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The annual meeting was very informative! By Mary Hale, President



On May 18, 2016, AFT retirees, guests, and a few AFTWA staff members gathered for our Retiree Chapter annual meeting at the Bridge at Village Cove in NE Seattle.

This year was not an election year for Retiree Chapter officers and directors (those elections will occur in 2017), and so the agenda focused on **AFT and the 2016 Elections**, a topic that your chapter

executive board felt would be of particular interest to retirees this year.

Our kick-off speaker was **Pramila Jayapal**, AFT's endorsed candidate for Washington State's 7th Congressional District. She is currently the state's senator from the 37th Legislative District and has focused on and been a vocal leader for a higher minimum wage, racial and gender equity, more affordable college, and increasing access to reproductive health care. If elected, she was clear, she would continue to champion these issues as a member of the U.S. Congress.

Gerard Friesz, AFT Regional Director, was the second speaker. In general, he addressed AFT's election priorities and strategies for the 2016 elections. He also stressed the critical importance of defeating **Donald Trump** in November and cited a number of reasons for doing so.

Mary Hale, President
Susan Levy, Vice President & Liaison to Other Retiree Organizations
Rosemary Thurston, Secretary
Glenda Hanson, Treasurer & Chapter Rep. to AFTWA COPE
John Guevarra, Director
Ann McCartney, Director
Ross Rieder, Director & Chapter Rep. to AFTWA Exec. Board
Roger Carlstrom, Editor
Merrilee Miron, AFTWA Staff Liaison

Bernal Baca, AFTWA's lobbyist and a staff representative to the Committee on Political Education (COPE), addressed the organization's processes for endorsing candidates and state-wide-ballot measures and for making contributions to campaigns deemed worthy by the AFT Washington Executive Board. He was joined in this discussion by **Glenda Hanson**, our chapter's representative to COPE. (See Glenda's report on COPE below, on page 3.)

AFTWA's president **Karen Strickland** circulated a petition for Initiative 1433 that calls for a raise in the state's minimum wage to \$13.50 by 2020. (See "Retiree action in brief" below for more information.)

Special thanks to AFTWA staff members **Merrilee Miron** (our chapter's liaison with AFTWA) and **Kristin Elia** (AFTWA's political organizer, who would be leaving AFTWA at the end of June), as well as chapter Vice President **Susan Levy**, who assisted with making arrangements for the annual meeting.

What's Inside

- Retiree Action in Brief
- Glenda Hanson on COPE & the Primaries
- Two Poems by Elaine Smith
- Jelanie Cobb on Charleston One Year Later
- Mann & Ornstein on the Future and on the Present-day Republican Party
- J.M. Gilbert's Short History of Civilization
- Ross Rieder on the Dearth of Labor History in the Schools
- Sid Smith: Prospero's Farewell
- Michael Kischner on National Monuments
- Roger Carlstrom on Mann & Ornstein
- COPE Contribution Form



President Mary presides



Bernal speaks of
COPE

Scenes From the ANNUAL MEETING



Gerard, on AFT election
priorities & strategies



Pramila speaks of Congress
& more



Dave McCourt meets Pramila



*Photos by
Garet Munger*



Retiree action in brief

Zoom + Care Update: We continue to work with the Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA) and other labor and community organizations in efforts to assure that the state Insurance Commissioner’s office rejects Zoom Health Insurance as a health-insurance corporation in the state of Washington. As we reported in our last issue, the company discriminates against the poor and/or elderly.

Initiative 1433: An organization called “Raise Up Washington” seeks to collect 300,000 signatures in support of Initiative 1433 by June 30 so that it may be included on the 2016 general-election ballot in November. The initiative would amend certain statutory provisions pertaining to fair labor standards. Over a four-year period, the initiative would phase-in wage increases in the state’s minimum wage from the present \$9.47 per hour to \$11 in 2017, \$11.50 in 2018, \$12 in 2019, and \$13.50 in 2020. In addition, workers would be allowed to earn one hour of paid sick leave for every forty hours worked. According to “Raise Up Washington,” the measure would also provide “safe leave” to workers, which the organization says would allow “people coping with the consequences of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking to seek health care, take out a restraining order, go to court, work with law enforcement, or move – and still have income and a job to return to.”

AFT Washington has endorsed this initiative and has supported this effort through signature gathering.

COPE activities and contributions: As **Glenda Hanson** makes clear in her article next door, we continue to be involved in the activities of the AFT Washington’s Committee on Political Education (COPE), and we would like to have more of our chapter members contribute to COPE. She tells you how.

