



# PUBLIC EMPLOYEE Advocate

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

## A plan that works

President Obama's jobs plan is an investment in our communities

**SCOTT LEIGH KNOWS** a thing or two about the interdependence of a state's infrastructure, the vibrance of its economy, and the health and welfare of its citizens. Leigh is construction group chief for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' (DOT&PF) Northern Region, an expanse of 370,000 square miles—comparable in size to California, Nevada and Arizona combined.

The Northern Region DOT&PF maintains, among other things, more than 3,400 miles of roads; 70 percent of the state's National Highway System routes; 408 public buildings, including courthouses and state office buildings; 104 airports; 390 bridges; and 1,548 miles of aviation surfaces.

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"All of our infrastructure needs funding," says Scott Leigh.

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Ohio voters reject anti-worker law **PAGE 8**



## One thing we learned this year is that elections matter

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

MANY OF OUR biggest challenges in 2011 can be traced to the losses of worker-friendly legislatures and governors in states such as Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Wisconsin.

Politicians in those states and others cynically took advantage of the anxiety caused by our economic crisis. As a result, some of our most arduous and important work in the past year—the successful Ohio citizens' veto of Senate Bill 5, the Wisconsin recall elections, the fight against Alabama's anti-immigration bill—involved trying to undo

opportunities. We can never forget that the policies they put into law have a real impact on real people: the child who is denied extra help because her class size has ballooned; the senior who puts off buying a prescription because he can't afford the cost; a family that loses its home to bank foreclosure.

We need to change this in 2012. While key state and federal elections won't take place until November, we must use the early months of the coming year to begin laying the groundwork for the important contests that lie ahead.

Democrats will need to pick up 24 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives to regain control. We anticipate close contests that could flip control of the legislatures in at least a half-dozen states. Races such as these could result in policy shifts that change the lives of hundreds of thousands of our members.

We'll have to continue our fight for passage of the American Jobs Act, and we'll need to continue to push for reauthorization of an Elementary and Secondary Schools Act that will help ensure all children can get the great education they deserve. And the decisions on how to tackle the federal budget deficit will be felt for years to come.

What can each one of us do? It is crucial we educate and mobilize our members, our allies and the general public around the issues that will help us create an environment to elect pro-public sector, pro-public education candidates.

In the past year, we have faced unprecedented challenges. We fought hard and we fought smart. In many cases, our opponents have been chastened. In other cases, they may have been emboldened. As Frederick Douglass said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand," and "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

So struggle we will. The overreaching policies of the extremists may be draconian, but they also may provide us an opening to take back our nation. The ball is in our court. We can't afford to throw it away.

Elected officials have a direct effect on **our jobs, our rights**, and the well-being of **our families** and communities.

the terrible choices that made their way into law and were hurting children, seniors and middle-class families.

The starkest example was Ohio, where politicians used the devastating recession as an excuse to strip public employees of their collective bargaining rights. The overreach galvanized a broad coalition of Ohioans, who collected signatures to place the anti-worker law on the ballot. In November, voters soundly repealed the measure.

But the lesson that remains from 2010 is that elections matter. Elected officials have a direct effect on our jobs, our rights, and the well-being of our families and our commu-

Next year's elections will be the first after the reapportionment and redistricting process, which shifted about a dozen electoral votes from states President Obama won in 2008. At stake is the control of Congress, dozens of state legislatures and, of course, the White House.

Meanwhile, the Brennan Center for Justice warns that a wave of legislation tightening restrictions on voting has swept the country. A study by the center concluded that more than 5 million voters could be affected by the new rules—a number larger than the margin of victory in the last three presidential elections.

While our challenges are great, so are our



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# Saving kids one at a time

## Social work is a complex job requiring professionalism and objectivity

SOCIAL WORK IS not a 9-to-5 job. It requires devotion to the clients—and the flexibility to work odd hours.

