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‘Taking back our healthcare system’

Conference focuses on reclaiming the promise

WHAT DOES “reclaiming the promise” mean to you? This was the question posed to the 275 nurses and health professionals who gathered in Baltimore for the joint AFT Healthcare Professional Issues Conference and National Federation of Nurses Annual Labor Academy in May. The conference introduced the AFT’s national effort to reclaim the promise of high-quality healthcare.

“When I think of reclaiming the promise, I think about taking our healthcare system back to a focus of public good and service rather than profits,” Candice Owley, president of the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals and an AFT vice president, said during the opening session. “Healthcare is viewed as a commodity today, and for many nurses, this is the only system they know. But there was a time when quality of care was what we believed in.”

We can change the focus in healthcare, and we are commited to change the culture, AFT President Randi Weingarten told attendees during the opening session. “Our history has been to find a way to create a voice as members that can be heard to preserve the respect and dignity of work. That’s the theory behind ‘reclaim the promise’: ensuring the view you have of wanting to make a difference is aligned with the tools you have to get things done.”

The union’s goal is to work at the national, state and local levels to transform the American healthcare system to deliver the high-quality care that patients deserve, and to ensure that our members have the tools and resources they need to thrive and succeed, Weingarten said. “Now is the time to reclaim the promise of our healthcare system, end the deprofessionalization of healthcare workers, and put patients above profits.”

But we can’t do it alone, said Weingarten. “We have to get the community on our side, and our members have to be engaged. When they are, they feel empowered—and no one can divide us. We have to be solution-driven, community-engaged and member-mobilized.”

In another session, nurse researcher Sean Clarke discussed the latest staffing research and trends to address staffing issues effectively. Clarke, the department chair for nursing research and innovative practice at McGill University, noted that until recently, there was no evidence to say that staffing had an impact on hospital outcomes. It wasn’t until the U.S. Institute of Medicine released its 1999 report “To Err Is Human,” which said that medical errors were one of the top 10 preventable causes of death, that people began looking at staffing, he said. “It was a watershed event that led to change in the research.”

However, there is still remarkably little information about what happens on hospital units, said Clarke. “Nursing is a big part of healthcare, but it’s largely invisible to outsiders. Research in this area is so difficult because outcomes are influenced by many different factors.”

But that doesn’t mean that staffing doesn’t matter, Clarke added. “Staffing is almost definitely one factor involved in patient outcomes—but these variables are likely to be associated with other factors.” To impact care, he said, it’s important to know where your hospital stands on staffing, and nurses need to advocate for the necessary support and structure.
Fighting back and fighting forward for high-quality healthcare

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

AT THE AFT 2014 Convention in Los Angeles this summer, the AFT Nurses and Health Professionals delegates showed the rest of us how to celebrate.

RNs, LPNs, respiratory therapists, social workers, hospital maintenance workers and more danced their way into the convention hall and jumped on stage as music blared and fireworks erupted on the big screen. The celebration marked the fact that last year’s affiliation of 34,000 registered nurses from the National Federation of Nurses pushed our membership over the 1.6 million mark—making AFT the second-largest nurses union in the nation.

It was a proud moment for me and our union as we stood united—bigger and stronger together and more determined than ever.

Of course, AFT Nurses and Health Professionals delegates did more than celebrate during the four days of inspiring and invigorating conversation, debate and solidarity. They laid the foundation for the work we will be doing over the next two years to transform the American healthcare system on the national, state and local levels by ensuring that our members have what they need to thrive—and deliver the affordable, high-quality care their patients deserve.

AFT delegates shaped this work by approving resolutions calling for safe staffing levels and efforts to reshape the healthcare industry to put patients before corporate profits, and by adopting a new name: AFT Nurses and Health Professionals.

This constitutional modification was followed by another important change—AFT’s mission was expanded to include our work to provide progressively better health and social service opportunities for all. As nurses and healthcare workers, this is a no-brainer; you all are passionate advocates for access to affordable, accessible care for every American in the work you do every day.

Decades of research has established the relationship between inadequate nurse staffing and unexpected hospital deaths or injuries, medical errors, complications and infections, readmissions, patient satisfaction, and burnout and turnover.

