



PUBLIC EMPLOYEE Advocate

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

TWO THOUSAND MILES may separate Sacramento, Calif., and Springfield, Ill., but the two state capitals had one thing in common April 21. They were the gathering spots for more than 22,000 Americans with one common cause: raising revenue to fund public services.

As state legislatures across the country grapple with another year of significant revenue shortfalls, the turnout at the two rallies was reaffirming for public service proponents nationwide.

"This is a fight for Illinois' future—everybody's future," Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) president and AFT vice president Ed Gepfert Jr. told the crowd gathered at the Statehouse in Springfield. "Education. Public safety. Human services. And all the vital programs. We cannot stand by and watch our children's education or our seniors be harmed by inaction in the Capitol."

The rallies attracted 7,500 and 15,000 public service proponents in Sacramento and Springfield, respectively, from all corners of both states—which equates to 63 public service advocates for every member of the California Legislature and 85 for every member of the Illinois General Assembly.

More than 7,500 concerned citizens rallied for investment in public services in California.

The rally-goers' message contrasts with that of Tea Party activists who are making headlines in their pursuit of limiting public services through tax and spending restrictions. April Tea Party events in Sacramento and Springfield each drew fewer than 2,000 people.

'March for California's Future'

The Sacramento rally really started March 5 when seven individuals, including four members of the California Federation of Teachers (CFT),

Continued on page 3

Fighting for our future



'Out of Balance'

Report examines compensation trends

PAGE 7

Safety First

Public service can be a dangerous job PAGE 4

Privatization Outrage

Executive order reads like an anti-union manifesto PAGE 6

Healthcare Reform

Notable changes that take effect this year and next PAGE 7



Congress must act

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

A NUMBER OF SECTORS of the economy appear to be bouncing back as the recession begins to recede. Housing starts, home foreclosures and job creation all show movement in the right direction. But the damage caused during the recession is broad and deep, and the fiscal situation in most states will not improve for quite some time. In fact, if one uses furloughs, pay freezes and job cuts as a measure, public employees could face one of the toughest years yet of the economic downturn.

than four years—state and local governments shed 6,000 jobs during the same period. Many public employees already were carrying heavier workloads, because many states started this recession with fewer employees than they had in 2000. Add furloughs to the mix and there is even less time to do the job.

It's not that there's less work for our members to do, or that these services are any less important during economic downturns than up cycles. In fact, the opposite tends to be true. The needs will be there—they just won't be met.

These cuts could have lasting, serious and even tragic consequences. And they could derail the country's fragile economic recovery. State and local employees who have been furloughed or laid off will have less money to spend in their local economies, causing a ripple effect that could lead to a cycle of economic weakness.

The federal government didn't let Wall Street fail. Why would we do less for essential public services, which undeniably are too important to fail? The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the Local Jobs for America Act, which will save and create an estimated 1 million jobs in state and local governments. And, at this writing, Congress was considering legislation to increase the federal share of Medicaid and to extend unemployment and COBRA subsidies through the end of the year.

I have been visiting with members in their workplaces throughout the country. I have heard about and seen firsthand the devastat-

ing effects of the economic downturn on our members and the services they provide. No sector of government has been immune to the consequences of the economic downturn, but certain examples grab one's attention.

Ken Brynien, president of the New York State Public Employees Federation, told me recently about the impact of cuts to the state hotline to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Because of the urgent nature of these reports, hotline employees are required to answer each call within 30 seconds. Years of budget cuts have stretched staff so thin that the required 30-second wait period has at times stretched to a 30-minute delay. Not only does this alarm and frustrate hotline personnel, it requires callers—teachers, child care workers, medical workers, and others who are required by law to report any signs of abuse they encounter—to hold the line for an unacceptable length of time.

Other cuts may be less consequential, yet still negatively affect important services (and the public's impression of government and government workers)—such as longer lines at the Department of Motor Vehicles, delayed road repairs and longer waiting times for services from every government agency.

Two very different scenarios are possible for the coming months. Cuts to the programs and personnel our communities need could continue and even worsen. Or elected leaders can do what it takes to help states restore vital services and avert further cuts to essential services. Congress must act.