Kim Wells, a social worker specialist for the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and a member of the Kansas Organization of State Employees, says it helps to have an understanding family, too.

When Wells has to work late, her three children selflessly acknowledge that their mom has been out “saving more kids.” That understanding allows Wells to stay focused on her job—investigating reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children.

Social work requires a skill set that’s so multidimensional that few other professions can compare.

“You have to be very observant,” says Wells, who has been a social worker since 1985 and has worked for Kansas’ SRS since January 2007. “You have to be where the client is at that given time. So if their mindset is at a level of crisis, you have to be in that crisis mode. *And* you have to be the professional. It’s almost like you have to be two people.”

Social workers, in general, have to understand the human condition. In the field of child protective services, social workers like Wells must have knowledge of child devel-



NICK KRUG

opment, signs and symptoms of neglect and abuse, and mental health. They are investigators. They are interviewers. They are counselors. They are advocates. And they also have to know the law and understand the court system.

Because she’s constantly dealing with children in crisis, “a lot of people ask me if I can sleep at night,” says Wells. “I sleep very well. I didn’t cause what happened. Something out

there has caused it, and my job is to help.”

While Wells admits that “a lot of times in this job you feel that nothing is going right,”

the job has its rewards—the parent she bumps into unexpectedly who says “I’m no longer on drugs” or “I’ve got a job,” or the kid who “runs up to me. Then I know it’s worth it.”

**“You have to be where the client is at that given time,” says Kim Wells of social work. “So if their mindset is at a level of crisis, you have to be in that crisis mode.”**

# Members of New York affiliate overwhelmingly back new contract

## Revised deal averts the layoff of nearly 3,500 state employees

BY A COUNT OF 27,718 to 11,645, members of the New York State Public Employees Federation ratified a revised four-year agreement with the state that averts significant layoffs.

The Nov. 3 vote count ended a stormy five-week period, which started when PEF members rejected a five-year contract proposal in late September. Within days of that vote, Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued nearly 3,500 layoff notices to PEF-represented state employees.

In an effort to save jobs and services, PEF and the governor’s office returned to the bargaining table and hammered out a new deal. Thanks to its passage, the layoff notices are automatically rescinded.

PEF vice president and contract chair Tom Comanzo says the revised agreement “addresses many of the concerns our members voiced with the first tentative agreement,” including reducing the lifespan of the con-

tract from five years to four years. Under the revised agreement, workers also will be reimbursed for the nine deficit-reduction leave days they are required to take.

Comanzo also said that once layoff notices went out, “we had names, and faces, and agencies, and work locations,” which made the layoffs very personal.

The four-year agreement spans fiscal years 2011 through 2015, and covers 56,000 professional, scientific and technical employees. It preserves the pay scale, and maintains increments and salary-grade parity, longevity payments and doctor visit co-pays. It provides a 2 percent increase in 2014. While employees will pay more toward their health insurance premiums under the pact, they may use vacation time to offset health insurance costs.

Within minutes of the ratification announcement, PEF’s Facebook page started

buzzing with activity. Josh Tomlin posted: “Thank you all for saving my job. I appreciate it.” Nancy Karpeles posted: “I am literally sitting in the hair salon, foils all over my head, with tears streaming down my face. Thank God! And thank the PEF members who voted to avert these layoffs!”

“Although this was a difficult decision for our members, it demonstrates they are willing to do their part to put New York state on a stable financial footing,” says PEF president Ken Brynien, who also is an AFT vice president.

“PEF members displayed incredible compassion and sacrifice in voting for a contract that is pivotal to New York state’s fiscal viability,” says AFT president Randi Weingarten. “New York state public workers didn’t create the fiscal crisis, but they have been asked to help solve it.”

# A plan that works



"Infrastructure is a major issue because of the oil boom," says Mike Stebbins.

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When President Obama unveiled legislation in September calling for investment in critical-needs areas such as infrastructure, public education and job training, infrastructure professionals like Leigh welcomed the prospects. Good infrastructure is essential, he says, to efficiently move people and goods, and ensure the health and safety of communities.