Scholarship Fund: In May the chapter’s Executive Board voted to contribute \$100 from its Retiree Voluntary Contribution Fund to the **Scherwin-Campbell Scholarship Fund**. Each scholarship provides \$1,000 toward higher education costs of an AFTWA member or of a dependent, spouse, or domestic partner of an AFTWA member. The fund is named after the law firm that serves AFTWA and that contributes a substantial amount each year to the fund.

Correction: The property-tax increase of \$1,775 cited in the “Singing the COLA blues” article that appeared in our last issue is a *two-year* rather than a monthly rate.

It’s COPE—and the primaries! By Glenda Hanson, Treasurer



Our AFT Washington Committee on Political Education (COPE) has been at work these past couple of months reaching out to the candidates and giving them the opportunity to answer our questionnaires so that the committee may make recommendations to the AFTWA Executive Board for endorsements.

At this writing, the AFT Washington Executive Board has made primary-election endorsements for Governor (**Jay Inslee**), Attorney General (**Bob Ferguson**), Lieutenant Governor (**Cyrus Habib**), and State Supreme Court Position 1 (**Mary Yu**). In addition, the board has endorsed candidates in some 30 legislative districts, and, as of June 4, congressional candidate **Pramila Jayapal** in the Seventh Congressional District. Further recommendations from the committee are under consideration by the board. For an

(continued on page 4)



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(continued from page 3)

updated list, please visit <http://wa.aft.org/take-action/2016-primary-race-endorsements>. At that site, you may, if you wish, print out the list as well.

I would also like you to consider signing up for making a voluntary contribution to AFT Washington COPE. This committee

- provides information to assist our members in understanding and engaging with the political process,
- asks and learns about what values and issues our members want to see our union prioritize in the political arena,
- raises political money from our membership through voluntary contributions, and
- decides which candidates and ballot measures deserve AFT Washington's endorsement and financial support.

To sign up, all you need do is fill out the "Voluntary COPE Contribution" form that appears below on page 9 and send it to

AFT Washington COPE
625 Andover Park West, Suite 111
Tukwila, WA 98188

If you'd like more information about this program, please contact our state lobbyist, **Bernal Baca**, at (206) 432-8086 or email him at bbaca@aftwa.org.

Finally, as we say on our 2016 Primary Election Endorsements list, "**Your voice, Your Vote! Please send in your ballot by Aug. 2!**"

Elections



Two poems Elaine Smith

Meditation

On the window sill the bowl of stones
Sits in stark-bright, slanted summer sun
That strikes across the 50's Roseland plate
And makes chartreuse translucence
Of the house plant's mottled leaves.

Outside the pane the arbor vitae branches
Cut the glare and palm a new chartreuse,
Drawn on the garden's darker shadow
behind the bowl of stones
Collecting dust upon the sill.

Big Sister

Bainbridge woodsmoke and laced fog
Salt water in warm layers
pooling over the cold
and my sister
Fishing me up by the hair
thrashing as I'd gone under
my footing lost
even before I knew the bottom was gone

She tossed me back to
my mother's wash tub
to be stewed clean as any kitten
and braided up tight to sleep.

As later she would toss me
on the fire of her feminist polemics.



Elaine Smith began teaching English composition and literature at Yakima Valley College in 1965 and retired in 1993. She lives in Yakima.



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Charleston, one year later

“We understand Charleston, rightly, as part of the cascade of violence that defines the times we live in – nine more lives offered as tribute before a sacred ideal of the well-regulated militia.”

Jelani Cobb, “The Hate That Remains, A Year After Charleston,” *The New Yorker Newsletter* (online), June 17, 2016

Medicare will pay your doctor for end-of-life discussions with you!

A May 27, 2016, online article from the Associated Press by **Matt Sedensky**, entitled “Elderly book end-of-life talks once labeled ‘death panels,’” describes how a change in Medicare



provisions allows payment of fees to doctors who conduct end-of-life discussions with their patients. The change became effective on January 1, 2016, and was the result of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services having “tucked” it “into a massive package of regulations last summer.” Sedensky suggests that “because Medicare is the single largest payer of health care in the U.S., this could stand to be one of the most significant developments in end-of-life care ever seen in the country.”

He says that “Medicare reimbursements for the appointments vary by region and the type of facility, but on average, an initial 30-minute session in a doctor’s office costs \$86.”

