



PUBLIC EMPLOYEE Advocate

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES



THERE IS NO SHORTAGE of reports about the nation's retirement crisis. In the private sector, too many workers are ill-prepared for retirement. As for the public sector, some politicians and think tanks have portrayed the defined-benefit pension plans of government workers as a reason for budget woes. They have argued that private sector employees don't get a guaranteed benefit from their employers, so public workers shouldn't either.

The politics of divide and conquer do nothing to solve the problem: How does the nation ensure that all workers can look forward to a decent and dignified retirement?

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The taxing issue of shared responsibility

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT once called taxes the dues we pay for the privileges of membership in an organized society. Although nobody likes paying taxes, my hunch is the vast majority of Americans agree with Roosevelt. Every April, they file their returns and then go on about their business.

But in recent years, many of us have shared a growing concern that the system is out of whack. Too often, it seems as though those who have the least are asked to sacrifice the most, and those who have the most get more.

In Michigan, Gov. Rick Snyder proposed cutting corporate taxes by \$1.8 billion, or 86 percent. At the same time, he cut funding for public education. The one tax loophole he wants to close isn't for corporations; it's a tax break for the working poor. And in doing so, he will push 14,000 Michigan kids into poverty.

In Wisconsin, Gov. Scott Walker proposed a total of \$200 million in tax cuts, including major benefits for his wealthiest supporters. At the same time, he called for \$500 million in Medicaid cuts and \$1.7 billion in public

education cuts. Custodians at the University of Wisconsin will receive 16 percent pay cuts as a result.

budget plan would get about two-thirds of its proposed \$4 trillion in budget cuts over 10 years by slashing Medicaid, Pell Grants, food stamps and low-income housing—programs that serve people who need them the most—all so he can give a trillion-dollar tax break to millionaires and billionaires.

Even these egregious examples do not tell the whole story. On average, the richest 1 percent of Americans pay 6.4 percent of their income in state and local taxes. The middle class and the working poor pay more than 9 percent. Many profitable Fortune 500 companies pay no state taxes. Several months ago, we all read with amazement that General Electric made \$5.1 billion in profits in its U.S. operations last year, but paid no federal taxes on those profits and even claimed a tax benefit of \$3.2 billion.

It's just plain wrong to give more tax breaks to the people who pay the least, while **everyone else** trying to live the American dream sees the **services** that make communities livable **cut dramatically**.

We are still recovering from the worst recession since the Great Depression. And while most Americans did not cause this recession, they're living with its effects: high rates of foreclosure, a weakened job market, the loss of revenues. Shared responsibility and shared sacrifice have become the clarion calls.

Americans understand that, and most of us are willing to step up to the plate and do our fair share of sacrificing. But for those surviving paycheck to paycheck, any increase in food or gas prices or health insurance payments, or a salary freeze, is a real sacrifice.

We also know that our fiscal challenges are real. But in too many states, governors have decided to play politics-as-usual rather than rolling up their sleeves and finding real solutions.

education cuts. Custodians at the University of Wisconsin will receive 16 percent pay cuts as a result.

In Pennsylvania, Gov. Tom Corbett proposed up to \$400 million in business tax breaks. At the same time, he wanted to cut education by \$1.2 billion. At a time when college access and affordability have never been more important, Corbett's plan calls for an incredible 50 percent cut in state aid to higher education.

And in New Jersey, Gov. Chris Christie vetoed an extension of the state's tax on millionaires and called for \$2.5 billion in new tax cuts, much of them geared toward large corporations and the wealthiest citizens.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's

That's not shared sacrifice. It's just plain wrong to give more tax breaks to the people who pay the least, while everyone else trying to live the American dream sees the services that make communities livable cut dramatically.

The success of our society depends largely on the amount of confidence its citizens have in it. The vast majority of Americans play by the rules. They go to work every day. They provide for their families. They pay their taxes.

And they expect others to do the same.

But too often, inequities in our tax system erode that confidence.

As President Obama has said, we do not have to sacrifice the America we believe in. But only through shared responsibility can we transform the American dream into a reality for all our citizens.