Obama's plan includes \$50 billion in immediate investments for highways, transit, rail and aviation—investments that would help modernize the nation's infrastructure, which receives a grade of D from the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Under Obama's plan, Alaska stands to get about \$220 million for infrastructure projects that could support at least 2,900 jobs.

"All of our infrastructure needs funding," says Leigh.

## Reducing public investments for health, education, research and the upkeep of infrastructure will erode competitiveness.

—"GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS REPORT 2011-2012,"  
World Economic Forum

The Alaska Public Employees Association member says nothing in the Northern Region is more central to the state's economy than the James W. Dalton Highway and the E.L. Patton Yukon River Bridge.

"The Dalton Highway is vital to Alaska for North Slope oil development, and it definitely needs rehabilitation," says Leigh, noting that the majority of the 400-plus-mile highway from Prudhoe Bay to just north of Fairbanks remains unpaved.

Then there is the issue of upgrading the 2,290-foot Yukon River Bridge—a must to support a new gas pipeline from the north. "Everyone is talking about a new [gas] pipeline, and getting over the Yukon River is one of the challenges," says Leigh.

For Alaska communities, the infrastructure needs are no less important and no less in demand. DOT&PF builds evacuation roads, sanitation roads and landfill roads. It's in the process of upgrading airports to federal aviation standards.

The list of projects is endless in Alaska—and elsewhere.

Under the president's plan, Illinois would receive at least \$1.6 billion for immediate infrastructure investment, which could support more than 20,000 jobs; Kansas would receive \$360 million, supporting nearly 5,000 jobs; New York would receive nearly \$3 billion, supporting more than 38,000 jobs; and North Dakota would receive about \$177 million, supporting a minimum of 2,300 jobs. The list goes on, with every state poised to receive money from the president's plan to create jobs—and address critical infrastructure needs.

"Right now, infrastructure is a major issue because of the oil boom," says Mike Stebbins, a transportation services supervisor for the North Dakota Department of Transportation. Highway maintenance is Stebbins' job, whether it's fixing potholes or plowing snow. The North Dakota Public Employees Association member is based out of Underwood, N.D., which is halfway between Bismarck and Minot. His routes are on the edge of the oil patch.

The oil boom has boosted the state's economy but has done a number on the roads, which were built for cars and farm trucks, says Stebbins. The oil well trucks are hauling 24/7, and the "semi traffic is beating the roads

to death," he says, noting that traffic volume has doubled in the last five years on his routes.

"We've had an oil boom once before, and it went bust, so everyone was hesitant about investing in road infrastructure," says Stebbins, who has worked for the DOT for more than 23 years. "Now we are behind the eight ball."

### The economics of infrastructure and other public spending

The ideological divide over the benefit of government spending has been pronounced since Obama unveiled the American Jobs Act in September.

Congressional Republican leaders were quick to denounce the plan. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) described Obama's plan as "the same wasteful spending, the same burdensome union giveaways, and the same temporary tax policy that has failed the American people."

While debate focuses on whether the nation can afford to invest in infrastructure, education and the unemployed, the real question is: Can we afford not to?

The World Economic Forum's "Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012" indicates that the United States' edge in the world is quickly dulling. The United States ranked 5th overall, out of 142 countries, in the 2011-2012 report; in the 2008-2009 rankings, it was first.

While the slip might not seem significant, the country appears to be on a downward trajectory in many of the "12 pillars of competitiveness" that are measured, including infrastructure, primary education, and higher



education and training—the exact areas of investment targeted under Obama’s plan.

The United States is 16th out of 142 nations in infrastructure; 42nd in health and primary education; and 13th in higher education and training.

“There is no doubt that reducing public investments for health, education, research and development, or the upkeep of infrastructure will erode competitiveness over the medium to longer term,” according to the report.

