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I-735 will be on the November ballot By Mary Hale, President



Barring an unanticipated number of invalid petition signatures, Initiative 735 will be on the state-wide ballot in November 2016. According to the Washington Coalition to Amend the Constitution (<http://www.wamend.org/>), more than 325,000 signatures were turned in to the Secretary of State's Office on December 30, 2015. (A minimum of 246,372 valid signatures are required for the

measure to qualify for the November 2016 ballot, but the Secretary of State's Office recommends that 20 to 25% more than that be submitted just to be safe.) The month of December, when more than 100,000 signatures were gathered, was critical to putting "the measure over the top."

The initiative calls upon the Washington State Congressional delegation to support a federal constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that corporations are considered as "persons" and that their contributions to political candidates are therefore free speech and cannot be restricted.

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In late October 2015, the chapter's executive board voted to assist with the state-wide petition drive. All members of the board left the meeting with one or two petitions to be filled (as fully as possible) and submitted by late December. In addition, a number of **AFT Washington affiliate locals** gathered signatures. Kudos to them, and also to **Susan Levy**, our chapter vice president, for her work on this important initiative. We are all proud to have been part of this successful signature-gathering drive.

Moreover, we encourage you to donate to the campaign, which needs funding to provide information in support of I-735 to voters during 2016. Contributions can be sent to the **Washington Coalition to Amend the Constitution, P.O. Box 95769, Seattle, WA 98145.**

What's Inside

- Glenda Hanson: Join COPE in 2016
- National AFT Executive Council: Vote for Hillary!
- SAVE Benefits Act Introduced in the Senate
- K. Ann McCartney on White Privilege
- Flicks for Pols
- How Universities Have Changed over 20 Years
- Ross Rieder: Professors Out to Lunch
- Three Poems by Rachael Levine
- Mary Hale on Retirement Years Not Turning Out to be What We Expect
- Marilyn Smith on Love
- Roger Carlstrom: "Fictive Language" in our Lives





Be active—join COPE in 2016

By Glenda Hanson, Director



The last meeting of the year for the AFT Washington COPE Committee was on December 17, 2015, and the committee talked about the importance of uniting all of our AFT Members – Active and Retirees – to support measures voluntarily that will protect

and preserve our right as a union to participate in the political process and to give us a strong, unified voice about issues that matter to us. One way you can be a part of this important work is through your donation to COPE in 2016.

We currently have approximately 650 active members in the Retiree Chapter, and of those, would you be surprised if I told you that fewer than ten contributed to COPE in 2015? Can we do better? Can we do more? As a long-time member of the COPE Committee, I feel it is important that I share the following information with you before you decide to make a contribution:

- COPE money is used to support candidates who support our issues. The committee sends questionnaires to state and local candidates and then uses a rubric to evaluate the candidates’ responses. We also look at the candidates’ biographies, past voting records, and sponsorship of bills in the legislative process. We sometimes hold in-person interviews with candidates. This work is done so that we can be objective in our decision-making on where to spend COPE funds.
- AFT Washington provides a full accounting of where COPE funds are spent, and this information is available to

all AFT members to allow for transparency in our political efforts.

- Most importantly, by making a contribution you are *actively* participating in the political process and helping our union become unified and united in our voice to protect what is important to us.

It is easy to become a COPE donor. Any amount is welcome--\$1 or more per month or a one-time donation through your checking account or by personal check. If you are a new retiree and donated while working, you will need to start a new donation.

To request a form to renew your COPE donation, change the amount, or to start a new donation, please contact **Elizabeth Ferrell** by e-mail, eferrell@aftwa.org, or phone, (206) 432-8088.

Here are some helpful websites for political information: AFT Washington, at <http://wa.aft.org/legislation>; Washington State Senior Citizens Lobby, at <http://www.waseniorlobby.org/>; League of Women Voters, at <http://www.seattlelwv.org/>; and Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA) at <http://psara.org/>.

