

UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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June, 2021



Representative Jayapal spoke of the challenges education workers have faced and overcome in her keynote at the 2021 AFT Convention.

Photo by Cortney Marabetta

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Adjuncts Rising!

By Kent Hill, SCCFT 3rd Vice President for Associate Faculty & Enrie Morrison, Union Organizing Representative

A small but powerful group of about 40 contingent faculty met in late April for our 2021 Adjuncts Building Community Conference. 15 of our higher ed faculty locals in both AFT Washington and Washington Education Association were represented. This is promising, especially in light of how much COVID has devastated our workforce.

The Communities for Our Colleges Coalition provided the keynote address; speakers Fernando Mejia-Ledesma and a contingent of Student Fellows, including Isaac Tchao, Mya Leonhard, Lizbeth Rivera-Estrada, and Nyla Coleman joined us to share how they successfully advocated for HB 5194. This bill originally contained language around pay parity for adjuncts, but was pared down as it made its way through the legislature to funding 200 new full-time faculty positions, in an effort to begin to flip the 70:30 ratio of Part-Time to Full-Time Tenure-Track faculty. Even in its reduced form, this bill represents a major investment in CTCs and is a huge win! It would not have gotten as far as it did without the tireless work of the coalition and the hundreds of AFT Washington members who came out to support it. The key difference in this win was that we worked in coalition with

students; legislators listen to students in a way they don't always to faculty. Our working conditions are their learning conditions; we are in this together, and should be fighting for the issues important to them.

Imagine what we could accomplish if more adjuncts came out in support of a bill for pay parity and job security in the next biennium. We could get a reinvestment in our colleges that improved the quality of the education our students receive, in part by ending the inequitable conditions that contingent faculty endure. That's where YOU come in. The Contingent Faculty Issues Committee has a blueprint for starting committees on each campus, with a representative attending the monthly CFIC meetings. An organized adjunct committee on your campus could provide social activities as well as a much-needed space to share tips for surviving on your campus, as well as engaging adjuncts in supporting legislative priorities.

To learn more about starting an adjunct committee on your campus, or get involved in one that already exists, message Kent Hill, Third VP for Shoreline Community College Federation of Teachers & CFIC member at hill.kent@gmail.com.

Dr. Yilin Sun Recognized by State Department

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

Dr. Yilin Sun, faculty at South Seattle College, has been recognized with the 30@30 Award, given by the US Department of State for her lifetime commitment to building English teaching capacity abroad and bolstering mutual understanding through English language education. The award is in honor of the English Language Specialist Program,

and given to English Language Specialists who have made a lasting impact on both the program itself and on the TESOL field.

For more details, look at <https://elprograms.org/30th-anniversary/30at30/>.

Congratulations to Dr. Sun!

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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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President's Column

Spotlight, Summer 2021



Karen Strickland

A healthy partnership between the local and the state federation is foundational to the power of our union, and essential for acting powerfully.

The foundation for that fight is built with trainings, on topics ranging from unemployment, worksite representation, contract enforcement, financial management, communications, talking to legislators and more; through partnering, as when staff help with a ULP or with a member engagement campaign; through bringing you together at events like Powerful Locals (check the back page for a save the date!) to communicate as locals with a common language and common needs. All of this means that when you are faced with threats or opportunities at your job and in your community, you are prepared to take action. This work will be a priority for us in the coming year.

Another priority is continuing to build on our coalition work. Our 2019 resolution calling for exploration of a student membership program put us on a trajectory that led to our partnership with the Alliance for a Just Society. From there the Communities for Our Colleges Coalition was born, launching just as the shutdown occurred last year. Fernando Mejia-Ledesma, coalition director, has done extraordinary work building the coalition, developing young leaders, and steering the coalition to a remarkable legislative win!

