutions, seems to generate a good deal of oinking. When I read that very august and philanthropic members of the community cry out that public education is broken and must be repaired, I am obliged to wonder how these good people imagine that public education comes about.

Perhaps the nature of public schools was clearer long ago when a community had to decide for itself whether it would establish a school, whether to hire a teacher and who that teacher might be, understanding at the outset that the community would have to pay the bill. Perhaps it was easier to understand the benefits to the whole community associated with the investment.

Now all those decisions are more remote; we delegate community responsibility to school boards, who further delegate to administrative officers, who further delegate to local entities. For many of us, once we've voted for school boards and levies, the rest of the business is out of sight unless we are dealing with particular schools and particular classrooms and teachers, at which point we know how to praise or complain.

Two films come to mind—"Waiting for Superman" and the newly released "Won't Back Down." Both seem to argue that there are villains at work who must be identified and ousted, after which a newly energized community will surely direct a rightful course, presumably ever after.

Righteous indignation is always stimulating, but it's not always accurately targeted, nor does it necessarily confer the clear insight necessary to correct a system's faults.

(continued on page 5)



Retiree Newsletter

(continued from page 4)

Any public school is ultimately what the community is willing to have; any public school system that works at all is a function of a dynamic relationship with its whole community. Whether it works or doesn't, we did build it ourselves.

This is Marcia Barton's third article for us, the previous two having appeared in our April and June 2011 issues.

It's better to be right and win By Roger Carlstrom, Editor



Ed. note: In our last issue, I boldly declared my desire not only to address the matters below but also how these matters could be seen in the context of the 2012 book by Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein called It's Even Worse Than It Looks. Alas, it couldn't be done. This is enough for now!

I wrote in our last issue that I have never forgotten a remark **Bill Faller** made to me: "I'd rather be right and lose than be wrong and win." He made the remark in the context of a 1970s case where he and I were right, and we won! Actually, I have never endorsed the idea that virtue lies in being right and losing, and I wonder if Bill himself has either. For example, when I interviewed him for that article, I asked about voting for **Ralph Nader** in the 2000 presidential election. He would have preferred to do so, but he reasoned that by voting for Nader he would be voting against **Albert Gore** and helping **George W. Bush**. He voted for Gore.



In 1973 when I first negotiated on behalf of the **Yakima Valley College Federation of Teachers**, I ran head-on into the vise that closes on one who settles for something less than what is "right." Namely, when the State Board for Community Colleges "mandated" that faculty could not receive a salary raise in excess of seven percent, I settled for a faculty raise of 7.6%, far below what some old-guard members of the union thought should be 13.1%. I caught hell for settling for the "good" instead of the "perfect," to borrow an idea expressed by **David Cole** in a July 10, 2012, NYR blog post entitled "Why Can't We Celebrate When the Court Gets It Right?" (Cole asked why "the perfect" must be construed as "enemy of the good" with regard to the Affordable Care Act as opposed to a more perfect, single-payer health-care system that liberals would prefer.)

If you want to be right and *win*, of course, you have to decide what "right" you want to pursue, and I think you have be careful about how you frame the issue you're pursuing. The most remarkable application of this idea that I know of is the successful pursuit of same-sex-marriage legislation in this state by people who didn't start the pursuit there. They started with gaining rights for civil unions and then worked their way up to the victory they achieved in the last legislative session. In November at the ballot box, should they lose the right they have won, I anticipate that they'll set out on the march to restoring the right methodically, patiently, and relentlessly. That's what they did in the first place.



For back issues of the Newsletter, go to <http://wa.aft.org> and click on "Retiree Members"

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