



Contact:

Public Affairs Dept.
202/879-4458

EMBARGOED UNTIL:
12:01 a.m. Thursday, July 15

West Virginia Teacher Salaries Rise

Washington, D.C.— West Virginia's average teacher salary jumped 4.7 percent for the 2002-03 school year, yet still trailed most of its neighboring states, according to the American Federation of Teachers' annual teacher salary survey released Thursday.

West Virginia ranked 36th in the nation for its 2002-03 average teacher salary, at \$38,497. West Virginia ranked 40th for its average beginning teacher salary, at \$26,692, up 4.1 percent from the year before. The AFT estimates that West Virginia's average starting salary for the most recent school year, 2003-04, was \$26,692.

West Virginia's 36th position was lower than many of its neighbors. Pennsylvania was 10th, at \$51,425; Ohio was 15th, at \$45,515; and Virginia was 20th, at \$42,778. Kentucky was 37th at \$38,486;

Across the country, teachers' salaries remained relatively stagnant while their share of health benefits rose at all-time rates, making it difficult to attract and keep good teachers at a time when they are increasingly needed, the report said.

Nationally, the 2002-03 average teacher salary, which is the most recent figures available, was \$45,771, up 3.3 percent from the previous year, and the average beginning teacher salary was \$29,564, up 3.3 percent from the year before. But AFT's report noted that teachers' share of health insurance costs spiked an average 13 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Exorbitant health insurance costs are taking an intolerable bite out of already inadequate teacher salaries. Teachers are being asked to do more, shortages persist in the most challenging areas to teach, yet compensation packages are insulting," said AFT Secretary-Treasurer Edward J. McElroy.

Furthermore, the AFT noted, superintendents' average salaries are as much as four times higher than teachers' average pay. "States and school districts are crying poverty when it comes to teachers' pay yet somehow find money for extravagant administrator salaries," McElroy said.

California led the nation with the highest average teacher salary for 2002-03, at \$55,693. South Dakota had the nation's lowest average teacher salary, at \$32,414. Alaska led the nation with the highest average beginning teacher salary for 2002-03, at \$37,401. Montana had the nation's lowest average beginning teacher salary, at \$23,052.

###

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.