

UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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May 2020



Federation of Head Start Local 6153, marches on the boss to present their workplace health and safety petition.

Photo by Anna-Marie Magdalena

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(Re)Building A Better World

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, AFT Washington will maintain a page of information that you can find on our website under Resources. We have focused heavily on working conditions and the state and federal responses to the pandemic, with the goal of creating a thorough resource for locals to ensure workplace needs are met and protections are in place.

While it's difficult to predict the future, we are thinking about the future as we curate that resource, with the thought that we have an unexpected, almost unprecedented, opportunity to reshape the world we live in and make it more just and more equitable for all. The caveat "almost unprecedented" is due to the fact that we have seized such opportunities in the past, particularly with the New Deal after

the Great Depression. We did not seize the opportunity after the Great Recession in 2008, and the effects are still being felt in inequity and insecurity.

As the COVID-19 pandemic ends and the situation becomes more manageable, we as members of the labor movement are in a unique position. We will continue to identify opportunities and to bring them to your attention through the most expedient means possible; that will include elections, the upcoming legislative session as we strive to overturn decades of disinvestment in public education, and others. Watch for them, and stay informed. We have the best chance in decades to shift toward the world we want to see, but not if we aren't alert to the chances as they appear.

Call for Donations for the AFT Washington/BIL Scholarship

As a union that supports education professionals, a natural match is for AFT Washington to offer a scholarship. We have done that in partnership with our law firm Barnard Iglitzen & Lavitt LLP for 15 years. Our goal is to offer at least two \$1,500 scholarships to students attending an institution of higher education to earn a degree or credential at any level from associate to graduate. Last year, thanks to the generosity and enthusiasm of the attendees of the 2019 Convention, we were able to award four scholarships.

This year, our scholarship program is faced with the same uncertainties that we are all confronting. With so many workers suddenly unemployed, including some of our members, there's no lack of requests for donations. At the same time, we want to build for the future and so we're ask-

ing you to contribute to our scholarship fund. We need your support to continue our tradition of offering scholarships to members and their families this year.

Saving money on gas? Donate it! Saving money by not going out? Donate it! Saving money by eating in? Donate it! If you follow our Facebook page (you are following our Facebook page, @aftwa, right?) you've seen other ideas we've posted.

Members are the heart and soul of any union. **Help us support the future** – donate to the scholarship fund! You can donate by check to:

AFTWA/BIL Education Scholarship
604 Oakesdale Ave SW, Suite 103
Renton, WA 98057

or online at:

<https://actionnetwork.org/fundraising/aft-washingtonscbil-education-scholarship>

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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

Another world is possible. And it's a better world for working people. We are witnessing the inadequacy of capitalism, brought out into the open by COVID-19, but for many years we have seen the dismantling of the public good and the consequent suffering resulting from neoliberalism. Our profit-driven healthcare system is showing its true colors as hospitals and insurance companies have prioritized fattening shareholder and CEO wallets while fighting workers over staffing levels and fighting to block healthcare access to many Americans. Right now we still lack adequate COVID testing and 27 million people have no healthcare coverage. All that amidst the frequently touted claim that we have the "best healthcare system in the world!" Best at what – and for whom?

The phrase "another world is possible" keeps surfacing in my mind every time I catch the news. It comes from the World Social Forum, a gathering of 20,000 progressives intended to counter the World Economic Forum in 2001 and has been a theme ever since. At a time like this, it resonates more than ever. Fidel Castro referenced it in a speech at the International Conference on Financing Development in 2002, as did Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in her 2018 acceptance speech, and as did youth activists led by Greta Thunberg at COP25 in 2019. With the failure of capitalism in front of us, I say that another world isn't only possible, it's essential.

Clearly, the feelings of hope, of good will, of gratitude, of solidarity we have as we witness inspiring acts of healthcare aren't enough to realize another world. We need ongoing action from all of us.

Public education, like healthcare, has also been under the assault of capitalism for many years. Corporate tax breaks have expanded while school funding for basics like infrastructure and services for students with disabilities are anemic.

In higher education, the disinvestment of the last 30 years was exacerbated during the last recession; Washington was still 14.5% below pre-recession funding levels in 2018. Last year's legislative session did not substantially improve on that. This disinvestment has been subsidized by students paying more tuition and fees, adjunct faculty pay inequity, degradation of student services, and wage stagnation for nearly all employees in higher ed.