### Federal investment needed to spur job growth, fund critical needs

The nation is in crisis, and the one thing our country has in its first aid kit is federal investment to spur job growth and fund the nation’s critical needs.

The president’s comprehensive plan failed in the Senate in mid-October, prompting the administration and congressional allies to introduce the American Jobs Act in pieces.

On Nov. 3, the transportation infrastructure portion failed to advance in the Senate by a vote of 51-49, with all 47 Republicans and two Democratic caucus members voting no. On Oct. 20, a bill providing aid to states for teachers and first responders also failed to advance in the Senate. The vote was 50-50, with all Republicans and three Democratic caucus members voting no. Both measures would have been fully paid for by a tax increase—a fraction of 1 percent—on income above \$1 million a year.

“The American people deserve to know

why their Republican representatives in Washington refuse to put some of the workers hit hardest by the economic downturn back on the job rebuilding America,” Obama said in response, noting that 70 percent of the public supported the measure but “100 percent of Senate Republicans said no.”

“The fight is far from over,” says AFT president Randi Weingarten, noting that the components of the American Jobs Act “are not radical ideas; they are real solutions to get Americans back to work doing the work that needs to be done.”

When thousands gathered in mid-October in Washington, D.C., for the March for Jobs and Justice to honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., Weingarten called on the crowd to be “foot soldiers in the fight to reclaim the American dream.”

In Wisconsin, AFT member Joanne Johnson-Clauser has heard much of the dismissive spin surrounding the jobs plan—and is buying none of it.

When it comes to the effort to win passage of the jobs plan, like the battles across states to protect workers’ rights, and to fund essential public services and the jobs of the people who deliver them every day, Johnson-Clauser says the message is clear: “Never give up.”

### TAKE ACTION

Go to <http://go.aft.org/JobsAct> and tell members of Congress that your community needs the jobs plan.

### President Obama proposed the American Jobs Act to strengthen our economy and create jobs. How would you like to see the money and resources put to work in your community?

“Some of this money needs to be spent on our crumbling infrastructure. Our roadways, our electrical grid, and our water supplies need to be updated and improved. This would create millions of jobs.”

Michael Schmitz  
Ohio

“It’s important for Congress to pass the American Jobs Act. It will put people to work, improve school buildings and improve our roadways. Our country is behind many countries. We have been spending our resources on war and letting our country fall behind. ... We need to invest in ourselves and not the world.”

Ruth Hirsch  
New York

“The money should be used as outlined by the president: rebuilding roads, schools and rehiring teachers; helping those who are unemployed by extending unemployment benefits and those whose houses are ‘underwater.’”

Mary Anderson  
Illinois

## Public spending: A societal boon or bust?

### Research shows public spending drives economic growth and development

THERE’S AN ABUNDANCE of empirical evidence that dispels the notion that public spending is “parasitic on the real productive sectors of the economy.”

Some of that evidence was presented earlier this year during an Albert Shanker Institute forum on public services and public employee unions in Washington, D.C., that featured top economists, attorneys and public opinion researchers.

“There is nothing in the empirical evidence that suggests that public spending is a burden on [economic] growth or should be regarded as impeding growth,” said David Hall, a researcher with the Public Services International Research Unit at the University of Greenwich Business School in London.

Hall presented findings from PSIRU’s re-

port “Why We Need Public Spending,” which examines more than 140 years of global economic data.

PSIRU’s findings include:

- Fifty percent of all productivity gains in the whole U.S. economy between 1930, when public spending was just over 10 percent of

The public debt didn’t cause the crisis. The crisis made the public debt rise.

—David Hall, Public Services International Research Unit

gross domestic product, and 1980, when public spending was approaching 35 percent of GDP, were due to infrastructure investment.

- The share of all income taken by the top 1 percent of people more than doubled from 8

percent in 1980 to 17 percent in 2005.

