

UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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December 2019



Classified workers at UCWU Local 4795, Northshore School District Chapter are united in enforcing their contract and delivered a supermajority petition to management.

Photo by James To

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INSERT: Spotlight On Retirees In Action

The Farewell Playlist




 “It’s been a long time, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come”

Sam Cooke, “A Change is Gonna Come”

In the nearly three years I’ve been here at AFT Washington, I’ve learned a lot and feel as though we’ve accomplished a lot. There is still a ton of work to be done, but the momentum we’ve built is nothing short of amazing! Which is why I’m sad to announce that I’ll be leaving AFT Washington at the end of November.


I’ve never been great with goodbyes, so I thought, given my love of karaoke and music, I would use lyrics!


 “But baby, oh baby
I don’t know what I’m gonna do
I’m crying ‘cause I love you, yeah”

Lizzo, “Cuz I Love You”

This is a bittersweet moment for me because I truly love working with you all and I’m proud of what we were able to do together. The hard-fought legislative wins, the amazing candidates we helped get into office, the crazy amount of money we worked so hard for to be invested into our CTCs. It’s been a real rollercoaster (especially this last session). I couldn’t have made it this far without the great members and colleagues who helped to get us here.

My decision to move on was hard, but I feel that it is the best choice for me. I’m sorry to be leaving at such a crucial time, but opportunities like this don’t come around too often.

 “‘Cause I’m my own soulmate (Yeah, yeah)
I know how to love me (Love me)
I know that I’m always gonna hold me down”
Lizzo, “Soulmate”

 “Just turn me loose, let me straddle my own saddle
Underneath the city lights
On my Cayuse, let me wander over yonder
‘Til I see the morning sky

I wanna ride to the ridge where the view commences
Gaze at the moon ‘til I lose my senses
My heart stays on the road ‘cause I can’t stand fences
Don’t fence me in”
Labrinth, “Don’t Fence Me In”

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Board meetings are usually held on the first Saturday of the month except for holidays and summer months. Board members are elected to two-year terms. AFT Washington represents over 6,500 members and prospective members in early childhood education, K-12, and higher education in Washington State and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which represents 1.7 million members nationwide.

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Karen Strickland

President's Column

Continuing the Fight

In our last *Spotlight*, I wrote about the importance of our labor movement — or more accurately, the individuals who make up our labor movement — putting our values into action, and the power we have when we stand together and take collective action. I think this is a good time to dig into what it takes to change the status quo through bold action. Our staff and local leaders often ask you, our members, to get involved in one thing or another — from talking to your co-workers about your union, to speaking out at a board meeting, to door knocking for initiatives. And based on the responses (and my personal history of carpooling kids to robotics, coaching little league, going to union meetings, etc.), I know that members' lives are full, and balancing personal needs with work demands and personal challenges is no easy task. The thing is, our efforts to build power in the workplace, get good laws passed, build community alliances — these require action now to pay off in the future. Sometimes the payoff is in the very near future, but oftentimes it's months or even years down the road.

That's what we saw with our sister union, the Chicago Teachers' Union and SEIU 73, unions with classified staff, clinicians, paraeducators, and teachers. They stood together and won big by “bargaining for the com-

mon good,” winning such gains as a nurse and a social worker in every school in addition to traditional subjects of bargaining like better pay. Closer to home, the Sumner-Bonney Lake paraeducators walked the picket line after a 99% pro-strike vote, and won significant wage increases. Members of the United Auto Workers struck to address healthcare, wages, plant closures, and an overreliance on temporary workers. After a painfully long 40 days, their solidarity and courage paid off with huge improvements. Twenty thousand Providence healthcare workers, members of UFCW 21, the Washington State Nurses Association, and SEIU 1199NW are preparing to walk out in their fight to win adequate staffing ratios, competitive pay, and other workplace rights.