Building an effective coalition takes a substantial investment of resources – energy, money, time – to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, navigate the range of interests among the group, steer them toward a set of coherent, equitable, and righteous policies, and then convince a legislature, that tried to tamp down expectations and get us to share their austerity mindset, to pass the legislation! Furthermore, working genuinely in coalition requires the development of trust, a respect for all voices, and that we seek the common ground and develop win-win-win solutions.

Collectively, we made this investment – check out the legislative update on page 4 to find out what the result was, but I'll just say – the bill passed!

Sometimes coalition work has a more narrow focus, as was the case with the union transportation coalition and the SEBB healthcare coalition. These coalitions addressed funding issues and ensured PreK-12 members had healthcare that would work for them, and they allowed us to build the kind of relationships with labor allies that will translate to increasing our power in bargaining and in legislative advocacy.

The proof is in the pudding. Coalition work has been key to getting what our members want and need and I want for us to deepen and broaden our coalition work with community groups, families, and students in order to address some of the long-standing, stubborn challenges our constituencies face – classified staff and Head Start workers in particular. I believe that a good coalition can make the most stubborn challenge give way. I've said it before:

the power of the movement lives within the people, and the power of the people lives within our relationships with one another. Our success with these coalitions makes the truth of this quote more salient than ever.

Critical to ensuring the rights of all of our members are upheld is fulfillment of Resolution 2020-04, which calls for us to become an anti-racist, unified and inclusive union. The Resolutions Report from the convention has been posted on our website; you can see the work we've been doing to fulfill this priority, ranging from legislative advocacy to evaluation of union practices to raising awareness and encouraging action to disrupt and end systemic and individual racism. The work is ongoing and will evolve over time – we are committed to staying the course and achieving human rights and equality for all.

Additionally, our executive board just approved a special committee - the Institutional Equity and Accountability Alliance. (Check out the writeup on page 6 for more information!) I invite you to contact James To (jto@aftwa.org) if you'd like to add your voice to this work. We have also launched a project that will result in a library of anti-racist collective bargaining language, something our leaders have requested. Core to this project is reaching out to our BIPOC members who are most directly impacted by systemic racism and implicit bias to identify problematic areas and develop anti-racist language. The project also includes support to locals to integrate anti-racist language into their bargaining priorities once we've developed the library. This language will proactively advance justice and equity, creating stronger

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Big Wins in the 2021 Legislative Session

By Carolyn Brotherton, Government Relations Specialist

This year raised challenges in all areas of society, and our legislative advocacy was not immune. Working with our AFT Washington Legislative Affairs committee, the [Re]invest in Our Colleges (ROC) committee, and in strong coalition with Communities for our Colleges, AFT Washington took a different approach to legislative work than many other advocates. Instead of merely fending off cuts, we called for a bold, positive agenda with demands for investment, particularly in students and communities of color and low-income backgrounds.

If you've been following *The Legisletter* this past legislative session, you may already know that our approach was successful. We have a lot of wins to celebrate!

Progressive Revenue

After a decade of talk about a tax on profits from the sale of stocks and bonds, also known as a capital gains tax, the legislature finally did it! The legislature passed Senate Bill 5096 with a slim majority enabled by key electoral victories won by progressive democrats in 2020. SB 5096 will enact a 7% tax on capital gains that exceed \$250,000 per year, with exemptions for capital gains from selling real estate and cashing out retirement accounts. The half a billion dollars raised by this tax will go toward early learning and other education programs.

Washington's upside-down tax code was brought slightly more right-side-up by the passage of HB 1297, an expanded and more inclusive Working Families Tax Credit (a policy originally passed in 2008). HB 1297 will send a tax rebate to working people, a minimum of \$300 and up to \$1200. Importantly, this tax

break for low-income Washingtonians was funded in the budget (more than a decade after the policy was first passed).