AFT delegates pledged to support state and federal laws setting minimum standards for the number of patients assigned to registered nurses for each hospital unit and shift, as well as laws to establish nurse staffing committees that would research, establish and review factors appropriate for increasing nurse staffing levels above required minimum levels.

Building on this need to ensure that all patients have access to the best caregivers, AFT delegates also approved a commitment to promote and support APRNs and nurse practitioners as key providers of primary healthcare—and will work to remove any barriers that prevent nurses and all healthcare professionals from practicing to the full extent of their educational preparation in every state.

Meanwhile, in hospitals and healthcare facilities across the country, nurses are being laid off while hospital executives’ compensation increases at double-digit rates—even as studies show that CEO compensation is not tied to higher quality, better outcomes, or other factors that would benefit patients and communities.

AFT delegates pledged to create a national education and advocacy campaign to focus on reshaping the United States healthcare system “to serve the needs of communities and to truly put patients first,” while advocating for transparency in the healthcare industry.

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 let austerity mongers, hedge fund managers or our bosses change our healthcare system from one that cares about patients to one that cares only about profits. We must fight back and fight forward. 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 our allies will have the votes they need to pass the legislation we’re fighting for in Connecticut to push back against privatization, or the

We have a **chance** to fight back against those who demonize, demoralize and **aim** to destroy us and to **fight** forward with a **vision** for a nation in which we **reclaim** the promise of high-quality healthcare.

safe-staffing bills we’re championing in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Oregon, New Jersey, New York and Wisconsin—and at the federal level.

Elections matter. They mean the difference between a Dan Malloy and a Tom Foley in Connecticut, or a Tom Wolf and a Tom Corbett in Pennsylvania, or a Mary Burke and a Scott Walker in Wisconsin.

This election, we have a chance to fight back against those who demonize, demoralize and aim to destroy us and to fight forward with a vision for a nation in which we reclaim the promise of high-quality healthcare—not as it is today or as it was in the past, but as it can be—to fulfill our collective responsibility to guarantee access to all.

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

I hope you will join me this fall as we knock on doors, make phone calls and spread the word as the trusted messengers in our communities that members of AFT Nurses and Healthcare Professionals are reclaiming the promise of America.
WHEN UNION MEMBERS and their families turn out on Election Day, candidates who are with us on issues of importance to working families usually win.

But when turnout is low among union members and households, the results can be ugly. Just look at 2010, when an anti-working-family majority—many of them supported by the tea party—seized control of the House of Representatives, drastically reduced a Democratic, pro-worker majority in the Senate, and won a number of key governors’ races. The result was an avalanche of anti-union, anti-worker legislation in states across the country and total gridlock on Capitol Hill.

The country can’t afford a repeat of 2010. In a Labor Day message to members, AFT President Randi Weingarten outlined the union’s vision to reclaim the promise of America. Our fight is about more than elections, but what happens on Nov. 4 can send a powerful message moving forward.

“As a union, we are fighting back against the relentless attacks on our jobs, our families and our communities,” Weingarten wrote. “We are fighting back—whether it’s against Campbell Brown’s efforts to strip teachers of their due process rights and pit teachers against parents; corporate hospital chains seeking to enrich themselves at the expense of patients and healthcare professionals; politicians like Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback, who never met a public school, public service or public employee he didn’t want to eliminate; or those saddling students with debt, ripping them off and ‘Wal-Martizing’ the higher education workforce.”

For working families and the issues we care about, the stakes are huge this year, so it’s vital to elect candidates who support...
workers and public services in as many places as possible. We support candidates who are focused on economic fairness, high-quality healthcare and strong public education, and oppose candidates whose agenda includes building an economy that favors the powerful and dismantling public education and public services. The choices are clear.

In the Senate, it is critical that Democrats maintain a majority because a Republican-controlled House of Representatives, which is likely to continue, will keep passing legislation that would be devastating to workers’ rights, healthcare, economic justice and civil rights. Eight or nine races will probably determine control of the Senate, with most of those involving seats now held by Democrats, and many taking place in states that are traditionally Republican and lack strong unions.