- Income inequality within a country contributes to health and social problems—and the United States is the most unequal compared with 20 countries, including many European Union members and Japan.

- Health expenditures in the United States are 16 percent to 20 percent of GDP, approximately \$7,290 per capita in 2007—nearly double the per capita costs of public health-care systems in Canada, France and Germany, and more than double the per capita costs in Japan and the United Kingdom.

“For the past 150 years, public spending has been driving economic growth and development, and rising steadily in all countries of the world,” Hall said. “Far from being a bur-

*Continued on page 6*

# PRESIDENT OBAMA'S BOLD PLAN

**THE PRESIDENT** has proposed a plan that will rebuild our nation's infrastructure, put people back to work, put more money in the pockets of working Americans, invest in job training programs to help workers gain the skills they need to find meaningful employment, and help small businesses grow.

## WHAT WILL THE PRESIDENT'S JOBS PLAN DO?

### Put Educators Back in the Classroom

- Provide \$30 billion to prevent 280,000 teacher layoffs and allow school districts to hire additional teachers and frontline staff, including rehiring some of the thousands of educators who have lost their jobs since 2008.

### Rebuild and Modernize Schools

- Provide \$30 billion to modernize, renovate and repair 35,000 elementary and secondary school buildings (one-third of all U.S. public schools).
- Provide funds that can be used for emergency repair and renovation projects, asbestos abatement, and building new science and computer labs to upgrade technology in our public schools.
- Provide \$5 billion in funds to modernize, renovate and repair community colleges to ensure that students have high-quality

## Public spending

*Continued from page 5*

den on economies, it is an essential driving force, providing universal services for human development—healthcare, education, social security—and also the essential infrastructure making other economic activity possible.”

Yet, pressure to reduce public spending is a global phenomenon. The International Monetary Fund has been calling on countries to reduce their public spending by 8.7 percent of GDP by 2030, Hall noted.

“Forty percent of the cuts [the IMF is

pressuring countries to deliver] are coming from direct hits on government employees,” through wage and benefit freezes and reductions, and workforce cuts.

### Put Americans Back to Work

- Put workers in the building and construction trades back on the job by providing \$50 billion for essential infrastructure improvements to roads, bridges, highways, railways and aviation facilities.
- Add \$5 billion to keep police, firefighters and other first responders on the job.
- Expand job opportunities for low-income youth by providing \$1.5 billion for summer jobs and year-round employment.
- Provide tax credits for employers that hire unemployed veterans and those wounded in action.
- Provide tax credits to employers that hire long-term unemployed workers.
- Provide re-employment services to the unemployed.

### Provide Relief for America's Families

- Extend the payroll tax cut for 160 million workers regardless of income.
- Invest \$15 billion to rehabilitate homes, businesses and communities as well as put workers in the building and construction trades back on the job in our hardest-hit communities.
- Provide \$49 billion to extend emergency benefits to unemployed workers through 2012.
- Enable low-income homeowners to refinance their homes with the current historic low interest rates, allowing more families to remain in their homes.

pressuring countries to deliver] are coming from direct hits on government employees,” through wage and benefit freezes and reductions, and workforce cuts.

For a country like the United States, which is spending about 42 percent of GDP, the IMF target would amount to a 20 percent cut in public spending, he said.

The historical data, according to Hall, should be used to challenge arbitrary public spending targets.

“It's not the public debt that caused the crisis,” he said. “It's the crisis that [made the public debt rise].”



## WHY SHOULD CONGRESS PASS THE PRESIDENT'S JOBS PLAN?

### America's schools must be modernized.

The American Society of Civil Engineers in a 2009 report gave the nation's school buildings a grade of D. About one-fourth of all public schools were built before 1950; and 45 percent of all public schools were built between 1950 and 1969.

### We must put Americans back to work.

It is estimated that if the president's plan is passed, 1.9 million jobs will be created over the next two years.

