



# UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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October, 2017



**AFT Washington attended a rally, along with 250 people, to show support the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program following President Trump’s announcement to end DACA**

*Photo by Richard Burton*

## Inside

**2017-18 Education Scholarships Awarded .....2**

**Important Election Dates .....2**

**President’s Column.....3**

**Rise of the Right .....4**

**Family Leave Article.....4**

**Student Debt Clinics .....5**

**Corrections Ed.....6**

**Powerful Locals Make Progress ....6**

**In Memoriam.....7**

**New Faculty Institute .....7**

# 2017-18 Education Scholarships Awarded

By Christine Landon, Data Manager and Communications Assistant

Two aspiring college-bound students will receive newly-increased \$1,500 AFT Washington/Schwerin Campbell Barnard Iglitzin & Lavitt scholarships in support of their higher education goals this year. Our congratulations to:

**Damita Gomez**, daughter of incoming secretary-treasurer **Lexine Torres** of Bates Technical College Federation of Teachers Local 4184. Damita plans to undertake a bioengineering degree at the University of Washington; and

**Joseph Moore**, son of UW English Language Faculty Local 6486 founding president **Richard Moore** and **Louise Spiegler**, membership chair of Cascadia Community College Federation of Teachers Local 6191. Joseph enters the theatre program at Western Washington University this fall.

Our deepest thanks to all members and locals who donated to support this year's scholarships, and particularly to our friends and allies at Schwerin Campbell Barnard Iglitzin & Lavitt, LLC.

## AFT Washington Executive Board

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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 in early childhood education, K-12, and higher education in Washington State and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which represents 1.6 million members nationwide.

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## IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES

**OCT. 9**

Last day for online and mail-in registration

**OCT. 18**

General Election Ballots mailed to homes

**OCT. 30**

Last Day for in-person registration

**NOV. 7**

**General Election!**

Ballots must be postmarked or dropped off in a drop box

**by 8 PM**

For the locations of Drop Boxes, go to <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/dropbox.aspx>





Karen Strickland

## President's Column

# Upcoming Court Case Seeks to Eliminate Fair Share

A union is built on the notion of solidarity, and it's through this solidarity that we have made many improvements for workers. In addition to higher wages, faster progress on racial and gender-wage equity, better benefits, and safer workplaces, the Labor Movement in Washington recently achieved a Family Leave Law, the best in the country (see article on pg. 4)! This means that starting in 2020 new parents or workers needing to take medical leave will be able to do so AND have an income. These are the very achievements the 1% would like to strip away.

The labor movement has been under attack for decades with a well-funded, strategic, and coordinated assault. A key element of this attack is happening now with the looming U.S. Supreme Court Case Janus v. AFSCME. What this case will do, assuming the court rules against the unions, is eliminate fair-share fees for people who opt not to join the union.

I like treating my friends to dinner on occasion, or springing for their double-double, grande, mocha frappuccino. I like doing that when it's my choice to do it. I'm not so keen on "free-loaders" though, especially in our union whose power depends on workers raising our collective voice in unity.

These workers will continue to reap the benefits of representation, but they will,

as in my coffee example above, force us to pay for it. Folks who choose not to become members won't contribute a dime and, as we all know, money is an essential ingredient in winning gains!

This lawsuit is just one tactic among many designed to silence the voices of working people – in our workplaces, in the State Legislature, and in Congress. The villains are obscenely wealthy people like the Koch brothers and their puppets like Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, the architect of Act 10 which eliminated collective bargaining rights for our AFT families and other public sector workers. Here in Washington, the Freedom Foundation (funded by the same bad actors) are focusing their energy on disorganizing public sector workers and eliminating workplace rights at city and county levels.

We need not sit idly by, passively waiting for the Supreme Court's decision, which we are expecting in Spring 2018. We have an antidote to the poison being spread by the right wing's campaign to mute our voice.