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In tragedy, the spirit of public service shines

AFT remembers fallen members and honors the heroes who responded to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks

"IT'S A LOT OF BOREDOM, interrupted by sheer terror." That's how Joel Vetter describes his former job as a state flight paramedic at Stony Brook University Medical Center.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Vetter was listening to the radio as he laid bricks for a poolside patio in his backyard on Long Island. That was when he first learned that an airliner had crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center. Within minutes, his pager went off.

"While I was on the phone with my office, the second plane crashed" into the south tower, says Vetter, who was then a member of the New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF). It was time to go to work.

When Vetter arrived at the scene in lower Manhattan, the paramedic, who was used to responding to accidents and disasters, found himself in unfamiliar territory: "There were no patients to treat." Being able to help someone physically is part of an emergency

responder's coping mechanism, he says. Vetter spent the next 10 to 12 hours flying in and out of lower Manhattan transporting key personnel and supplies.

Dozens of AFT members died in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, including 34 PEF members whose offices were at the World Trade Center, and three Washington, D.C., teachers who were traveling with their students on a school trip when their jetliner crashed into the Pentagon.

Scores more of our members lost family members, colleagues and friends. And then there were the United Federation of Teachers members who ushered their students to safety from schools within blocks of the World Trade Center.

As the nation prepares to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, Vetter, who now works for the Suffolk County (N.Y.) Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Ser-



"... Coming to work and doing my job. That is the greatest good I can do."

— JOEL VETTER,
former New York state
flight paramedic

vices, plans "on coming to work and doing my job. That is the greatest good I can do—continue my public service."

"We, at PEF, can never forget the sacrifice of our colleagues who perished that day 10 years ago," said PEF president Ken Brynien, who also is an AFT vice president. "In the face of the terrorist attacks, we united as a union to help victims of the tragedy and aid their families. We must continue building on the unity forged in the fires of Sept. 11 to improve the lives of our members. This is the best tribute we can make to our colleagues in recognition of the sacrifice they made."

From patrol to public administration

With retirement on the horizon, AFT member heads back to school

WHEN POLICE OFFICER John Stewart graduated from Northeastern University in Boston in 1991 with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, he never thought he'd go back to school.

Now, two years away from retirement, he is pursuing a master's degree in public administration.

"Getting up at 2:30 in the morning is getting old," says Stewart of the shift work that is standard in public safety, adding that he's looking forward to using his master's degree to help him get a 9-to-5 job with weekends off.

Stewart, a member of the Keene (N.H.) Police Officer's Association, is among the 2011 Robert G. Porter Scholars Program grant winners. Every year, the scholars program awards \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with their continuing education.

Stewart says the grant "was like a blessing." Since he started working toward his master's degree two years ago, Stewart has had to take off a couple semesters because his household budget couldn't afford the



Patrolman John Stewart says the Porter Scholars Program grant "was like a blessing."

extra expense. Each course costs about \$750.

Grant applicants were required to write an essay about how they are working to strengthen their local union to overcome the hostile economic and political environments facing union workers.

"Deciding to get involved is the first step to change," wrote Stewart, who is former president of the KPOA and a former vice president

of AFT-New Hampshire.

Stewart's essay explained how his local gained its voice: Members united and became both politically and socially active within the community. Politically, the KPOA "no longer let the chief of police speak for us." Socially, the union sponsored community service events, including child fingerprinting.

The union, Stewart says, gives "you the opportunity to have a voice [in] how your workplace is going to operate."

"I've come to learn that people have great ideas and sometimes never share them," Stewart adds. "Getting involved with the union is a great opportunity to share ideas with management. I have also come to learn that one person can make a difference."

In addition to the grants, the Porter Scholars Program awards \$8,000 scholarships to four outstanding graduating high school seniors who are dependents of AFT members.

Applications for the 2012 competition will be available in mid-November. For more information, visit the "Your Benefits" section at www.aft.org/benefits.