Before I bury you in hopelessness, though, let's consider the opportunity we are presented with right now. The progressive movement, including Labor, is well aware of the threat of disaster capitalism described by Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine*. Disaster capitalism goes beyond the kind of price gouging we've seen for hand sanitizer. It attempts systemic change in order to gain a foothold for future profits, such as is likely in the realm of online education in the current COVID-19 crisis.

In addition to raising questions about workload, intellectual property, cyber security, and more, the digital divide has been lit up brilliantly as educators at all levels struggle to provide continuity of learning under orders to stay home. Income and wealth disparity is glaring, as issues of housing, food, and job insecurity smack us in the

face. The limitations of a gig economy are illustrated by absence of a safety net for those workers, even when it exists for others.

Had we moved toward that other world in the last 20 years, we would be better equipped to mitigate the damage done by today's crisis. But just as some will use this crisis to further line their own pockets, we can use it to create a better world. One in which broadband is universal; where healthcare is available to all; where affordable housing meets our needs. One where classified workers have jobs that don't hurt; where all workers have retirement security and living-wage salaries.

As you might have heard, this is a big election year! We will be electing a president; we will also be electing the state House of Representatives, half of the state Senate, and several congresspeople. AFT Washington endorsed Bernie Sanders, and our task is to press on to ensure that the democratic platform includes the policies he (and Senator Warren) have demanded – and it's working. Joe Biden has released plans on student debt reduction, bankruptcy, and immigration that move the platform to reflect our interests. Our task is to get active and get out the vote.

We have a solid track record of big wins like paid family and medical leave, increasing the overtime threshold, and creating a long term care program. We and organizations like the Economic Opportunity Institute, PSARA, Washington CAN, and OneAmerica will continue investing in the human beings that make up our Washington State community. That relies on strong-willed, progressive candidates, many of whom are running for office this year.

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Update on the 2020 Legislative Session

By Carolyn Brotherton, Government Relations Specialist

The 2020 legislative session has wrapped up, but we're not ready to rest. In the coming weeks, we'll be in touch as we develop our legislative agenda through our Legislative Affairs Committee and organize around securing investments in our state's Community and Technical Colleges (CTC) through our [Re]Invest in Our Colleges (ROC) Organizing Committee. Reach out to me at cbrotherton@aftwa.org if you'd like to get involved in either (or both!) of these committees.

Advocacy for CTC Faculty Equity and Student Success

Thanks to our advocacy – from 1-on-1 meetings to hearings to Lobby Day – we got legislators' attention on the issue of contingent workers in higher education.

At the beginning of session, we introduced and advocated for a new bill, SB 6405. This bill addressed the fact that 70% of faculty in our state's CTCs are adjunct faculty, and many adjuncts lack resources and sufficient pay. At public hearings on our bill, AFT members provided compelling testimony about the challenges adjunct faculty face, the increasing workload for full-time faculty, how teaching conditions are learning conditions, and the more intangible impacts the current system has on student success.

While our bill didn't make it past the legislative cutoff, we worked with the bill's prime sponsor, Senator Stanford (LD-1), to write and pass a budget proviso. The proviso appropriated \$200,000 to colleges and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to develop plans, in collaboration with local union representatives, to move to a system with a higher ratio of full-time faculty, expand

opportunities for adjunct faculty, and establish pay equity standards. A goal of reaching a system-wide ratio of 60% full-time, tenure-track faculty was outlined in the proviso.

Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed our faculty proviso when he signed the budget on April 2. Our proviso was one of many budget items relating to public education the Governor cut to free spending for COVID-19-related costs to the state. However, it's important to remember that our advocacy this session was impactful, and that work doesn't get cancelled out by a veto from Governor Inslee.

Public Education Appropriations in 2020 Supplemental Budget

Another win from this session was also vetoed by Gov. Inslee. We fought for and won funding for all four days of required training for paraeducators. Last year's budget only funded two days. Gov. Inslee's veto of this year's additional funding means the previous funding levels will be carried forward, but not increased as we had advocated.

In addition to the paraeducators' training money, Gov. Inslee cut important appropriations for guidance counselors in high-poverty elementary schools and mental health counselors in public universities.