The federal government didn't let Wall Street fail. Why would we do less for essential **public services**, which undeniably **are too important to fail?**

Years of budget cuts in the vast majority of states already have taken their toll. Most states have exhausted their federal stimulus funds, and many states long ago tapped out their financial reserves. The continuing economic weakness means that additional reductions will be cutting into bone—affecting protective services for children, water and air quality, and infrastructure needs such as bridge and road inspections.

Even as the U.S. Labor Department reported that payrolls grew by 290,000 jobs in April—the largest one-month gain in more



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Fighting for our future



ILLINOIS FEDERATION OF TEACHERS PHOTO

Illinoisans turned out en masse to lobby for tax increases to fund public services.

Continued from page 1
set out from Bakersfield on a 48-day, 365-mile “March for California’s Future.” They followed a path blazed 45 years

ago when César Chávez walked through the Central Valley to Sacramento to draw attention to the plight of farmworkers.

This time, however, the focus was on the plight of all Californians. More than \$20 billion has been slashed from the state budget over the past two years, cutting public services to the core.

Trudging through a valley known for its lush farms and tidy vineyards, the marchers attracted daily media attention. They staged rallies, organized teach-ins, registered voters and talked to people about how their lives have been affected by the economy.

The march had three goals: to reclaim the promise of high-quality public education and services; to rebuild state government so it works for everyone; and to restore fair and equitable taxes to invest in California’s future.

The CFT, the AFT’s state federation, sponsored the march in coalition with other labor, community and faith groups. The core group of marchers included a community college professor and a juvenile probation officer.

AFT Guild member Jim Miller, a professor of English and labor studies at San Diego City College, marched because “we are slamming shut the doors of opportunity and gutting our infrastructure.” Miller says lawmakers need to

“bring back a fair and equitable progressive tax system.”

More than 7,500 unionists, including AFT president Randi Weingarten, parents, students, community activists and faith leaders, joined Miller and the other marchers for the last mile of their trek to the Statehouse.

“These marchers didn’t march for themselves,” Weingarten told the rally. “They marched for our children; they marched for our future.”

The coalition hopes the march helped raise awareness that the budget crisis and “its attendant local ravages were not an act of nature or God, but the result of conscious choices made by the Legislature and governor.”

‘Fighting for our Future’

MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow called the 15,000-strong “Save Our State” rally at the Illinois Capitol the “un-Tea Party Movement.”

Rally-goers, including members of the IFT, the AFT’s state federation, which represents members in each of the five AFT constituency groups, were calling on the General Assembly to pass tax increases to fund public education and state services.

The gathering was the largest rally at the Statehouse since the era of the Equal Rights Amendment more than a quarter-century ago, according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

Speakers called on lawmakers to act responsibly, do their jobs and raise the revenues that are desperately needed to fund public ser-

vices. The state’s budget deficit for fiscal year 2011, which will begin July 1, is estimated at more than \$13 billion.

The rally was organized by the Responsible Budget Coalition, a network of more than 200 organizations, including the IFT, other labor unions, and community and religious groups. The coalition wants the General Assembly to broaden the sales-tax base to include some three dozen consumer and luxury services; raise the individual income tax from 3 percent to 5 percent; and increase the corporate income tax from 4.8 percent to 5 percent.

Without additional revenue, public employee layoffs—including K-12 teachers and state employees—are expected to register in the tens of thousands. No number can be placed on what those layoffs will mean to communities in terms of larger class sizes and restricted access to public services.

Longtime state employee Randy Hawkins, a member of the IFT’s Illinois Federation of Public Employees, said he participated in the rally “to show solidarity not just with the other unions but with the other groups that are being affected by the budget crisis.”

Hawkins, a site superintendent with the Department of Natural Resources, also is president of the Rochester school board. He can appreciate the need to balance the budget.

“I hope the demonstration will force the Legislature to show some fortitude and do something to address the problem,” says Hawkins. “When you are talking about \$13 billion, you cannot tax your way out of it; but you cannot cut your way out of it either. It is going to require a combination of a lot of sacrifices by a lot of people. It is going to be shared sacrifice.”