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“There is a misguided storyline out there that blames public pensions for a lot of the financial ills we are facing,” says AFT vice president Dan Montgomery, who is president of the Illinois

Federation of Teachers. “We, as a nation, have a strong interest in seeing to it that our citizens have the means to live a healthy and productive retirement—all citizens. And just as the unions have led in our history on wages and working conditions, we must lead here.”

In May, the AFT executive council adopted a blueprint for strengthening public

toward a model based on individual responsibility,” says Feist, a member of the AFT Public Employees program and policy council.

The blueprint underscores the union’s belief that all Americans should have a decent and dignified retirement, and that tax dollars should be spent prudently and strategically to advance the nation’s goals. It calls for an end to abuses and excessive payouts. It also sets the record straight—debunking widely repeated misperceptions.

Fact: Of the 7.7 million retired state and local government workers in 2008, the average retirement benefit was a modest \$23,653 annually, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“There isn’t any one single solution. It’s got to be through a variety of approaches that we preserve public pensions.”

DAN MONTGOMERY, president, Illinois Federation of Teachers

pensions and improving retirement security for all. The report, “Strengthening Retirement Security and Building a Better America,” was written by the union’s Ad Hoc Committee on Revenues and Retirement Security, which is composed of 20 elected AFT leaders, including Montgomery.

“Our committee looked at what’s necessary for everyone—public and private sector—to have a secure retirement,” says North Dakota Public Employees Association president Gary Feist, a corporate tax auditor who also is on the committee.

Social Security, employer-sponsored retirement plans and personal savings have been the nation’s construct for retirement security for decades.

But “politics and policy have been moving

Fact: About one-quarter of all state and local public workers are not covered by Social Security. Thus, the pension benefit is their major source of retirement income.

Fact: Nearly 73 percent of public pensions are financed through investment returns and employee contributions.

Guiding principles

Because of the intricacies of each government-sponsored retirement plan, the committee emphasizes that, “while it is important to make meaningful changes to existing plans, circumstances may exist in different states that dictate alternative approaches.” The committee’s six guiding principles are:

Universal retirement coverage. Every worker should be covered by retirement arrangements that provide consistent income to secure a reasonable standard of living throughout retirement.

Shared responsibility. Retirement security should be the shared responsibility of employers, employees and the government. Both employers and employees should contribute to retirement benefits. The government should ensure that low-income workers are able to participate fully.

Portability. Pension accruals should be portable when workers change jobs, and no withdrawals should be permitted before retirement except in cases of severe disability.

Governance that ensures adequate funding and risk management. Topping the list of the committee’s recommendations is that employers should pay their annual required contributions.

“A lot of the problem with pensions is that state and local governments have not made their required contributions,” says Feist. “In good times, when plans were well-funded, state and local governments took payment holidays. Now, employees are being told plans aren’t funded and the employees need to pay more—even though employees have been making their contributions all along.”

The slippage in funding since the financial market meltdown has been most severe in cases where employers have not made their annually required contributions. New Jersey, for example, has met its required contribution to all seven of its statewide pension plans only one time in the last 14 years.

Public employee pension reforms. The committee recommends eliminating design options that negatively affect pension costs, including elimination of spiking and double-dipping, and establishment of a maximum benefit ceiling on the employer-sponsored defined-benefit portion of an employee’s pension to deal with excessive benefit payments.

Participation in Social Security, voluntary savings. The committee recommends that employers encourage and facilitate voluntary tax-favored savings.

On the Social Security issue, the committee says, “It’s time to have an open discussion to consider the inclusion of public employees in the program.” To that end, the AFT will convene a summit of public employee organizations to discuss this concept, as well as to discuss the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset.

“Pensions need to be well-funded and well-managed because they help retain people who provide services that taxpayers depend on,” says AFT president Randi Weingarten. “But practices like end-of-career spiking and double-dipping have to be addressed,” she adds, referring to measures that have inflated pension benefits for some.

Some of the committee’s recommendations may be controversial, says Montgomery. “Unfortunately, we are not in an era of benefit increases, and given the political environment of attacks on pensions, we need to find smart ways to secure the plans going forward while removing the aspects of pensions that cause them to become targets of politicians and the public alike.”