AFT Endorses Clinton

In July of last year, the executive council of the American Federation of Teachers endorsed **Hillary Clinton** for the Democratic presidential nomination. The council cited her “proven record in leading the fight for high-quality healthcare and high-quality public education for all, starting with our youngest children.” Moreover, the council praised her as “an original co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act” and for her “deep and long record on economic and social justice issues – from voting rights to immigrant rights to worker rights –

(continued on page 3)



(continued from page 2)

earning her a 100 percent AFT voting record during her time in the U.S. Senate."

Moreover, the council cited the pledge she made at an executive council meeting in June "to work with educators": "It is just dead wrong to make teachers the scapegoat for all of society's problems." She told the council then that "Where I come from, teachers are the solution. And I strongly believe that unions are part of the solution too."

The council declared that "Hillary Clinton shares our values, has the support of the membership, and is the strongest candidate to win in 2016. She has earned the endorsement of the AFT."



The council did not consider any Republican candidates because none responded to the council's invitation to complete a candidate questionnaire and to meet with the council itself.

When questioned about why there was an endorsement in a contested primary, the council responded that it was in the best interests of the AFT and its members to become engaged in the debate on issues facing the country and to try to shape that debate. "While we will never outspend our opponents," the council averred, "we have a collective voice and energy that they can never match. And those strengths can help shape the debate, help Hillary Clinton win the election, and help us reclaim the promise of a better America."

(Source: "Questions and answers about AFT's endorsement of Hillary Clinton," available on the AFT website: <http://www.aft.org/election2016/questions-and-answers-about-afts-endorsement-hillary-clinton>)

SAVE Benefits Act introduced in the US Senate

In the December 2015 issue of the Puget Sound Advocates for Retiree Action's newsletter, Washington State Senator **Pramila Jayapal** (37th LD) reports that US Senator **Elizabeth Warren** has introduced the Senior and Veterans Emergency Benefits Act (SAVE Benefits Act) in the US Senate. US Senators **Patty Murray** and **Maria Cantwell** have signed on as "original co-sponsors."

According to Senator Jayapal, the SAVE Benefits Act is a response to the fact that "While Social Security beneficiaries are denied a cost-of-living raise in 2016, CEOs of large corporations are sitting on massive nest eggs." The Act "would give about 70 million seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and others a one-time payment equal to 3.9 percent of the average annual Social Security benefit, or about \$581." Senator Jayapal says that the 3.9% raise is intended to be comparable to "the same rate of increase in pay [that] CEOs of large US corporation enjoyed [in 2015]."

No indication is given in the article about the current status of the bill nor about the bill's chances of passing in Congress.

Those old white-privilege blues By K. Ann McCartney, Director



"Black lives matter!"
"Institutional racism!"
Headlines of the times.
How do we respond?

As we are dragged into this new phase of the Civil Rights movement represented by the headlines above and

(continued on page 4)



A Union of Professionals

(continued from page 3)

as we remember the accusation of “white privilege” that many of us middle-class whites rejected earlier, I reread the Peggy McIntosh 1989 article on “White Privilege: “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” She identified 46 of the daily effects of white privilege in her life not counted upon by African American co-workers, friends, and acquaintances. I invite you to look at that article and see how it speaks to you now (<http://www.uakron.edu/centers/conflict/docs/whitepriv.pdf>). And I offer a quote from one of my students in the multicultural course I taught at Shoreline Community College in the ‘90s:

Perhaps through education, ignorance will be replaced with knowledge, hatred replaced with compassion, prejudice replaced with truth, and false myths replaced with the reality of hope.

I am continuing my own education in this area and have discovered a book that I recommend highly. It has given me a new perspective on the black experience and caused me to reflect on what I can do to decrease racism: *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* by Cornell University historian **Edward E. Baptist** (Basic Books, 2014). Here is part of the description of the book from the dust jacket blurb:

Told through intimate slave narratives, plantation records, newspapers, and the words of politicians, entrepreneurs, and escaped slaves, *The Half Has Never Been Told* offers a radical new interpretation of American history. It forces readers to reckon with the violence at the root of American supremacy [that we rode to supremacy on the backs of the slaves], but also with the survival and resistance that brought about slavery’s end – and created a culture that sustains America’s deepest dreams of freedom.