Among governors, where Republicans currently hold 29 posts, there are huge opportunities to unseat some of the Republican incumbents who have led the movement to attack labor and working families since the 2010 elections.

Obviously, what happens in the House is also important, as are state legislative elections and other statewide races, ballot initiatives, and on down to school board and other local elections. There are far too many races to mention individually, but a few to watch include U.S. Rep. Tim Bishop’s tough re-election fight in New York’s first district; state legislative contests in Minnesota, New Mexico, Ohio and Oregon, where pro-public-education, pro-working-family candidates stand to make significant gains; the race for California’s superintendent of public instruction, where incumbent Tom Torlakson, a strong ally of public school educators, faces a challenge from a well-funded charter school executive; and the campaign to stop Missouri’s anti-teacher-tenure measure.

As Weingarten says: “Our strength and the strength of the labor movement has never been our dollar power. It’s been our people power.” With that in mind, thousands of AFT members around the country will be making calls, knocking on doors and attending community events between now and Election Day to make sure the candidates who stand up for us are successful.

Control of the U.S. Senate will be determined in several key races across the country, including the races highlighted below. Other key Senate races include Arkansas, Iowa, Louisiana, North Carolina and West Virginia.

ALASKA
Alaska has one of the most closely watched Senate races in the country, and Senate control could hang on Democrat Mark Begich’s ability to win re-election. Begich, first elected in 2008, is in a tight race with Republican challenger Dan Sullivan. Among other issues, Begich has supported higher funding for school counselors and technical education programs, as well as increased support for the state’s rural schools. Begich’s AFT voting record is 93 percent.

COLORADO
Democrat Mark Udall is hoping to continue his family’s long-running history of public service by winning a second term in the Senate. He faces a strong challenge from Republican U.S. Rep. Cory Gardner. With Gardner gaining some notoriety for his support of “personhood” proposals, which could end up banning many common forms of birth control, women’s and reproductive rights are playing a role in the election. For his part, Udall supports comprehensive immigration reform, raising the minimum wage and fully funding important federal education programs. Udall’s AFT voting record is 96 percent.

MICHIGAN
With Democratic Sen. Carl Levin retiring, the contest for this open seat pits Republican Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land, an outspoken critic of the auto rescue package, against Democratic U.S. Rep. Gary Peters, a strong voice for Capitol Hill action to save jobs in the auto industry. Sharp contrasts on gender equity also factor into the race: Peters co-sponsored the Paycheck Fairness Act to ensure equal pay for equal work; Land said she would have voted against the bill. Peters’ AFT voting record in the House is 100 percent.

MINNESOTA
Since winning his Senate seat in 2008 after an eight-month recount battle, former comedian Al Franken, a Democrat, has proved himself to be a serious, hard-working legislator. His opponent is Republican investment banker Mike McFadden, who has attracted some unwanted attention because the company he works for is headquartered in Bermuda to avoid paying U.S. taxes. Franken serves on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and has earned a 100 percent AFT voting record.
Nurses and health professionals take spotlight at convention

Staffing, improving patient care are focus of resolutions

AFT CONVENTION DELEGATES passed resolutions that provide a road map to improving the quality and safety of patient care in the U.S. healthcare system by calling for safe staffing levels and efforts to reshape the healthcare industry to put patients before corporate profits. The policymaking resolutions were approved unanimously at the AFT convention in Los Angeles, July 11-14. The more than 3,500 AFT delegates and guests also celebrated last year’s affiliation of 34,000 registered nurses from the National Federation of Nurses, which helped push AFT membership over the 1.6 million mark.

In her keynote address to the convention, AFT President Randi Weingarten said there is a need to reclaim the promise of high-quality healthcare to provide affordable, accessible care for all. “Let’s make sure we use all tools and tactics available ... to fight for a healthcare system that puts patient care and worker safety above corporate profits.”

Among other things, the AFT pledged to support state and federal laws setting minimum standards for the number of patients assigned to registered nurses for each hospital unit and shift, as well as laws to establish nurse staffing committees that would research, establish and review factors appropriate for increasing staffing levels above the minimum required by law.