“There isn’t any one single solution,” Montgomery cautions. “It’s got to be through a variety of approaches that we preserve public pensions.”

Definitions

PENSION SPIKING Artificially increasing an employee’s retirement benefit.

DOUBLE-DIPPING An employee who is rehired after retirement by the same employer and, therefore, is collecting both a pension and a salary.

GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET Reduces the Social Security spousal benefit by two-thirds of the government pension benefit.

WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION Reduces Social Security benefits for workers who earned both their own Social Security benefit and a government pension not covered by Social Security.



Read the full report at <http://go.aft.org/secureretirement>.

Continuing the fight

Whether the legislature is in session or out, the discussion over public services and workers' rights continues

AS THE CONVERSATION about workers' rights, including pay and benefits, continues, AFT affiliates are making a difference—challenging attacks on workers and the middle class every step of the way.

What has become evident over the past six months is that elected officials who were determined to undermine unionized public employees didn't bargain for the broader community outcry that's resulted. The end-game for the AFT and its affiliates: finding ways to work cooperatively to move the economy and the middle class forward.

Fate of Ohio's anti-bargaining law will be decided by voters, thanks to state's 'citizens veto' process

The We Are Ohio coalition and its supporters sent a clear message to Gov. John Kasich and other state lawmakers, when thousands of people marched through downtown Columbus on June 29 during the "million signature march."

The marchers, including hundreds of AFT members, were delivering more than 1,500 boxes of petitions, which had been signed by nearly 1.3 million Ohioans, to the office of the Ohio secretary of state.

The signatures—more than five times the number required—were gathered to qualify a referendum to repeal Senate Bill 5 for the November ballot. Senate Bill 5, which was signed into law by Gov. Kasich in late March, strips teachers and other government employees of their collective bargaining rights.

More than 10,000 volunteers, including scores of AFT members, had been gathering signatures since late April.

Unions challenge constitutionality of Wisconsin's 'budget repair' bill

The day after the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned a Dane County Circuit Court's ruling that struck down Gov. Scott Walker's anti-bargaining law (Act 10), a broad coalition of unions filed a federal lawsuit.

The unions, including AFT-Wisconsin, charge, among other things, that "the Act's differential treatment of public employees violates the equal protection guarantee of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution." Specifically, Act 10 creates two classes of public employees, "general"

and "public safety," and not all sworn law enforcement officers are included in the public safety category.

The law severely limits the bargaining rights of general employees, but retains bargaining rights for public safety employees, who are largely represented by organizations that endorsed Walker in the gubernatorial race.

"The Equal Protection Clause forbids legislation that creates classifications either for the purpose of disadvantaging groups that are out of political favor or for the purpose of bestowing rank political favors to the supporters of those in power," according to the lawsuit, which was filed June 15.

"Scott Walker not only has ignored the voices of hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites who oppose his extremist legislation, but also has taken a baseball bat to the constitutional rights of one group of public employees," says AFT-Wisconsin president Bryan Kennedy. "We are optimistic that the courts will agree, and this blatant discrimination will not stand."

Ohio members delivered petitions calling for a referendum to repeal Senate Bill 5.

ALYSA BURTON



Florida affiliate sues over pension plan changes

The Florida Education Association has filed a lawsuit in state Circuit Court asserting that pension reform legislation signed by Gov. Rick Scott is unconstitutional.

The new law requires active members of the Florida Retirement System (FRS) to contribute 3 percent of their salaries toward their retirement benefits starting July 1, 2011.

"This pay cut was used by legislative leadership to make up a budget shortfall on the backs of teachers, law enforcement officers, firefighters and other state workers," says FEA president Andy Ford, who is an AFT vice president.

"While the state of Florida may make the policy decision to ask future employees to contribute to their retirement, it may not unilaterally change the covenant it made with current employees," Ford says.

A court date has been set for Oct. 26.