All in all, the Governor vetoed 170 different items representing \$240 million in spending in this biennium and about the same amount of spending in the next biennium.

Greater Protection for Public Sector Workers from HB 1888

HB 1888 was a priority for AFT Washington, the Washington State Labor Council, and public sector employee unions, whose members

have had their privacy and safety threatened by information requests over the past few years. The final bill, as it passed the legislature, exempts month and year of birth, photographs, and payroll deduction information of government employees from public disclosure. The bill permits exemptions for the news media to access to full dates of birth and photographs, and also requires government agencies to provide notice when a records request has been made for information in an employee's personnel, payroll, supervision, or training file.

Running Start in the Legislature

The legislature passed HB 2864, which establishes a Running Start Summer School Pilot Program. The SBCTC and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will choose three community colleges to take part in a summer school Running Start pilot program in the 2021 and 2022 summer academic terms. The bill requires that the pilot is tuition free.

Workforce Education Act Revenue is Bolstered

In 2019, the Workforce Education Investment Act (HB 2158) made long-term and serious investments in students and public higher education institutions, including making the Washington College Grant an entitlement program and putting millions of dollars into CTC faculty salaries and Guided Pathways. Due to increased demand for the WA College Grant, the dedicated fund for HB 2158 was facing hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue shortfall. A coalition of advocates convened by Senator Randall and Representative Hansen came together and passed SB 6492, which simplifies and increases the B&O taxes collected for the HB 2158's dedicated

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Community Coalition Rallies to Save Shoreline's Dental Hygiene Program

By Bob Downing, Union Organizing Representative



Shoreline Federation of Teachers Local 1950 worked with a powerful community coalition that included students, faculty, local dentists, and several legislators to achieve an important step in saving Shoreline Community College's Dental Hygiene program – the building housing the program will not be demolished this year and the program will continue to operate on campus for now.

For over 50 years, Shoreline Community College has trained thousands of dental hygiene assistants while providing an affordable dental clinic to low-income Shoreline residents. But as the school's administration planned to upgrade campus

facilities and cut costs at the same time, it looked like the Dental Hygiene program might be eliminated. As of January, the clinic's building was slated for demolition during summer 2020 and there was no real plan to keep the program going.

Local President Eric Hamako and faculty member Nikki Honey sprang into action, organizing meetings with concerned State Representatives Pollet and Ryu, and joined in with over 300 people attending the school's Board of Trustees meeting, where AFT Washington and WFSE union members delivered community and legislator letters showing the broad public support for the program.

Ultimately, the Board backed down and agreed to keep the program on campus for another year as it explores ways of continuing it. There is still much work to be done to save the program, but postponing the demolition was a huge step.

"The Dental Hygiene program changes students' lives," said Hamako, "providing a two-year path to family-wage careers that serve communities and employers. Community partners see the value of our programs and so does our union. Together, we were able to organize and advocate for the health of our community."

Legislative Session

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fund. The bill raises the B&O service rate from 1.5% to 1.75% for businesses earning more than \$1 million a year. It also subjects "advanced computing businesses" with income greater than \$25 billion, such as Amazon and Microsoft, to an additional 1.22% surcharge on top of the normal 1.5% B&O tax. However, the bill caps those large computing businesses' taxes to \$9 million a year.

Adjuncts Building Solidarity Conference Goes Virtual!

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

AFT Washington's Contingent Faculty Issues Committee is hosting our annual conference for contingent faculty, this year titled "Adjuncts Building Solidarity in the Time of COVID-19", online. The conference on May 16th will be a series of Zoom workshops. There will be a workshop on Organizing as Adjuncts during COVID-19 hosted by

Kent Hill of Shoreline Community College, and one on Labor in the Classroom: Nurturing Student Allies hosted by Tracy Lai of Seattle Central College.

Our Unemployment Clinic will also be part of the programming.

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/34qbRya> or contact Irene Morrison at imorrison@aftwa.org.