Randy Hawkins, a site superintendent at Spittler Woods State Natural Area in Mt. Zion, Ill., participated in the Springfield rally.



ROBERT POPE



WHEELING

Stop Workplace Violence

Public service can be a dangerous job; locals work to raise awareness and institute safety protocols

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY 2010 had personal meaning for Priscilla Caporaletti-Bean. Her colleague, Hannah Wheeling, was killed in the line of duty in February.

That line of duty was not law enforcement. Wheeling was a teacher at Cheltenham Youth Facility, home to more than 100 male youths ranging in age from 12 to 18, in Prince George's County, Md. The suspect in Wheeling's death is a 13-year-old student.

"I want to remember Hannah as the woman who truly loved everyone and loved education," says Caporaletti-Bean, a math teacher at Cheltenham. "She wanted to make sure every child had the opportunity to learn and receive a quality education."

In response to Wheeling's death, the Maryland Professional Employees Council (MPEC), which represents teachers, nurses

"We are determined to do all we can as a union to work with the staff and administration to make these facilities safe," says MPEC president George Myers. "This is the best way we can honor Hannah's memory."

The troubling statistics

In 2008, the last year for which comprehensive data are available, 544 public sector workers were killed on the job. An additional 938,000 state and local government workers suffered work-related injuries—a rate of 6.3 cases per 100 workers, which is significantly higher than the 3.9 cases per 100 workers in the private sector, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Despite the statistics, efforts to strengthen workplace safety protocols are often the result of a tragedy.

"You can bring any concern to the table whether it is related to building safety or safety on the job," says Kathy Bruner, an FCCS social worker. "It is a forum to bring issues to light and to work on resolutions that protect everybody."

A number of safety protocols have come out of the safety committee, including having a deputy on guard at the front desk and a requirement that every visitor sign in and wear a badge. Employee identification badges also must be visible at all times now.

FCCS also instituted a buddy system. Workers can request to have a co-worker accompany them on a visit, or can request a police escort, says Bruner, executive vice president of the Federation of Franklin County Children Services Employees and a member of the AFT Public Employees program and policy council.

Since Fitzgives' death, FCCS also has required child welfare caseworkers to take a minimum of three hours of safety training every year, regardless of years of service. Courses range from self-defense techniques to de-escalation skills.

Before Fitzgives' death, Bruner says safety courses were offered but not mandated. "Her death forced an awareness—of being more mindful and taking care of yourself in the performance of your job responsibilities."

"When you are working with parents who do not want you in their home to begin with, you are starting from a difficult position," says Bruner, who has worked at FCCS for 25 years. "This is a very different dynamic from working with voluntary clients who welcome your involvement, services and support. We had a deputy sheriff once tell us that [sheriffs] are the only other county employees who have to go into the same homes we do, but they get to carry a gun, which speaks to the dangers we can encounter on the job."

Fallen colleagues never far from memory

"I still wear the pin on my badge that [FCCS] gave us to commemorate her memory," says Bruner, of the pin employees received following the death of Fitzgives.



"We want to ensure that what happened to [Wheeling] does not happen to anyone, anywhere," says Priscilla Caporaletti-Bean.

MICHAEL CAMPBELL

and other professionals at Cheltenham, has called for a joint labor-management workplace violence prevention program. MPEC also has conducted a statewide survey of members who work at juvenile detention facilities. Using the results from the survey, MPEC is working with the administration to plan prevention training and to form labor-management committees to address safety concerns.

Take Franklin County Children Services (FCCS) in Columbus, Ohio. A joint labor-management safety committee was formed after the tragic death of child welfare caseworker Nancy Fitzgives in October 2001. Fitzgives was beaten, choked and stabbed during a routine home visit with two parents whose seven children had been taken into protective custody after allegations of child neglect and parental drug abuse.



ERNE LEVRA

“We had a deputy sheriff once tell us that [sheriffs] are the only other county employees who have to go into the same houses we do, but they get to carry a gun. ...”