**We are the antidote.** We have enormous power should we choose to wield it.

What does it mean, exactly, to activate this power? It means **we engage ALL of our members** and those who are not yet members! We listen to their concerns and interests, we invite them into the life of the union, we educate them so they understand how each person directly impacts our collective ability to win.

In 2015 the AFT Washington Executive Board passed a resolution calling for us to talk to every single member, to have

70% of members participate in a union event, and 10% become activists in the union. Staff and leadership have been working toward these goals, but if we are to successfully defend ourselves against the losses caused by the Janus case, we need you! **We need you to:**

- Participate in a protest of the policies promoted by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos on **October 13th in Bellevue, 5:00 p.m.** at the Bellevue Hyatt - watch for details on our Facebook page and website!
- Set a goal of talking to five of your co-workers by the end of October. If talking to a member, ask them to sign a recommitment card; if they aren't a member, ask them to join! (Both forms are available from us or your local leadership.)
- Attend your local membership meeting.
- Become a worksite representative.

The damage the Janus case will do to the ability of workers to have a say in their working conditions cannot be overstated. **It is time for us to Stand Together**, and I mean ALL of us, whether bus driver, faculty member, events coordinator, nutrition services worker, truck driver, student success navigator, or custodian.

When AFT Washington members stand together, we strengthen our community of 6500 education employees, and we become part of a community of 450,000 working people in Washington State - and that translates to power. With that power, we can continue improving our work lives and communities, rather than going backwards in time. I urge you to actively join us in this vital effort!

# Rise in Hate Demonstrations Prevalent on Campuses

By Dan Troccoli, AFT Project Organizer

Many of us looked on in horror at the violence on display at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville this August. While it happened clear across the country, it hit particularly close to home for many in higher education here in Washington.

We have had our own troubles with fascist and racist groups demonstrating on our campuses this year. From the shooting at the UW during the **Milo Yiannopoulos** event in January to the shutting down of The Evergreen College because of right wing threats received following protests, we have seen a sharp rise in hate speech and hate crimes in the region and across the country. And we've seen the violence beyond our campuses as well, whether in the form of various demonstrations in Seattle or the shooting of a Sikh man in his own driveway earlier this March.

The rise of the right wing this year, from alt-right to neo-nazis, has been

more than alarming. Known fascist sympathizers, such as **Steve Bannon** and **Richard Spencer**, were staff in the White House until recently, and in the case of Spencer, have led right-wing rallies complete with torches.

The fascists' growth must be seen in a larger context of the rise of a right wing, anti-union and anti-choice, around which groups have made headway on those issues for decades. The neo-liberal project of slashing the social safety net and promoting free market policies on these same social services has eroded a sense of supporting the public good, and it is in this context that the racism of the right wing has arisen. Indeed, the anti-union Freedom Foundation gets substantial financial donations from the Bradley Foundation which has funded right-wing theorists such as **Charles Murray**, author of the notorious [The Bell Curve](#).

The right wing has targeted higher education as an arena that they believe

the left wing has taken over, so it is likely that we will see more requests for events on our campuses. As one of the main organizations of a collective voice on college campuses, AFT Washington has a place and a responsibility to take time to assess as well as confront an ideology that seeks to scapegoat the most vulnerable among us and play a divisive role in our communities. We must rise to meet this role, not only to oppose hate and fear, but also to preserve our union and the vital role it plays in being a bulwark against the individualistic ideology of the free market that would leave so many of us out of any future prosperity.

AFT national has taken this threat very seriously and is already putting resources together for members that includes step-by-step guidance on organizing protests, advice on inclusion and risks, and additional resources at [http://allin.rtp.aft.org/sites/default/files/article\\_pdf\\_files/2017-08/fighting\\_white\\_nationalism\\_on\\_campus\\_final.pdf](http://allin.rtp.aft.org/sites/default/files/article_pdf_files/2017-08/fighting_white_nationalism_on_campus_final.pdf).