Read it, and you’ll know what a “coffle” is; you’ll know what caused the development of the banking and loans in the early nineteenth century in our country; you’ll know how the institution of slavery increased after the import of slaves was forbidden; and you’ll see how the change from plantation slaves to “hands” ripped black families apart and also drew blacks together to create and sustain their culture.

Ann McCartney, now a chapter director serving on the chapter executive board, previously served as the first secretary and third president of the chapter.

Flicks for Pols



Ed. note: Sid Smith of Yakima has made available to us the following note to Roger Ailes, President of Fox News, from Shepard Smith (no relation). You should consult with your grandchildren, Sid

suggests, if you do not understand some of the references.

MEMO

To: Roger Ailes, President, Fox News
From: Shepard Smith
Re.: Filming Update

Hi Roger,

Here is a summary of my progress (so far) asking candidates to name their memorable movies. It will make a great piece to air before the Oscars because, as you said, they are never asked interesting questions during the debates.

Bernie's favorite film is "The Good Dinosaur." He commented, "Every young person should be able to see it free of charge."

Hillary said, although she forgot some of it, her memorable film was "You've Got Mail."

(continued on page 5)



A Union of Professionals

(continued from page 4)

Republican candidates were, of course, more serious. Huckabee thought for a minute and then offered "The Exorcist" as one favorite, but added he would get around to viewing "Rapture Palooza" when he moves into the White House.

Rand Paul admitted he rarely sees movies, but people have told him that in an odd way he reminds them of "The Martian," so maybe he will check it out.

Carly Fiorina has a thing for Joaquin Phoenix, so that's the reason she identifies with the OS he falls in love with in "Her." She recalls that "Take the Money and Run" made a big impression on her. "But only because I see all Woody Allen movies," she hastened to add.

She also admits to identifying with Katniss Everdeen: "A young woman who will not be defeated."

I have a few more interviews left before the program is ready to air, but expect to finish up after the next debates.

By the way, I met Brian Williams at a reporters dinner and thought to ask if he has a favorite film. He does: "Forrest Gump."

Shep

How universities have changed in the past twenty years

"Even for the tenure-track faculty, in the last twenty years, universities have shifted firmly toward a corporate model in which faculty are treated as salespeople on commission. "Publish or perish" was the admonition when I was in graduate school, but today the rule is more like 'external funding or expulsion.' . . . Our usefulness is not measured by generation of high-quality knowledge but by the volume of grants added to the university economic

machine. This means our work is skewed toward the politically safe or, worse, the industrially expedient. Meanwhile, administrators shamelessly talk about their universities' 'brands,' and lately some are even checking to see if their faculty are appropriately adhering to 'the brand.' Yet more evidence of a growing and scary corporate mentality. Add to this the often unfair Internet-based attacks on researchers who are perceived as promoting dangerous messages, and what you end up with is regression to the safe—a recipe for service of those already in power."

—*Alice Dreger, writing of the obstacles raised by universities to empirical scientific inquiry in her 2015 book, Galileo's Middle Finger: Heretics, Activists, and the Search for Justice and Science, p. 258*

These professors have it completely wrong By Ross Rieder, Director



I consider elitism to be the enemy of education at all levels.

In the case of higher education, elitism fouls the atmosphere constantly. As recently as December 20, 2015, in The Seattle Times, for example, two full professors at the University of Washington decried the

movement for a UW faculty union that included the entire faculty, not just the endowed and tenured.

Elites ask, "What interest do we have with the untenured, the adjunct, the TAs, etc.?"

Although my experience tells me otherwise, I have tried to have high expectations of the elites in education, K through 16+, but these two guys writing in The Times test my patience. It seems reasonable to me that the higher the level of

(continued on page 6)



(continued from page 5)

education the better support there should be for the less fortunate caught in the web of the “ed. biz.” That just does not seem to be the case, however.

In their article titled “UW union would jeopardize unity,” **Paul B. Hopkins** and **Ed Lazowska** said, “Now is the wrong time and the UW is the wrong place for a unionized faculty.” What a stunning judgment!

