



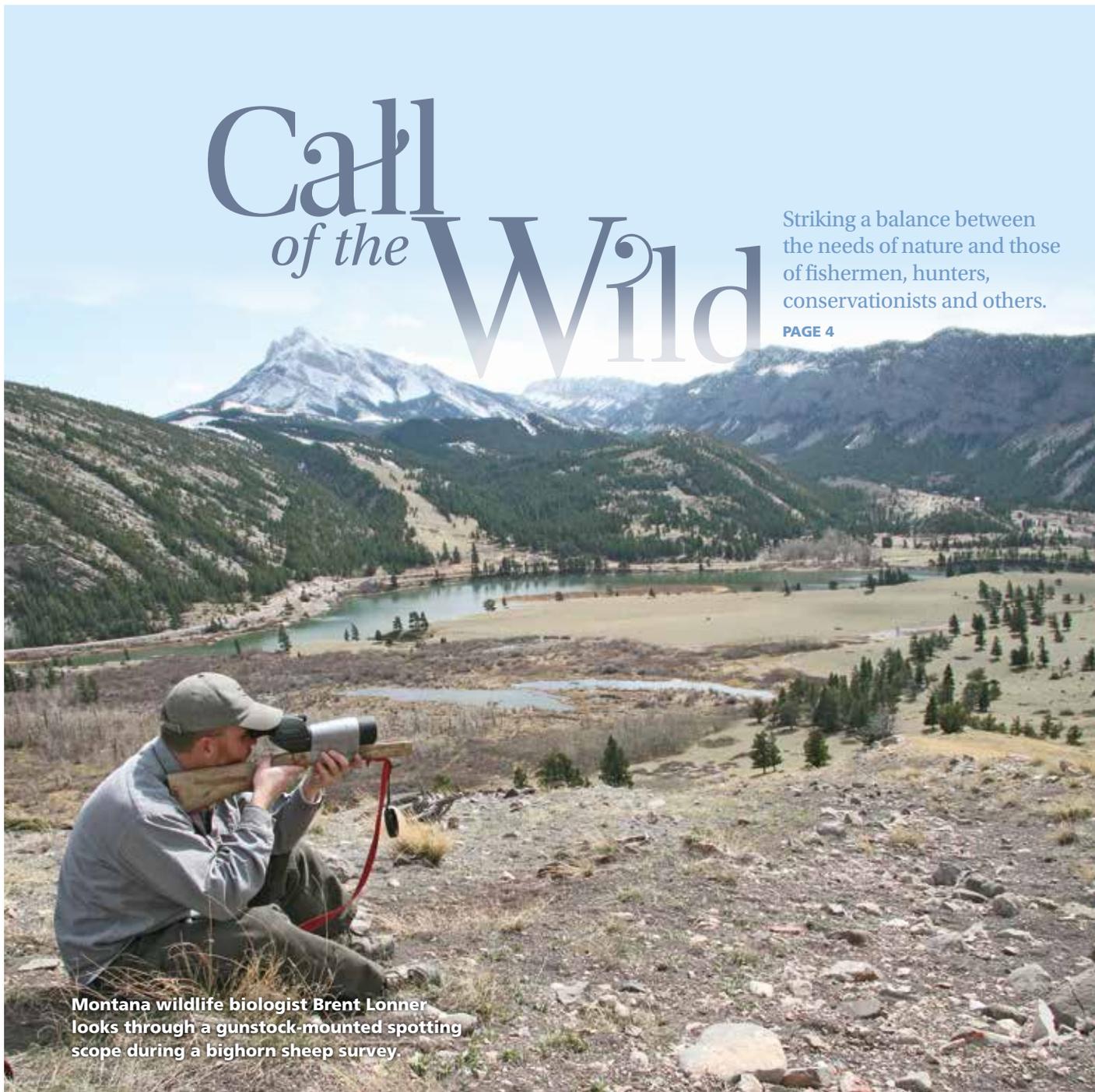
PUBLIC EMPLOYEE Advocate

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Call *of the* Wild

Striking a balance between the needs of nature and those of fishermen, hunters, conservationists and others.

