



A Union of Professionals

AFT News Release

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TENNESSEE RANKS 29TH IN THE NATION FOR TEACHER PAY Teacher Pay Is Insufficient To Meet Rising Debt, Housing Costs in Many Areas

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Tennessee ranked 29th in the nation for its average teacher salary in 2004-05, according to the American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) annual teacher salary survey released today. Nationally, anemic teacher salary growth continues to lag behind inflation and precludes many teachers from finding affordable housing and paying off student loans.

The average teacher salary in Tennessee for the 2004-05 school year was \$42,076, up 4.4 percent from the previous year. Tennessee was ranked 22nd in the nation for beginning teacher salary, at \$32,369, an increase of 6.3 percent from 2004.

The average teacher salary nationally in 2004-05 was \$47,602, a 2.2 percent increase from the previous year. This falls short of the rate of inflation for that year, which was 3.4 percent. Between 2003 and 2005, the buying power of the average teacher salary decreased by almost \$800.

“Given the difficulty many districts have attracting and keeping educators, the financial penalty for deciding to become a teacher is unacceptable,” said AFT President Edward J. McElroy. “If we’re serious about placing the most qualified professionals in the classroom and keeping them there, then we need to make a significant investment in teacher salaries.”

The 2005 salary survey also examines the impact of rising housing costs and student loan debt payments on teachers in America’s 50 largest cities. The study concludes that the incomes of mid-career teachers in these cities will limit them to purchasing low-priced homes. In cities such as Seattle, Oakland, Los Angeles and San Francisco, many career teachers will never be able to realize the middle-class dream of home ownership.

Other states in the Southeast region ranked in the AFT survey as follows: Georgia was ranked 18th in the nation, at \$46,437; Virginia was 20th, at \$45,377; North Carolina was 24th, at \$43,343; Florida was 27th, at \$43,095; South Carolina was 28th, at \$42,189; Arkansas was 30th, at \$41,489; Kentucky was 31st, at \$41,075; Louisiana was 42nd, at \$39,022; West Virginia was 44th, at \$38,404; Mississippi was 45th, at \$38,212; and Alabama was 46th, at \$38,186.

Connecticut had the highest average teacher salary, at \$57,760, while South Dakota reported the lowest, at \$34,039.

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The AFT represents 1.3 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; nurses and healthcare workers; and federal, state and local government employees.

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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