—KATHY BRUNER

Franklin County [Ohio] Children Services

“When Hannah left us, she took a little piece of all of us with her,” says Caporaletti-Bean, noting that employees, the union and the administration “are bringing ourselves together so her death will not be in vain,” she adds.

“We want to ensure that what happened to Hannah does not happen to anyone, anywhere.”

The first Workers Memorial Day was observed April 28, 1989—the 18th anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act).

Prior to this Workers Memorial Day, Caporaletti-Bean was not aware that such a day existed. “I was pleased to find out that there was something established to honor men and women who have given their lives on the job in one way, shape, form or another.”

On this year’s anniversary, Caporaletti-Bean and her colleagues remembered Wheeling while some 20 miles away on Capitol Hill federal lawmakers held a hearing about the

Protecting America’s Workers Act (PAWA), which would, among other things, strengthen the OSH Act by expanding coverage to uncovered workers, including more than 8 million state and local public employees, and strengthening whistleblower protections.

“There is universal agreement about the importance of workers being involved in addressing safety and health hazards at the workplace,” AFL-CIO general counsel Lynn Rhinehart told members of the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee’s Workforce Protections Subcommittee.

“Workers see firsthand the hazards posed by their jobs and their workplaces, and they are an important source of ideas for addressing these hazards,” Rhinehart noted. “But in order for workers to feel secure in bringing hazards to their employer’s attention, they must have confidence that they will not lose their jobs or face other types of retaliation for doing so.”

—KATHY WALSH

Budget crisis jeopardizing employees’ lives

PAROLE OFFICER SAMUEL SALTERS, a member of the New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF), suffered a nonfatal gunshot wound to the shoulder at the hands of paroled murderer Robert Morales.

The April 15 shooting raised the ire of PEF, which has been calling on the New York State Division of Parole (DOP) to install metal detectors in parole offices for years. While the DOP agreed to a limited pilot program in 2009, that program was stalled over staffing issues, says PEF president and AFT vice president Ken Brynien.

“This latest incident should serve as a warning: the state can no longer hide behind the budget deficit as an excuse not to staff metal detectors in the state’s parole offices,” says Brynien.

Eyewitnesses to Salters’ shooting said the parolee sat in the waiting room of the parole

office in downtown Brooklyn until his name was called, then calmly approached Salters, who was sitting at his desk, and shot him. According to Associated Press reports, Morales’ weapon jammed before he could fire another shot.

“This comes down to appropriate staffing levels,” says parole officer and PEF council leader Manuelita Clemente. “We recognize there is a hiring freeze due to the state’s fiscal crisis, but we are talking about life and death, and the safety of our officers, visitors and parolees. The only deterrent at this time is a piece of paper on the wall that lists banned items, including weapons.”

According to PEF, another parolee brought a weapon into a parole office in Queens in March 2009. That parolee was shot to death after grabbing a parole officer and holding a knife to her throat.

What are the risks associated with your occupation?

“As a child protective worker, I and my co-workers have to constantly be aware of safety issues and risks associated with our work. Common worries include: clients calling or coming to our homes and threats of violence. Many of our workers are alone at clients’ homes, and this makes them vulnerable to all sorts of possible safety factors.”

REGINA MAURER
Ohio

“I’m a correctional officer for the state of Colorado. Every day my co-workers and I are faced with the chance a convicted felon could take our lives through violence or by things like hepatitis, MRSA, TB, etc. We also face the administration, which allows convicted felons to possess X-ACTO knives (called etching tools) in their rooms and not on any tool control list. Officers are not allowed to even have pepper spray for personal defense. [The administration] has armed the inmates and disarmed the officers. At 96 inmates to one housing officer, I would say it’s a miracle nothing bad has happened yet.”

JOHN BARRON
Colorado

“Ocean rescue lifeguard: six-foot shore break, washing machine conditions on the inside, rip currents sucking out multiple victims, up to six thankful swimmers on a buoy and you still need to go get more [who were] sucked further out. ... Do that for hours on end with no rest. Risky, you bet, but your fellow lifeguards and a time-honored system of working together and trust creates camaraderie and your safety net. Risk is mitigated by teamwork.”