Nurses often are forced to endure unsafe scheduling practices, including mandatory overtime and excessive shifts due to inadequate staffing, said Mari Cordes, president of the Vermont Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals.

Nurse staffing shortages are a factor in one of every four unexpected hospital deaths or injuries caused by errors, the resolution states. “Patients die when nurses are overwhelmed with more than they can handle,” added Alana Smith, a member of the Ohio Nurses Association. “Somewhere between birth and death, we are all going to be in the hands of a registered nurse. I want to give good care to my patients.”

Delegates also passed a resolution titled “The Role of the Staff Nurse in Patient Satisfaction and Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems.” Nurses play a crucial role in the patient care experience, the resolution says; it calls for educating locals about best practices to achieve better patient satisfaction scores. Another resolution, “APRNs: Key Providers of Primary Care in the USA,” also was adopted. Members who stood in support of the resolution called for the removal of barriers that prevent advanced practice registered nurses from utilizing the full extent of their education.

There are only 18 states that allow APRNs to practice to their full extent, said Lori Chovanak, executive director of the Montana Nurses Association and an APRN. “We support the removal of barriers in all states for APRNs,” so that they can practice to the full range of their education and training.

The patients-before-profits resolution noted that hospital executives’ compensation increases at double-digit rates while nurses are being laid off, and it highlighted 2013 data which show that CEO compensation was not tied to higher quality, better outcomes or other factors that would benefit patients and communities.
This resolution calls for the union to join with patient advocates, community groups and other providers to create a national education and advocacy campaign to focus on reshaping the U.S. healthcare system “to serve the needs of communities and to truly put patients first.” The AFT also will advocate for transparency in the healthcare industry by calling for all financial information and quality indicators to be publicly available.

**English professor turned nurse is celebrated**

The healthcare division held its first breakfast gathering at the convention. Nurse and author Theresa Brown was honored with an award for excellence in communications. Before becoming a nurse, Brown was an English professor at Tufts University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. After switching jobs, she wrote the book *Critical Care: A New Nurse Faces Death, Life, and Everything in Between*, chronicling her first year on the job. She also writes about her experiences for the *New York Times*.

“I became a nurse and I never looked back—and I have never regretted the decision,” Brown told the breakfast participants.

“When I tell people who I am, I say I am a nurse and I write for the *New York Times*. Nursing always comes first.”

Giving a voice to nurses and the work they do is a privilege, Brown said. “It’s good for people to see us and the work that we do. We need nurse voices because our voices are patients’ voices.”

**‘You are on the path to change’**

“Healthcare is viewed as a commodity today, and for many nurses, this is the only system they know. But there was a time when quality of care was what we believed in,” said Candice Owley, president of the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals and an AFT vice president, during the healthcare divisional meeting at the convention. But control over the quality of healthcare can be pulled back from corporate hands if we all work together, she said.

The meeting featured remarks from Shannon Brownlee, a writer and essayist best known for her groundbreaking work on overtreatment and the implications for healthcare policy. She is the author of *Overtreated: Why Too Much Medicine Is Making Us Sicker and Poorer*. Brownlee told delegates that even though patients have become “customers,” things can be turned around. Overtreatment is endemic in healthcare, Brownlee pointed out. “You can’t work in a hospital and remain unaware of the scope of overuse.”

Overtreatment happens because patients represent revenue to hospitals, said Brownlee. “The default in healthcare is to do something because we think of death as a failure.

“Extracting overuse and restoring the healthcare system will require deep structural change. I want you to be involved in how the change occurs,” she told delegates.

And as unionized health professionals, “you are already on the path for collective action to bring about change.”

**Healthcare members honored**

The AFT Everyday Hero award for healthcare went to leaders of the unions at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital, in New London, Conn., which fought to keep patient care services in the community hospital rather than outsourced—through a strike, a hospital lockout and ultimately a successful contract this past winter. Accepting the award at the convention were Lisa D’Abrasca, president of AFT Local 5049, which represents L+M registered nurses; Stephanie Johnson, president of AFT Local 5051, which represents licensed practical nurses and technicians; and Harry Rodriguez, president of AFT Local 5123, which represents service and support workers.