Before 2009, when the Affordable Care Act was proposed, “there was bipartisan consensus on the value of helping people understand their desires at the end of their lives and make those

wishes known.” All that changed “in an instant,” he says, when the Act was proposed and when the idea of “death panels” was raised by opponents. To characterize that opposition, Sedensky cites especially the rants of **Sarah Palin** at the time, who, before having been tapped as John McCain’s running mate in 2008, had signed a proclamation as Governor of Alaska extolling the importance of advance directives. He quotes Palin from a Facebook entry as follows:

The America I know and love is not one in which my parents or my baby with Down Syndrome will have to stand in front of Obama’s “death panel” so his bureaucrats can decide, based on a subjective judgment of their “level of productivity in society,” whether they are worthy of health care.

Unfortunately, such lies have a way of sticking around, and Sedensky notes that there is still a lot of misunderstanding about and fear of “end-of-life” discussions in the land. He hopes that as people have experience with such discussions, “the topic of discussing end-of-life care may return to the relatively uncontentious mantle it once enjoyed.”



Wither our future?

“All of the boastful talk of American exceptionalism cannot obscure the growing sense that the country is squandering its economic future and putting itself at risk because of an inability to govern effectively.”

Thomas E. Mann & Norman J. Ornstein, *It’s Even Worse than it Looks* (2016)



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A short history of civilization

By J.M. Gilbert

So, Aristotle asked Freud

What does X + Y equal?

Freud answered,

X + Y = XY+

And so, civilization continued.

J.M. Gilbert, a friend of the editor's, resides in Salem, OR.

It's hard to find labor history in the schools

By Ross Rieder, Director



A couple years after I started teaching in the Everett school District at Everett Junior High in the early 1960s, I was a volunteer choir director at the Everett Unitarian Fellowship. A fellow teacher, a Unitarian member, told me about an Everett Community College student who boarded

at his home near the campus. He told me that she was doing a paper in **Norm Clark's** Washington History class about the Everett Massacre of 1916.

And that she was getting threatening calls, suggesting that the Everett Massacre topic was not a good topic and could result in possible physical damage to her.

This was the first I'd ever heard of the event (or any other labor-related event like it). I immediately went to the Everett Public Library and was literally shocked to learn that such an event would take place in my new hometown, Everett, or any other American community. I

started checking out more books from EPL with the intent of shouting a short two-word phrase at whoever dared call to threaten.

No one called, but boy did I get a kick start on what became a romance with working-class labor history.

In 1968, I attended the annual Washington State History Conference. A small group held a special meeting to organize a Washington State Labor History committee. This soon became the Pacific NW Labor History Association (PNLHA), which included British Columbia, Oregon and Washington. Our first official conference was in 1969 – in Spokane.

All this because of a phone call, or the threat of one.

I have learned many lessons about the lack of labor history in our schools, including the lack of such schooling in my own home town of Yakima, where I learned at one of our PNLHA conferences but not from my own schooling there that in 1933 the Wobblies were active in Yakima, their office was destroyed, and they were treated as they had been in Everett. They were organizing farm labor, in particular a large fruit ranch that was about two miles away from where I lived.

My dad taught at a junior high school (the one my brother and I attended) for 30 years, beginning in 1930. He taught Washington state history most of those 30 years. I learned about the IWW in Yakima Valley in 1985 through the PNLHA, three years after Dad passed away. He never said a word about it to us while he was teaching, or later.

"[T]he Republican Party has become the insurgent outlier in American politics and as such contributes disproportionately to its dysfunction."
Thomas E. Mann & Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse than it Looks* Was (2016)



Prospero’s Farewell—from “The 2016 Campaign Tempest” (With apologies to Shakespeare) By Sid Smith

You do look, my comrades, in a moved sort,
As if you were dismayed: be cheerful friends,
Our rancors now are ended. These our candidates
As I foretold you, were all actors and
Will melt into air, into thin air – the Cloud –
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The bankers’ temples, the gorgeous hotels,
The solemn off-shore havens, the great Web itself,
Yea, all which It inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial campaign faded,
Leave not a yard sign behind. We are such stuff
As media make us, and our little votes
Are ours; their ends none of our own.

Sid Smith is a regular contributor to the Newsletter. He lives in Yakima.



Our nation at its best By Michael Kischner



Like many families, mine has a history that includes a lot to admire and a bit to regret. Last year, I got rid of a packet of letters that I decided my children will never see. I suppose I was whitewashing. I thought about this recently during a moving visit to Washington D.C. This was a good year to

revisit the great monuments and be reminded of the eloquence our leaders have been capable of.

I'd forgotten that **Jefferson** wrote in 1816,

Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free.