These powerful displays of solidarity and bold action didn't happen quickly. This kind of action takes months of preparation and “fed-up-ness.” Workers don't come to a strike easily — it's a very big deal! These union leaders and activists did the groundwork to bring their members together - phone calls, meetings, house visits, community outreach, and more - to get to the point where workers recognized that striking was both possible and necessary to achieve their goals. Members had to accept the risks and sacrifices that come with the territory. Those sacrifices, often in the form of lost pay, are real; potential gains are theoretical. It takes determination and resolve to accept one in an effort to get the other.

With all of the other commitments on our plates, it seems safer to wait for others to get started changing the workplace, rather than take the bold, risky steps that can change the

game ourselves. Instead, we tolerate, we do more with less, we find workarounds, we carry more stress, we work more hours — doing those things keeps our lives settled, even if they make our lives harder. And then finally we say enough is enough — we need to do something different!

We have a roadmap for bold action in our [Re]Invest in Our Colleges campaign that targets getting robust investment in the community and technical college system from the legislature. Members have taken all kinds of action to compel that robust investment. We are still waiting, and now is the time for the groundwork that supports bold action. We know that if we build to the point of readiness for bold action, we are actually less likely to have to take it, because our escalating actions will have made the point to legislators. If you are a member who works at a community or technical college, I'm asking you right now to carve out some time to participate in our ROC campaign. Then talk to your local leaders and get involved.

If you're a member who works in a PreK-12 setting or four-year school, I know you have issues in your own workplace you want to solve — workplace injuries, a lack of dignity at work, or relief from crippling debt. The AFT Fund Our Future campaign is another legislative avenue for addressing these issues in addition to local action, and we are working closely with that campaign — we'll keep you updated on its progress.

We are surrounded by examples of workers seeing a problem, crafting a solution, and then taking bold action

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Pierce College Federation of Teachers Local 4821 Celebrates Contract Ratification

By Irene Morrison, Union Organizing Representative



Photo by Pierce College Bargaining Team

PCFT Local 4821 ratified its new contract this month with a 100% yes vote! The vote marked the culmination of a contract campaign that spanned nearly a full calendar year, including one all-day session that ran until 2 AM.

The biggest wins in this contract were around wages, especially for adjunct

faculty, who will see about a 10% raise in addition to the state-mandated 6% COLA over 2 years. At the end of these two years, some adjuncts will receive a pay rate of 75% per credit hour of a full-time starting salary. Full-time faculty are also getting raises in addition to the COLAs, totaling \$1,170 a year for two years, with a wage reopener in year 3.

Other wins included additional personal days for adjuncts (1 per quarter), incentive pay for developing Open Educational Resource classes, which are classes with free or no textbooks, and elongating the post-tenure review process from 3 to 5 years in order to decrease workload.

There's still much more to be done. While many of the State Board for

Community and Technical Colleges' recommendations for Best Practices for Part-Time Faculty have been implemented, adjuncts are still not receiving pay equity with full-time faculty. The raises for faculty at the Joint Base Lewis-McChord campus were much smaller, and the pay gap between the satellite military campus and main campuses grows. Additionally, while workload adjustments were mixed—the team carefully allowed increases in some areas if they matched decreases in others—full-time faculty will continue to be overworked with regards to committee and advising duties, for as long as the college continues to over-rely on part-time laborers.

Do You Know Who Your Building Rep Is?

By Anna-Marie Magdalena, Union Organizing Representative



When you have a question about your contract or union, an issue with management, or want to find out how to support your coworkers, your Building Rep is who you want to talk to. Whether they are called stewards, site reps, building reps, department reps, division reps, or something else, this person is your best resource for infor-

mation about your contract and what is happening with our union.

During this academic quarter, AFT Washington has trained over 40 representatives at our cohort Steward Trainings, and we are planning more trainings this winter on the Eastside as well as in King and Pierce Counties. At the trainings, new building stewards

learn what actions are most effective to take with their coworkers to change their working conditions and how to represent their coworkers when meeting with management.

To find out who your Building Rep is, contact your union leadership or the AFT Washington Union Organizing Representative for your local.