Investments in K-12 and Early Learning

There is one billion in new state dollars in the budget going toward K-12 schools, including \$300 million to complement the federal dollars coming in from the recent stimulus packages. There is \$14 million to support student nutrition, including money to fund a bill, HB 1342, that eliminates co-pays for free-and-reduced-price meals. The Paraeducators' professional development days are fully funded for four days per biennium. A bill to expand allowable uses of transportation dollars during school shutdowns, SB 5128, also passed. This will help school districts support transportation workers and deliver services to students in any future remote or hybrid school situation.

Finally, the Fair Start for Kids Act, SB 5237, also passed! This is a big investment into childcare by the state. This bill will increase providers' compensation, increase subsidies for childcare for more working families, and expand eligibility for accessing working connections childcare, including for student-parents.

Communities For Our Colleges Coalition: Powerful Advocacy and Passage of the Our Colleges, Our Future Act

One of the most inspiring aspects of this legislative session was the work AFT Washington members did as part of the Communities for our Colleges coalition. This coalition began in early 2020 and is led by students of color, many of whom are current community college students.

The coalition developed policy that became SB 5194, the Our Colleges, Our Future Act.

The coalition engaged in powerful advocacy during the session, and continually centered student voices with an eye toward leadership development. The final bill as passed by the legislature will invest in a set of policies aimed at improving racial equity and economic justice within the CTCs, including: investing in 200 new full-time, tenure track faculty positions across the system in the next two years, establishing a mental health counseling pilot program to expand on-campus services, additional investments (\$15 million) to fully implement guided pathways at each college, calling for statewide and college-by-college diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plans, including plans to diversify the faculty workforce to better reflect the student body, and expansion of state college aid to more students by modification of the residency requirements (this will be especially helpful to many undocumented students). The next steps for this work are to continue to engage in the coalition and be at the table for implementation of this bill both at the state and local levels.

Investments In Public Education Are Continued

The legislature fully funded the cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for K-12 and higher education workers. While there was a threat early in the session of the Initiative 732 COLA not being funded, and even a serious proposal for mandatory furlough days, through our strong advocacy and an improving economic outlook, these cuts did not come to pass. The legislature also continued to fund salary increases for

(Continued on pg. 6)

Biden's First 100 Days

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

President Biden has moved swiftly during his first 100 days in office, taking steps to get the pandemic under control and bring real relief to Americans, who spent the majority of 2020 being served poorly by political leaders in many states and in the federal government. There was a lot to do! The work isn't done, but the first 100 days of a presidency gives us a good sense of how a president means to conduct their administration, and that makes it worth looking over in some detail.

In terms of legislation, the administration has signed, supported, and otherwise put on the table some big, ambitious pieces. The American Rescue Plan, signed in March, invests \$1.9 trillion in America. (For a breakdown of how some of that money was spent in Washington, see the Legislative Report on page 4.) The American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan are equally ambitious, carrying price tags of \$2.3 trillion and \$1.8 trillion respectively. They also represent a shift in priorities for the federal government. The Jobs Plan, also referred to as the infrastructure bill, spends on buildings and utilities, jobs and innovation, in-home care, and transportation. The Families Plan covers education investments, including in public education and CTCs, working-class tax credits, child and family support, and funding for the IRS. This sounds like a lot of money, but in practice, it's just needed investment.

AFT Washington has referred many times to the importance of upholding the social contract, and this is a prime example of where we see a crack in it. Education is a pathway to a better life, and spending on it - investing in it - is crucial. The same is true for investing in buildings, utilities, jobs of all sorts, and family supports. Those investments are investments in

people, not expenses we can put off. That only raises the cost later, and the cost, when we talk about the social contract, is not merely money - it's equity, justice, and a better future for all Americans.

These three bills represent a fundamental shift in thinking about America, away from decades of "that's a problem for later" to "how do we create the conditions for Americans to thrive?"

That question certainly appears to be at the heart of the Biden Administration's planning. The list of executive actions that have been signed is long, but worthwhile. 16 of them related to ending the pandemic and getting people relief. 7 supported workers and the economy. 18 were focused on improving equity and combating discrimination against underserved communities. 10 dealt with immigration, 6 each on climate action and gun control, another 7 on public health - all the things we know and have known need to be done to invest in Americans and repair the social contract.

