Convention
Gathering in Detroit is a celebration of labor solidarity and a call for continued community engagement.

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Obama and Romney
See how they compare
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First Book
Members at children’s services agency spread the joy of reading
PAGE 3

Our Everyday Heroes
AFT members are recognized for going above and beyond
PAGE 5

Member benefits
AFT + pull-out booklet inside
Solution-driven unionism is rooted in solving problems.

made it impossible to maintain the same level of quality we have always strived to provide. And the precipitous decline in union membership over the past 40 years has coincided with the meteoric increase in wage inequality.

What we are seeing now, here and throughout the world, is our new normal. This new reality demands an entirely new approach to unionism. It demands an approach that is relevant and appropriate to the 21st century, that is creative and visionary, and that unifies the members of our union with those we serve. I call this approach “solution-driven unionism.”

Solution-driven unionism is rooted in solving problems, not winning arguments, and many AFT affiliates are pursuing this approach with great results. It is our compass at the national union, as well. We know that this tough climate is no excuse for not having a proactive agenda; to the contrary, it demands it. Solution-driven unionism doesn’t mean letting our traditional strengths atrophy. Demonstrating for our goals and beliefs, speaking truth to power, organizing, lobbying, being heard at the bargaining table—this is what we always have done, and always will do. But what I’m talking about is not an “either/or”; it’s a “both/and.”

The AFT executive council has issued a report titled “Building a 21st-Century Economy for All: Recommendations on Good Jobs, Fair Funding and Quality Public Services,” which identifies concrete steps to improve job growth and increase revenues to support public services and build pathways to the middle class. Delegates to the 2012 AFT convention adopted a resolution based on the report.

The report’s recommendations include:
- Close tax gaps caused by states’ failure to collect revenues because of tax evasion and inefficient tax systems, which can amount to billions of dollars. California has shown that every dollar spent on collection can yield $9 in revenue—an 800 percent return on investment. Nationally, if we collected just 2 percent more tax revenue from people who should be paying and are not, we could avoid $14 billion in cuts.
- Correct inequalities in state, local and federal tax systems so the highest earners share fiscal responsibility by assuming a larger share of the tax burden than lower earners.
- Enact corporate tax reform. Consider that General Electric made $5.1 billion in profits in the United States in 2010 but paid no federal taxes on those profits and, in fact, claimed a tax benefit of $3.2 billion. And each year, dozens of Fortune 500 companies report profits to shareholders but pay no state taxes.

In Oregon, our state affiliates are fighting to protect progressive income tax measures that prevented devastating cuts to education, healthcare, public safety and other services. The AFT’s California affiliate is championing a similar solution. And numerous AFT Public Employees affiliates have advanced proposals for enhancing state revenues and maintaining the quality of services provided by public employees.

The North Dakota Public Employees Association/AFT recently scored a big win with an impressive example of solution-driven unionism. The NDPEA, working with a coalition of more than 90 organizations, waged a large-scale mobilization to defeat a ballot measure that would have banned all property taxes in the state. Not only did the NDPEA and its allies make a strong statement about such overreaching tax proposals and threats to public services, it connected with people in the community, activated union members, recruited new members and crafted a mobilization strategy it can employ in future efforts.

Solution-driven unionism takes many forms. At its core, it unites our members with their communities, and, in so doing, it ensures that we don’t merely survive, but we succeed. But success also rests upon electing leaders who support this concept—of collaboration as opposed to conflict, and of problem-solving as opposed to finger-pointing. We are experiencing some of the toughest times I’ve seen, and the November elections can shape whether times get even tougher or give way to a climate of seeking solutions for the common good.

Tell us what you think about solution-driven unionism and the kind of solutions that should be happening in the trenches at http://go.aft.org/solutions.

Solution-driven unionism

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

ECONOMISTS HAVE DECLARED an end to the Great Recession, but you and I know that this crisis is far from over. State government tax collections are still 5.5 percent below prerecession levels and will take years to recover. More than 100 bills are out there in the states, capping revenues, cutting services and riding a recession-fueled resurgence in attacks on unions.

These rampant cuts have hurt our members in their pocketbooks—through layoffs, furloughs and pay freezes. They also have

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IF YOU THINK BOOKS belong only in schools, think again. Young children at the Franklin County Children Services Family Center in Columbus, Ohio, were beaming July 12 when AFT members gave them new books and threw a party to celebrate the new library that will be available to young visitors from now on. Books also will be distributed by social workers making home visits.