In addition, Health Professionals and Allied Employees Local 5091 at Bergen Regional Medical Center in Paramus, N.J., was given a Pride of the Union award, which honors AFT affiliates and their union-building efforts through membership growth.

**Welcome a new name**

DURING THE AFT’S recent national convention 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 a large group—34,000 nurses from the National Federation of Nurses—join with the AFT,” said 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.”

“Not only does this honor our new nurses and the respect that we have for this profession, but it also sends a 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.”

Ann Twomey, president of Health Professionals and Allied Employees in New Jersey and an AFT vice president, emphasized the importance of the name change. “We need to organize more nurses and more health professionals. We need to be very clear in defining who we are to the outside world. We are proud to be part of the AFT; but we also want the unorganized to know they can come to us, and we will help them gain their rights and improve their standards.”

The AFT, which represents 112,000 nurses and other healthcare workers, is the second-largest nurses union in the nation.
LAST MARCH, between shifts as a registered nurse in the psychiatric crisis unit at Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune, N.J., Marty Marino met with state lawmakers in an effort to persuade them to support a bill that would provide safe staffing in New Jersey hospitals. Marino wasn’t alone. He was joined by members of his union, Health Professionals and Allied Employees, who shared his passion for getting the legislation passed.

“Safe staffing is about helping patients,” says Marino. “It’s not about creating less work for nurses and health professionals. We can’t be in two places at once; if we want to improve the quality of patient care, it requires more nurses and ancillary staff. That’s the message we tried to get across.”

Healthcare workers across the country are voicing the same message: Safe staffing saves lives. A growing body of research shows that there is a direct link between safe nurse staffing levels and patient outcomes, patient satisfaction, mortality rates and readmission rates. HPAE is among a number of AFT Nurses and Health Professionals affiliates—including AFT Connecticut, the Oregon Nurses Association and the Washington State Nurses Association—that have launched efforts to improve nurse staffing through legislation in their respective states.

At the national level, delegates to the 2014 AFT Convention in Los Angeles this summer passed a resolution that solidified the union’s commitment to safe and effective nurse staffing, by calling for the support of state and federal laws that set minimum standards for the number of patients assigned to a nurse, as well as laws that establish nurse staffing committees. In addition, the resolution notes that the AFT will help locals negotiate contract language that establishes safe staffing levels and requires hospitals to share data on staffing, patient satisfaction and patient outcomes. As the resolution notes, “to reclaim the promise of healthcare, we must ensure frontline caregivers and staff are well-prepared and supported to provide safe, sufficient and high-quality patient care.” And that starts with staffing.

‘Staffing guidelines are woefully inadequate’

In New Jersey, HPAE has called on the state department of health to update its staffing standards; the union also is supporting a
Nurses are supporting AFT Connecticut’s social media campaign to address safe staffing.

state Senate bill that improves nurse-to-patient staffing ratios. “Nurse staffing guidelines haven’t been updated since 1987 and are woefully inadequate,” says Ann Twomey, HPAE president and an AFT vice president.

The meetings with state legislators provided an opportunity for the working nurses to talk about their daily work and educate the lawmakers on the importance of the bill. “They heard our concerns, and we heard theirs,” says Marino. “The legislation may not pass this year, but it will eventually.”

Some states do have laws that address nurse staffing, and our affiliate members are working in coalition with healthcare unions, community groups, professional organizations and other allies to improve staffing regulations and to ensure that the laws are implemented effectively. “Our effort to reclaim the promise can’t be done alone,” says AFT President Randi Weingarten. “We have to get the community on our side, and our members engaged. When they are, they feel empowered—and no one can divide us,” Weingarten told AFTNHP members at a Professional Issues Conference in Baltimore this spring.

‘We want legislation that will work’

In June, the Washington State Nurses Association held a summit on staffing and patient safety, teaming up with SEIU Healthcare 1199NW to provide education and training to members so they can advocate at the state Capitol for a staffing ratio law and make a stronger case for safe staffing in their hospitals. Washington has a law that requires the facilities to establish staffing committees, but it isn’t effective, says Anne Tan Piazza, assistant executive director of governmental affairs and operations for WSNA. The union wants a bill to establish staffing ratios as minimum standard while also requiring hospitals CEOs to implement the staffing plan proposed by the staffing committee based on the needs of the patients. “It’s not enough to simply adopt ratios,” says Piazza. “We want legislation that we believe will work in Washington state.”