The Gig Economy Is An Organizing Opportunity

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

In the May issue of the *Spotlight*, we examined how the world of work is changing, primarily due to external factors such as changing technology and education requirements, as well as decreasing union membership and stagnant wage growth. But those issues affect how a person does work and how they are compensated for it, not what the nature of work is. Work, at its simplest, is an exchange of labor for money. Due to the rise of unions, the convention was that a worker exchanged 40 hours of labor for a living wage, which slowly became 40 or more hours of labor for a wage that isn't necessarily a living wage, which slowly turned into no guarantee that the job will be there next year, next quarter, next month, and for a wage that definitely isn't a living wage. Work is going contingent, and it creates uncertainty for workers.

The nontraditional workforce is large and growing. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics defines the nontraditional workforce as including, "multiple job holders, contingent and part-time workers, and people in alternative work arrangements," and also mentions that, "nearly four out of five employers, in establishments of all sizes and industries, use some form of nontraditional staffing."

Andrew Snider, adjunct professor at Pierce College, earns some of his family's income by writing books for language learners; he teaches Spanish and got into writing and publishing as gig work to fill the gap he saw in materials available for learners. "Reading is the big thing to acquire language. You can go at your own pace, if something's boring you can put it back on the shelf and pick something else." But of course, there was more to it than simply wanting to support his students – he doesn't see a point to waiting for a tenure-track position to open up, given how many

applicants there are for any open positions. "There's no solution coming in the form of waiting for that full-time job, because it's probably not going to open."

If that job did open, though, Snider isn't sure he'd want to take it; one thing that publishing gives him is more control over how he teaches. He wants the schools he works at to be more collaborative between faculty and administration but doesn't see it. "When I was at Green River College, we talked a lot about shared governance and how that wasn't being achieved, that [in that format] faculty has a lot of say along with the administration versus an adversarial administration versus faculty." His publishing makes him less reliant on a school system he doesn't think has a place for him either in role or in ideology.

These kinds of work arrangements are pitched as beneficial for employees. Snider pointed out that even if a tenure-track position was likely to come up, and that he beat out the other candidates to get the job, given his wife's job as a nurse with variable shifts, they needed the flexibility to care for their children more than they needed the money or even the stability. That's a common argument made for a lot of gig economy jobs – work from home on your own schedule to save on childcare or adult care costs! That might even be a compelling argument, if it was true, but according to the App-Based Drivers Association's (ABDA) pithily-titled report, "Uber/Lyft Take More, Pay Drivers Less", that after taxes and maintenance fees – which rest on the employee as a legally-defined, independent contractor – drivers for Uber earn as little as \$3/hr. Uber and Lyft don't compensate drivers for required maintenance of their vehicles, which eats into the pay that drivers do take home.

Or, to put it into another industry, adjunct teachers are paid per course, but the

pay is so low that it rarely reflects all the work done outside of class – the preparation, grading, and student support. As with app-based drivers, when the wage is accurately examined and hidden costs are accounted for, adjunct workers make a much poorer rate of pay than their contracts suggest.

It's not an earth-shattering conclusion to recognize that the reason so many employers favor nontraditional roles is because it puts the burden of operating expenses on the worker. If you're an adjunct, the school often doesn't provide you with an office, let alone your own computer. If you drive for Uber, your car maintenance expenses are yours to handle, not Uber's. Airbnb isn't compensating you for the electricity your guests use; you're expected to build your operating costs into your rental rate and stay competitive with others offering rentals. Even more saliently, if you're self-employed or legally defined as a contractor, you're paying your own payroll taxes, health insurance premiums, and social security costs, on top of the expenses incurred in your work. Every single thing about that arrangement saves your employer money – not you.