“It looked like Christmas Day,” says Kathy Bruner, a child welfare caseworker and executive vice president of the Federation of Franklin County Children Services Employees, describing the scene. Thirty-eight children and their families came through to see tables and shelves full of books, and adorned with balloons and stuffed toys. Local members took turns reading to the children and then served them lunch.

“It was such a heart-warming experience to see the joy on their faces,” says Bruner, noting that the population the center serves “has it harder than most in this very difficult economy.”

The book distribution program is run in partnership with First Book, a nonprofit organization that works with 90 publishers to get free and low-cost books into the hands of children from low-income families. First Book has distributed 90 million books in the 20 years since it was founded, including high-quality, award-winning titles. The AFT has facilitated nearly 30 distributions with locals across the country, but the Columbus Children Services site is the first to be run outside a school.

At the Columbus event, some of the favorites were Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Green Eggs and Ham, Little House on the Prairie and Curious George.

Franklin County Children Services interacts with more than 29,000 families each year, investigating and providing services related to abuse and neglect; staff there are involved in setting up foster care and adoptions, assisting with independent living for older youths, organizing volunteer and mentoring services, and running a therapeutic arts program and holiday giveaways.

Giving away books is just one more way these AFT members are making a difference in the lives of children struggling with change.

New officers for PEF
Susan Kent elected to head New York state union

MEMBERS OF THE New York State Public Employees Federation elected new leadership in June. Susan Kent, a credentialing specialist at the state Education Department, was elected president, and her running mate on the “N.Y. Union Proud” ticket, Carlos Garcia, was elected secretary-treasurer.

“This administration is committed to involving and uniting all PEF members and working together to turn the tide against the negative campaigns targeting public workers and unions,” Kent says. “We will work tirelessly to ensure the public, business community and elected officials know the value that PEF members add to the community and New York’s economy.”

PEF members also elected three new vice presidents who ran on the “N.Y. Union Proud” slate. They are Barbara Ulmer, Wayne Bayer and Wayne Spence.

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A member of the AFT local at Franklin County (Ohio) Children Services reads to kids during the book giveaway hosted by the local.

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**Barack Obama**

“I believe that this country succeeds when everyone gets a fair shot.”

—President Obama, weekly address, June 9, 2012

**JOBS AND THE ECONOMY**


**TAXES**

- Wants to end tax breaks for companies who send jobs overseas, and supports making large corporations and the richest 2 percent of Americans pay their fair share of taxes. (Devin Dwyer, “Promises to End Tax Breaks for Outsourcers,” ABC News, 7/11/12; Barack Obama, address to joint session of Congress, 2/24/09.)

**AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL**

- Signed the landmark Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to reduce the number of uninsured Americans by 30 million, guarantee insurance coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, and allow parents to keep their children on their insurance plans until age 26. (Josh Levs, “What the Health Care Ruling Means to You,” CNN, 6/28/12.)

**WORKPLACE RIGHTS**

- Opposed the anti-union attacks in Ohio and Wisconsin. (Brady Dennis and Peter Wallsten, “Obama Joins Wisconsin’s Budget Battle, Opposing Republican Anti-Union Bill,” Washington Post, 2/18/11.)

**MEDICARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

- Wants to secure a future for working Americans by strengthening Social Security and Medicare. He has vowed to fight Romney-supported plans to turn Medicare into a voucher system that would hurt the children, disabled and older people who receive healthcare through Medicare. (www.whitehouse.gov/issues/seniors-and-social-security)

**Mitt Romney**

“He [Obama] says we need more firemen, more policemen, more teachers. Did he not get the message of Wisconsin? The American people did. It’s time for us to cut back on government and help the American people.”

—Mitt Romney, campaign event, June 8, 2012

**JOBS AND THE ECONOMY**

- Co-founded Bain Capital, an equity company that specialized in relocating American jobs to lower-wage countries. When a steel mill run by Bain went bankrupt, the firm laid off hundreds of workers without their promised health benefits and severance packages—yet awarded top executives $10 million. (Andy Sullivan and Greg Roumeliotis, “Special Report: Romney’s Steel Skeleton in the Bain Closet,” Reuters, 1/6/12.)