The administration is not without flaws in their actions. Student debt relief appears to be largely stalled, if not completely dead. Biden's focus on bipartisanship and unity is not bearing out well. There are legal challenges that the Trump administration initiated that, inexplicably, Biden's Department of Justice is continuing. Candidate Biden made promises regarding refugee admission numbers that President Biden did not follow through on until called to account. The administration has opted not to create a commission on policing. The failure to speak out in opposition to the violence against Palestinians is baffling. The PRO Act certainly appears to be stalled, with Biden's vocal support for it not becoming effective action in the Senate.

But even with those negatives, the administration has clearly settled on the idea of investing in America by investing in Americans, and has followed through. There will be tough challenges ahead, including the 2022 midterms, where our balanced Senate is at real risk of tipping Republican - not a great thing when those particular Republicans have intentionally, overtly, and vocally set themselves out to be obstructors of the kinds of policies we support. And yet, we're off to a strong start, with a president and administration who see that America is the sum of its people, not the sum of its money. Investing in people is the right thing to do, and the Biden administration is doing it wholeheartedly.

Combating the Rise of Anti-Asian Hate

Following the Atlanta spa shootings in March, and the frightening rise in anti-Asian violence and hatred we've seen in the last year and a half, the AFT developed a landing page of resources to help combat the rise of anti-Asian hatred. The page contains resources on a variety of subjects, including lesson plans, mental health resources, and justice for victims of anti-Asian hate, as well as others. This is particularly timely in light of the Department of Education's recent letter to educators on the need to address the rise of harassment and bullying directed at AAPI students.

You can find the page at www.aft.org/stopasianhate.

Introducing the Institutional Equity and Accountability Alliance (IEAA)

By Simone Terrell, Vice President At-Large

AFT Washington is excited to introduce its new special committee, the Institutional Equity and Accountability Alliance (IEAA). The IEAA was proposed by AFT Washington executive board VP at-large, Simone Terrell, in recognition of the rampant and increasing lack of accountability for college and school employers in the application of policies including terminations, discipline and numerous other administrative decision-making

processes. This challenge is larger than any one local is equipped to take on, so we need to create an alliance of locals and external stakeholders to leverage our union's power to hold our employers accountable.

As a first step, the IEAA is creating a survey for locals to identify the specific issues locals are facing to help guide the alliance's initial focus and work. The founding members of the IEAA are Simone Terrell (Renton Federation of

Teachers 3914), Jaeney Hoene (Green River Community College Federation of Teachers 2195) and Ken Pimpleton (Tacoma Community College Federation 2196). All AFT Washington affiliated locals are invited to join the alliance and send a representative from their local executive board to help drive and guide this important work.

If you are interested in learning more about the IEAA or getting involved, contact James To at jto@aftwa.org.

President's Column

(from pg. 3)

contracts for everybody. It's a universal design issue: we all benefit from anti-racist contract language that creates more fair and thoughtful practices for everyone.

And finally, this year's convention delegates passed resolution 2021-01, calling for us to Create Contingent and Part-time Faculty Organizing Campaigns. These are faculty whom we represent, but who, due to systemic disparities, miss out on the full benefits of membership, and locals and the state federation miss out on their contributions. These campaigns will bring more contingent and part-time faculty into membership, opening up opportunities for input, participation and solidarity. This will, in turn, increase the collective power of the membership to make gains in bargaining and in legislative work.

You may recall that in the Winter 2021 Spotlight I called attention to the longstanding breach in the social contract made stark by the pandemic. My State of the Union speech

continued that theme and highlighted our priorities for the coming two years, as you read in this piece. These are not unconnected ideas. Rebuilding the social contract is critical work that all of us have the opportunity to be part of. The union's priorities will be a big part of that opportunity, at the state federation level and at the local level, as well as in our communities and our schools. As we said at the convention, big dreams and bold actions are inextricably linked.

