



# PUBLIC EMPLOYEE Advocate

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES



## PUBLIC EMPLOYEES STAND THEIR GROUND

Workers challenge  
anti-worker agenda  
in state legislatures

**PAGE 4**

### AFT for Hillary

AFT endorses  
Hillary Clinton

**PAGE 2**

### 2015 conference

AFT public employees  
focus on the fight for  
quality services **PAGE 6**

### A threat to working families

U.S. Supreme Court case  
challenges unions **PAGE 7**

### Take the survey

Do you have work-life  
balance? **PAGE 8**

## OUR MISSION

The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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Cover photo: MICHAEL PENN

## AFT endorses Hillary Clinton

“Clinton is the champion working families need in the White House”

THE AFT EXECUTIVE COUNCIL VOTED overwhelmingly on July 11 to endorse Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primary for president of the United States. The AFT is the first national union to endorse a candidate in the 2016 Democratic presidential primary.

“In vision, in experience and in leadership, Hillary Clinton is the champion working families need in the White House,” says AFT President Randi Weingarten. “Hillary Clinton is a tested leader who shares our values, is supported by our members, and is prepared for a tough fight on behalf of students, families and communities. That fight defines her campaign and her career.

“I’m honored to have the support of AFT’s members and leaders, and proud to stand with them to unleash the potential of every American.”

—Hillary Clinton

“In Arkansas, Hillary fought to expand access to early childhood education and care. As first lady, she fought for the right to affordable, high-quality healthcare and helped win that right for our youngest citizens. As senator, she fought for education funding and workers’ rights, and she defended public service workers who came to our nation’s defense on Sept. 11. And as secretary of state, she promoted democracy throughout the world, lifting up the worth and dignity of all people—men and women, gay and straight.”

Adds Weingarten, “Hillary Clinton, a product of public schools herself, believes in the promise of public education. From early childhood learning through higher education, she sees how that promise can create real opportunity for kids, building a much-needed bridge to the middle class. Hillary understands that to reclaim the promise of public education, policymakers need to work with educators and their unions. She’s ready to work with us to confront the issues

facing children and their families today, including poverty, wage stagnation, income inequality and lack of opportunity. Hillary is the leader we need to help us reclaim the promise of public education and, indeed, of America.”

Upon learning of the union’s endorsement, Clinton said, “For nearly a century, the American Federation of Teachers has worked to expand opportunity for the people and communities they serve. I’m honored to have the support of AFT’s members and leaders, and proud to stand with them to unleash the potential of every American.”

Clinton continued, “I know from my own family that teachers have the power to change lives. We need to make sure every child has access to a quality public education and teachers with the tools to help them succeed. Our country’s future depends on the education we give all our children — and giving them the best means working with the teachers and school personnel who help shape their futures each day.”

As in past elections, the AFT’s 1.6 million members will be a powerful organizing force behind our endorsed candidate. Leading up to November 2016, AFT members are expected to make more than 1 million phone calls and knock on more than 500,000 doors.

The AFT’s endorsement comes one month after Clinton attended an executive council meeting in Washington, D.C. At that meeting, she said, “It is just dead wrong to make teachers the scapegoats for all of society’s problems. Where I come from, teachers are the solution. And I strongly believe that unions are part of the solution, too.”

Bernie Sanders and Martin O’Malley also spoke with the executive council at that meeting. All potential and announced candidates were invited to complete a questionnaire, and those who returned the questionnaire were invited to meet with the council. No Republican candidates responded to the invitation.

The AFT has conducted a long, deliberative process to assess which candidate would best champion the issues of importance to

*Continued on page 7*



For more information on Hillary Clinton’s priorities, go to [www.aft.org/election2016](http://www.aft.org/election2016). Sign up to join the Political Activist team and receive up-to-date election news. Text **VOTE** to **69238**.



## Raising our collective voice

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU about the attacks that are ricocheting across the country. I don't have to tell you because in so many ways public employees are on the frontlines of these attacks.