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## New Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act Will Benefit Members

By Bernal Baca, Lobbyist

After many years of advocacy by unions in our state, the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Act (SSB 5975), prime sponsored by Senator Fain (R-Auburn), was passed and enacted into legislation on June 30, 2017, during the Third Special Session.

This Act not only impacts all AFT Washington members, but also impacts all employees in the public and private sector except for very small businesses and self-employed

individuals. This law supersedes any existing law impacting medical leave and insurance. It is scheduled for implementation in January 1, 2020.

Here are some key points of the new law:

- Purposes of leave: SB 5975 creates and implements paid family and medical leave program funded by premiums paid by employers and employees and administered by the Employment Security Department (ESD). This paid leave may be used for bonding with a child, because of

serious health condition or for military exigency.

- Coverage: Employees (public and private sector) are eligible for these paid family and medical leave benefits after working 820 hours during the qualifying period. To receive benefits, an employee must file a claim, notify the employer, and consent to disclosure of certain information. All working people, except those employed by the U.S. Government, are included. Tribes, those who are self-employed, and independent contractors may opt in.

(Continued on pg. 5)

# Student Debt Clinics Available for Your Local

By Richard Burton, AFT Washington Internal Organizer

In August, I was honored to be part of three meetings of the AFT Seattle Professional Staff Local 6550 at the South, North, and Central Seattle campuses. Local 6550 president **Bob Sullivan** had asked me to come and talk about two key federal programs designed to address the problem of student loan debt.

More than 44 million people in the United States are carrying debt from student loans worth \$1.3 trillion, an average of more than \$30,000 per borrower. The weight of this debt is having a massive impact on our personal and national economic well-being. People are putting off buying a home or starting a family, and money they could be spending on goods and services at local small businesses that would spur economic growth is instead going to service their debt.

The good news is that the federal

government has free programs available that can help many student loan borrowers lower their monthly payments and, in some cases, even have their debt forgiven. These two programs are income-driven student loan repayment programs and Public Service Loan Forgiveness. The former program features various loan repayment plans that allow borrowers to pay considerably less per month than is typically paid in a standard repayment plan. The latter program is available for those who work in public service (such as public education) and, if qualified, the borrower can have the entire balance of any remaining loan debt forgiven.

At several of these workshops, members asked about whether moving to an income-driven repayment plan might affect a borrower's credit score. The answer is that this is highly unlikely except

under the circumstance that a given borrower is now — under one of these plans — able to make on-time payments. This would improve the credit score. Also, the term “federal program” prompted many to ask how likely these things are to remain in place, given the current administration in Washington, D.C. While the Trump/Devos administration has proposed significant changes, it will literally take an act of Congress for these changes to go through — a feat which has been surprisingly difficult in the last six months. And even then, any changes will apply only to loans originated on or after July 1, 2018.

If you would like to learn more about either of these two programs, or would like to schedule a Student Debt Clinic for the members of your local, please contact **Richard Burton** at [rburton@aftwa.org](mailto:rburton@aftwa.org).

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## FMLA Act Benefit

(from pg. 4)

- **Benefits:** This will be determined by the percentage of the individual's wages, depending on the individual's income. All benefits begin January 1, 2020, and individuals with lower wages will receive up to 90% of their wages. The maximum duration of benefits in a year is 12 times the typical workweek hours (i.e., 12 weeks). The benefit amount is a percentage of the individual's average weekly wage during the highest quarters of the qualifying period with a maximum amount of \$1,000 per week and a minimum amount of \$100 per week.
- **Funding:** The payroll premium of

0.4% of wages beginning Jan. 1, 2019, with annual adjustments. Employees pay up to 63% and employers pay at least 37% of the premiums. Employers may pay the employee share if they desire.

- **Duration of benefits:** There will be 12 weeks each of family and medical benefits with a combined limit of 16 weeks, with 2 additional weeks for a serious health condition related to a pregnancy. No benefits are payable for a seven-day waiting period, except for leave for birth or placement of a child. Employers may allow an employee to use accrued vacation, sick, or other paid time off, or receive

the benefits under the program.