Fifty years later, God's justice having awakened, **Lincoln** in his Second Inaugural Address spoke the breathtaking sentence in which he calls the Civil War a "mighty scourge" sent to punish us for slavery. A hundred years later, **Martin Luther King** reminded us that "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." The words are inscribed in the massive white monument to King on the National Mall.

Bronze and marble were not made for showing warts. On our national monuments, you will not read that Thomas Jefferson never freed his own slaves or that he fathered children with at least one of them, or that for a time Lincoln advocated shipping freed slaves to Liberia, or that King was evidently more faithful to his cause than to his wife. And even the inscriptions are not wholly trustworthy. According to the historian **Garry Wills**, Jefferson’s 1816 statement on slavery that I’ve quoted above from the Jefferson Memorial is “misleadingly truncated.” Jefferson went on to say, “Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government.”

Is this “whitewashing”? The question of what we should teach our children about our past is too complicated to deal with here. A people must not elide from its history wrongs that still require correction or atonement. But I’m glad we have a place to contemplate this nation at its

(continued on page 8)



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(continued from page 7)

best. The National Mall is like a civic Mecca, a place to renew faith and hope, the inscriptions on its walls part of our national scripture. That scripture includes the words etched into the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where King first stood to proclaim them: "I have a dream."

Just how bad are things, really? By Roger Carlstrom, Editor



In 2012, **Thomas E. Mann** and **Norman J. Ornstein** published their book, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*.

They focused on the dysfunction in American politics, especially the Republican Party, which has become "ideologically extreme; contemptuous of the inherited social and economic policy regime; scornful of compromise; unpersuaded by conventional understanding of facts, evidence, and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition."

The party, Mann and Ornstein said, has put "political expedience above the national interest and tribal hubris above cooperative problem solving." Compromise, for the most part, has been out of the question, and the party invariably has been against anything that **President Obama** is for, even when some ideas that the president has advanced originally derived from conservatives and Republicans. (One thinks of "Obama care," for example, which originated in Massachusetts under the governorship of Republican **Mitt Romney**.)

With the advent of the Internet and its effects on how people receive their news, nightly news

programs merely provide "a kind of headline service for viewers, but with more soft news about entertainment, lifestyle, and sports, and with fewer in-depth pieces of extended interviews with sources." The "Fox business model" has meant, they said, that "No lie is too extreme to be published, aired, and repeated," and few if any repercussions come to the teller of the lie.

In April this year, Mann and Ornstein published a "new and expanded" paperback edition of the book, with the title changed (at least on the book cover) to *It's Even Worse Than It Looks Was*. It's the 2012 book with a "Preface" and an "Afterword" added.

Things are worse than they were, they say, because of "Anger at the establishment fueled by candidates and influential figures in the media and interest groups . . . painting an apocalyptic vision of America, one that plays into the populist unease about economic uncertainty and changing demographics." Moreover, race matters, where "one party," the Republican, "is overwhelmingly white, and the other one . . . consists of a majority of minorities." It is "naïve in the extreme," Mann and Ornstein say, "to imagine that race no longer matters."

Written before **Donald Trump's** apparent conquest of the Republican nomination for president, the book doesn't focus directly on his relationship with the party, but you can gain insight here about his rise to the nomination.

Contact us:
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labor donated



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AFT Washington Committee on Political Education (COPE) contribution: *COPE is a voluntary deduction that funds the union's ability to participate in the political process. AFT Washington does not use members' dues money for political purposes.*

There are three ways to contribute and any stated amount is a suggestion only:

By payroll deduction per paycheck: I hereby authorize my employer, _____ [employer name], through its officers, agents, and employees, to deduct from that portion of my wages due me the amount indicated below and remit to AFT Washington COPE, 625 Andover Park West., Ste. 111, Tukwila, WA 98188, a contribution in the amount of \$_____ (\$2.50, \$5, \$10, \$20, etc.) per paycheck.

By checking account withdrawal: I want to make an ongoing monthly or yearly (circle one) contribution in the amount of \$_____ (\$5, \$10, \$20, \$60, \$100, etc.) from my checking account. Note: In order for us to process your contribution by checking account withdrawal, please attach a check for bank verification. Mark "VOID" across the front of the check. We cannot use deposit slips because they do not have complete bank routing information. (Please see below on how to cancel your monthly/yearly automatic contribution.)

By personal check: Enclosed is a one-time contribution of \$_____ (\$60, \$75, \$100, etc.) payable to AFT Washington COPE.

Please contact me again in a year for another annual donation- Yes No (circle one)

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