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Montana wildlife biologist Brent Lonner looks through a gunstock-mounted spotting scope during a bighorn sheep survey.

Reclaim the promise

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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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Strengthening our community and our voice

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES IN ALASKA are taking seriously the need to reclaim the promise of high-quality services and build a stronger connection with the communities they serve. Members of three Alaska Public Employees Association locals in Fairbanks came out on the AFT's National Day of Ac-

Alaska public employees participated in a community event on the National Day of Action.



AFT PHOTO

tion, Dec. 9, to help Santa's Clearing House, a nonprofit that provides food and gifts during the holiday season to families and seniors in need, spread "holiday joy," once again sending the message that state and local government employees serve their communities both on and off the job.

The APEA members, who belong to the Fairbanks North Star Borough Employees Association, the Alaska Supervisory Unit and the United Academic Adjuncts, sorted and bagged toys for children in need.

Nationwide, the National Day of Action brought together thousands of public employees, educators, community activists, faith leaders and others for more than 100 events around the country. The events included town hall meetings, candlelight vigils, marches, teach-ins and other activities.

Reclaiming the Promise

It's time to reclaim the promise of high-quality public services for strong communities—not as they are today or were in the past, but as they can be—to fulfill our collective obligation to advance the common good.

Reclaiming the promise is about fighting for **first-rate public services that support communities** and keep them safe, healthy and vibrant.

Reclaiming the promise is about ensuring **our tax dollars are properly invested back in our communities** and the resources are used responsibly.

Reclaiming the promise is about ensuring **public employees are well-prepared and supported** so they can provide the high-quality services our communities depend on.

The promise is under attack by those who demand and pursue austerity, polarization, privatization and deprofessionalization.

By uniting our voices, we can reclaim the promise.

Together, we can advance the common good by insisting on support for high-quality public services that benefit families, strengthen communities, ensure safety and bolster the economy.

aft.org/promise | [#ReclaimIt](https://twitter.com/ReclaimIt)



Uniting to reclaim the promise of high-quality public services

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

FOR A GENERATION NOW, public services at every level of government have been defunded, sold off, privatized and cut back. Public employees have been demonized. They have been forced to do much more with much less. Their salaries have been cut, and their pensions have been raided. As a consequence, the services our communities depend upon to maintain a decent quality of life have been diminished.

We know that our public employee members are sick and tired of the attacks, and yet, despite fewer resources, they soldier on, committed to the health, safety and well-being of the people they serve. We also know, from our

Brooklyn community. This plan can be found at www.brooklynhospitalplan.org.

In Connecticut, state employees represented by 15 different unions with 34 separate contracts have come together in a long-standing, legislatively mandated State Employee Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) in order to bargain with the state administration and come up with solutions to the problems facing state employee pensions and healthcare. Their efforts have paid off with huge cost savings and improved delivery of healthcare services to state employees. Their success may now be extended to local government employees in Connecticut as well.

ballot for a public referendum.

In Montana, our MEA-MFT affiliate has long publicized the outstanding services provided by our public employee members across the state through its Work that Matters program. Essential services that provide, maintain or protect clean water, public safety, roads and bridges, healthcare, education and natural resources, to name a few, are delivered by trained and talented public employees committed to their work and to the service of the community. Through Work that Matters and our work with community organizations, decision-makers and the broader community are more aware of the contributions made by



KAREN SACHAR

By reaching out to the **community**, and by developing **solutions** that meet the needs of **our members** as well as those **we serve**, we can join with the rising tide of support for **sensible policies** to advance the **common good**.

alliances and interactions with the broader community, that people are beginning to understand the connection between high-quality services and the strength of the community. That is why we have launched a special effort across the country to reclaim the promise of high-quality public services for strong communities. AFT public employee members across the country are taking action to reclaim the promise in a variety of ways.