- **Job protection:** This legislation will follow the employee as long as they work for an employer with 50 or more employees and worked for at least 12 months and at least 1250 hours in the last 12 months for that employer.

The Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) will likely adopt implementing rules (WACs). We will report on this as we get more information.

For questions, contact Bernal Baca, AFT Washington Lobbyist, at [bbaca@aftwa.org](mailto:bbaca@aftwa.org) or 206-432-8086.

# Corrections Education: Changing Laws and Changing Lives

By Theodora Doromal-Fletcher, Faculty, Edmonds Community College Developmental Education Faculty at Monroe Correctional Complex and Richard Burton, AFT Washington Staff

According to a September 2013 report from the Rand Corporation<sup>1</sup>, when incarcerated individuals receive education while in prison they had “43% lower odds of recidivating” and “13% higher odds of obtaining employment” once released. This set of facts about the importance of public education for those serving time in our state is perhaps not “news” for most AFT Washington members. But when this information is coupled with the fact that our state’s prison population has more than doubled from 1996 to today — from 8,000 to about 17,000 — it’s profoundly important.

It was in the mid-’90s, in fact, that an important part of our state’s higher education programs for inmates in correctional facilities changed. Prior to 1995, the state’s Department of Corrections could provide funding for associate and baccalaureate degrees for inmates. But this rehabilitative concept of tax-dollars being spent to educate prisoners fell out of political favor in the ’90s, and such education funding was a casualty of this conservative trend. That is, until this past 2017 state legislative session.

This past spring, despite less than fully satisfactory results on other important priorities for public education and AFT Washington’s legislative agenda, Olympia lawmakers passed Substitute Senate Bill 5069<sup>2</sup>. For the first time since

1995, inmates can now earn Associate Degrees through state-funded education programs. Although the new law still leaves us with a long way to go (e.g., it does not provide additional funding), it reestablished the ability of inmates to access state-funded postsecondary education programs.

In addition to the improvement this new law constitutes for inmates, it also represents a change for the educators who teach in correctional facilities. Approximately 215 two-year college faculty from eight colleges around the state teach in these and many other corrections education programs, such as GED, ESL, computer literacy, workforce education, and life skills programs. The important work of these faculty, like the lives of the students they serve, all-too-often goes unnoticed. Such faculty often face challenges due to the intense emphasis on lock and key, safety and security, and the lack of access to, or ability to use resources (even yellow highlighters are now allowed). For example, besides the extra time needed to get through extensive security checks entering and exiting their workplace, there’s often little flexibility for short discussion after class, even if only a few extra minutes. Following a pattern found in non-prison faculty, the number of contact hours for a full-time corrections faculty member varies depending on whether they are teaching in academic or prof-tech programs, but

the difference is that full-time corrections faculty in academic programs have six contact hours per day, and their full-time prof-tech faculty colleagues have eight or more. Full-time corrections faculty teach six hours per day (in contrast to the three hours of class-time that many non-prison full-time college faculty teach). Most, if not all of them, teach without office hours. Moreover, classes can be cancelled with little or no notice. Such faculty also often lack the job security of their non-prison full-time colleagues, since their contracts are renewed annually, and they can be terminated with little or no notice. Finally, of course, such faculty often must work with staff and faculty from their main college campus – not to mention college and prison administrators – who don’t understand or appreciate the nature of their work.

Fortunately, though, with the recent legislative change, these hard-working faculty have a little more support and recognition, and the thousands of inmates in our state’s prisons have improved chances of redirecting their lives.

<sup>1</sup>Evaluating the Effectiveness of Corrections Education  
[https://www.bja.gov/publications/rand\\_correctional-education-meta-analysis.pdf](https://www.bja.gov/publications/rand_correctional-education-meta-analysis.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>SSB 5069: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5069&Year=2017>

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## Powerful Locals Make Progress

While grievances and contract bargaining are part of union business, they must go hand-in-hand with true membership engagement

and mobilization in order to achieve power to effect real change and make a difference at our workplaces and in our communities.