We know that in the eyes of any management there is never a right time for employees of any kind to organize. Solidarity among workers is bad news for any boss. Elitist proclamations like this “go-slow” approach have postponed justice, equality, safe work, and wider-spread satisfaction with one’s (and everyone’s) job for American workers, whether pipefitters, carpenters, musicians, teachers, et al.

To the contrary, there is *no* wrong time for any employees to organize. The more employees who organize together – with all levels of an institution’s employees – the better.

As a young teacher union activist, I had many discussions with members of many trades. Some in the labor movement weren’t too sure about the suitability of unions for teachers. For instance, they used to say to me, “Yeah, but you only work nine months out of the year.” That stymied me until I discovered that the average building tradesman worked about nine months out of the year too. And, if that worker picked up a piece of lumber that he could see was not fit for construction, he could refuse to use it, while people in my profession were pretty much expected to improve on whatever was presented to them.

But, that’s another story.

Three poems Rachael Levine

Meditation Upon Entering the Ninth Decade of Life

What I long for now is the time to not know
time.

To be so absorbed in thought or action that there
are

No movements of the sun, moon and stars.

To move easily among life’s detritus. To
remember;

The childless neighbor who gave me her pressed
glass spoon holder,

Or from a photo evoke the sounds of sea
meeting joy at Iron Springs.

To gracefully yield the payments now required
by my body

For all those attempted overhead shots, pulling
weeds,

Cradling while nourishing children and myself.

To see familiar faces, illuminated by a warm
Idaho sun;

Or those emerging from cool water,

Whose laughter confirms: “You are here!”

To hold the wonder of sand and stone

Butterflies and tent caterpillars,

Ripe blueberries and green tomatoes.

To recognize that magnificent laws,

We really don’t understand,

Firmly enfold all in this universe, forever.



The End of February

Oh rejoice in this time of waiting,
this time of rawness.
A sparrow spins and feeds.
Light air
brings her song inside.

Oh sing with thanksgiving
for this small breath.
Dancing purple cosmos
are being summoned
to delight a garden.

Oh praise this unseen work,
this recrudescence.
The moon's crest
still holds us
in the sweet embrace of life.

Collateral Damage

What happens to the earth,
when roto-tilled by bombs?
Fertilized by blood,
do new plants appear?

What happens to birds,
when their nest is burned.
Are there none left
to feed on worms?

What happens to a calf,
bawling all day,
when the cow's torn udder
lies drying in the hay?

What happens to fish,
when poisoned water
offers only a dead child's
shoe for shelter?

Where is she who wore the shoe?
Where is he who fed the cow?
Who will sow and who will reap?
Will even clouds be left to weep?

Rachael Levine is a frequent contributor to the Retiree Newsletter.

When our retirement years aren't what we anticipated By Mary Hale, President

A few years after my husband **Don** was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease Dementia, I wrote an article for the July/August 2014



Retiree Newsletter ("Living with Alzheimer's Disease: Some Thoughts from a Caregiver"). In that article, I included some basics that need to be addressed (a will or updated will, powers of attorney, physician's instructions, etc.), but my mind was not then on a number of other important decisions that need to be made. That's where I am now.

Two books in particular have helped me focus on some of the other important decisions, and I recommend them to you (even if you are not dealing specifically with Alzheimer's "long journey"--degenerative, progressive, and fatal): **Katy Butler's** *Knocking on Heaven's Door: The Path to a Better Way of Death*, and **Atul Gawande's** *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. Both are very readable, are pertinent for other medical conditions, and provide information about clinical options for us to consider.

(continued on page 8)



A Union of Professionals

(continued from page 7)

A few other decisions (none of which I'd considered a few years ago) now occupy center stage for me.

When I can no longer care for Don, how do we finance a facility for him that specializes in dementia care? How can I ensure that it is the right facility for him?

Do we sell our home and property now when the market favors sellers, or wait until we must do so when he needs a level of care that I can no longer provide? (As is true of most dementia sufferers, he is comfortable in his known environment and resists change.)

When we ultimately need to move out of our home, what are the best ways to dispose of our belongings that our daughters and sons-in-law have no interest in inheriting (a significant portion of 10,000 books, an art collection, my extensive political button collection, etc.)?