TIMOTHY RAAB

State workers protest layoffs

Members of the New York State Public Employees Federation turned out by the thousands for 13 rallies across the state on June 20. The rallies were in response to an announcement that 9,800 state jobs will be cut if \$450 million in workforce savings could not be met. At press time, contract negotiations between PEF and Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office were ongoing. Since the state's fiscal crisis began, 15,000 state jobs have been eliminated, PEF president and AFT vice president Ken Brynien told the crowd at the Albany rally. "Most agencies are beyond bare bones, and services are already at the breaking point."

AFT spreads our message to progressive bloggers

THE AFT PLAYED a prominent role at Netroots Nation, an annual gathering of progressive political activists, held this year in Minneapolis June 16-19.

AFT president Randi Weingarten was part of a high-powered opening keynote session that included, among others, former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean and Russ Feingold, former U.S. senator from Wisconsin.

At a time when shared sacrifice is cited as an appropriate solution to our problems, Weingarten asked, “Where is the shared responsibility when an entire corporation pays less in taxes than one custodian at the University of Wisconsin?”

By the way, she continued, “where are all those new jobs [elected officials] promised in their campaigns? All we see are power grabs and paybacks, the pulling back of the safety net, and disinvestment” in public services.

A \$1 trillion annual expense

WHAT’S WORTH MORE to you? Public services or tax expenditures? Tax expenditures cost the federal Treasury more than \$1 trillion in 2010, according to a report by the Center for American Progress, which says elimination of tax expenditures should be part of the nation’s deficit reduction plan.

“Dollars spent through the tax code in the form of tax breaks, called tax expenditures, are widely recognized to be the functional equivalent of direct government spending,” according to Seth Hanlon and Michael Ettlinger, authors of “Cut Spending in the Tax Code: Wasteful Spending in the Tax Expenditure Budget Is Fertile Ground for Deficit



Reduction.” Hanlon and Ettlinger note that in fiscal year 2010, the federal government spent \$719 billion on Medicare and Medicaid, \$701 billion on Social Security, \$491 billion on discretionary programs—and \$1 trillion on tax expenditures.

The authors detail 24 tax expenditures that are ripe for elimination “because they serve little or no public purpose or are poorly designed.” Three of the “most striking examples of wasteful tax spending,” they say, are oil and gas subsidies, tax breaks for vacation homes and yachts, and the carried-interest loophole, which permits hedge fund and private equity fund managers to pay capital gains tax rates on much of their compensation.

Elimination of the carried interest loophole would save \$10 billion between fiscal years 2012 and 2016. By eliminating the mortgage interest deduction for vacation homes and yachts, the federal government would save more than \$6 billion between fiscal years 2012 and 2016. And elimination of eight tax expenditures for the oil and gas industry would yield \$22.8 billion between fiscal years 2012 and 2016.

No budget, no pay

IN TODAY’S LEGISLATIVE environment, elected officials from both sides of the aisle have taken issue with rank-and file public employees’ pay and benefits. The tables were turned on California legislators in June—and they were none too pleased.

Background: Within hours of the June 15 budget deadline, the Legislature passed a budget, which Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed. State Controller John Chiang then analyzed the vetoed budget to see if it was in compliance with Proposition 25, the On-Time Budget Act of 2010, which voters approved in November.

Proposition 25 includes a mandate that legislators must forfeit their pay and living expenses for each day the budget is overdue.

“My office’s careful review of the recently passed budget found components that were miscalculated, miscounted or unfinished,” Chiang said in a press release. “The numbers simply did not add up, and the Legislature will forfeit their pay until a balanced budget is sent to the governor.”

California Federation of Teachers president Joshua Pechthalt applauds Gov. Brown’s budget veto and gives Democratic legislators credit for their effort. The refusal of Republicans to budge from their rigid rejection of taxes, new or old, limited Democrats’ options, Pechthalt says.

“It is a shame that the people of California are being held hostage by a minority of the Legislature due to the two-thirds requirement for passing a budget with revenues,” says Pechthalt. “We look forward to the day when democracy, which means 50 percent plus one, is restored to our state Capitol.” The CFT supported Proposition 25.