**TAXES**

- His tax plan would increase taxes on the middle class by $1,300 per family but provide millionaires with an average tax break of more than $200,000. (Elizabeth Dwoskin, “Mitt Romney’s Tax Plan: Cuts for Millionaires and a Hike for Just About Everyone Else,” Bloomberg Businessweek, 8/2/12.)

**AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL**

- Vowed to “repeal and replace” the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, thereby leaving 30 million Americans uninsured and allowing insurance companies to deny healthcare coverage due to pre-existing conditions. (Ezra Klein, “Romney’s Health Care Plan—or Lack Thereof,” Ezra Klein’s Wonkblog, Washington Post, 6/13/12.)

**WORKPLACE RIGHTS**

- Supported the attacks in Ohio and Wisconsin on the rights of union members. As governor, he tried to eliminate collective bargaining rights for thousands of state employees. He has pledged to use the U.S. Department of Education to assail unions formed by educators and school staff. (Sam Stein, “Mitt Romney’s Caution on Department of Education Owed to ‘94 Campaign Ad,” Huffington Post, 4/17/12.)

**MEDICARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

- Supports a budget plan that would voucherize Medicare—doubling out-of-pocket expenses of seniors—and lead to privatization of Social Security. The plan takes away the benefits workers have earned and shifts costs to current and future retirees. (Joe Klein, “These Savings Are Unreal!” Time, 4/23/12.)

The choice is clear. One candidate is fighting for working-class Americans. For more information, visit www.aft.org/election2012.
Earlier this year, the AFT put out a call for nominations of members who go above and beyond the call of duty. Twenty-seven semifinalists, selected from a field of more than 300 nominees, received close to 15,000 online votes. The winners, who come from all six AFT constituencies, were honored at the AFT convention in July in Detroit.

Public Employees
SOME MEN MEASURE their success by how much money or power they have. Michael Morris measures success by one kind act—one good deed, one act of courage, one life saved—at a time.

“The first time I ever saved a life, I knew I was going to be in public service,” says Morris. That fateful day was when Morris was 16 years old. A house across the street from his was on fire. He followed his uncle, a fire captain, into the burning house, and following his uncle’s lead, Morris helped everyone out of the home to safety.

For Morris, public service is not just a career. It is a way of life. His job: correctional officer at the Baltimore County (Md.) Detention Center. His duty: sergeant in the Maryland National Guard. His passion: volunteer firefighter and medic.

Morris has saved two more lives since the house fire. Most recently, in December, he derailed an inmate’s suicide attempt by hanging, which earned him a director’s commendation. And during his last tour in Iraq, he saved the life of a fellow soldier after their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb.

On a typical day, Morris spends the morning volunteering at a firehouse. Then he’s off to work for the 3-11 p.m. shift at the detention center.

Since joining the National Guard in 2004, he’s had four tours of duty—two on the frontlines in Iraq, one noncombat tour at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and one stateside in New Orleans to help with recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina.

Teachers
Mention Martin Messner to Donna Ruland, and she immediately sings his praises. “I can’t say enough about Marty. He is just a wonderful, wonderful person.” Ruland, an AFT retiree, is one of hundreds of flood victims hit by Hurricane Irene last year in Schobarie, N.Y. Dozens of families lost their homes, and every business on Main Street was destroyed. Messner, president of the Schoharie Teachers Association, rallied hundreds of union members from all over the state to join the volunteer cleanup. They hauled waterlogged carpets, furniture and drywall to the curb, and later insulated the homes for the winter.

Healthcare
School nursing is a passion for Saundra McCauley. For the last 26 years, McCauley, a member of the West Haven (Conn.) Federation of Teachers and School Nurses, has committed herself to helping students and their families. “I try to get to know the children,” says McCauley. “Eventually, I find out what their problems are and what I can do to help.” McCauley’s help often comes in the form of Christmas gifts, Thanksgiving baskets or lunch money. McCauley is more than willing to go the extra mile for her students. “Students are needier [than they used to be], and I like being able to help. Sick, sad or hungry children can’t learn,” she says.

