



# afterwords

CONVENTION 2016

FRIDAY JULY 22, 2016

## AFT officers pledge to keep up the fight



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

Save the dates,  
and join us  
in Pittsburgh for the  
AFT's 85th convention:  
**July 13-16, 2018**

THE AFT'S three national officers closed out the 2016 convention by thanking the delegates for their support and urging them to keep working together to move the country forward, in the November elections and beyond. "I am honored and humbled by your vote of confidence," said AFT President Randi Weingarten. "I will try—we will try—to earn that confidence every day."

After outlining some of the resolutions delegates passed—on the Every Student Succeeds Act, healthcare consolidation, college affordability, safe communities, confronting discrimination and more—she urged them to turn their attention to November.

"While we've been here laying out our vision of inclusion and prosperity for all, there's another convention happening in Cleveland. That convention couldn't be more different, and its central message is fear," she said. "Our job in November is to elect our candidate and people who share our values up and down the ticket. But our other job is to resoundingly re-

ject the party that is explicitly normalizing violence, misogyny, racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, nativism and hatred. The way we do that is by electing Hillary Rodham Clinton to be the next president."

Said AFT Secretary-Treasurer Lorretta Johnson: "This week we have reaffirmed our commitment to reclaim the promise from generation to generation. And more importantly, we will all leave this convention hall charged up with the energy necessary to take back our public schools, our hospitals, our colleges and universities, and our communities."

AFT Executive Vice President Mary Cathryn Ricker said it's time for the union to stop being defined by other people's stories of us. "It is time for us to tell our own story."

It's a story "that names our union, the American Federation of Teachers, as a powerful force for justice, innovation and equity," she said. "This is a true story. It's not fiction. It's our story."

# Iconic labor leader Dolores Huerta shares the fight

DOLORES HUERTA is an icon of the labor movement, a co-founder of the United Farm Workers and a staunch advocate for women's rights. She is also a longtime friend to the AFT—she has supported our work and spoke nearly 50 years ago at the 1967 convention. On Thursday, she received the AFT's Women's Rights Award at a breakfast honoring the service of women in the labor movement.

At age 86, Huerta continues not only to inspire those around her, but to do the work of building a just society for working people. Her Dolores Huerta Foundation focuses on education as well as civic engagement—getting people out to vote. She urged AFT members, especially women, to go to the polls, to run for office, to make a difference, and she celebrated

the opportunity to vote for Hillary Clinton for president.

"We will never have peace in the world until women take power," she said, quoting Coretta Scott King.

In the convention hall, Huerta called teachers crucial to healing this nation's crisis of racism and hate—a crisis created by ignorance. "You are the ones who bring light to people's minds, to people's lives, with education," she told them. "You are the soul of the nation. You are framing its philosophies and values. You have the power. It's up to you." She urged them to teach women's studies, ethnic studies, labor studies and LGBTQ studies, and to ensure students know that while people come "in all different shades and colors," we are all one human race—one that began in Africa. "We are all Africans."

Huerta looped back to elections when she said school boards are instrumental in effecting change too, and tasked delegates with helping to elect the best ones they can. And she vowed to work for education funding with policies like California's "millionaire's tax," which she is working to extend. It increases taxes for those who make more than \$1 million, and it could raise more than \$6 billion, which would go into the budget for public education. Tax your millionaires, she advised.



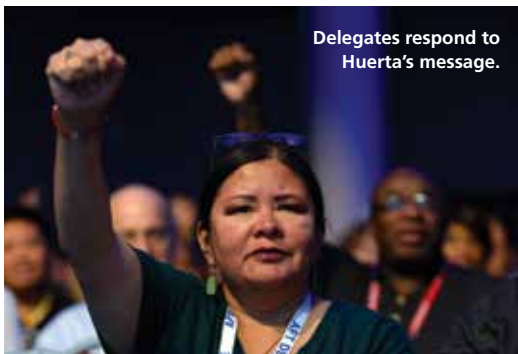
**"You are the ones who bring light to people's minds, to people's lives, with education."**

—DOLORES HUERTA,  
Co-founder, United Farm Workers

Huerta will continue to work for a progressive society that cares about working people, she said. "We have to work very, very hard against the forces of evil trying to put profits first and workers second. We cannot allow this."

Ending on a hopeful note, Huerta led the convention hall in chanting, "Who's got the power? We've got the power!" and "¡Si, se puede!"

Yes, we can.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

## Key U.S. lawmaker hails partnership with AFT

AFT DELEGATES reserved time on July 21 to hear from Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), one of the union's most effective partners in Congress on issues that range from federal action on workplace violence to securing the Every Student Succeeds Act, the new education law that AFT President Randi Weingarten called a historic opportunity to "stop fixation on testing and start fixation on the whole child."

Scott was a "hero" in the fight to move ESSA through committee in a Republican-controlled House, Weingarten told delegates; and Scott, in turn, said the victory depended on the active engagement of the AFT and our members throughout the legislative process. That type of involvement will be just as essential as the make-or-break work of ESSA implementation continues at the state and local levels.