Facts matter: ‘The War Against Public Service and Public Employee Unions’

Shanker Institute meeting focuses on data and discourse

LEADERS OF U.S. and Canadian public employee unions discussed strategies and actions to alter the prevailing anti-government, anti-union narrative that dominates public discourse. The program, “The War Against Public Service and Public Employee Unions,” was sponsored by the Albert Shanker Institute June 8-9 in Washington, D.C.

The meeting opened with a compelling discussion of “Why We Need Public Spending,” an exhaustively researched economic study on the real story of public spending and public service in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

countries, including the United States.

Drawing on data reaching back 135 years, in some cases, the study upends the conservative view that government spending is a drag on economic development and growth. It has had exactly the opposite effect. The detailed report was produced under the auspices of Public Services International.

Other presentations focused on the role of government spending on economic growth and healthy democratic participation; comparisons of public sector and private sector employee compensation; the legal status of public sector collective bargaining and sug-

gested innovations; the connection between good government, a strong union voice and a healthy democracy; and the political forces driving the anti-union campaign and how those forces are funded.

In addition to the participation of international, national and state union leaders, including AFT president Randi Weingarten, Service Employees International Union president Mary Kay Henry and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees secretary-treasurer Lee Saunders, the meeting brought together top economists, attorneys and public opinion researchers.



CA Influence. Autonomy. Equity. Cooperation. These are the reasons listed for the uncommon revenue-sharing contract adopted in the San Diego Community College District.

The contract provides faculty and staff with a constant percentage of any state funding increase. The percentage corresponds to the percentage of the college budget they currently receive in salary and benefits, which for San Diego is 85 percent.

"It gives us complete autonomy on how to distribute those resources," says Jim Mahler, president of the AFT Guild and a professor of engineering, mathematics and physics at San Diego City College. "Let's say we want to take the money and put it across the board on the salary schedule, or provide a new step on the salary schedule. We don't have to negotiate [for that]."

The contract includes a "trombone clause," which kicks in when there are no state funding increases, like this year. Named for the action of pulling back the trombone slide, the clause requires bargaining over the existing budget and, this year, budget cuts.

CT After several months of organizing and fending off attacks from Jackson Lewis, one of the oldest and largest union-busting firms in the country, nurses at William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich voted to join AFT Connecticut in May.

The nurses decided to organize because they were concerned about short-staffing and other cost-cutting measures the hospital had implemented.

Carol Adams, a step-down unit nurse, has worked at the hospital for 26 years. She says concerns about understaffing and the quality of equipment and other materials led her to join the effort to unionize. "We had quite a lot taken away over the years," she says, including "the ability to provide the quality of care that I enjoy giving." By voting for the union, Adams says, she is taking a step to make her hospital better.

FL Showing the world how good a school lunch can be, three 10th-graders from Jacksonville, Fla., took top honors in the

national 2011 Cooking up Change competition sponsored by the Healthy Schools Campaign. Their teacher is Judith Schmidt, a member of Duval Teachers United.

Culinary arts students Alexis Baldwin, Leoniqua Jackson and Denver Singletary had to produce a tasty school lunch that would meet USDA nutrition standards for teenagers, use only ingredients and equipment found in a school cafeteria, and take just six steps to prepare—all at the cost of a school meal, about a dollar. Their winning lunch: Caribbean beef ribs in a green salad, Moroccan rice and a sweet potato cornbread muffin.

Schmidt says that as first-year culinary students and the youngest team competing, the three sophomores pulled off a "monumental achievement."

In accepting the award after a cook-off May 23 at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., Singletary thanked Schmidt and the team's chef mentors.

NY Promoting the Honor Flight Network has been a mission of retired teacher Linda Snyder's since she tagged along on her father's Honor Flight in September 2010.

The network organizes all-expenses-paid trips to Washington, D.C., for World War II veterans so they can visit the National World War II Memorial, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery and other sites.

The New York State United Teachers retiree sent a "dear colleague" letter to "everybody north of Manhattan," encouraging

donations to the program. Nearly two dozen NYSUT affiliates and other school district organizations have donated to the cause in response to Snyder's appeal, including the student council at J. Manley McKenney Middle School in Canton.