WSNA members are trying to deal with the current law by improving its implementation. This is what led them to sponsor the summit with SEIU. More than 300 nurses from across the state participated in training on how to effectively advocate for safe staffing. “Hospitals haven’t always responded to the need for safer staffing,” Piazza says. “That’s why we need to continue the push so our voices are heard.”

The WSNA also is holding events called “RN Days of Action” in which members volunteer to help on the campaigns of “nurse champions”—people who are running for legislative offices in the state and who support issues that are important to WSNA members.

Raising awareness

Connecticut also has legislation on the books that requires hospitals to establish staffing committees. It, too, is ineffective. Earlier this year, AFT Connecticut implemented an initiative called Safe Staffing Connecticut to raise awareness. It is an AFT-led coalition of allies statewide that believe safe staffing is a key element of high-quality healthcare. The coalition has used legislative visits and social media to influence policymakers and community members, urging them to make safe staffing and quality care a priority as the new landscape of healthcare unfolds.

Ole Hermanson, an AFT Connecticut staff er, says nurses are showing their support for the coalition through the union’s social media campaign—by posting photos with signs detailing why they support safe staffing. “They share it on their Facebook pages and Twitter feeds and it has really helped to get our message out,” he says. “Staffing is a problem we are having in all of our hospitals, and we want to address it on all fronts—in our community, in our contracts and in state legislation.”

Resistance to optimal staffing

It has been 10 years since staffing legislation was passed in Oregon. The state also uses staffing committees in its hospitals. “In hospitals where the law is embraced, it works OK. But it’s been challenging in hospitals that don’t buy into staffing committees,” says Sarah Baessler, the Oregon Nurses Association’s director of health policy and government relations. “Staffing decisions in these hospitals are based on budget—not on the needs of patients.”

Frustration with the lack of enforcement led the ONA to push for a stronger law. The union has made passage of improved staffing legislation a priority in the 2015 legislative session. The ONA wants to strengthen the law to empower nurses on staffing committees and give the state more tools to effectively enforce the law. The ONA is not pursuing a nurse-to-patient ratio like many of the other affiliates. “We want to strengthen the structure that is already in place,” says Baessler.

Cheryl Brewer, an ONA member and a nurse at Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend in Springfield, is on her hospital’s staffing committee and is part of the Oregon Nurse Staffing Collaborative, where nurses share best practices and evaluate staffing challenges and opportunities. She says there has been resistance to optimal staffing at her hospital. “My organization either doesn’t understand the staffing law or doesn’t want to follow the law.”

In July, the ONA, which represents the 1,000 nurses at Sacred Heart, negotiated a two-year contract that contains provisions to address some of the staffing issues. In fact, a number of AFT NHP locals also have used contract language to make staffing improvements in lieu of stronger staffing regulations in their states. Brewer hopes the contract will help with staffing, but she also supports efforts to change the law. “No matter what we have in the contract,” the hospital will do what it must “to ensure CEOs are taken care of, but there are no guarantees for our patients that adequate staff will be at the bedside. The law needs to be enhanced to empower nurses and make hospitals accountable for implementing safer staffing.”

—ADRIENNE COLES
‘Taking back our healthcare system’

Continued from page 2

tures to help them provide high-quality care.

In a session titled “Money, Politics and Right to Work,” Gordon Lafer, associate professor at the Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon, discussed the unprecedented wave of legislation aimed at reducing healthcare wages, safety measures and workers’ ability to bargain, as well as attacks on nonunion workers.

“Right to work succeeds in lowering wages and benefits—like healthcare and pensions—for everyone, but does nothing to increase job growth,” said Lafer. “This is not an issue of partisanship. It’s about carrying out an agenda that will make the rich richer. When this legislation comes to states, it seems local, but the truth is that these are cookie-cutter bills that come from national corporate lobbies” that write model legislation.