SUNY Downstate Medical Center is a large hospital in Brooklyn, N.Y., with extraordinary services provided by exemplary doctors, nurses, technicians and other staff, all of whom are state employees. As a result of poor management decisions, this hospital, which serves an extremely diverse Brooklyn community, is threatened with closing. Our union has worked with community leaders to develop a plan to keep SUNY Downstate open and address the healthcare needs of the entire

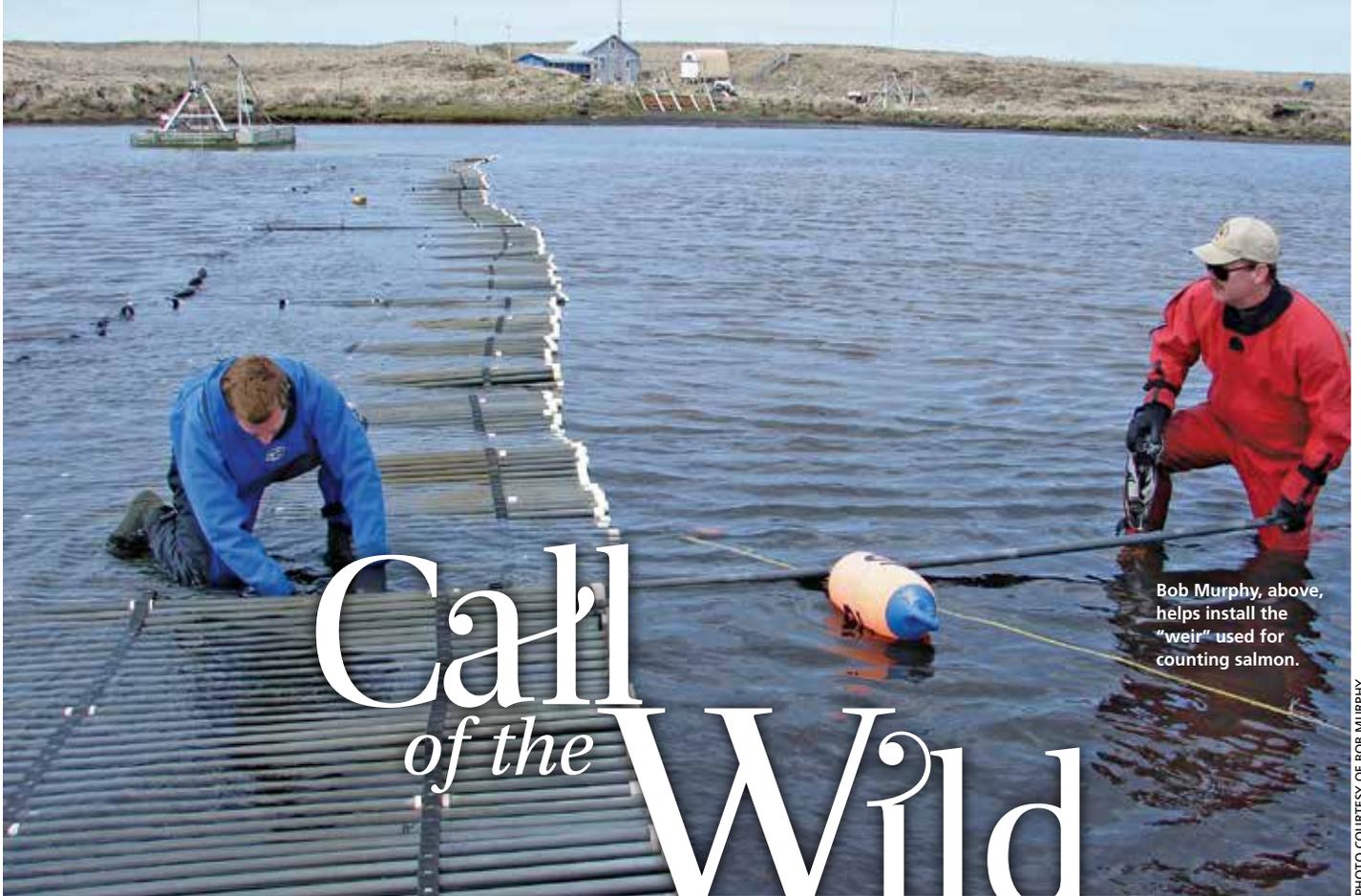
In Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback and the state Legislature have cut taxes so drastically that the delivery of public services has been threatened across the board. Additionally, public employees' pensions have been cut, and government services have been privatized. As a result, public employees in every agency of government, along with local government employees and school board employees, have come together in two state-wide alliances with the broader community—Keeping the Kansas Promise and the Working Kansas Alliance—in order to fight the cuts and call for full funding for high-quality public services.