In June, the student council traveled to Albany to send off their honoree, George MacGregor. "It's just so nice to put the kids in human contact with someone who did something really remarkable," says Trish Montville, student council co-adviser and a member of the Canton Central Teachers Association. Some of the students have grandparents who are Vietnam veterans, but they are generations removed from World War II, Montville notes.

"What they did for our country is important, and I think individuals should donate to Honor Flight in order to provide [World War II veterans] with an experience that they might not see otherwise," says student council member Sarah Rivers.

MacGregor was the student council's second honoree. The group also sponsored a veteran for an April flight.

President Clinton authorized the American Battle Monuments Commission to establish the World War II memorial in 1993 to honor the 16 million who served in the U.S. armed forces during that war. The memorial opened to the public in April 2004—nearly 60 years after the war.

The Honor Flight Network operates hubs across the United States, including five in New York.

Canton, N.Y., middle-schoolers sponsored World War II veteran George MacGregor's June Honor Flight to the nation's capital.



TIMOTHY RAAB

Unions fight to preserve negotiated pay plan

ULP charges that legislators failed to bargain in good faith

JOEL FELIX KNOWS what's involved in negotiating the state employees' pay plan with the governor's office. That's why he is so disillusioned by the Montana Legislature's failure to ratify the negotiated pay increases for the 2013 biennium.

"During negotiations, there is a conscious effort among the team to bargain in good faith in order to develop a responsible pay plan respecting the needs of state workers as well as remaining fiscally responsible," says Felix, a chemical terrorism laboratory coordinator at the Montana Public Health Lab in Helena, and a three-time member of the MEA-MFT team that negotiates the pay plan.

Felix points to fall 2008 negotiations over the 2011 biennial pay plan as an example. "We went into bargaining and we put our stuff on the table. A week later, the crash hit," says Felix. "It was brutal." The unions and the state agreed to a two-year pay freeze for full-time employees earning more than \$45,000 annually. Full-time employees earning less received a one-time payment of \$450. The Legislature approved that plan.

"Unfortunately, the current Legislature failed to do its part, as agreed upon by the state, of bargaining in good faith, when it refused to ratify the state pay plan," says Felix.

The pay plan (H.B. 13) for the 2013 biennium provided a 1 percent salary increase in 2012 and a 3 percent increase in 2013, for a combined total cost of approximately \$15 million.

The Legislature's failure to ratify the plan—or any pay plan, for that matter—is at the center of an unfair labor practice charge that has been filed with the Montana Board of Personnel Appeals.

The MEA-MFT, the Montana Public Employees Association, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees of Montana filed the charge in late May.

It alleges that: "The failure of the Legislature to address H.B. 13 in a timely fashion and the resultant late-session defeat of H.B. 13, occurring when there was no time left for the exclusive bargaining agents (the unions) to negotiate a new proposal to submit to the Legislature, constituted a failure of the state, acting through the Legislature, to bargain in good faith with the exclusive representatives



KURT KELLER

State employees want to make a difference, but "they want a salary for what they do," says Joel Felix, right, with colleague Curtis Fjelstad.

of its employees."

"The legislative majority left us with no other option but legal action," said MEA-MFT president

Eric Feaver, who also is an AFT vice president, during a news conference at the state Capitol announcing the ULP filing.

The ULP notes that the duty to bargain in good faith requires all concerned parties to keep an open and fair mind and work together with "a sincere desire to reach an agreement in a spirit of amity and cooperation.

"The manner in which the Legislature handled H.B. 13 utterly failed to meet this standard."

Unlike most state governments, Montana's finances are back in the black. In early May, according to the ULP, the state had a \$300 million surplus.

"Funding this pay plan agreement was never an issue—the money was always there," said Quint Nyman, executive director of the Montana Public Employees Association, at the news conference.

"There are a lot of smart people doing great work who have strong convictions and want to make a difference," says Felix of state employees. "They don't want to waste money. But they want a salary for what they do."

AFT VOICES

About one-quarter of all state and local public workers are not covered by Social Security because their employers do not participate in the program. Do you think Social Security participation should be mandatory?



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