AFT Washington Classified Workers Are On The Front Lines

By Anna-Marie Magdalena, Union Organizing Representative

From Bothell to Hoquiam, our classified public school members are on the frontline caring for our students and providing for their families. They make and deliver food, maintain equipment, and keep students educated and engaged; they are truly the backbone of public education. March 16-20 was proclaimed as Classified School Employees Week by Governor Jay Inslee. The proclamation states: "These dedicated individuals, who are the backbone of our public education system, deserve recognition and thanks for the outstanding work they do to serve this state, their communities and the students enrolled in Washington's public schools, colleges and universities." Although this year's Classified Workers Conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the critical work these union members are doing continues. Here are some of their stories.



Phoebe Grigsby

Phoebe Grigsby, Bus Monitor, Tacoma Federation of Para-Educators Local 461, Tacoma Public Schools
"At 8 AM every morning my husband, a custodian with the school district,

and I go out to start work. We start setting up with the lunch ladies and put out tables and all the carts for the food for the kids. Every morning we load up the food and homework packets onto the bus and distribute them to the students who don't have transportation to the school. I knocked on every door that I could to wake them up and get them fed, especially on Friday, when we have double the food orders to deliver so they have something to eat over the weekend. I do the work for the kids and feel good doing this work because I want to do

more than sit at home. I am trying to work as many locations as possible and am always thinking about what else I can do. I see the kids listening for the bus horns and they are excited to see us show up. I don't know what they go through every day, but taking away school from them is a big deal. I want to make it fun and exciting for them."



Mary Ege

Mary Ege, Kitchen Manager, United Classified Workers Union Local 4795, Northshore School District
"I've been with the school district for eight years and my job is to feed

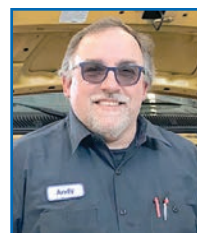
the kids during lunch. Now it is different circumstances, but my job is the same, feed the kids because the need is still out there. If the governor says we still need to feed the children, then that's what I am going to do. Every day I see the same students coming in and picking up food. The food we are serving them is what they usually get and it gives them a little bit more normalcy. Seeing their expressions and making them feel good makes me feel good and then the kids are less scared. As adults, we are scared too, but the kids don't understand what's going on. It's hard on them because their parents are stressed. The food we serve gives them comfort and it makes them feel better."



Angie Huizar

Angie Huizar, Teacher Assistant/Health Advocate, Federation of Head Start Employees Local 6153, Thurston and Grays Harbor Counties
"Head Start is a program for low income

and foster families with preschool children age three to five. When my kids were young they were going to Head Start and their teacher noticed that I was really good with the kids and asked me to become a substitute. I have always liked working with kids. I started working at Head Start because the hours fit my schedule as a parent. A lot of the families we serve are facing hardships right now. I work at the Yelm center and we are finding resources for families and putting packages together and the bus drivers are doing food delivery. I deliver materials to the families on my teaching team and go to the families' houses. We are working on name puzzles, PlayDoh, and beading patterns. We delivered seeds and potting soil so that they can start growing plants. We've sent out booklets with learning activities. The families are excited for the activities and the support."



Andy Guertin

Andy Guertin, Mechanic, AFT Renton Local 6367, Renton School District
"As a school district mechanic, I keep the trucks, vans, lawnmowers, and school busses running. After my really nice drive to work,

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Voting Rights and Census Counts are Civil Rights

By Tracy Lai, Vice President for Human Rights

On January 17-19, 2020, AFL-CIO held its Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Civil and Human Rights Conference with the theme: Give Us the Ballot – Political Boot Camp! Julia Barcott (WSNA) and I attended as members of national AFT's Civil and Human Rights Committee. Looking back — pre-Pandemic — now, more than ever, the opening plenary on a Voting Rights Mandate seems prescient. How can we continue to register more voters and do the necessary voter education and mobilization under "Stay at Home" policies! Several themes were especially meaningful to us: the 2020 Census will shape the next decade in terms of political representation (state and local redistricting), as well as distribution of nearly \$1 trillion in federal funds. NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) states, "the Census is how we make sure democracy works."