BOB ADLER
New York

How have furloughs affected your job?

IT’S YOUR VOICE

We want to hear from you!
Visit www.aft.org/voices
today where you can respond
to this and other questions.





CT Gov. M. Jodi Rell's suspension of the Technical High School System's licensed practical nurse (LPN) program for budget reasons was short-lived, thanks to the perseverance of AFT Connecticut and its State Vocational Federation of Teachers (SVFT) local, which represents the instructors.

In April, Gov. Rell signed legislation re-establishing the program at six locations starting in January 2011.

LPN students and program alumni united in protest against elimination of the program, which graduated approximately 350 students every 16 months. "We are a program that has a 100 percent hire rate without job placement" services, said Connie Gibeault, one of several SVFT members to testify during a public hearing on Rell's budget mitigation plan. Gibeault, who was department head at Windham Technical School's LPN program noted that "approximately one-third of my applicants have Workforce Investment Act funding."

"Our analysis showed cutting the program actually cost the state more than \$800,000," said SVFT president Rick Tanasi. "What's more, it cost the state much-needed LPNs."

Tuition for private sector LPN programs in the state cost upward of \$30,000 compared with the \$4,850 tuition for the state-run program.

AFT Connecticut reports that SVFT members Julie Marzano and AFT Connecticut lobbyist Jennifer Berigan participated in a legislative task force charged with finding ways to restore the LPN program.

NY "It's not rocket science!" a television commercial by the New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF) declares. "Cut the waste, not the workers."

The waste PEF wants cut is private contractors. "Nice people, but they do the same work [as state employees] and it costs more," says the narrator, who notes that the state could save \$375 million annually by cutting the 23,000-plus consultant workforce by 50 percent.

The PEF ads began running on broadcast and cable TV statewide April 5, supplemented by print advertisements in targeted newspapers and on newspaper websites. The aim is to educate both the public and legislative leaders about the budget savings that can be achieved without sacrificing services and cutting the state workforce.

PEF's savings suggestions are well documented. In January, the union issued a 27-page report, "The Tip of the Iceberg," detailing the state's wasteful spending on consultants. Based on filings with the Office of State Comptroller, PEF found that the state pays thousands of consultants performing professional services an average of \$160,719 per consultant annually, which is 62 percent more than it would cost to have state employees do the work.

The ad campaign is the second series of ads the union has run this year. The first series, which began running in March, pointed out that there are 4,500 fewer state jobs today than there were in 2008. "It takes people to provide service," says the narrator.

WI AFT-Wisconsin's State Employees Council's annual professional development day drew a record crowd of nearly 500 participants. The daylong event April 28 in Madison was structured around four dozen workshops on topics ranging from civility in the workplace to tips on how to make meetings more focused and productive.

"As a group of professionals, we really have needs for ongoing training, and this event provides that opportunity," says Jeff Richter, president of Professional Employees in Research, Statistics and Analysis. PERSA bargaining unit members get five days of paid professional development annually under their collective bargaining agreement.

Richter, a member of the professional development day planning committee, says the aim was to offer workshops that "will keep you healthy and informed on issues that come up in life or in the daily workplace" and workshops about "things you need to know because you are a state employee."

One of the "things" state employees need to know is the process for reclassification. Richter, a public utility rate analyst for the Public Service Commission, took the lead at those workshops. While it's not an easy process, PERSA secured classification upgrades last year for 19 of the local's 39 members who had been regularly assigned work above their classification.

Executive order or anti-union manifesto?

IS NEW JERSEY Gov. Chris Christie's executive order establishing a privatization task force smart policy or political payback?

While governors use their executive order-issuing authority to do many things, one thing that most executive orders have in common is that they are to the point. Written in a tone of reasoned authority, Statesmanlike (definition: a political leader regarded as a disinterested promoter of the public good).

Christie's March order establishing a privatization task force charged with developing "a comprehensive approach" to the "privatization of state and local services," on the other hand, reads more like a fundraising speech.

Five paragraphs—or 1.5 pages of the 4.5-page order, are dedicated to attacking the pay, benefits and collective bargaining rights of New Jersey public employees.