In Alaska, 10,000 state employees received layoff notices in June. In Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback has been playing games with the state budget while gutting bargaining rights for state employees. In New Jersey, Gov. Chris Christie and the state Supreme Court are making decisions that compromise the retirement security of those who have worked hard—for others—to earn it, while the governor continues to balance his budget on the backs of middle-class families.

And on the national level, the U.S. Supreme Court recently agreed to hear *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, a case that seeks to silence public workers by eliminating fair share, a long-standing practice backed up by 40 years of legal precedent.

These attacks are all aimed at one thing—eviscerating unions in order to preserve the status quo, a rigged, trickle-down economic system. The Koch brothers, the hedge funders, the Scott Walkers and the backers of the *Friedrichs* case: They all know that unions get in their way, because unions give working people power at the bargaining table and the ballot box. And unions advance the common good.

Which is why we are fighting back—to reclaim the promise of America. In our workplaces, in our communities, in the statehouses and on Capitol Hill, we are raising our voices. Our collective voice is power—the power to serve our communities and lead them toward a better future.

As we discussed at the AFT Public Employees national conference in May, to seize that power, we must organize. We must work with community. And we must engage our members.

The AFT is embarking on its 100th anniversary, which will be celebrated in 2016. We have set an ambitious goal to have 1.6

million conversations this year—one with every member of our union to engage, to empower, to make all our voices heard and to have each other's backs. We know that through the union, the engagement of one

pling debt. It means that when you become ill, you'll get good healthcare, and you'll be treated fairly at work, getting a real raise every once in a while. It means you won't have to choose between your job and taking care



MICHAEL CAMPBELL

**We know that through the union, the engagement of one becomes the power of many—and it is with that power that we will win.**

becomes the power of many—and it is with that power that we will win.

We build this power by growing our unions at the local, state and national levels. We build power by reaching out to our members and talking about the challenges we face, the aspirations we have. We build power by finding ways for all our members to join together to fight those obstacles, to reach those aspirations and to reclaim the promise of America.

The promise of America means you can send your children to a great neighborhood public school and give them the advantage of a college education without incurring crip-

pling debt. It means that when you become ill, you'll get good healthcare, and you'll be treated fairly at work, getting a real raise every once in a while. It means you won't have to choose between your job and taking care

of a sick child or, increasingly, a sick parent. It means a lifetime of work will culminate in a retirement with dignity. The promise of America also means our tax dollars are invested in our communities and the resources are used responsibly; it means that our communities get first-rate public services to keep them safe, healthy and vibrant. Services provided by public employees—social workers, probation officers, economists, accountants, nurses and infectious control specialists—not privatized.

If we raise and combine our voices, we can reclaim the promise of America—for our kids, for our families, for our communities.

# PUBLIC EMPLOYEES STAND THEIR GROUND

Public employee unions are fighting to save quality services in the standoffs between state lawmakers and governors

AS STATES PREPARED TO BEGIN A NEW FISCAL YEAR THIS SUMMER, dozens faced budget shortfalls. To close the gap, public employees found themselves fighting governors and state lawmakers, urging the leaders to keep them on the job providing important, high-quality public services. The continued attack on public workers is inspiring them to stand their ground and push back.

## ALASKA

**FUNDING IN ALASKA** (a state that relies on gas and oil revenues for its general fund) was hit hard by the drop in oil prices this year. The Republican-led Legislature passed a budget, but there wasn't enough money to fund operations in the budget. Gov. Bill Walker warned the legislators that the state government might have to shut down if the budget was not fully funded, but the lawmakers didn't budge. Their

Noss was one of thousands of APEA members who were part of the union's effort to mobilize members to fight the budget impasse. Many members made phone calls, sent emails to their state lawmakers, wrote letters to newspaper editors and took to social media to speak out about the budget fight. The APEA also worked closely with the state AFL-CIO and other unions.