According to a research report by the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, "if you're not counted, you're not seen." Census Hard To Count Map 2020 is a useful tool to visualize the progress in Census counts in your area. Other resources include Census Innovation Lab and Complete Count Committees. The U.S. Census Bureau announced its intent to complete the Census by August 14 and deliver its report to the president by December 31, 2020. An inspiring evening was held at the National Museum of African American History and Culture with the co-authors of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Politics*: Donna Brazile, Yolanda Caraway, Leah Daughtry and Minyon Moore. The book title is inspired by Ntozake Shange's ground-breaking play, "for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf." These

Colored Girls, as the authors call themselves, shared their 30+ years of political involvement and challenged the audience to step up and continue the struggle for justice and political power. Two other publications help map the organizing road ahead: *One Nation Built on the Strength of Immigrants* by the One Nation Commission (October 2019) and *Untapped Power, the Strength of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Working People* by the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (November 2019). Now more than ever, the leadership of the labor movement is essential to protect the rights of working people and communities of color. This gathering of more than 400 trade unionists was one of the last in-person gatherings prior to the pandemic. The knowledge, tools, and inspiration will help us all in the months ahead.

President's Column

(from pg. 3)

Our endorsement process is under way and we will wrap that up in early June. Then you'll be hearing from us as we knock on doors, make phone calls, and send texts in support of the candidates that will help us make that better world possible.

Our Committee on Political Education, Legislative Affairs Committee, and [Re]Invest in Our Colleges (ROC) organizing committee are active - you can request to join by contacting your local president or Christine Landon at clandon@aftwa.org.

The last 3 years of education and labor degradation, and the current pandemic make abundantly clear the essential role that we can, and must, play in shaping our future – join us in building the better world that truly is possible.

Front Lines

(from pg. 6)

because no one else is out here, I sanitize all the touch surfaces though out the whole shop – doorknobs, bathrooms, everything. Then I get suited up to start working on vehicles. Our team of six workers do a really good job of keeping our social distancing. We make sure we are in a large enough area. We talk about what we are doing outside of work because it is stressful. We make sure we are taking care of ourselves

so we don't bring the virus inside. We are always on top of the news and what is going on with the Washington State school districts and making sure we are complying with all the recommendations. There is a lot of uncertainty of what we all face every day. Every one of us is at least a little nervous being out and away from our home. We are all choosing to be here and do this important work. When it's

time for us to stay home, we will. I've been with the district for four and half years. I worked for 18 years at the Kenworth plant across the street here in Renton. I decided to work for the school district because I have a special needs grandkid I care for and it fits with my schedule. My favorite thing about my job is serving my coworkers – from the groundskeepers to the bus drivers. I do this work to serve them."

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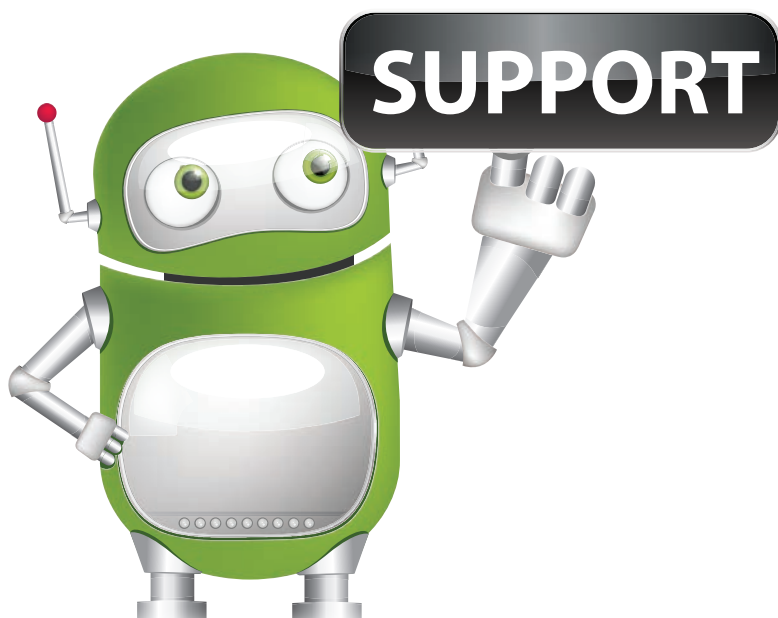
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AFT Announces New Trauma Benefit for Members

On April 1, AFT introduced a new benefit: trauma counseling. It will be available to AFT members, free of charge, anywhere in the United States at any time in the one-year aftermath of a traumatic incident. There is also a grief counseling benefit available to members and their families for COVID-19-related deaths.

To learn more, please visit <https://www.aft.org/benefits/trauma>



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