In one paragraph, Christie rants that "personnel savings" are "hindered by legal impediments."

The Garden State, like every other state, has had its privatization failures. Nevertheless, Christie is using that flawed playbook: The governor-appointed task force will be made up of "individuals drawn from outside government."

Those individuals include a former Republican congressman turned lobbyist; a former mayor (who lost her 2008 Republican primary bid for Congress); a former senior policy adviser to former New Jersey Gov. Tom Kean; a Chamber of Commerce executive who is responsible for directing public policy; and the president of a business advocacy organization.

Jean Pierce, of the AFT's Health Professionals and Allied Employees, has no doubts that Christie's motives are to weaken the civil service and bust unions. But, she says, his quest to shrink government will come at a cost to citizens.

Christie and his cronies must be banking on the fact that public outrage over the poor delivery and excess cost of privatized services won't swell up until he's long gone from the governor's office.

Now that's responsible stewardship of New Jersey taxpayer dollars.

The truth about public employee compensation

A 20-year look at public-private sector pay

NEXT TIME YOUR newspaper runs a story about how public employee compensation is bleeding taxpayers dry—write a letter to the editor.

Out of Balance? Comparing Public and Private Compensation over 20 Years finds that not only do jobs in the public sector typically require more education than private sector positions but also that state and local government employees earn less than their private sector counterparts.

The report, released April 28, was commissioned by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence (www.slge.org) and the National Institute on Retirement Security (www.nirsonline.org).

Authors Keith A. Bender and John S. Heywood, both professors in the Department of Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, found that local government workers typically earn 12 percent less than their private sector counterparts with comparable earnings determinants, including edu-

cation and work experience. State employee wages are 11 percent less.

When the value of retirement, healthcare and other benefits are taken into account, total compensation for local government employees is 7.4 percent lower on average than the private sector; and state employees are 6.8 percent behind.

Because government jobs demand more education and skills, “accounting for these differences is critical in understanding compensation patterns,” Heywood says.

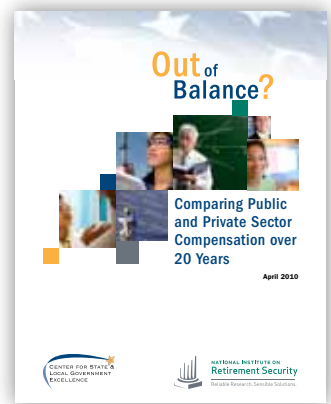
Bender and Heywood also examine public-private pay differentials in seven states, including California, Illinois, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

In Illinois, they found that both local and state employees make 13 percent less than their private sector counterparts. In Pennsylvania, local employee wages trail private sector ones by 13 percent, and state employee wages are 5 percent behind the private sector.

“This study refutes the critics of govern-

ment service who assert that public employees are overcompensated,” says Bruce Ludwig, chair of the AFT Public Employees program and policy council, noting that the findings are consistent with the AFT’s annual state employees Compensation Survey. (The 2010 Compensation Survey will be released in September.)

Elizabeth K. Kellar, president and chief executive officer of the Center for State and Local Government Excellence, says the study sheds light on her organization’s January survey of government hiring managers. “Hiring managers told us that despite the economy, they find it difficult to fill vacancies for highly skilled positions such as engineering, environmental sciences, information technology and healthcare.”



Healthcare reform is historic step forward

Many of the new law’s provisions will take effect this year

SOME OF THE BIGGEST challenges that health professionals face are the uninsured patients who seek care in the later stages of illness because they could not afford routine check-ups, prescriptions or follow-up care.

In the past year, public health nurse Yvonne Macklin, a member of the Baltimore County Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, has seen a surprising drop in patient visits at her county health center.

“We are just not getting as many people as we are used to seeing,” she says. “People don’t have the \$20 co-pay to spend for care. It’s just not in their budget.” Macklin is optimistic that the healthcare reforms signed into law in March by President Barack Obama will make healthcare more affordable.