Many of the union's 8,400 active and retired members were involved in the effort

"People ... [are] not sure how to participate. ... they have to realize they have a right to speak up."

— LURA NOSS, Confidential Employees Association, Alaska Public Employees Association

refusal to fund a budget resulted in the state sending 10,000 notices to state employees warning of the possibility of layoffs on July 1, the beginning of a new fiscal year.

"I've never seen our Legislature grandstand" before and be so stalwart. "It was a true standoff," says Lura Noss, who works for the state department of administration and is a member of the Confidential Employees Association, which is an affiliate of the Alaska Public Employees Association.

to sway the lawmakers, says Pete Ford of the APEA. "It was a roller-coaster campaign, but our members carried us" over each and every bump in the ride, says Ford. "They wanted to send the message that a contract is a contract, and you have to keep your word to state employees."

"Our legislators are well-known to our members," says Gary Miller a retired computer programmer for the state and member of the Retired Public Employees Association.



"We were down to the wire, but the member involvement was critical ... people knew how hard we worked to get a really good contract."

— FRAN POLUMSKY,  
United Academic Adjuncts,  
Alaska Public Employees Association

MICHAEL PENN

“We reminded them that we have children and grandchildren who are public employees,” and called on the lawmakers to support funding contracts for public employees.”

### A move to break the union

Alaska runs thanks to its state employees, says Fran Polumsky, a University of Alaska Southeast professor and retired physical education teacher who is a member of United Academic Adjuncts. The local, which is an APEA affiliate, had just ratified its contract when the budget battle broke out. Its members were actively involved in getting the message out to people about what was happening with the budget. “We negotiated these contracts in good faith, Polumsky says, “and then the other party didn’t want to hold up its end of the bargain.”

Polumsky saw the budget battle as “a huge move to break the union.”

“We were down to the wire, but the member involvement was critical,” says Polumsky. “For adjuncts, it’s tough at times because we are so spread out. But people knew how hard we worked to get a really good contract.”

After being bombarded by phone calls and emails, lawmakers decided to hold a special session on the budget, moving it from Juneau to Anchorage. Noss, who lives in Anchorage, used the change of venue to her advantage. She began by making daily lunchtime visits to the building that housed the lawmakers’ offices and mobilized her fellow union members to accompany her.

“I wanted to have a physical presence to counter the attitude that many lawmakers had,” says Noss. They thought “that we didn’t care.”

Noss and many other APEA members also joined a Facebook group for state employees. The social media outlet was a place for people to get together and talk about what was happening. Many posted photos of their layoff notices. Noss believes the page helped build momentum among members. “It was a beautiful grass-roots campaign that gave people a voice.”

Getting people to take action is a tricky thing, says Noss. “People know how to vote, but they’re not sure how to participate, and they get scared because this is unfamiliar territory for many of them. But they have to realize they have a right to speak up.”

This was a huge effort and ultimately, the unions and the governor stood together against the Legislature, says Noss. “We’ve learned a lot and that’s good, because I know this behavior will be there again next year.”

## ILLINOIS

**IN ILLINOIS, THE SITUATION** is the other way around. The unions and the Democratically controlled state Legislature are standing together against a governor who wants to strip public employees of their right to collective bargaining.

Gov. Bruce Rauner, a Republican, spent most of the 2015 legislative session fighting over how to address the \$6 billion deficit. The battle remains unresolved; the Legislature issued a 30-day temporary budget in July.

In the meantime, a coalition of unions that represent state employees, including the Illinois Federation of Public Employees, took steps to ensure that employees who are still on the job will be paid in full for their work, even in the absence of a state budget.

“We are in a holding pattern while the governor and the Legislature battle it out,” says Thomas Kosowski, president of the IFPE, which represents 1,500 public employees. “All state services are essential, and we pro-

Aguirre, a member of the IFPE who works in the Illinois attorney general’s office. “We are joining in the mobilizing efforts with other union brothers and sisters. We all provide important public services in communities throughout Illinois, and we all deserve a fair contract.”

Part of that effort is building public awareness of the role public employees play in the lives of citizens and their communities. “As the impasse continues, we know that the community is seeing the impact it is having on social services,” says Aguirre, “especially for the elderly and children.”

The coalition has held informational picketing in front of the state government agency buildings in downtown Chicago, and union members also are distributing lawn signs to friends and neighbors asking people to support public employees.

IFPE members are working with state lawmakers to support Senate Bill 1229, which

“Our jobs are necessary, and it’s not fair to families or the state of Illinois. The situation in our state is a mobilizer for members to get involved.”

— THOMAS KOSOWSKI, President,  
Illinois Federation of Public Employees

vide quality services. Our jobs are necessary, and it’s not fair to families or the state of Illinois,” he says. “The situation in our state is a mobilizer for members to get involved.”

In response to the budget impasse, IFPE has mobilized its members and is working in coalition with other unions. “The governor is trying to dismantle the union,” says Veronica

allows either party involved in labor negotiations to declare an impasse and bring in a third-party arbitrator to help them reach a binding deal as a way to avoid a strike or lockout. Although the legislation passed, the governor vetoed it. At presstime, the coalition was working with legislators to override the veto.

The Illinois Federation of Public Employees is building unity and solidarity with other unions and the community to fight Gov. Rauner.



IFPE PHOTO

# Building a better future

Public employees mobilize to fight for strong communities

WHEN THE UNION UNITES with the community and engages its members in building a better future, the combination can make for a powerful force for change. This was the message AFT President Randi Weingarten brought to the more than 200 AFT members who gathered in Denver in late May for the AFT Public Employees division's national conference. Weingarten's keynote remarks addressed the conference theme of "Reclaiming the Promise of Quality Public Services for Strong Communities." At a time when powerful, well-funded forces are striving to silence workers' voices, eliminate bargaining rights and promote harmful austerity policies, it's more important than ever that we fight together to restore the middle class in this country. That means working for fair wages, great neighborhood schools, affordable higher education, accessible healthcare, retirement security, safe communities and more. "And it means that our communities get first-rate public services that keep them safe, healthy and vibrant," she said—"services that are provided by the public, not privatized."

"Our opponents have made it clear that power never yields willingly," she added. "This fight will be long and hard, but it's a fight we don't intend to lose."

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper welcomed the attendees to Colorado. Many of them participated in leafletting around the city—despite a hailstorm—to support the efforts of Colorado WINS, one of the host locals,

to promote respect in the workplace and a living wage for the state's public employees. Luncheon speaker David Cay Johnston, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author, spoke about how bad tax policies in our country are a cause of increasing inequality and underfunded public services.

The closing session included a presentation on the work of the AFT's racial equity task force, which held its first official meeting in Baltimore this July. (Because the AFT represents many people who work in public safety and law enforcement, a special meeting was held with them during the conference because of their unique perspective on issues of racial equity and public safety.) In addition, AFT organizing director Phil Kugler and Jennifer Kaseman, assistant to the president, talked about the union's plans to focus intensely on engaging members as part of our effort to fight back bad legislation in the states and bad decisions coming from the courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. AFT Public Employees also used the conference to get more responses to two ongoing surveys: one on work-life balance and another on professionalism.

Conference attendees had a chance to thank Steve Porter, the long-time director of the AFT Public Employees department, and Karen Schiffhauer, the department's administrative assistant, for their service. Both retired this summer, after nearly 60 years of combined service.

AFT Public Employees met in Denver in May for its national conference. Participants attended workshops, heard from speakers, including author David Cay Johnston and Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper. The attendees also said farewell to AFT staffers Steve Porter and Karen Schiffhauer, who both retired this summer.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL

## 2015 AFT Public Employees

### Award for Public Safety Advocacy

Connecticut Judicial Professional Employees Union for its attention and focus on the unique issues facing public safety professionals and for bringing attention to these issues throughout our union.

### Standing Up for Quality Public Services Award

AFT-Kansas and the Kansas Organization of State Employees for their work in fighting for sensible funding to support and maintain quality public services for all Kansans.

### Solidarity Award

Alaska Public Employees Association/AFT for its fight to maintain the negotiated contracts for Alaska state employees and for its unfailing efforts to assist public employees throughout the union. APEA/AFT has been an outstanding example of a union committed to the ideals of solidarity and unity.

### Defending Labor Rights Award

Illinois Federation of Public Employees for its struggle to maintain union security for public employee unions in Illinois and for its staunch defense of retirement security protections for the state's public employees.

### Solution-Driven Unionism Award

The Montana MEA-MFT for bringing together a community alliance of citizens, activists, unions and community groups around issues that help support the common good. The MEA-MFT agenda works to build a stronger community as the union works to support mental health programs, public safety, retirement security, jobs, education and a wide range of issues that benefit communities all across Montana.

### Member Engagement Award

The state employees in Maryland who fought for their negotiated 2 percent raise through the legislative session and, when it was put back in the budget, found that they had to continue to fight the governor for the raise when he threatened not to release the money. Members of the Maryland Professional Employees Council and AFT-Healthcare Maryland and their unions demonstrated their strength and resolve in enforcing the negotiated agreement.

## Conference Award Winners

### Social Justice Award

City Union of Baltimore for courage and determination in very difficult circumstances. CUB members worked to protect their city during the recent disturbances there. They stayed on the job and supported public services and helped in the cleanup efforts. CUB is a founding member of Forward Baltimore, a coalition put together with community groups and the A. Philip Randolph Institute to register 10,000 new voters.

### Promoting Public Employee Professionalism and Dignity in the Workplace Award

Colorado WINS for its thoughtful exploration of what it means to have dignity in the workplace as a public employee. For many, this means wages; almost 3,000 state employees do not make \$15 an hour. Colorado WINS has championed the Fight for \$15 for state workers and created a space for discussion and organizing members around dignity in the workplace. This is a model for the nation.

### Political Action Award

AFT Connecticut's state employee affiliates for their innovative political program—We Are Not Wisconsin. The program was used as a rallying cry in the campaign against a conservative gubernatorial candidate who called for a Wisconsin-style attack on labor in Connecticut. The effort was successful in educating members on what was at stake in the election and helped to highlight the threats to union security and quality public services.

### Community Building Award

Administrative and Residual Employees Union for its continuing efforts to contribute to the community food bank and for its extraordinary campaign to make sure that poor families across Connecticut have a healthy Thanksgiving dinner.

### Defense of Collective Bargaining Award

Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees for its work to expand the scope of collective bargaining, establish binding arbitration for contract settlement disputes and build on union security for greater union strength.

## Court decision threatens America's working families

### Unions disappointed with high court's plan to hear *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*

THE LEADERS OF FIVE MAJOR UNIONS issued a statement June 30 expressing their disappointment with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to hear a case, *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, that challenges the fees nonunion members pay. "We are disappointed that at a time when big corporations and the wealthy few are rewriting the rules in their favor, knocking American families and our entire economy off balance, the Supreme Court has chosen to take a case that threatens the fundamental promise of America—that if you work hard and play by the rules you should be able to provide for your family and live a decent life," AFT President Randi Weingarten, NEA President Lily Eskelsen García, CTA President Eric C. Heins, AFSCME President Lee Saunders and SEIU President Mary Kay Henry said in a joint statement.

"The Supreme Court is revisiting decisions that have made it possible for people to stick together for a voice at work and in their communities—decisions that have stood for more than 35 years—and that have allowed people to work together for better public services and vibrant communities.

"When people come together in a union, they can help make sure that our communities have jobs that support our families. It means teachers can stand up for their students. First responders can push for critical equipment to protect us. And social workers can advocate effectively for children's safety.

"America can't build a strong future if people can't come together to improve their work and their families' futures. Moms and dads across the country have been standing up in the thousands to call for higher wages and unions. We hope the Supreme Court heeds their voices."

## AFT endorses Hillary Clinton

*Continued from page 2*

our members, their families and communities. Members have been engaged online, through the "You Decide" website, through several telephone town halls, and through multiple surveys—reaching more than 1 million members.

Additionally, the AFT conducted a scien-

tific poll of our membership on candidates and key issues. The top issues members raised were jobs and the economy and public education. Seventy-nine percent of AFT members who vote in Democratic primaries said we should endorse a candidate. By more than a 3-to-1 ratio, members said the union should endorse Clinton.

Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton holds a town hall discussion with voters in New Hampshire.



MSNBC.COM

# Workers triumph in suit over illegal layoffs

COURAGE AND TENACITY have paid off for thousands of Connecticut public employees, whose union membership made them the targets of a coercive, outrageous round of job cuts in 2003 under former Gov. John Rowland. The cuts targeted only union members and sparked a suit against the executive branch—a case resolved more than a decade later when a settlement was reached with the state's attorney general and the administration of current Gov. Dannel P. Malloy. The agreement reached in late April marks a tremendous victory for the nearly 3,000 state employees who risked their jobs to stand up for bedrock freedoms of speech and association rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

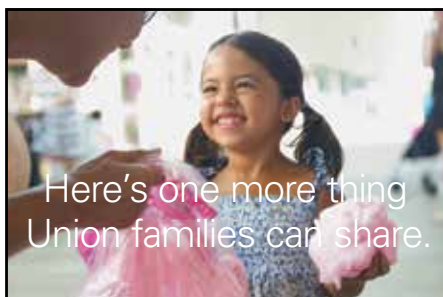
In June 2013, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals held that the former governor, by targeting employees based on their union affiliation, had violated basic rights of association under the U.S. Constitution. This decision overturned a lower court ruling, and the case was remanded to the district court to craft appropriate, equitable relief for the workers. "Defendants have not shown why the state's fiscal health required firing only union members, rather than implementing membership-neutral layoffs," Judge Gerard E. Lynch wrote for the Second Circuit.

AFT Connecticut and affiliates in the state were part of the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC), a group of 16 unions, that brought the case on behalf of public employees. SEBAC refused to yield to the governor's demand for \$450 million in concessions in 2002 and sued when Rowland responded by laying off 2,800 workers.

Among those caught up in Rowland's rampage was Marcelle Pichanick Groves, a member of AFT Local 4200 who, as an analyst with the state Department of Environmental Protection, became a plaintiff in the original lawsuit when she was laid off in 2003.

"Edmund Burke once said, 'the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing,' [and] I'd like to thank all the good men and women who helped make this possible and saw to it that justice triumphed," said Groves after the court's decision this June. Groves, who now works for the state Department of Education, added that, "When John Rowland laid off nearly 3,000 state workers it was a mean, vindictive act."

In 2004, Rowland was forced to resign over charges that he had accepted bribes. He pled guilty to "depriving the public of honest service" and spent more than 10 months in federal prison.



Here's one more thing Union families can share.

**Save on family entertainment,** including theme parks, car rentals and movie tickets with Union Plus. Union Plus gets union families where the fun is, with special discounts on a long list of travel and amusement attractions. That includes up to 25% off on rental cars, plus major savings on movie tickets and theme park packages—including Disney and Six Flags destinations. Who knew your union membership could be so...entertaining?



**Learn more at UnionPlus.org AFTTravel**

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A Union of Professionals  
AFT Public Employees

In the United States, we know very little about the impact of work on the **health** and **well-being** of **government workers**.

AFT public employees can help change that.

Take our **anonymous survey** and tell us how conditions at work affect your life.

You should expect to complete the survey in about 1.5 minutes. We recommend using a desktop or laptop computer.

bit.ly/AFTPE\_Survey