None of this is to say that nontraditional work should be eliminated. When it works for the worker – as it does for Andrew Snider – that should be respected and valued. We live in a society where decisions about things like family care need to be considered, and nontraditional work offers a lot more flexibility for many. But it is to say that nontraditional work should not be poor-quality insecure work with no protection or benefit. One of many reasons for labor's push for portable benefits such as universal healthcare and Washington's new Paid Family and Medical Leave policy is that it allows

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Elections 2019

By Sandra Toussaint, State Affiliate Political Organizer

This election cycle was more ... interesting than the last couple of cycles. We had a number of great candidates and initiatives we were supporting, and several that affected us, but we did not endorse. The ballot was long for an off year, showcasing all of the work that was done last session and the exciting taxation changes that were made. As of the morning of November 14th, the Secretary of State has reported that 44.26% (1,993,220) of the total registered voters (4,503,888) turned out to vote this year. It's not a bad turnout rate, but it's not good either, especially given the huge, game-changing issues we needed to decide on. With only 28,019 votes left to count, and even though the election has not been certified, these are the races we can confidently call. Every percentage and number below are as of the morning of November 14th.

Statewide

Approve I-1000/R-88

Unfortunately, the opposition won this one, with 50.47% of the vote. That's 17,774 votes. So close it's painful, but also so close it gives us hope for a more equitable Washington. The work will continue, but this time Washington REJECTED I-1000/R-88

No on I-976

Tim Eyman struck again, and this time the results could truly cost us. With 53% of the vote, we will all be paying \$30 for our car tabs starting next year. Sounds great, right? It isn't. The tabs that we pay fund our roads, public transportation, maintain our bridges, and a slew of other important transportation projects. This means projects we've been griping about for years will never get finished. It means people will lose their jobs, and

that the chance of bridge collapses increases, the number of potholes filled decreases, and if you use public transit to commute, good luck catching a bus or train in a reasonable timeframe. This is bad for our state, there's no way around it. But yay, \$30 car tabs...

This measure was approved by 116,911 votes.

Municipal

Renton

Our endorsed candidate, Marcie Maxwell lost her race against Armondo Pavone, who won with 53.02% of the vote, or only by 1,310 votes.

Seattle

It's not all bad news though. Two of our three candidates in the Seattle City Council races were successful!

Kshama Sawant in the 3rd district finally beat her opponent, Egan Orion, with 57.76% of the vote, or by 1,693 votes. That was a real nail-biter of a race!

Dan Strauss in the 6th district beat out his opponent, Heidi Wills, with 55.59% of the vote, or 4,972 votes.

Unfortunately, though, Shaun Scott in the 4th district lost to his opponent, Alex Pedersen, with 52.08% of the vote, or by 1,455 votes.

Tacoma

More good news out of Tacoma! Our endorsed candidate, Lisa Keating, for School District Position 1 beat her opponent Debbie Winskill with 51.46% of the vote, or 1,655 votes.

I guess you are wondering why I put in the exact vote differences between what won and what lost. Or at least I'm hoping you are. I added those because

you can't see the impact of voter turnout from percentages alone. Each vote counts. Statewide we had voter turnout of 1,993,220 people. That means 2,510,668 people did not vote, in a state with absentee voting, automatic voter registration, and same-day registration!

For example, in Pierce County our school board candidate won, but I-1000 lost by 23, 970 votes, and I-976 was approved by 63,849 votes. Turnout in Pierce County was 39.52% or about 206,512 voters of the registered 519,416. That's 312,904 people who did not vote.

I won't even get into the thousands of ballots that were rejected, many of them because people did not sign them.

Voter turnout is important. As educators we have the access, opportunity, and the trust to get people to vote. Get Out The Vote, or GOTV isn't just some catchy saying, it's encouraging people to participate in a basic process of democracy. Yes, I'm getting preachy, but our elections have real and direct consequences. We cannot go in to 2020 with weak participation. Every election is important, and local races are just as important as federal races.

We must actively get everyone to vote. Not only for our personal needs, but for our needs as a union. We are public employees; votes affect how and what we bargain. Our pay, our benefits, our work-life balance, our schedules, all of it.

We made big gains last session, and now we'll have to fight harder to keep those gains, never mind make improvements. All because our neighbors, friends, and family wanted to pay \$30 for car tabs.