Retirees
Joe Satriano, a member of the Roslyn (N.Y.) Teachers Association, and his wife, Susan, were both math teachers at Bushwick High School in Brooklyn until Susan was diagnosed with breast cancer. When she died, Joe Satriano not only lost his wife but also had to watch his two sons lose their mother.

Now the Susan Satriano Foundation distributes scholarships to other children whose parents have cancer. “I no longer help kids in front of the classroom,” he says, “but I can help in another way.”
RANDI WEINGARTEN
“SOLUTION-DRIVEN UNIONISM”

AFT president Randi Weingarten kicked off the convention by advocating “solution-driven unionism,” a new vision of unionism that advances solutions focused on uniting union members, the people we serve and the communities in which we live.

In her keynote speech, Weingarten said that America’s workers face a new normal—with severe budget cuts jeopardizing public education, healthcare and other critical services; families losing more than 30 percent of their wealth during the economic crisis; and more than 100 bills introduced in state legislatures to demonize and attack public employees and undermine public services.

Across the country, the AFT is working with community, business and other partners on solutions that address economic and educational equality. Weingarten used her speech to highlight some of those efforts, including uniting communities around ballot measures, such as in California, that raise revenue and stop budget cuts by raising income taxes on the state’s highest earners, and investing the pension funds of educators in projects to rebuild America’s infrastructure and retrofit out-of-date buildings to make them more energy efficient and create jobs.

“We look at it this way: We’re rebuilding the middle class on multiple fronts,” she said. “Every day, in schools, universities, healthcare facilities and other work sites, AFT members are helping children and their families achieve a better future.”

Despite the economic crisis, Weingarten announced that the AFT’s 1.5 million membership number has held steady, with the union organizing 79 new units in 18 states since the last convention.

VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN
“WE SEE YOU AS THE SOLUTION”

In a lively speech punctuated by chants of “four more years,” Vice President Joe Biden drew a strong contrast for AFT convention delegates between the Obama administration’s vision for the country and that of Republican candidate Mitt Romney.

The fundamental debate between their administration and Romney, Biden said in a Sunday afternoon session dedicated to politics, is about how important it is to rebuild the middle class.

“We think you build and rebuild this country from the middle out. They honestly be-
lieve that the best way to make us more competitive in the world is from the top down.” That translates into contrasting economic policies, with the administration supporting middle-class tax cuts, and the Republicans fighting to maintain—and even expand—tax cuts for those making more than $1 million annually.

Biden chastised the Republicans for being opposed to a .5 percent tax increase on income over $1 million, money he said would put firefighters, cops, educators and other essential public employees back to work.

Polling shows that close to 70 percent of the people in America who said they were millionaires support the tax increase, Biden pointed out. “It’s not that wealthy people aren’t prepared to do their share.”

BOB KING
STRENGTH IN SOLIDARITY

There’s a silver lining to these challenging times for unions and workers, United Auto Workers president Bob King said. And it’s this: “There’s greater solidarity in the labor movement than I’ve seen in my lifetime.”

King, who praised the AFT for focusing on member mobilization and activism, said he and the UAW stand with our union in the fight to ensure that workers have a voice on the job. “If we want better education, better hospitals or better government, we need the voice of workers in solving problems.”

“A vibrant and strong labor movement is essential to a strong democracy and society.” Labor and our allies must take the lead in restoring an America based on democratic values and jobs with wages that lift everyone’s quality of life—union and non-union, King asserted. “We have to be committed to rebuilding a social and economic justice movement.”

King praised President Obama for supporting the bailout of the auto industry when many elected officials, especially Republicans, opposed it and polls showed it wasn’t a popular decision. “If the auto industry had been liquidated,” he pointed out, “over a million good-paying, mostly union jobs would have been lost.”


Affiliates build the union even as they respond to challenges

THOUGH THE EXTREME challenges faced by labor were acknowledged at AFT Public Employees’ divisional meeting, several bright spots also were highlighted. In Colorado, Kansas, Maryland, New York, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin, unions have held off legislation that would have destroyed collective bargaining rights, and they’ve pushed back on privatization, campaigned for supportive political candidates and continued to build the union movement.

Steve Porter, director of the public employees division, presented information from the union’s annual public employee compensation survey, which shows that those advances are essential: Salaries in states without collective bargaining are 35 percent lower on average than salaries in states with collective bargaining.