The mayor and city council in Anchorage, Alaska, have acted to limit the bargaining rights of city employees and their voice on the job. Here again, our union has partnered with the community to take a stand. It has filed petitions that will now put the measure on the

Montana's public employees.

By reaching out to the community, and by developing solutions that meet the needs of our members as well as those we serve, we can join with the rising tide of support for sensible policies to advance the common good. Our Reclaiming the Promise effort is a multifaceted approach to address the attacks on public services, to link up with community partners, and to take a solution-driven approach to the challenges we face. Our affiliates are using a variety of approaches to address the circumstances where they live and work, but together we are united in our goal to build support for public employees and stronger communities.

Join us in this effort. Use the materials we have put together as part of our public employees Reclaiming the Promise program at www.aft.org. Together, we can reclaim the promise of high-quality public services for strong communities.



Call of the Wild

Bob Murphy, above, helps install the “weir” used for counting salmon.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB MURPHY

EVERY YEAR, Bob Murphy travels to the remote area of Port Moller, Alaska, where he spends five months observing the flow of salmon. His job is to manage the commercial fisheries and count the number of salmon that have migrated from the Pacific Ocean up the 350-mile portion of the Alaska coastline he is responsible for. Here, the salmon spawn in the Alaskan waters, helping to ensure the economic vitality of the small communities and commercial fishermen that depend on the salmon industry.

Meanwhile, more than 3,000 miles away, Rick Morin has the livelihoods of Maryland’s commercial fishermen on his mind as he manages the harvesting of snapping turtles. Snapping turtles, as it turns out, are a delicacy in China, and Maryland is a leading supplier.

The citizens of Alaska and Maryland, as well as those of other states across the country, are well-served by state employees like Murphy, Morin and the other professionals who manage and protect our parks, waterways, wildlife and natural resources. Typically working behind the scenes, these men and women are regularly called upon to coordinate with hunters, fishermen, conservationists, environmentalists and others with a vested—and often economic—interest in the work they do.

Brent Lonner, a wildlife biologist for the state of Montana, says he and his co-workers “are entrusted with managing a valuable public resource.” And that often means communicating directly with the public. “Involving and listening to the public is a vital part of the work we do,” he says.

Landowners, hunters, students, nongovernmental organizations and tourists are among the groups that Lonner and his colleagues

often work closely with. “Working with and balancing the interests of these groups is important to make sure wildlife management in Montana—and nationally—remains a success story,” he says.

Protecting the fish and the fishermen

Currently in his 25th year as a fishery management biologist for the state of Alaska, Murphy sees his job as protecting both the long-term future of the state’s salmon population and the livelihoods of the fishermen and boat crews that depend on the salmon.

Each summer, Murphy leaves his home in Kodiak for Port Moller, where his top priority is ensuring that enough salmon migrate annually back to the waters of Alaska so the species can continue to



The salmon return to spawn in the exact same Alaska river they were born in.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB MURPHY

“We wanted to find a way to allow our fishermen to have an income while at the same time maintaining a sustainable fishery of snapping turtles.”

—RICK MORIN, Maryland fish biologist



propagate. The Alaska Public Employees Association member marvels at how the fish that spawn in the Alaskan rivers in 2014 will migrate out to sea for four to five years, depending on the species, and then return to the same river where they were born. “We have thousands of rivers in Alaska, yet these fish somehow find their way back to the exact same river,” Murphy says.