One day, in the relatively near future, the pandemic will be in the background of our lives, leaving more space for realizing our big dreams. The pandemic has brought into focus just how essential these dreams are, and a renewed dedication to the kinds of bold action required to achieve them. It's not easy work, but it is righteous work, and I urge you to find your way into it at your local or at the state level. We need you in order to truly create the conditions in which everyone has the freedom to thrive.

Big Wins

(from pg. 4)

nurse educators and high-demand program faculty in the Community and Technical college system.

Appropriation From the American Rescue Plan Act

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 is the federal government's most recent COVID-19 relief funding legislation. The most flexible part of that is the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund, a block of money (\$4.253 billion) sent to states that can be used over the next four years. There are additional pots of money that are part of the ARPA, including an Education Stabilization Fund (\$2.55 billion), which includes: \$1.85 billion for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (public K-12) and \$656 Million sent directly to institutions, called the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. 50% of this money must go directly to students in the form of financial aid. The state legislature appropriated over 2 billion dollars from ARPA within their operating budget. This is "one-time money" that can be spent until 2024.

Action Needed: Injuries, Health Hazards Persist at PreK-12 Locals

By Enrie Morrison and Anna-Marie Magdalena, Union Organizing Representatives



The ESD 113 Board listens to safety concerns presented by members at their June meeting.

Photo by James To

Your union brothers and sisters on the front lines of PreK-12 education need your support! AFT Washington represents hundreds of Pre-K and K-12 staff and teachers whose struggles with safety we must put a spotlight on. Pre-COVID, safety issues were rampant, with preventable injuries that staff had reported as concerns multiple times before the injuries occurred. Several of the staff we represent have had to go to the hospital, from a pregnant woman being punched in the stomach to another getting sanitizing spray in her eyes. One recently had her jaw broken!

In a recent survey done by the Tacoma Federation of Education Support Professionals, AFT Local 461, one in three survey respondents reported being injured at work. The local represents frontline staff at Tacoma Public Schools, providing vital

support in buildings, special education classrooms and in transportation. Most of the injuries reported could have been prevented with adequate staffing. Initiating Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to support students with volatile behaviors can take months to get in place. In the meantime, students need to be educated and this can't happen without adequate staffing.

Thanks to decades of advocacy and activism, those with disability were able to pass the Americans with Disability Act and other laws that require schools to provide the support students need to succeed. The success of students requires supporting those on the frontline that support their education. Now, more than ever, action needs to be taken at the school district and state level to make sure every student has the ability to succeed and every

educator doesn't worry about their safety when they go to work.

As you might have guessed, existing health and safety issues are only magnified by COVID. We know that transmission rates are higher now that we have returned to the classrooms, thanks in part to insufficient safety precautions. Cohorts were once supposed to be separate, now they are mixed together. There are baffling about-faces on social distancing requirements and classrooms declared properly ventilated when staff argue that they are in fact not. The list goes on and on.

What can you do? For starters, you can watch for opportunities to support our PreK-12 members. Several members of the Federation of Head Start Employees, Local 6153, brought up these and other concerns in an ESD 113 Board of Trustees meeting in June; several members from other locals spoke in support of the FHSE members. We are also looking for ways to incorporate safety guidelines in the AFT Washington legislative agenda for the upcoming session, and will be reaching out with other ideas and campaigns.

As a union, we must commit to solidarity across all our locals; these are shared struggles. When one worker is unsafe, all are at risk, and we cannot allow this situation to continue because it jeopardizes everyone. Stay tuned for other ways to support safety initiatives and Classified workers!



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Powerful Locals

Join us August 5th through 7th for Powerful
Locals. Watch for more information coming soon!

**If you'd like to go green
and get the
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electronically, please
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