### We must reduce child poverty.

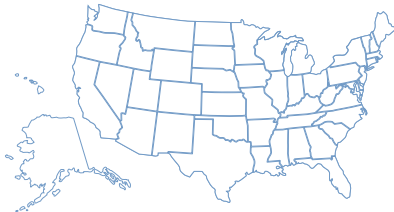
In the richest country in the world, the numbers are shocking and morally unacceptable: 22 percent of America's children live in poverty; 39 percent of African-American children live in poverty; and 35 percent of Hispanic-American children live in poverty. Putting parents back to work will reduce poverty.



### John Vecelio on public spending driving growth:

“This has been known for ages but it would undermine the Republican agenda and once again give more strength to the working class.”

[www.facebook.com/AFTunion](http://www.facebook.com/AFTunion)



**MT** The MEA-MFT will have its day in court, so to speak, over the issue of whether the Legislature failed to bargain in good faith with its organized employees.

In late May, a trio of unions, including the MEA-MFT, filed an unfair labor practice (ULP) charge against the Legislature, which refused to act in a timely fashion on the pay plan for state employees. The unions charged that the legislators failed to bargain in good faith on the economic plan that had been negotiated between the unions and Gov. Brian Schweitzer, as required by state law. The plan would have provided a 1 percent salary increase in 2012 and a 3 percent increase in 2013.

In late September, a Montana Department of Labor and Industry hearing officer recommended that the Board of Personnel Appeals dismiss the ULP—and issued an order to cancel the hearing that had been scheduled for Oct. 6-7 on the matter.

The unions quickly filed an appeal of the recommendation to dismiss, which will be heard Dec. 15.

According to news reports, the state collected \$76 million more in revenue for the year ending June 30 than what the legislative fiscal staff had projected—and what the Legislature had used in crafting the budget for the 2012-13 biennium.

The state employee pay increases that had been negotiated between the unions and the governor carried an \$8 million price tag.

**NY** The Faculty Association of Suffolk Community College started a community outreach program about eight years ago, first creating a presence at existing events, then coordinating with Habitat for Humanity to raise money and build two houses each year.

“That was successful,” says FASCC co-chair Dan Linker, “but it didn’t play to our strengths. We’re not all that great at raising money, and most of us are not gifted carpenters.”

So in 2009, the faculty members switched gears and founded the Professors on Wheels program aimed at giving presentations to seniors at nursing homes. “The more we



thought about it, the more we realized that what we can offer is lots of valuable and interesting information to the community,” says Linker. “After all, we are a community college.”

At least a dozen FASCC members participate in the program, using PowerPoints, videos and handouts to present a wide range of subjects, from stem cell research to poetry.

Linker, who has visited the seniors several times so far, presents the history of the English language. Jean Anastasia lectures about the impact that global climate change is having on the ocean and marine ecosystems. Natalie Niemann’s session is on the Pioneers of Modern Architecture. Marianne McNamara offers a session on jellyfish, and another on her research in the Antarctic.

“I love going out and teaching people about a subject they know nothing about,” says McNamara. The seniors “have such insightful questions, they really absorb it all. They’re so involved in the presentation, and they’re asking all these questions, I don’t want to leave.”

“I like the fact that I can use my skills as a teacher and marine scientist to brighten their days a little,” says Anastasia.

**TX** Laid-off teacher Kimberly Russell introduced President Obama at an early October event in Mesquite, where the president detailed the nation’s need for the American Jobs Act.

Russell, a Dallas high school social studies teacher who began her career as a substitute teacher, eventually completed Dallas’ alternative certification program to begin a second

Jean Anastasia presents a session on global climate change to residents at Island Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. “I like the fact that I can ... brighten their days a little,” she says.



PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT

career as a teacher. For three years, her salary was paid through federal stimulus funds, and she lost her job when those funds ran out.