Using a contraption on the water called a “weir”—a barrier across a river designed to not alter its flow characteristics—and an aerial view from small airplanes, Murphy and his co-workers count the fish as they migrate into the state’s major rivers.

When the salmon count is low, they are often forced to make the tough decision to close the waters to the local fishermen.

“These are small, remote communities and fishermen throughout the state that depend on the fishing industry to survive, and we sometimes have large-scale closures that affect the livelihoods of our fishermen and the money they can make during the summer to survive during the winter,” says Murphy.

While he sympathizes with the fishermen when the state is forced to close a river, he knows that “if we allowed them to fish when the count was low, the salmon population would be wiped out and there would be no fish for them to catch and sell.”

The wild Alaskan salmon from the rivers regulated by Murphy and others end up in restaurants and on dinner tables across the country.

‘I think snapping turtles are beautiful’

About 10 years ago, Maryland state officials started receiving phone calls from residents who reported seeing truckloads of snapping turtles. When state workers investigated, they discovered that turtles from Maryland waterways were being shipped to China. Turns out, the turtles are extremely popular in China, where they are both eaten and used in traditional medicines that are said to boost everything from the immune system to sexual prowess.



JAY FLEMING

MORIN

“The Chinese had basically wiped out their native turtle populations because they didn’t have any controls on their harvesting,” recalls Morin, a member of the Maryland Professional Employees Council and a veteran employee of the state’s Department of Natural Resources.

Led by Morin, Maryland developed a snapping turtle management plan. “We wanted to find a way to allow our fishermen to have an income while at the same time maintaining a sustainable fishery of snapping turtles,” says Morin. So Maryland “navigated a middle ground” that protects the species from extinction yet allows the state’s watermen to make a living catching them.

The regulations prevent the harvesting of snapping turtles in non-tidal waters such as ponds and lakes. They also protect smaller snapping turtles, which are typically the females and the ones responsible for future generations of the species.

The efficacy of the Maryland program has brought attention to both the state and Morin, who has received wide recognition for his role in managing the state’s snapping turtles population, presenting papers and speaking at national and international meetings.

Through his work, Morin has developed an affection for snapping turtles. “Most people think snapping turtles are scary looking,” he says, “but I think they’re beautiful.”

Maintaining these resources into the future

Lonner says “there really is no limit” as to what wildlife he and other Montana wildlife biologists come in contact with. His work can involve animals ranging from elk, mule deer and antelope, to bighorn sheep, mountain goats and various species of birds and other nongame animals.

Not unlike fishery biologists Murphy and Morin, Lonner’s responsibilities often revolve around those individuals who use the state’s parks, wildlife management areas, mountains and waterways for income and recreation. “I like to think that working with wildlife is the easy part of my job,” Lonner says. “It’s working with humans that makes things a challenge, given the multiple interests.”

He appreciates that challenge, however, because “it shows that people have an interest and care.”

Lonner and his co-workers, who are charged with protecting endangered species that can be as small as Least Terns or as big as grizzly bears, use research and survey data to help manage not only wildlife populations, but their habitats as well.

A critical—and relatively unknown—aspect of Lonner’s work is the time he spends educating the public, particularly youth, about wildlife management. “Our nation is really a fairly young one, but it provides one of the best existing forms of wildlife management in the world,” he says. “The dedication and quality of our wildlife professionals, and the public’s involvement, are what have gotten us to this point. Maintaining these resources into the future is the next challenge.”

—ROGER GLASS

“Our nation is really a fairly young one, but it provides one of the best existing forms of wildlife management in the world. ... Maintaining these resources into the future is the next challenge.”

—BRENT LONNER, Montana wildlife biologist



Detroit public workers' pensions shouldn't take the hit in bankruptcy

The sanctity of the pension plans is guaranteed by Michigan state law

BY DAN PEDROTTY

IN DETROIT'S BANKRUPTCY CASE, the decision by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Steven Rhodes to authorize pension cuts for city workers was morally and legally wrong, and will undermine Detroit's economic recovery. Detroit's bankruptcy was caused by predatory financial deals, a revenue crisis, massive job losses and Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder's decision to slash state aid.