There are other considerations that I now know to address, but I'll stop here.

Don is still doing quite well, which may be attributed to his high level of education and many years of brain-intensive, on-the-job work and challenging volunteer activities. Maybe not, though. So much is unknown.

Contemplating love By Marilyn Smith

*love is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart –
the root of the root of a thing called life*



E.e. cummings captures in these lines the enormous power and presence of love. Many moments reflect this power: a good conversation with my son or daughter, the surprise

phone call from an old friend, a bird's song in the early hours, the honor of a secret shared by a grandchild, the loneliness of another human being and the sudden connection that engulfs us. No one remains a stranger or strange.

Love does not take time to build when two spirits connect. There are short-lived loves and longer ones. The threat of loss is part of love's presence. The loss of a long-lived love may require a lifetime of overcoming. Its new existence becomes an abyss of absence. Evidence of his former being seems ubiquitous: photos on the desk, love letters that bulge from boxes into which each one has been tucked, coats and jackets of many colors and uses accumulated over the years, the pills that helped keep him alive, house slippers bashed down at the heels, a dog Lucy that asks each day where her friend has gone. His roses, not informed of his loss, continue to explode in summer and the peonies he prized continue to topple over from the weight of their beauty.

His last day with those roses – how difficult it was for our son David to maneuver his father's wheelchair into the yard. The last time that Lucy got cozy on his lap, a moment our granddaughter Hannah captured in a photo of us. I still see the heaving of his chest on his last day and feel the increasing distance between breaths. I squeeze his weak arms that just a few weeks before had been able to hold me in a brief dance at our friends' 50th anniversary party, and I look now at a photo taken of us at the Seattle Art Museum only a few days before those final breaths.

I feel his courage and determination to keep on drawing breath. We never discussed what he would want when there were no more to inhale. He never wanted, I think, to give up our life together with all those we have loved over the course of forty years.

(continued on page 9)



A Union of Professionals

(continued from page 8)

How do any of us who have lost the center of our lives overcome that loss? The road beyond can be traveled only with the empathy and care that friends still with us provide. Gratitude makes life bearable if one can only track the courage to find its whereabouts, to prevent it too from falling into that abyss.

Marilyn Smith is a frequent contributor to the Retiree Newsletter.

The place of “fictive language” in our lives By Roger Carlstrom, Editor



In the fall, a friend loaned me his copy of **Yuval Noah Harari’s** book, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (2015). I enjoyed the book so much that I purchased a copy for

my son for Christmas, and one for myself as well. I told another friend, here in Yakima, that there’s enough material in the book for me to write a series of these 400-word articles for the *Newsletter* over a period of two or three years, given that we only publish quarterly!

I was struck in the early going by Harari’s discussion of “The Cognitive Revolution” that began some 70,000 years ago when “fictive language” emerged. *Sapiens* became capable of transmitting “information about things that do not exist at all.” “As far as we know,” Harari says, “only *Sapiens* can talk about entire kinds of entities that they have never seen, touched, or smelled.” This was a time when “Legends, myths, gods, and religions appeared for the first time. . . .”

Later in the book, he discusses how myths “sustain entire empires,” and he considers the Code of Hammurabi of ca. 1776 BC and the 1776

Declaration of Independence, roughly 3,500 years apart.

The Code, Harari tells us, divided the people “into two genders and three classes: superior people, commoners and slaves.” It was thought to be a social order “rooted in universal and eternal principles of justice, dictated by the gods.”

The Declaration, of course, spoke to the “self-evident” truths “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Harari then turns to “the science of biology” to show that both the Code’s “division of people” and the Declaration’s “truths” are based solely on myth. This fascinating discussion includes a translation of the “self-evident truths” into biological terms:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men evolved differently, that they are born with certain mutable characteristics, and that among these are life and the pursuit of pleasure.

He sees the Code and the Declaration as “imagined orders” that serve, not because they are “objectively true” (they are not), but because “they are the only way large numbers of humans can cooperate effectively.” “Advocates of equality and human rights” should rest easy. Their beliefs, though not “objectively true,” have great value.

There’s more in this book to like. I’m hooked!

Contact us:
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labor donated