"We worked to make sure your priorities were reflected" in the new law, Scott told delegates. Done right, ESSA "will empower all students of all backgrounds for college and

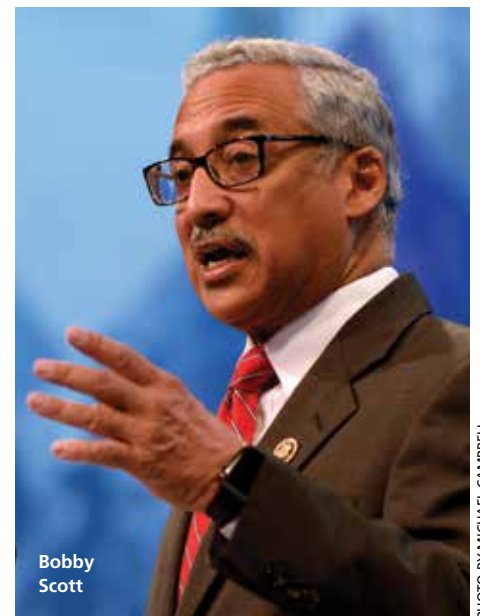
career ... but this won't happen without your involvement."

It's a message the Virginia Democrat has been sending to federal, state and local authorities as well. Several weeks ago, Scott and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) sent a joint letter to Education Secretary John B. King Jr., telling federal regulators to help remove barriers, such as lack of release time, that could stymie stakeholder involvement in state and local discussions on implementing ESSA's major components. When it comes to these discussions, "you need to claim your seat at the table," Scott told AFT delegates.

The AFT has also been a vital, effective partner on a broad spectrum of other issues—from helping to strengthen federal standards on workplace violence and safety, to working for strong new laws for higher education and excellent career and technical education.

"I'm proud to count the AFT as a partner, and I look forward to continuing that partner-

ship" in forging a strong, progressive agenda for America's future, Scott said.



Bobby Scott

PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL



# Speaking truth to power in Detroit

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Lakia Wilson, a school counselor at Spain Elementary and Middle School in Detroit, was featured in an AFT video about the appalling conditions at her school. “It went viral,” Wilson told the crowd during the Wednesday afternoon session. “People were appalled that children attend schools with health violations, roaches, mice, black mold, asbestos and wildly fluctuating classroom temperatures. Everyone understood that this should not be happening anywhere in a country as wealthy as ours.”



Lakia Wilson

PHOTO BY RUSS CURTIS

The response to the video has been phenomenal, said Wilson. Detroit schools have received cards and letters of support, as well as supplies. In addition, “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” donated technology and \$500,000 toward repairing the gym at Wilson’s school and other improvements.

But the most important thing the video did was educate the public, said Wilson. “For a long time, Michigan legislators have trash-talked Detroit teachers and schools in the media. And they got away with it too, since no one really knew the issues we face on a daily basis.”

Now, the world knows that Detroit public school teachers are dedicated, caring professionals who don’t have the support or resources they need, said Wilson. This didn’t move the state’s Republican-controlled Legislature, however. Lawmakers are instead using legislation to try to silence educators.

“The fight has been long and hard, and it will continue,” she said. “What we learned in Detroit is that we can’t just sit back and assume our union officers can handle it by themselves. It takes all of us becoming active and spreading the word.”



Carmella Salinas

PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

## One early educator’s story of hope and courage

A PRE-K TEACHER’S career odyssey from pain to promise was shared with convention delegates by Carmella Salinas, an Española, N.M., educator and president of the AFT’s New Mexico Early Educators United. Salinas stood at the podium on July 21 and recounted years of struggle—the fight to keep electricity on in her home, the daily battle to keep family finances afloat—a never-ending ordeal faced by her and early educators like her, professionals across the country scraping by on wages that don’t reflect their exceptional skills or the essential contributions they make to the education mission.

Not long after she started working as a pre-K teacher, and dealing with the paycheck-to-paycheck struggles that go with it, Salinas began to see that the fault lay not with the clients, centers and practitioners but with a broken system, one that was dishing out stress and financial pain to every segment of the early childhood education community. “I knew I wasn’t a failure,” Salinas said. “It was the system that was failing me.”

That realization was a jolt, and it led to action. A new coalition took root in New Mexico: PEOPLE for the Kids, a break-the-mold partnership among educators, parents and the owners of early learning centers across the state. They are working to make the state the first in the nation to guarantee access to affordable, high-quality child care and early education for all.

“Together, we have a voice,” said Salinas, whose story was recently featured in the *New York Times*. Today, she serves as president of the groundbreaking new coalition, and prospects for real change are growing by the day. “I’ve seen change in the last five years,” she told the convention, and there is “hope among my co-workers.”

### CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED ON JULY 21

#### Resolution 82

Support, Respect and Dignity for PSRPs

#### Resolution 83

Summer Nutrition Program

#### Resolution 84

Work Shouldn’t Hurt—Safe Schools For All

#### Resolution 49

Advancing our Professionalism

#### Resolution 50

Engaging Our Members in Reclaiming the Promise of America

#### Resolution 55

Early Childhood Educators and Adult Educators

#### Resolution 67

Supporting the Recommendations of the AFT Racial Equity Task Force and the Work Performed by the Constituent Members of the AFT Criminal Justice and Public Safety Task Force

#### Resolution 70

No More Flint: Stop Childhood Lead Poisoning—Guarantee all U.S. Children Lead-free Water and Communities

#### Resolution 68

Planning for the Looming State and Local Public Employee Retirement Tsunami

#### Resolution 86

Stand With Planned Parenthood

#### Resolution 87

Girls’ and Young Women’s Education

#### Resolution 90

Paid Sick Days

#### Resolution 73

In Support of More Accurate COLA Adjustments to Social Security

#### Resolution 75

Protect and Expand the Social Safety Net

#### Resolution 72

Promote retirement security through full funding, investment manager transparency, and accountability

*Listed in order of passage.*



Members of the DeSoto County (Fla.) Paraprofessionals

PHOTO BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

## Organizing victories on display

DURING THE CLOSING SESSION, AFT President Randi Weingarten celebrated the union's organizing victories by calling our newest members to stand and be recognized by the delegates. In the last two years, the AFT has added more than 37,000 new members across more than 80 workplaces. A number of newly organized locals were also highlighted from the convention floor. New locals, new members, and locals with new members include the Temple Association of University Professionals (adding adjuncts), the Houston Federation of Teachers, the Kansas Organization of State Employees, the DeSoto County (Fla.) Paraprofessionals, the Association of College Educators (West Valley-Mission Community College District in California), United Teachers of New Orleans, the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, and the Alaska Nurses

Association. Members from each affiliate shared compelling stories of successful organizing campaigns and member activism.

### Credentials Report #3

CHAIR—DAVID KAZANSKY  
UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS  
(NEW YORK CITY)  
LOCAL 2

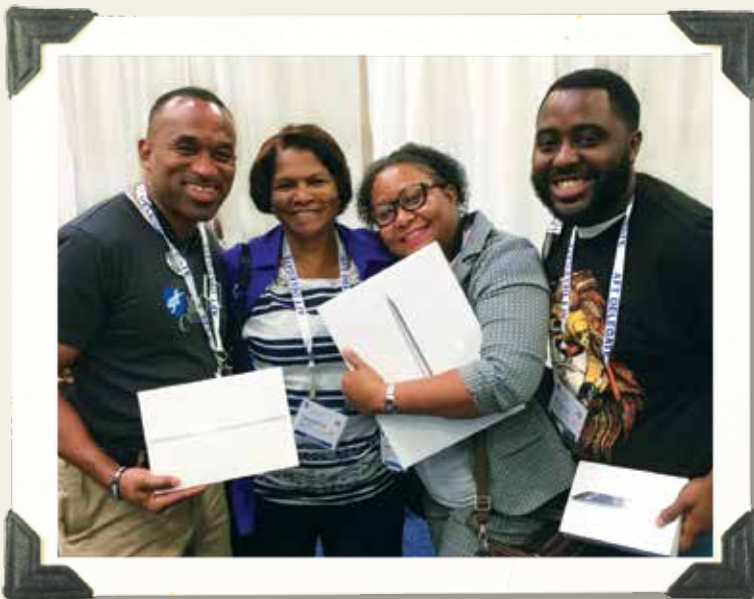
REGISTRATION AS OF 5 P.M., JULY 20, 2016

TOTAL DELEGATES..... 2,654

locals represented— 467  
state federations— 24  
councils—0  
executive council ex-officio—6  
total alternates—17

TOTAL ELECTION VOTES..... 784,851  
(includes 40,846 sequestered votes)

## *AFT100 Scavenger Hunt winners*



## *AFT announces 2016 Porter Scholarship winners*

EACH YEAR, the AFT presents an \$8,000 Robert G. Porter Scholarship to each of four outstanding high school seniors who are the children of AFT members. Recipients must show outstanding service to their community and plan to pursue a career in labor, education, health or government service. The winners were announced on Sunday:

- Talya Klinger of Novato, Calif., daughter of Alisa Klinger, a member of United Professors of Marin
- Allison Proszowski of Clifton, N.J., daughter of Katarzyna Proszowski, a member of the Union of Rutgers Administrators
- Shea Roe of Nashua, N.H., daughter of Lynne Roe, a member of the Nashua Teachers' Union
- Clifford Soloway of Cortlandt Manor, N.Y., son of Harry Soloway, a member of the Elmsford Teachers Association

The program also awards \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with their continuing education. This year's winners are Cherise Arthur, Oregon School Employees Association; Elizabeth Bowers, Ventura County (Calif.) Federation of School Employees/Paraeducators; Teresa Fenton, Oregon School Employees Association; Naomi Goldman, Health Professionals and Allied Employees; Karen Hardy, Health Professionals and Allied Employees; Greg Joiner, Sumter County (Fla.) Essential Support Personnel; Lindsay Poetz, United Teachers of Monroe (Fla.); Elizabeth Porter, Bristol (Conn.) Federation of Teachers; Darcy Sanchez, United Teachers of Monroe (Fla.); and Cheryl Vinson, United School Employees of Pasco (Fla.).