



# AFT / COPE Fundraising



# AFT's Political Funds

---

- **AFT/COPE**
  - *AFT's Political Action Committee (PAC).*
  - *All voluntary money.*
  - *FEC qualified.*
  - *Funds used for contributions to candidates for President, US Senate, US House of Representatives, national political committees.*
- **State and Local COPE**
  - *Political funds controlled by State Federations and Local Unions*

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454





# Part 1

## Introduction and Overview



# Why COPE?

---

- **Committee on Political Education**
- **Supporting the needs and concerns of our members in the political process.**
- **AFT/COPE allows members to have an impact on all levels of government.**
  - *Political training sessions*
  - *Contributions to candidates*
  - *Communicating with members*

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# COPE Works

---

- **New York: Political action efforts helped produce the largest increase in state school aid in history.**
- **Louisiana: Successfully mobilized against public school vouchers.**
- **New Jersey: Worked to pass Needlestick Safety Bill.**
- **California: Defeated ballot initiatives that would have silenced the voices of workers on political and legislative issues.**
- **Maryland: Elected a pro-union governor, who signed an executive order allowing for collective bargaining.**

**Political and Legislative Mobilization**  
**202-879-4454**



# Organizing a COPE Program

---

- **Partners in Political Education (PIPE)**
- **Communicating With Members on Issues that Matter**
- **Fundraising Help & Hints**
- **COPE: Making it Happen**

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# Partners in Political Education

---

- **Locals and State Federations raise voluntary contributions for AFT/COPE – AFT’s Political Action Committee.**
- **AFT provides Locals and State Federations with resources for local and state candidates, and other political activities.**
  - *Governor, State Legislature, City Council, Mayor, Boards of Education, and others.*
- **The Local or State Federation decides on how to use these funds.**

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# Why COPE/PIPE Is Important

---

- **AFT/COPE is the only legal AFT entity permitted to contribute to Federal candidates.**
  - *President, Senate, and House of Representatives*
- **Builds a strong and efficient political structure at every level.**
  - *National, State and Local*

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# How PIPE Works

---

- 1) Employer sends voluntary COPE check(s) to Local.
- 2) Local deposits voluntary COPE check-off funds in a separate, segregated, non-interest bearing “COPE Transmittal” checking account.
- 3) Local must send the voluntary COPE funds to AFT/COPE within 30 days.
- 4) After AFT receives your voluntary COPE contributions, AFT remits to the Local a check for the Local’s political activities.
- 5) Local deposits AFT’s check into second segregated, non-interest bearing account for state and local political activities.

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# COPE Check-Off Card

**UNION COPE  
DEDUCTION**

I hereby authorize the (your employer) to deduct from my salary the sum of \$5.00 , \$10.00 , \$20.00 ,  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ (other amount) per pay period and forward that amount to the (your local COPE committee).

This authorization is signed freely and voluntarily and not out of any fear of reprisal and I will not be favored or disadvantaged because I exercise this right. I understand this money will be used to make political contributions by AFT/COPE. AFT/COPE may engage in joint fundraising efforts with the AFL-CIO.

This voluntary authorization may be revoked at any time by notifying the (your local COPE committee) in writing of the desire to do so.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SS#: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ WORK SITE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Contributions or gifts to AFT/COPE are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

**Political and Legislative Mobilization**  
**202-879-4454**



# Do's and Don'ts

---

- **DO negotiate for Voluntary Check-off**
- **DO ask your members to sign up for political check-off**
- **DO ask members to sign individual authorization cards**
- **DON'T wait until the next bargaining session**
- **DON'T ask non-members to participate in COPE**
- **DON'T propose participation in COPE on a general vote at membership meeting**

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# Do's and Don'ts

---

- **DO tell members that political check-off is voluntary**
- **DO use the language required by federal law**
- **DO keep check-off funds in separate, segregated, non-interest bearing checking account**
- **DON'T force a member to make a political donation**
- **DON'T require a fixed amount for contributions**
- **DON'T commingle political contributions with any other funds**

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# Do's and Don'ts

---

- **DO send check-off money to AFT/COPE within 30 days**
- **DO have a separate, segregated checking account for the Local/State funds**
- **DON'T forget to send money to AFT/COPE within 30 days**
- **DON'T contribute directly to Federal candidates**

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# COPE Fact

---

- **AFL-CIO polling data show that members who are contacted frequently by their union are**
  - *40 percent more likely to be satisfied with their union's political work,*
  - *50 percent more likely to support the union's position or candidate.*



# Part 2

## Fundraising Help & Hints



# Why Members Get Involved

---

- **Strengthen or Enact Collective Bargaining**
- **Fight for Better Wages and Benefits**
- **Provide Due Process Rights**
- **Prevent Privatization of public Services**
- **Effect Whistle-Blower Protection Laws**
- **Defeat Mandatory Overtime**
- **Promote Class-size Reduction**
- **Laws to Protect Pension Investments from Corporate Outlaws**

**Political and Legislative Mobilization**  
**202-879-4454**



# Why Members Aren't Involved

---

- **They are never asked to be involved.**
- **Members do not understand how politics can affect their jobs.**

# Fundraising = Organizing

---

- ✓ Encourages greater activism in members; gives them a stake in the process.
- ✓ Demonstrates that the union is working for its members.
- ✓ Highlights key union issues; helps educate our members on key issues.
- ✓ Allows members to hold politicians accountable.