After AFT pension expert John Abraham pointed out that public pensions have been scapegoated (because they account for only about 3 percent of state budgets, they never could have caused the budget deficits for which they are blamed), Jordan Marks, executive director of the National Public Pension Coalition, argued that the best way to protect workers’ rights is to build coalitions with other unions.

Policy decisions are redistributing money upward

Given the power that corporations now have in this country, one might think the country was created to make money, observed Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Cay Johnston as he spoke at the AFT Public Employees Breakfast. “We have forgotten the reasons the U.S. was created,” said Johnston, as he cited the preamble to the Constitution: The United States was founded, he said, “to establish justice, promote the general welfare, secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.”

Johnston cited statistic after statistic showing the terrible disparity between the haves and the have-nots. The United States has the No. 1 rate of child poverty among all modern nations.

Yet, “if you are extremely wealthy, you never have to pay income tax,” said Johnston. “We’re not a poor country, but we are becoming one. We are making policy decisions that are redistributing money upward.”

Journalist David Cay Johnston addresses the AFT Public Employees Breakfast during the convention.
Delegates vote to restore economic dignity
Austerity and budget cuts are not the answer

CONVENTION DELEGATES passed a sweeping resolution that lays out ideas to rebuild our economy in ways that will help restore economic dignity and invest in public services.

Among the most important pieces of business at the AFT convention, the resolution, called “Building a 21st-Century Economy for All,” was one of several that directly addresses the concerns of public employees. Other resolutions passed at the convention included one to protect overtime rights for all workers and another to prevent workplace violence.

To create good jobs and rebuild a “broad highway to a middle-class way of life,” the first resolution says, “we must reinvest in America. We need to modernize our infrastructure, fund the public services needed to create real economic development, and take steps to see that hard work will have rewards not just for the fortunate few but for everyone.” Austerity and budget cuts, it adds, are not the answer.

The resolution recognizes the AFT’s ability to help rebuild the economy by supporting investment of public pension funds in infrastructure improvements and by advocating for the services that communities need for strong economic development. It notes that through fair tax reform, along with strategic government investment, healthcare and other public services, the U.S. economy can recover more quickly.

“We just don’t have a fair economy,” said AFT Connecticut’s Leo Canty. “This isn’t about class envy or class warfare. It’s about fairness and justice.”

“A strong middle class helps raise the standard of living for everyone,” said Jill Cohenour, from the Federation of Public Health and Human Services in Montana.

The “Protecting Overtime Rights for All Workers” resolution addresses a recent threat to computer professionals: Many are denied the overtime hours they earn. The AFT opposes legislation that would strip them of overtime protection. If such legislation passes, “it will produce an incredible oppression and exploitation of IT workers,” said Greg Dunkel, of the Professional Staff Congress at the City University of New York. “After IT workers, then what other group would be selected as not eligible for overtime?” asked Carl Hereford, of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Employees Association in Alaska.

Another resolution, “Preventing Workplace Violence in All Healthcare Settings,” addresses the danger some healthcare practitioners face on the job. Moving testimony memorialized co-workers killed or injured by psychiatric patients as well as victims of workplace bullying.

“This isn’t about class envy or class warfare. It’s about fairness and justice.”

—LEO CANTY, AFT Connecticut

City workers get collective bargaining on the ballot
THE FOLKS WHO KEEP the town of Ocean City running—beach sweepers, boardwalk crews, bus drivers, recreation staff, clerks, trash collectors and more—just want to be heard. Thus far, they’ve made their voices clear enough to win a place on November’s ballot, where voters will decide whether city general staff should have the right to collective bargaining. Firefighters and police officers already exercise that right.

The Ocean City Employee Coalition delivered 2,362 signatures on a petition supporting collective bargaining. The number of signers exceeded the requirement that 20 percent of registered voters sign in order to win a spot on the ballot during voting Nov. 6.

“We feel that the question of our representation should be decided democratically by the voters of Ocean City,” says Ocean City Employee Coalition member Barbara Dahan. “Having representation rights would grant us the ability to work together to make Ocean City a better place to live and work. We care greatly about the town of Ocean City and providing the best possible services to the citizens.”

A referendum on collective bargaining will appear on November’s ballot. Over the next two months, city workers will knock on doors and make phone calls urging residents to pass the referendum.