In the bankruptcy, the modest pensions of Detroit's firefighters, police officers and other city employees could be all but wiped out, even as Wall Street banks continue to extract hundreds of millions of dollars from the city's economy.

It's unfair that public workers take the lion's share of the hit, while Wall Street did the lion's share of damage.

The city's position can be boiled down to this: Contracts are sacred, except when they're entered into with public workers and retirees. The sanctity of Detroit's public pension plans—one for police and firefighters, another for other city workers—is guaranteed by Michigan state law.

Indeed, the state's Republican Attorney General Bill Schuette has said he'll support the Michigan Constitution's protections for pensions and appeal the decision. It's up to Gov.

Snyder now to honor his oath and uphold the state constitution. That means both appealing this decision in state court and protecting Detroit retirees if their deferred wages are cut in Bankruptcy Court.

Both pension plans are well-funded and can sustain most if not all of promised benefits with a relatively modest employer contribution. The police and fire system is 96 percent funded, and the general retirement system is about 78 percent funded. These are healthy numbers, especially given the losses pension funds have sustained from the Wall Street and tech bubble collapse.

We're talking about a modest benefit here. The average Detroit retiree collects a pension of \$19,000 a year. Tens of thousands of these retirees live and spend money in the city. Why would the city cut back their purchasing power and risk further undermining Detroit's recovery? These pensions are an economic engine. For every dollar paid out in benefits, \$2.37 in total economic output was generated.

“We're talking about a **modest** benefit here. The average Detroit **retiree** collects a **pension** of \$19,000 a year.”

We face a looming and very serious retirement crisis in this country. The average working household has virtually no retirement savings. The median retirement account balance is \$3,000 for all working-age households and \$12,000 for near-retirement households, according to the Federal Reserve.

Our vision of retirement security as a labor movement must extend beyond maintaining the modest, hard-won retirement benefits that too few workers currently have. We are now engaged in a broad-based effort with state treasurers, large Wall Street firms and unions to expand retirement security through pooled professional asset management.

I am very optimistic about this effort to reclaim the promise of retirement security.

Dan Pedrotty is the co-manager of the AFT's Center for Workers' Benefits and Capital Strategies.



MD. UNION ENDORSES FOR GOVERNOR

Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown is the Maryland Classified Employees Association's endorsed candidate for Maryland's next governor. Noting that he has worked hard to create jobs and save taxpayer dollars by increasing private investment in public infrastructure projects such as roads, schools and bridges, the state employee affiliate endorsed Brown in December.

Brown is also a friend of labor, the MCEA's quarterly publication points out. "On several occasions, Brown has voiced his support and sympathy for union causes, particularly for the collective bargaining rights of workers."

The Maryland lieutenant governor addressed the MCEA's annual convention in

October, where he told delegates that he identified with MCEA members because "we are all public servants."

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM IN NEW YORK

The New York State Public Employees Federation is cautiously optimistic that a recent announcement by Gov. Andrew Cuomo reflects a better approach to changing the state's mental health services. Last July, the governor proposed closing nine state-run psychiatric hospitals, a plan strenuously opposed by PEF, which said the closures would lower the quality of services. In late December, Cuomo announced changes in the plan that are consistent with the union's Save Our Services campaign.

"While we are pleased that Gov. Cuomo's ... changes to the state Regional Centers of Excellence plan seem to signal a more logical and thoughtful way to transform mental health services in New York state, we are disheartened that the governor continues to roll out public policy decisions in the media," PEF President Susan Kent says.

COLLECTIVE ACTION IN MONTANA

State employee members of MEA-MFT are reaping the benefits of its victory in getting the state pay plan through the 2013 Montana Legislature. The pay plan gives state employees a 3 percent salary increase in 2013 and a 5 percent increase in 2014. It also provides a 10 percent increase in the state's contribution to its employees' health insurance premiums in 2014 and 2015.