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# COPE Fact

---

- **Characteristics of Typical Political Donors**

- *46% earn over \$250,000 annually.*
- *95% are white.*
- *81% are men over 45 years old.*
- *49% are Republican.*
- *31% are Democrat.*

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454

Source: Center for Responsive Politics



# COPE Fact

---

- **Characteristics of Typical Political Donors**
  - *46% are in business or law.*
  - *51% identify themselves as Conservative.*
  - *52% believe we should “cut taxes even if it means cutting public services.”*
  - *65% are members of a business group.*
  - *3% are members of a labor union.*

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454

Source: Center for Responsive Politics



# COPE: Working for Our Members

---

**Members are able to have a stronger voice in who serves as:**

- *President*
- *Congress*
- *Governor*
- *State Legislature*
- *Mayor*
- *City Council*
- *School Board*
- *State and Local Committees*

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# Why COPE Works

---

- **COPE allows members to:**
  - *more effectively communicate to their members and to candidates on our goals and stances on issues;*
  - *have a seat at the table of elected officials and candidates;*
  - *financially support candidates who believe in our mission.*

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# Doing the Ask

---

- **Explain the benefits of COPE.**
- **Ask for a specific amount, but remember they can contribute any amount.**
- **Wait for a response.**
- **Confirm the logistics of the actual contribution.**

# Good Fundraising

---

- **Explain the benefits of COPE.**
- **Ask for a specific amount, but remember they can contribute any amount.**
- **Wait for a response.**
- **Confirm the logistics of the actual contribution.**

# Do's and Don'ts

---

- **DO** talk about how members will benefit.
- **DO** focus your COPE message on issues that directly touch your members.
- **DO** speak from your heart.
- **DON'T** think of fundraising as separate from other union activities; if you can organize, you can fundraise.
- **DON'T** focus your message on politics or political parties.

# Do's and Don'ts

---

- **DO take small steps.**  
Take larger goals, and break them down into smaller ones.
- **DO remember what a good value COPE is for the members.**
- **DON'T try to do it all yourself; get a COPE committee to share the work.**
- **DON'T forget to say “thank you” often and in a visible way.**



# Part 3

## COPE: Making it Happen



# The Keys to Running COPE

---

- **Member-to-Member, face-to-face communication works best.**
- **Members will contribute because of issues, not political parties or candidates.**

Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454



# Ingredients for COPE

---

- **COPE Committee or Check-off Campaign group**
- **Separate, segregated non-interest bearing checking account**
- **Updates membership lists**
- **List of members already giving to COPE**
- **List of Agency-Fee members**
- **Budget for COPE Campaign - Dues Money**

**Political and Legislative Mobilization  
202-879-4454**



# Getting Started

---

- **Establish Voluntary Check-Off.**
  - *Obtain approval from Employer to establish Payroll Deduction.*
  - *Use federally-approved language on check-off cards.*
  - *Do not wait until bargaining time to bring up COPE Check-off.*

# Getting Started

---

- **Establish a COPE Check-Off Campaign Group to write the plan.**
  - *Officers*
  - *COPE Committee*
  - *Building Reps*
  - *Political/Legislative Liaisons*
- **Keep this group manageable**

# Preparing The COPE Plan

---

- **Start with an attainable goal.**
  - *Example: Twenty percent of membership to contribute \$5 each per pay period.*
  - *Budget for COPE Drive.*
- **Who will coordinate the COPE Drive?**
  - *Each local needs to determine role for local leadership, COPE committee, building reps, volunteers.*

# General Funds

---

- May be used to communicate only with members, even on political issues and candidates.
- Cannot donate this money to a party or campaign, or use this money to promote or otherwise support a candidate to the general public.
  - *Income Tax Liability.*
  - *Violation of Federal Election Laws.*
  - *Possible violation of State and Local laws.*



# Part 4

## The COPE Drive



# Use of Members' Dues

---

- **Federal law prohibits the use of dues money for contributions to federal campaigns, including:**
  - *Printing or copying literature for a candidate;*
  - *Using phones or union halls for campaign;*
  - *Outright contributions; and*
  - *Tickets to a dinner or reception for a Federal candidate.*

# Funds to a Federal Candidate

---

- **Only AFT National can contribute to a Federal candidate.**
  - *Federally-Registered Political Action Committee (PAC)*
  - *A Local or State Fed purchasing a ticket for a fundraiser for Senator Y is breaking Federal Campaign Law.*

# Payroll Deduction

---

- **Members volunteer a certain amount of money per pay period.**
- **Through PIPE, AFT can use these funds to assist federal candidates.**
  - *Exchange Local's COPE money with AFT National in exchange for funds that can be used for local and state candidates.*

# Legal FAQs

---

- Rules and restrictions may be confusing.
- Contact AFT's COPE Department with any questions.
  - *Call Liz Smith: (800) 238-1133, ext. 4436*