“There are teachers and educators like Kim all over the country,” Obama said. “I met a first-grade teacher from Minnesota at the White House who was laid off after having been named the Teacher of the Year in her school district. ... There’s a teacher over in Grand Prairie, Texas, who actually chose to resign in order to protect the job of a single mom who also taught at the school.”

Too many teachers have lost their jobs because of budget cuts, and without passage of the American Jobs Act, Obama said, thousands more could be at risk in the coming year.

Laying off teachers doesn’t just hurt the teachers and their families, he said. “It undermines our future as a nation. If you’ve got Kim, an AP teacher, not in the classroom, those kids aren’t going to have the same opportunities. And I want everybody to understand that what is at stake is nothing less than our ability to compete in this 21st-century economy.”

Russell has been featured in many media reports, including in the *Dallas Morning News*, and she also appeared on the “Ed Schultz Show” on MSNBC.



ALYSIA BURTON

Ohioans celebrate repeal of anti-union law.

## Citizens' veto in Ohio sends a clear message

### Voters reject effort to take away the rights of workers

THE CITIZENS OF OHIO took back their state with a historic vote on Nov. 8 to repeal S.B. 5. The vote, which marks the first time that the collective bargaining rights of public employees have been upheld on a statewide ballot, sends a clear signal that union members and their allies will not sit idly while politicians scapegoat public employees for an economic crisis they did not create.

"The repeal of S.B. 5 was a victory for every teacher who helps a struggling child, every firefighter who races into a burning building, every snowplow operator who ensures safe travel for others, and every community that relies on these vital public services," AFT president Randi Weingarten says. "The historic citizens' veto was a victory for all Ohioans, and for all Americans who care about democracy and fair play."

Ohio voters rejected the law gutting collective bargaining for public employees by 61 percent to 39 percent. The outcome is a clear vote of confidence in public employees who provide vital services every day, including the 20,000 teachers and school personnel, higher education faculty and staff, and social service professionals represented by the Ohio Federation of Teachers.

OFT president Sue Taylor says the repeal of S.B. 5, which was signed into law March 31, is a credit to the broad-based coalition of more than 17,000 volunteers who collected nearly 1.3 million signatures to put the issue on the ballot and then worked to make sure their fellow Ohioans knew what was at stake.

"Ohioans said loud and clear that taking away the rights of workers does not solve our state's economic problems," Taylor says. "Voters chose to support the idea that workers should retain their right to have a voice and dignity in their workplace."

Social worker Teresa Mitchell, a member of the AFT-affiliated Federation of Franklin County Children Services Employees in Columbus, says the one takeaway from Ohio is "how important it is for people to stand up, united. Solidarity is important, and the one thing [S.B. 5] has done is that it has brought people together."

The repeal of S.B. 5 was an important victory. But as Weingarten says, "there is still much work to be done." The same politicians who supported S.B. 5 also passed a state budget that cut vital funding for local communities and classrooms by more than \$3.5 billion, Weingarten notes.

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The Community Advantage

The interest rate a member receives is based on the member's credit history.

**AFT +** is your advocate. For information on all **AFT +** programs, call 800/238-1133, ext. 8643, or e-mail [aftplus@aft.org](mailto:aftplus@aft.org). The AFT has an expense reimbursement and/or endorsement arrangement for marketing this program. For more information, please contact AFT Financial Services at 800/238-1133, ext. 4493; send an e-mail to [disclosureinfo@aft.org](mailto:disclosureinfo@aft.org); or visit [www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure](http://www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure).

**AFT offers scholarships & grants**

**APPLY NOW FOR THE 2012 ROBERT G. PORTER SCHOLARS PROGRAM.** AFT members and their children are eligible to participate in the program, which awards four \$8,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors and awards \$1,000 grants to AFT members who are continuing their education.

**TO APPLY:**

- Download the application from the AFT website at [go.aft.org/scholarships](http://go.aft.org/scholarships).
- E-mail an application request to [porterscholars@aft.org](mailto:porterscholars@aft.org).

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 31, 2012**