Welcome Our New Staff Member



Carolyn Brotherton

Carolyn Brotherton is excited to join the AFT Washington team as the Government Relations Specialist and to build power for AFT Washington's members and working people across Washington. Carolyn earned a B.S. in chemistry from Yale University and a Ph.D. in chemistry from Harvard Uni-

versity. While working as a postdoctoral researcher in microbiology at the University of Washington, Carolyn helped form the UW Postdocs' union, UW Postdocs United, UAW 4121. As a member of the organizing and bargaining committees, she led successful collective actions and negotiated the UW postdocs' first contract. Inspired by these experiences, Carolyn shifted career gears from academia to the labor movement. In 2019, she interned for the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and became familiar with the state legislature's procedures and politics. Carolyn enjoys singing, making electronic music, and spending time with her husband David and her cat Freya in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. She lives in Seattle.

Presidents Message

(from pg. 3)

to achieve that solution. It all starts with talking to each other, worker-to-worker, and realizing that when things aren't right it's up to us to step up and figure it out. Together we have the potential of collective power to use for good. I urge every one of you to see your place in your union and step in to fill it. Good outcomes happen when we pull together for the common good.

**If you'd like to go green
and get *Union Spotlight*
electronically, please
contact
Christine Landon,
206-432-8075 or [clandon@
aftwa.org](mailto:clandon@aftwa.org).**

Gig Economy

(from pg. 5)

workers to make the choices around employment that best suit their situations. They can take gig jobs without worrying about benefits and what will happen if they get sick.

Fortunately, the gig economy caught on to what's going on and started working to protect nontraditional workers. The National Domestic Workers Alliance, which organizes and advocates for domestic workers, has been in the news this year; Senator Kamala Harris and Representative Pramila Jayapal introduced the National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights to Congress in July. Domestic workers were deliberately excluded from the National Labor Relations Act passed by Congress in 1935 and have no federally defined protections as a result. The bill is an effort to rectify that, with provisions including accrual of sick time,

written job descriptions, and the creation of a federal Wage and Standards Board tasked with creating future workplace protections for domestic workers, among other provisions.

Similarly, in Seattle the ABDA, a project of Teamsters Local 117, is working to protect drivers' rights and give them a collective voice. In recognition of the fact that this organizing effort is about the drivers, not about the employer, ABDA is explicitly not unionizing the drivers, as they don't want to join at this time. The union is responding creatively to new conditions in employment. Casa Latina is another organization that works with nonrepresented workers in this way by having day workers set wage standards and advocate for workers, among other efforts. These organizations, along with many others, are recognizing that contingent work-

ers deserve a living wage and basic job protections no matter their legal classification and are advocating and organizing for worker-friendly models.

Nontraditional work is often only popular with employers once employees do the math and realize what's missing from their compensation and on-the-job protections. Employees take that work because there are barriers to getting traditional jobs. But it is, unfortunately, here to stay, and the question before us now is how to engage with nontraditional work in a way that moves workers away from the precariat and makes it work for them as well as it does for the employer. Labor is stepping up to that task and helping the world of work change for the better, rather than insisting that change can be stopped. Change may or may not be inevitable, but it can be made to work for workers.

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Playlist

(from pg. 2)

I'm a bit of a "free spirit" (other people's words, not mine), and when I feel the need to move on, I must act on it. These decisions rarely have to do with anyone other than myself, and where I'm at in my life. I know we could accomplish more together, but for me, it's time to "wander over yonder".


 "Every step I take, every move I make
 Every single day, every time I pray
 I'll be missing you" Puff Daddy/Faith Evans, "I'll Be Missing You"


 "Remember me
 Oh, somewhere oh down the line
 You are gonna see this little heart of mine
 Is so large, so wonderful, so true" Otis Redding, "Remember Me"

Unity and solidarity isn't just my standard farewell. I'll see you down the road, as we continue the fight for workers' rights!
Sandra Toussaint, Free Spirit

AFT Washington is Moving!



In January, AFT Washington will be moving to our new location in Renton. The address is 604 Oakesdale Ave. SW, Suite B103, Renton WA 98057. We will be hosting our regular meetings there, including the ROC and Leg Affairs meetings. If you'd like to get involved in our legislative efforts – let us know if you're interested!