"We bargained the pay plan in 2012 and passed it through the 2013 Legislature against long odds," says Rich Aarstad, president of the Federation of Historical Society Workers and the secretary-treasurer of MEA-MFT. "Local members of MEA-MFT, MPEA [Montana Public Employees Association] and AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees] testified in committee for the pay plan. Then we stood shoulder to shoulder in the halls of the Capitol advocating for our pay plan."

In all, the state pay plan provides \$115 million in additional money for state employees—a historic boost for state employees and also for local businesses and communities across Montana.

SPREADING THE WORD ON WELLNESS

In October, AFT Connecticut received a \$25,000 Prize for Solution-Driven Unionism from the national AFT in recognition of the innovative employee wellness plan negotiated by Connecticut state employees and the state's governor.

Now, the AFT affiliate wants to expand the Health Enhancement Program to the state's municipalities and school districts, and will use the prize money to help fund its information campaign. HEP has helped stabilize Connecticut's health plan for state workers and exemplifies the spirit of the national union's Solution-Driven Unionism project, a partnership of the Albert Shanker Institute and the AFT Innovation Fund.

The Maryland Classified Employees Association has endorsed the state's lieutenant governor, Anthony Brown, for governor.



MIDGOVPHICS

Standing up to ALEC— and for democracy

THE ANTI-WORKER, ANTI-UNION American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) held its annual States and Nation Policy Summit in early December in Washington, D.C., where it was greeted by dozens of union members, along with other activists from community, civil rights and economic rights organizations.

"It doesn't matter where they meet—here in Washington or any other city. When ALEC comes to town, we need to let them know that it is not OK for them to have private meetings with our legislators and corporations and write legislation that impacts our lives every day," Diallo Brooks, from People for the American Way, told the crowd. "We're here to let them know—loud and clear—that democracy is still alive. We're paying attention, and we're going to call them out wherever they go."



AFT PHOTO



Supreme Court clears the way for taxes on Internet sales

States given the green light to begin collecting some \$13 billion in sales taxes that go uncollected each year

FOR YEARS, online retailers have been able to sell their products without having to collect state taxes—giving them an obvious economic advantage over brick-and-mortar retailers. But those days may be coming to an end.

In November, the U.S. Supreme Court gave states a green light to collect taxes on online sales, clearing the way for states to begin collecting some \$13 billion in sales taxes that go uncollected each year on Internet purchases.

In 2008, New York passed a law requiring sales tax collection by online retailers that use New York-based affiliates, which are companies whose websites link shoppers to online retailers. By declining to hear the case, the high court left intact a New York appeals court ruling that companies like Amazon must collect state sales tax. Several other states, including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Minnesota and Rhode Island, have passed similar laws.

"For decades, online retailers have relied on a 1992 Supreme Court ruling to avoid sales-tax collection in states where they have no physical presence," an editorial in the *New York Times* says. "That has given them an unfair advantage over

brick-and-mortar retailers and has deprived states of billions of dollars of sales tax revenue."

States without a law requiring online retailers to collect taxes "would be wise to follow New York's model," the editorial says.

A resolution adopted by the AFT in 2010 noted that online retail sales are forecasted to reach nearly \$249 billion by 2014. The

"Sale taxes not collected on online sales are never collected and contribute to state and local government budget deficits."

2010 AFT RESOLUTION

resolution, titled "Support the Main Street Fairness Act," points out that online sellers can "escape the sales and use tax collection obligations that Main Street 'brick-and-mortar' counterparts are subject to."

"When one type of seller has to collect a tax and the other

doesn't, it creates an unfair advantage," the resolution says.

The 2010 resolution called for the union to "promote congressional action to grant states the authority to collect this important source of revenue and take the burden off the consumers who are ultimately responsible for paying their own sales and use tax."

"Sales taxes not collected on online sales are never collected and contribute to state and local government budget deficits," the resolution notes.



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