It’s not just the uninsured and underinsured, however, whose healthcare needs are addressed by the new law. The reforms are systemwide. Changes that go into effect this year:

- Repeal lifetime limits. Currently, almost every AFT member’s health plan has a cap on benefits.
- Allow adult children up to age 26 to be on their parents’ health plan, provided they are not eligible for employer-sponsored coverage.

Most AFT plans currently provide coverage to children to age 24 as long as they are full-time students and a dependent of their parents.

- Prohibit insurance companies from dropping coverage when a person gets sick.
- Disallow preauthorization or referral requirements for certain services.

No law is perfect, but this is landmark legislation that makes a significant start, says AFT president Randi Weingarten.

Good things in store for seniors

There are plenty of improvements for seniors in the new healthcare reform law, too, including lowering prescription drug costs for seniors.

The new law will gobble up the Medicare Part D prescription “doughnut hole” between now and 2020. The doughnut hole is the \$3,610 gap between the annual coverage limit of \$2,830 and \$6,440, the point at which catastrophic drug coverage takes effect.

Specifically, in 2010, seniors who fall into the doughnut hole will receive a \$250 rebate. Starting in 2011, seniors will receive a 50 percent discount on brand-name drugs. Over the following years, additional discounts on



MICHAEL CAMPBELL

brand-name and generic drugs will be phased in so the doughnut hole is completely filled by 2020.

The new law also improves Medicare preventive health coverage by providing a free annual wellness visit and personalized prevention plan services, and improves transitional care by establishing the Community Care Transitions Program to provide transition services to high-risk Medicare beneficiaries following hospital discharge. Both of these changes are effective Jan. 1, 2011.

Playing 'chicken' with people's paychecks

Governor's response to budget impasse: furlough state employees

A FEDERAL COURT in Albany has granted unions a restraining order against New York Gov. David Paterson, blocking him and the Legislature from forcing more than 100,000 state employees to take one-day-per-week furloughs—the equivalent of a 20 percent pay cut.

In the absence of a budget for the new fiscal year, which began April 1, Gov. Paterson announced May 4 that he would propose weekly furloughs in the next round of emergency appropriations bills. On May 10, the Legislature approved Gov. Paterson's emergency appropriations establishing weekly furloughs starting May 17. Four unions, including three AFT affiliates, contemporaneously moved swiftly to court, maintaining in their lawsuits that the furloughs are illegal, violating, among other things, the U.S. Constitution's prohibition against passage of state laws that impair contractual rights.

The three AFT affiliates filing suit are the New York State Public Employees Federation, which represents 58,000 state employees; the United University Profes-

sions, which represents 35,000 faculty and professional staff on State University of New York campuses; and the Professional Staff Congress, which represents 22,000 faculty and academic staff in the City University of New York system.

"The governor continues to insist state employee unions aren't sacrificing and are uncooperative in helping to address the state's fiscal crisis," says PEF president Ken Brynien, who also is an AFT vice president. "That is patently false. PEF has given the governor proposals to cut hundreds of millions of dollars, including cutting contract consultants, reducing overtime and expanding the voluntary severance program."

In addition to granting the temporary restraining order, Judge Lawrence Kahn ordered the governor to include contractually mandated salary raises in any further budget extender bills. Since April 12, each extender bill submitted by the governor has suspended the 4 percent wage increase.

"Our position has been and remains: The state should be doing everything possible to reduce costs and waste before targeting the workforce and the services we provide to the taxpayers," says Brynien. "We remain ready to help the governor achieve the savings through the solutions we have provided."



Protect your pets!

(they won't get by on their looks alone)



INSURANCE

PET INSURANCE: Policies include older pets, accident-only coverage and more. For as little as \$11.95 a month, AFT + pet insurance can protect you against large, unexpected veterinary expenses.

PET ASSURE VETERINARY CARE SAVINGS: Save 25 percent off your bill at participating veterinarians. All pets are covered, including exotics and horses. No exclusions for older pets.



For more information about these and other savings, go to:

aft.org/members
The Community Advantage

AFT + is your advocate. For information on all **AFT +** programs, call 800/238-1133, ext. 8643, or e-mail 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; or visit www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure.