



PUBLIC EMPLOYEE Advocate

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES



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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 illustration: KEN ORVIDAS/THEISPOT.COM

GOOGLE JOINS EXODUS FROM ALEC Just weeks after Microsoft Corporation dropped its support for the controversial American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the AFT joined dozens of organizations across the country to urge Google to follow suit. Google cut ties to ALEC in September.

Google and Microsoft have been global leaders on net neutrality—the concept of allowing equal access to bandwidth for all websites regardless of financial backing—and clean energy, two positions ALEC opposes. In particular, ALEC maintains an increasingly unpopular position on climate change, resisting environmental regulations it argues could slow economic growth.

“Everyone understands climate change is occurring, and the people who oppose it are really hurting our children and our grandchildren and making the world a much worse place,” said Google Chairman Eric Schmidt on the Diane Rehm radio show Sept. 22. “We should not be aligned with such people.”

“The public knows that the ALEC operation—which brings state legislators and corporate lobbyists behind closed doors to discuss proposed legislation and share lavish dinners—threatens our democracy,” the letter to Google stated.

Over the past two years, more than 80 corporations and at least 400 state legislators have dropped their membership in ALEC, which has been called a “dating service” for politicians and corporate lobbyists and is known for pushing an extreme

corporate agenda at the expense of the American people.

LEGISLATING CHANGE The AFT has been a regular participant at the National Conference of State Legislatures’ annual summer legislative summit for many years. Keeping up with the latest state legislative trends and encouraging lawmaking that is friendly to public employees can make a huge difference in the political climate for unions and the workers they represent. At this year’s legislative gathering in Minneapolis, reclaiming the promise of public services was part of our union’s message. The summit also included a special recognition for the AFT, as Executive Vice President Mary Cathryn Ricker accepted an award on the union’s behalf for 20 years of membership in the NCSL Foundation.

WHAT’S IN A NAME? During the AFT’s national convention this summer in Los Angeles, delegates unanimously approved an amendment to the AFT constitution to change the name of AFT Healthcare to AFT Nurses and Health Professionals. “We are honored to have had a large group—35,000 nurses from the National Federation of Nurses—join with the AFT,” said Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals President Candice Owley, chair of the healthcare division and an AFT vice president. “They remind us of the importance of a name. We made a commitment to elevate the role and the voice of the registered nurse—not just in the AFT, but in our country.”

The move also sends an important message: There are over 2 million nurses in this country who are not in unions, Owley added. “We’d like to hope and believe that the AFT can be a beacon of hope for those nurses as we elevate our voice through our 1.6 million-member union.”



AFT convention delegates in Los Angeles this summer celebrate the unveiling of AFT Nurses and Health Professionals.



MICHAEL CAMPBELL



Advancing the common good

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

LISA OCHS, president of AFT-Kansas and the Kansas Organization of State Employees, gave us our marching orders at the AFT 2014 convention in Los Angeles with these words: “All public services have a vital role to play in combating the harms caused by both the recession and inequality, with investments in these services and in our economic infrastructure being absolutely essential to put Americans back to work and move our economy forward.”

Ochs and the many other AFT public employee members who were part of an inspiring and invigorating four days of conversation, debate and solidarity took these words and turned them into union policies for how to reclaim the promise of America.

One such policy included a promise to our newest members, the United Nations Staff Union. Already, we are helping these dedicated international public workers fight against an attack on their rights by putting the full power of our union to work for them.

Public service workers are the backbone of our communities, which is why AFT public employee members are leading the fight to reclaim the promise of high-quality public services to fulfill our collective obligation to advance the common good.

Our union reiterated this commitment with a resolution calling for state and local revenue systems that are adequate, stable and truly fair by ensuring that community tax dollars are properly invested into local communities and that the resources are used effectively and responsibly.

At the same time, AFT delegates resolved to fight the troubling tide of privatization that aims to put many of our nation’s dedicated public employees in the unemployment line. For AFT members in Alaska, Connecticut, Kansas, New York and throughout the nation, this is one of the biggest fights of our generation—as workers, as community members, as Americans. An additional resolution calls for U.S. trade policy that does more to protect

working families and less to defend corporations and investors, by enhancing labor rights and workers’ voices on the job.

AFT delegates also pledged to advocate for resources to rebuild our nation’s infrastructure—once the envy of the world—which is now in dire straits with one in nine of our nation’s bridges deemed structurally deficient, and an electrical grid that is an aging and leaking patchwork.

Public service workers are the **backbone** of our communities, which is why AFT public employee members are leading the fight to reclaim the promise of **high-quality public services** to fulfill our **collective obligation** to advance the **common good**.

This resolution also calls on our union to advocate for a national infrastructure bank that will develop innovative ways to fund and build the vital projects that will improve the competitiveness of our economy, efficiency of our services, and safety of our built environment—and create good American jobs.

In a like-minded effort to continue to improve public services and working conditions for public employees, AFT delegates recognized that when workers are under extreme stress caused by bullying on the job, the quality of public services suffers. The delegates passed a resolution to end workplace harassment and commit resources to advocate for continued research, state legislation and the promulgation of federal workplace violence prevention standards.

These and other policies exemplify a commitment to solution-driven unionism that engages our members and strengthens our community partnerships.

As I emphasized in my convention address, we cannot sit back and wait for the privatizers, austerity hawks, polarizers and deprofessionalizers to turn our high-quality public services into outsourced, on-the-cheap shambles. And the first step is to vote this November.

Elections matter. They determine who nominates Supreme Court justices. We are one justice away from having a fairer court, or from losing more and more rights.

Elections matter. They determine whether we have allies in Congress who will continue to push for the Marketplace Fairness Act, which aims to level the playing field between in-state and out-of-state retailers. This bill could bring in \$23 billion in new revenues to

help fund quality public services by allowing state governments to collect taxes for products sold to their residents by out-of-state retailers.

Elections matter. They mean the difference between a Mary Burke and a Scott Walker in Wisconsin, or a Paul Davis and a Sam Brownback in Kansas.

This election, we have a chance to fight back against those who demonize, demoralize and aim to destroy us and fight forward with a vision for a nation in which we reclaim the promise of quality public services for strong communities.

And while we will never outspend our opponents, we will outwork and out-organize them—with your help.

So as you reflect on the fight ahead, join me this fall as we knock on doors, make phone calls and spread the word as the trusted messengers in our communities that AFT Public Employees members are reclaiming the promise of America.

Together, we will continue to ensure that high-quality public services improve the quality of our lives, build stronger communities, reduce the impact of inequality and grow our economy.



Fight back, Fight forward

POLITICALLY DRIVEN ATTACKS on public employees may have set the tone for the 2014 AFT national convention, but they have not set the agenda.

AFT delegates addressed the major issues, from reckless cuts in government services to schemes in the statehouses and the courts to gut public employees' basic rights. They did so in ways that made clear the union would not only mount a strong defense but play offense as well—fighting back and “fighting forward,” a union working not just to stand its ground but to carve out progress and create opportunity for all.

“Our job is to inspire, ignite and move millions to reclaim the promise of America,” AFT President Randi Weingarten said in her keynote address. “Here’s how: Connect with community; be solution-driven; engage, empower and elevate our members—and, frankly, be a little badass.”

It’s a strategy that unquestionably comes into play this fall, when Americans will cast votes in 36 governors’ races, elections that will set the tone for state and local governments for years to come. Already, AFT members are getting involved in states such as Kansas, where one governor’s empty promises and reckless agenda have made him too extreme even for those in his own party, and Connecticut, where public employees are rallying behind an incumbent who pursued a path of respectful, constructive engagement with the

public sector and helped his residents in the process.

Fighting back in Kansas and fighting forward in Connecticut are just two examples of how the strategy carved out last summer by AFT delegates is now very much in play for the coming political season.

Connecticut on course

The power of the governor’s mansion made national headlines in 2011, when Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker launched a scorched-earth attack on public sector workers and sparked a grass-roots rebellion among citizens in the state. Today, the phrase “we are not Wisconsin” carries a lot of currency in places like Connecticut, where members are working for the re-election of Gov. Dannel P. Malloy and Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, leaders who have shunned the extremist Walker model and set out to forge a professional relationship with public employees in the state.

Without exception, the Malloy-Wyman administration has supported workers’ right to collective bargaining. Working with unions, they have negotiated job security and benefit protections, extended health and pension agreements, expanded state employee whistleblower protections, worked with

state-sponsored healthcare plans to reduce prescription drug costs and more. Under Malloy and Wyman, Connecticut has helped stabilize unfunded public pension liabilities and worked with the Legislature to make the tax code more progressive—asking corporations and rich residents to pay their fair share of income taxes.

Malloy is “the first governor in recent history who has put money into this state’s pension fund; the two previous governors raided it,” says Keith Inrig, a radiographer who recently retired from the University of Connecticut Health Center.

Inrig, who also was a first vice president for the AFT-affiliated University Health Professionals, has seen how residents across the state have benefited from reforms under Malloy-Wyman, like paid sick time and minimum-wage hikes. He remembers how public employees were asked to make some concessions while Connecticut was clawing back from the Great Recession and were told by the administration that this would not be a revolving door. “Gov. Malloy promised that he would not come back to state employees for more—and he’s kept that word.”

This spirit of cooperation has paid broad and meaningful dividends across the state, even during very dark days. The governor signed first-in-the-nation legislation for private sector workers who lack strong pensions and want to participate in a public retirement plan. Following almost unendurable pain in the wake of the Sandy Hook school shootings, Malloy established an assistance fund to help teachers, first responders, forensic analysts and other government workers called to action.

“Our members understand what’s at stake and what it takes to make sure Connecticut is

ELECTION 2014

WHAT’S AT STAKE?



For public employees, this election may jeopardize basic workers’ rights, including:



Collective bargaining for public employees



Defined-benefit pensions



Minimum-wage increases



Health insurance



THOMAS GIROIR

‘not Wisconsin,’” says AFT Connecticut President Melodie Peters. Affiliates in the state recently hosted a packed town hall meeting, where AFT leaders from Wisconsin detailed the pains and pressures they’ve faced under an extreme leader like Walker. The events galvanized rank-and-file interest and enthusiasm for making Connecticut’s upcoming election an opportunity to keep progress on course.

“We have been an exception to the stripping of workers’ rights that has been going on across the country,” says Peters. “That’s why we have united with the state’s labor movement to preserve our ‘Connecticut moment’ and back the re-election of Dannel Malloy for governor.”

An ‘adrenalin shot’ that wasn’t

The progress happening in Connecticut has precious little to do with the state of affairs in Kansas. There, incumbent GOP Gov. Sam Brownback, with support from deep-pocketed in-state supporters like the Koch brothers, has teamed up with a tea party-dominated legislature to muscle into law a raft of extremist bills concocted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

Public sector downsizing, layoffs and forced overtime, workplace bullying and attacks on due process—all have been used unsparingly in the Kansas public sector in the past four years under Brownback. The governor also has helped enact tax policies that offer windfalls for wealthy corporations and individuals while imposing extra burdens on working Kansans—an agenda that Brownback promised would give the state’s ailing economy a “shot of adrenalin.” Today, however, Kansas is consistently near the bottom of the region when it comes to job growth and other measures of economic health.

Brownback’s poor performance also hasn’t escaped Wall Street’s notice. This year, Moody’s Investors Service made it more costly for the state to fund highway and other major projects when it downgraded the bond rating for Kansas. The ratings house cited “Kansas’ relatively sluggish recovery compared with its peers,” along with “an

Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy, right, joins AFT President Randi Weingarten to tour a school where state aid made renovations possible.

underfunded retirement system for which the state is not making actuarially required contributions,” as major factors driving the downgrade.

“What the governor called a ‘shot of adrenalin’ turned out to be a do-not-resuscitate order and a race to the bottom” for the state, says AFT-Kansas and Kansas Organization of State Employees President Lisa Ochs, and nobody knows that better than state and local public employees.

For example, recent employee surveys show growing concerns at correctional institutions, where soaring inmate-to-officer ratios and forced overtime have made the work more dangerous. Infrastructure work has gone ignored or delayed for months on end thanks to budget cuts, and the state contribution to education has plummeted to levels where the state Supreme Court was finally forced to step in, ordering Brownback and state lawmakers to heed the state constitution and fund education for all children in Kansas. It was a fiasco, an embarrassment to many Kansans, but still not enough to convince Brownback and his tea party allies in the Legislature from going on another ALEC-inspired jag.

On the last day of the 2014 session, the Legislature took up an appropriations bill that was crafted to satisfy the state Supreme Court’s school funding order. What ultimately passed—in the dead of night, with no public hearing—was a bill that stripped teachers of due-process protections they had held for more than a half-century. The poison pill was something Brownback wanted, and he wasted no time signing it into law.

It’s beyond the pale, too much for even the mainstream of Brownback’s party. This summer, more than 100 influential GOP leaders in Kansas announced they would be backing state Rep. Paul Davis in his bid to unseat Brownback—a decision that’s being applauded by Kansans like AFT member Tim Nissen, a correctional officer and part-time farmer who says that the quality of

Continued on page 12

ELECTION 2014 STATES TO WATCH



ALASKA

U.S. SENATE RACE

Alaska has one of the top U.S. Senate races in the country, and Senate control could hang on Democrat Mark Begich’s ability to win re-election in the fall. Begich, who won a hard-fought victory in 2008, is currently in a tight race with GOP challenger Dan Sullivan. Alaska also illustrates the importance of issues below the top of the ticket. The state is considering a proposal to raise the minimum wage. Sponsored by three former state commissioners of labor, the proposal would raise the minimum wage to \$9.75 by 2016 and tie it to inflation in the following years.

COLORADO

GOVERNOR’S RACE

The Colorado governor’s race poses stark contrasts and clear choices for the public sector. Under incumbent John Hickenlooper, state employees have seen their first raises since 2008 and are negotiating in more than a dozen facilities as well as with the executive teams of the Department of Human Resources and Department of Corrections. Hickenlooper’s GOP challenger is former U.S. Rep. Bob Beauprez, who vowed—on his first day in office—to revoke an executive order granting bargaining rights to state employees.

ILLINOIS

GOVERNOR’S RACE

In Illinois, public employees and AFT members across the state are mobilizing support for incumbent Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn, who has fought for high-quality services and schools, and “supports our fundamental right to speak with a collective voice on behalf of our communities,” says Illinois Federation of Teachers President Daniel Montgomery, who is also an AFT vice president. His opponent, billionaire Bruce Rauner, has sought to demonize public employees and dismantle unions—and has gone on record as saying public employees are overpaid by nearly 25 percent.

WISCONSIN

GOVERNOR’S RACE

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker’s attacks on collective bargaining in the public sector have ushered in a climate of intimidation and fear, particularly among the many public employees working in agencies headed by political appointees. Efforts to unseat Walker have galvanized unions across the board, and opposition to the incumbent is growing, in part because of recent reports of campaign irregularities and Wisconsin’s consistent ranking at the bottom of states when it comes to job creation and economic growth. In November, he faces a stiff challenge from Democrat Mary Burke, a former business executive and school board member in Madison, in a race that is too close to call.



VOTE

ELECTION 2014



When union members and their families turn out on Election Day, candidates who are with us on important issues usually win. **But when turnout is low among union members and households, the results can be devastating.**

For working families and the issues we care about, the stakes are huge this year, so it's vital to elect candidates who are focused on economic fairness, high-quality healthcare, and strong public education—and to oppose candidates whose agendas favor the powerful and support the dismantling of public education and public services.

As we have seen, every vote counts. It is critical that we all speak to our family members, friends, and neighbors about getting out to vote for candidates who will stand with us to reclaim the promise of America. We cannot afford a repeat of the 2010 elections, when anti-working-family candidates won a majority of races across the country. What happens on Nov. 4 can send a powerful message. You and your family can help us send the right message.

go.aft.org/rockurhouse



Outsourcing public jobs results in a race to the bottom

A NEW REPORT from In the Public Interest looks at what happens to communities, and to the quality of life of the workers who provide important public services, when those services are outsourced to for-profit and other private entities.

The answer, drawn from a growing body of evidence and industry data: “a downward spiral in which reduced worker wages and benefits can hurt the local economy and overall stability of middle and working class communities,” says the report, “Race to the Bottom: How Outsourcing Public Services Rewards Corporations and Punishes the Middle Class.”

Historically, the authors note, state and local governments created ladders of opportunity that helped workers reach the middle class through public sector jobs that provided good wages and important benefits, such as health insurance and sick leave. This was especially true for women and African-Americans. “Low-road government contracts reverse

this dynamic,” the report says. “While corporations rake in increasing profits through taxpayer dollars, and CEO compensation continues to soar, numerous examples in this report show that workers employed by state and local government contractors receive low wages and few benefits.”

Among the examples: A 2009 study on the effects of outsourcing on food service workers in K-12 public schools in New Jersey found that companies such as Aramark, Compass and Sodexo cut workers’ wages by \$4 to \$6 per hour following privatization. Many workers completely lost their health insurance benefits. Among correctional officers, the median annual wage for officers employed by state governments was \$38,850, and it was \$37,510 for those employed by local governments. Correctional officers employed by private prison companies, by contrast, earned a median yearly salary of only \$28,790.

“All too often,” the report says, “taxpayers

are inadvertently contributing to growing income inequality and the erosion of the middle class by turning middle-class jobs into poverty-level jobs.”

The report outlines a set of policy recommendations for reversing this dangerous race to the bottom, including:

- Requiring contractors to show that cost savings derive from increased efficiencies and innovation, not from a decrease in compensation;
- Requiring contractors to pay a living wage and provide health and other important benefits;
- Requiring transparency measures, such as tracking how much state and local governments are spending on private contracts, how many workers are employed by those contracts and worker wage rates; and
- Requiring governments to conduct a social and economic impact analysis before outsourcing.

Convention celebrates victories, accepts challenges

Speakers inspire commitment; resolutions reflect determination to fight back, fight forward

THE 2014 AFT Convention in Los Angeles July 11-14 did much to energize the union’s “fight forward”—to preserve public workers’ rights—and our “fight back”—against those who would demonize public employees.

Members reviewed successes in places like Connecticut, where an AFT local negotiated a popular wellness program, and North Dakota,

where the AFT-affiliated North Dakota Public Employees Association and the North Dakota Education Association merged to form the state’s largest public employee union.

AFT Executive Vice President Francine Lawrence applauded public employee activists for advocating “on behalf of not just our members but those you serve,” and criticized the “misguided policies” of those who call for privatization and austerity.

On the convention floor, delegates passed a number of public employee-related resolutions, among them measures that oppose privatization of public services, support full restitution of pensions to Detroit municipal workers, and “proactively press forward ... to reclaim the promise of high-quality public services for strong communities.”

Delegates also voted to support immigration reform; to help Central American children crossing into the U.S. to flee violence in their home countries; and to increase locals’ per capita dues by 45 cents.

But the fireworks came through inspiring speakers like the Rev. William Barber, California Gov. Jerry Brown and AFT President Randi Weingarten, who passionately declared their intentions to reclaim the promise of America.

Other speakers included actor and parent Cynthia Nixon; L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti; U.S. Reps. Mark Takano (D-Calif.), Judy Chu (D-Calif.) and Mike Honda (D-Calif.); and Donna Brazile, vice chair of the National Democratic Committee.

“We are in the midst of a moral crisis that demands we have a movement now,” said Barber. “We will organize and fight for the soul of our democracy. ... When we get together we win.”

Weingarten noted that, despite devastating challenges to labor unions, at 1.6 million members the AFT is larger than ever. “Our union of professionals gives us the strength and solidarity to fight for what’s right.” She urged delegates to connect with community, pursue solution-driven unionism, and engage and empower their members.

To give back to the host city, AFT volunteers visited All Peoples Community Center in downtown L.A. to distribute free groceries and books, set up healthy cooking demonstrations and direct local residents to health assessment services, helping All Peoples connect with other social networks that will serve them well into the future. It was a perfect example of how the AFT is truly reclaiming the promise.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CAMPBELL AND RUSS CURTIS



A Union of Professionals

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* New York State United Teachers members have insurance programs and a legal services program through NYSUT Member Benefits Trust. To obtain more information about these plans, members can call 800-626-8101.

¹ Certain restrictions, limitations, and qualifications apply to these grants. Additional information and eligibility criteria can be obtained at UnionPlus.org/Assistance. Credit approval required. Terms & Conditions apply. Union Plus Credit Cards issued by Capital One, N.A.

[†] Washington State Nurses Association members have access to credit card and mortgage offerings through WSNA Membership Benefits. To obtain more information, members can visit www.wsna.org/membership/benefits/. Ohio Nurses Association members have access to credit card offerings through ONA Membership Benefits. To obtain more information, please visit www.ona.org.

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A Union of Professionals

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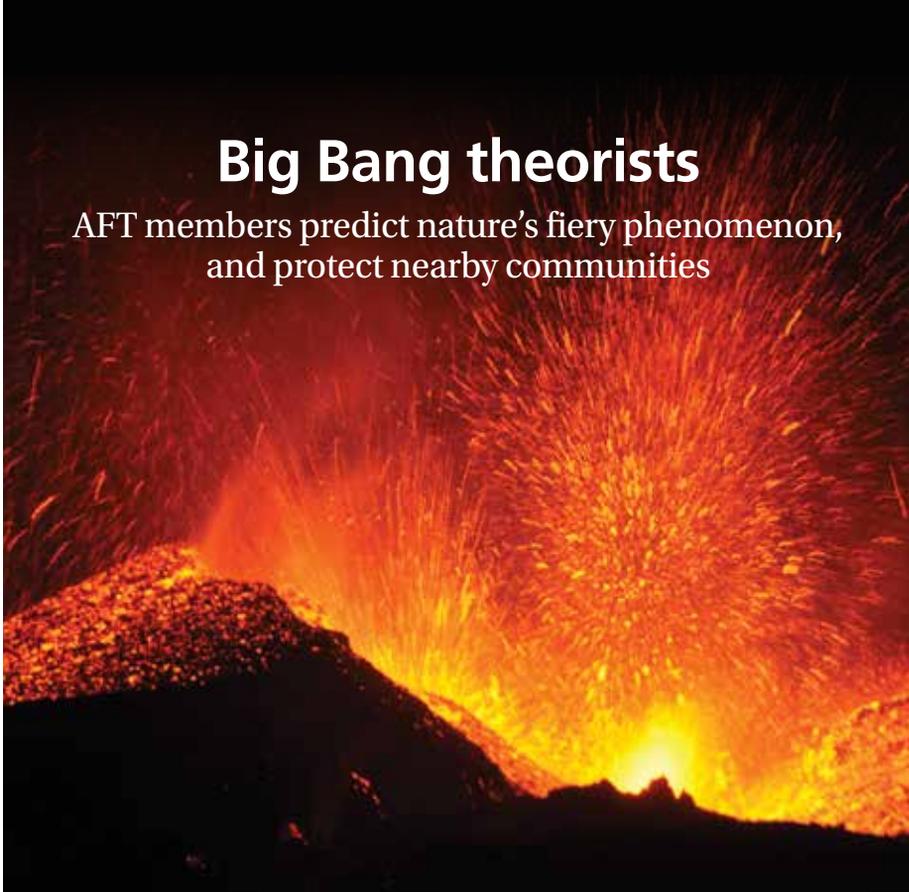
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Program information current as of July 2014. For updates and details, visit www.aft.org/benefits, or call 800-238-1133, ext. 8643.

The AFT has numerous endorsed programs for which it receives expense reimbursements. All payments to the AFT are used solely to defray the costs of administering the AFT + Member Benefits programs and, where appropriate, enhance them.

Big Bang theorists

AFT members predict nature's fiery phenomenon, and protect nearby communities



Fight back, Fight forward

Continued from page 5

life that drew him to Kansas is being undermined by a governor “who seems more focused on the next step in his career” than on meeting the needs of his state.

“I’ll be a Republican till the day I die, but Brownback is just not supporting the state sector and he’s not supporting me, as a resident of this state,” Nissen says. Staffing at the correctional facility where he works has fallen to dangerous levels, says Nissen, who points to other indicators of community pain in the Brownback years: teachers paying more out of pocket for school supplies at the public school his grandchildren attend, tax changes that hurt small and part-time farmers, the loss of important jobs at a nearby Boeing plant.

“This is where I call home, and I’ve seen it slip in the last four years,” says Nissen, who is also a union leader at his work site. He says his colleagues are keenly aware of the pain caused under the current administration, and getting them interested and engaged in the governor’s race hasn’t been difficult. “When people are sick of the same policies, it’s pretty easy to motivate them.”

DID YOU KNOW that AFT represents volcanologists?

Volcanologists are not your run-of-the-mill scientists; they study the processes involved in the formation and activity of volcanoes and their current and historic eruptions. In a sense, they’re detectives trying to decipher the clues that rocks tell us.

Volcanoes are complicated phenomena that can’t be understood without knowledge of the structure and chemistry of the Earth and its rocks, and the interaction of volcanic materials with air and water. Volcanologists frequently visit volcanoes, especially active ones, to observe eruptions and collect eruptive products. They also study the remains of either dead or dormant volcanoes as well as monitor volcanoes that may become active or “reawaken.” The basic goals of volcanology are to understand how and why volcanoes erupt, how to predict eruptions, the impact they have on the history of the Earth, and how they may affect humans and their environment.

AFT represents volcanologists, like AFT public employee Chris Nye, in Alaska. Since 1988, Nye has worked with the Alaska Volcano Observatory. AVO monitors the state’s volcanoes, provides warnings of impending eruptions and conducts basic research to try to understand the hazards. “One of the things that is neat about this job is that it really is science in the public interest,” says Nye. “There are billions of dollars at risk.”

Supervisory geologist Chris Nye monitors Alaska’s more than three dozen volcanoes for warning signs of impending eruptions.



ERIC ENGMAN