Last year, the state federation with the participation of 10 locals, embarked on a path to identify goals and develop clear, strategic plans to make their locals more

*(Continued on pg. 8)*



Robert Keyes Smith

# In Memoriam

## First President of Local 1485: R.K. Smith

By Roger Carlstrom, Charter Member of Local 8045R and former editor of the chapter's Retiree Newsletter

On July 28, 2017, Robert Keyes Smith died at the Fieldstone Memory Care facility in Yakima from the effects of Alzheimer's disease. He was 90 years old at the time of his death.

R.K. served as president of the Washington State Federation of Teachers (WSFT) from 1965 through 1967. He succeeded Florence Justin of Bremerton in that position and was himself succeeded by Ross K. Rieder, who served as president from 1967 until 1975.

R.K. helped form the Yakima Valley Col-

lege Federation of Teachers Local 1485, which was chartered by the American Federation of Teachers in 1963. He served as president of the local and received the local's Life Time Achievement and Service Award in 1993.

He was hired by Yakima Valley College in 1960 to teach art, to head up the Art Department, and to serve as director of the Larson Gallery on campus. He retired in 1983.

R.K. was a charter member of the WFT (Washington Federation of Teachers) Retiree Chapter (now AFT Washington

Retiree Chapter), which held its first meeting at SeaTac on May 2, 2003. At that meeting, he appeared with fellow charter members and past presidents of WSFT/WFT, Ross Rieder, Al Brisbois, and Susan Levy. At the time, Sandra Schroeder was president of WFT. (She subsequently retired and became a member of the chapter as well.) On December 1, 2006, R.K. received from the chapter an Award for Service in honor of his outstanding contribution to his union and his community.

He is survived by his wife, Kay, and children Brett Smith and Renee Rooney.



## State Board's New Faculty Institute

Union Members and Staff Meet and Greet New Faculty and Talk About the Tenure Process

### Staffing the recruitment table

*Pictured from left:* James Peyton, Highline Community College (WEA) faculty union president; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, WEA Lobbyist; Sandra Toussaint, AFT Washington Political Organizer; Annamary Fitzgerald, South Puget Sound Community College Federation of Teachers faculty union president; and Simone Terrell, Renton Technical College Federation of Teachers local union president.

(Continued on pg. 8)

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## Powerful Locals

(from pg. 6)

powerful. Called the Powerful Locals Program, the goal entails developing a member-centered local where the members' voices are heard and their infrastructure is strengthened.

These locals have made a lot of progress. The focus ranged from improving their membership database, reaching out to new employees and holding orientations, organizing substitutes, creating new board positions, and increasing visibility.

According to Marc Hobbs, a local board member of Pierce College Federation of Teachers Local 4821, their local has taken major steps toward improving member engagement through their overall plan. They created new positions on their executive board to, in the long-term, foster an environment of recruitment, organizing, and stewardship.

Since over 70 percent of their faculty workforce is adjunct faculty, and they do not have agency fee, the local is also focusing on reaching out to adjuncts to ask them to join. Their three new "Engagement Coordinators" will foster connections between them and the local union.

Now in its third year overall, the 10 Powerful Locals will reconvene at a retreat on **November 4 and 5**, and five more locals will be invited to participate in the program. Those who participate will take their plans back to their locals to share with and engage members.

Real power is achieved by demonstrating the local's strength in its efforts to mobilize its members, partnerships with the community on issues of common concern, and a strong infrastructure.

## New Faculty

(from pg. 7)



*Photos by Richard Burton*

### **Giving a presentation on the tenure process to new faculty**

*Pictured from left:* Bob Mohrbacher, Administrative President of Centralia College; Vik Bahl, faculty member at Green River Community College Federation of Teachers Local 2195; David Ortiz, faculty member at Cascadia Community College Federation of Teachers Local 6191; and Tracy Lai, faculty member at AFT Seattle Community College Local 1789 and AFT Washington Vice President for Human Rights