Lafer said the goal of these corporations is to stifle the voice of organized unions, but he offered a way to fight back: “Take the information back home, and make sure your friends and family understand where all of this is coming from and the true agenda.”

The three-day conference featured more than a dozen workshops, with topics ranging from intergenerational communications to nursing malpractice to social media.

Alexia F Txt. Assistant
Facts about Ebola for nurses and health professionals
AFT NHP calls on the CDC to provide added protections for health workers

THE WORLD IS SEEING the most extensive outbreak of Ebola viral disease (EVD) in history unfolding in Western Africa. Thousands of people have been exposed to this highly infectious and deadly disease, and many have died. The World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are working hard to develop methods to contain the outbreak and to develop promising vaccines and treatment.

AFT Nurses and Health Professionals and AFT Health and Safety have developed a fact sheet that provides an overview of EVD and methods to protect potentially exposed healthcare workers. The fact sheet discusses Ebola symptoms, transmission, potential exposure, and the protections that need to be in place for healthcare workers.

In addition, AFT Nurses and Health Professionals sent a letter to the director of the CDC, Dr. Thomas Frieden, calling for the agency to provide not only its technical expertise during this outbreak but also modern equipment such as body suits, masks and gloves, to protect healthcare workers.

Because the affected countries in Africa lack the public health infrastructure to contain the outbreak and support infected patients, the outbreak in Africa may go on for months. Although there have been no confirmed cases identified in the United States, it may be only a matter of time before diagnosed cases appear in North America. We are fortunate to have public health and medical care systems that are equipped to handle and isolate cases. Right now, there is no significant risk of EVD exposure in the United States; nonetheless, nurses and other healthcare workers must have the protections they need to support patients should EVD reach the U.S.

Hospitals and healthcare facilities should have infection control practices and personal protective equipment in place to keep healthcare workers safe—as mandated in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s bloodborne pathogens standard and CDC infection control guidance. In addition, healthcare workers should understand the signs and symptoms of EVD as well as isolation procedures and protocols for managing suspected cases.

The AFT Nurses and Health Professionals division will continue to monitor the epidemic in Africa and any potential risk to U.S. healthcare workers. If you want more information, please contact healthandsafety@aft.org.

Download the AFT Health and Safety Ebola fact sheet at go.aft.org/fs_ebola.
To read the full text of the letter sent to the CDC, go to: go.aft.org/ltr_ebola_cdc.
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You have access to a nationwide network of more than 2,000 law offices that offer free 30-minute consultations and discounted services.

+ Credit and Budget Counseling

www.unionplus.org/creditcounseling
877-833-1745

Certified counselors are available 24 hours a day to help members with free consumer credit counseling and discounted debt-management assistance.

+ Credit Card†

www.aftcard.com
To Apply: 800-522-4000
Customer Service: 800-622-2580

Three AFT + credit cards are available for AFT members to choose from. All provide full fraud protection, and all customer service calls are answered in the U.S. After just three months, eligible cardholders have access to exclusive hardship assistance grants, including a job loss grant, a strike grant, a disability grant and a hospital grant.

| 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. 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. |
**LEGAL | FINANCIAL SERVICES**

### + Mortgage

- [www.unionplus.org/AFTmortgage](http://www.unionplus.org/AFTmortgage)
- 800-848-6466

The AFT Union Plus Mortgage program, with financing available through Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, can help AFT members purchase or refinance a home while also receiving special benefits by virtue of your AFT membership. For qualifying members, exclusive benefits and special hardship assistance are available. Many program benefits also are available to the children and parents of members.

### + Real Estate Discounts

- [www.unionplus.org/moving](http://www.unionplus.org/moving)
- 800-284-9756

The Union Plus Real Estate Rewards, powered by SIRVA, allows AFT members to receive $50 for every $10,000 in home value after closing when you use an experienced SIRVA agent to buy or sell a home (not available in all states).

### + Entertainment Discounts

- [www.unionplus.org/entertainment](http://www.unionplus.org/entertainment)
code: 744387769

Save on movie tickets, theater, sporting events, theme park admissions and more.

### + Car Rental

- [www.unionplus.org/AFTcarrentals](http://www.unionplus.org/AFTcarrentals)

AFT + car rental programs help stretch your vacation dollars with savings up to 25 percent off regular rates and special deals.

### + Hotel Discounts

- [www.aft.org/hotels](http://www.aft.org/hotels)
  - 877-670-7088, options 1 or 2
  - code: 8000000297

Save up to 20 percent off the best available unrestricted rate at more than 7,400 participating Wyndham family hotels worldwide.

### + Extra Holidays by Wyndham

- [www.aft.org/extraholidays](http://www.aft.org/extraholidays)
  - 877-670-7088 #4
  - code: 8000000297

Save up to 20 percent off rates for vacation condominiums at resort destinations.

### + Moving Van Discounts

- [www.unionplus.org/moving](http://www.unionplus.org/moving)
  - Special pricing for members on interstate moves, packing and in-transit storage.

### + Motor Club

- [www.unionplus.org/motorclub](http://www.unionplus.org/motorclub)
  - 800-454-8722

The AFT + Motor Club will be there to help you with vehicle-related problems, anywhere in the country, 24/7/365. Costs less than AAA Plus.

### + Health Club Discounts

- [www.unionplus.org/healthclubs](http://www.unionplus.org/healthclubs)
code: AFT

Discounts on new health club memberships at more than 10,000 health clubs nationwide.

### HEALTH

**Entertainment Discounts**

- [www.unionplus.org/entertainment](http://www.unionplus.org/entertainment)
code: 744387769

Save on movie tickets, theater, sporting events, theme park admissions and more.

**Car Rental**

- [www.unionplus.org/AFTcarrentals](http://www.unionplus.org/AFTcarrentals)

AFT + car rental programs help stretch your vacation dollars with savings up to 25 percent off regular rates and special deals.

**Hotel Discounts**

- [www.aft.org/hotels](http://www.aft.org/hotels)
  - 877-670-7088, options 1 or 2
  - code: 8000000297

Save up to 20 percent off the best available unrestricted rate at more than 7,400 participating Wyndham family hotels worldwide.

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- [www.aft.org/extraholidays](http://www.aft.org/extraholidays)
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Save up to 20 percent off rates for vacation condominiums at resort destinations.

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- [www.unionplus.org/moving](http://www.unionplus.org/moving)
  - Special pricing for members on interstate moves, packing and in-transit storage.

**Motor Club**

- [www.unionplus.org/motorclub](http://www.unionplus.org/motorclub)
  - 800-454-8722

The AFT + Motor Club will be there to help you with vehicle-related problems, anywhere in the country, 24/7/365. Costs less than AAA Plus.

**Health Club Discounts**

- [www.unionplus.org/healthclubs](http://www.unionplus.org/healthclubs)
code: AFT

Discounts on new health club memberships at more than 10,000 health clubs nationwide.
SHOPPING

+ Flowers and Gift Baskets

www.unionplus.org/flowers
888-667-7779

Save 20 percent on hand-delivered flowers and plants from Teleflora, plus gift baskets from GiftTree—100 percent satisfaction guaranteed.

+ Skincare and Cosmetics

877-691-6360
AFT

Save 20 percent on all orders from a well-known skincare and cosmetics producer. Free same-day shipping and gift-wrapping on all orders.

+ Books

www.unionplus.org/books

Powell's online bookstore, the largest unionized bookstore in the country, has a huge selection of new and used books, including e-books.

+ Magazines

www.buymags.com/AFT
800-729-6247

AFT Subscription Services provides members with the lowest rates and the best customer service on magazine subscriptions, renewals and gift subscriptions.

+ Goodyear Tires and Service

www.unionplus.org/goodyear

You can save on Goodyear tires, auto parts and preventive maintenance at company-owned Goodyear stores.

+ Auto Buying

www.unionplus.org/autobuying

Members can save when purchasing new and used cars.

AFT + is your advocate:
Contact the AFT + member benefits program at 800-238-1133, ext. 8643, if you experience a problem with any endorsed program.

AFT + QUESTIONS
800-238-1133, ext. 8643
aft.org/benefits

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.