

UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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Fall 2024



The Whatcom Pro Staff Organizing Team celebrates their new local's recognition as they get ready to bargain their first contract.

Photo by Jacqui Cain

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome, Kaitlin Gillespie!2

Living The Legacy Award Conferred.....2

President's Column.....3

Increasing Member Involvement In Bargaining Gets Big Wins4

Communities For Our Colleges Is Making Big Moves4

Voter Suppression, Voter Empowerment: How We Can Make The Vote More Accessible 5

Our General Endorsements6

Moving Washington Forward7

INSERT: Spotlight On Retirees In Action (2 sided)

Welcome, Kaitlin Gillespie!

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

We are delighted to welcome our newest Union Organizing Representative, Kaitlin Gillespie! Kaitlin joined AFT Washington in late September, stepping into the role vacated by Javier Cortez.

Kaitlin Gillespie is excited to join AFT Washington as its newest Union Organizing Representative. Kaitlin's journey into the labor movement began as an education reporter working for The Columbian, the daily newspaper in Vancouver,



Washington. There, Kaitlin was inspired by the collective power of teachers' unions in the region. She led an organizing campaign at her workplace, and in 2020, began working for the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild, TNG-CWA #37082, as its executive officer. There, she oversaw new unit organizing, contract campaigns and representation for the local.

Kaitlin lives in Seattle with her husband and their dog, Xena, and cat, Lucy. In her free time, Kaitlin knits and hikes.

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Living The Legacy Award Conferred

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist



Living The Legacy Award

One of the best parts of any convention is the opportunity to recognize our members' extraordinary contributions! AFT's convention is no different, and this year President Karen Strickland received the AFT Living the Legacy Award in recognition of her 30 years of exceptional leadership and union advocacy in support of women's rights. Her nominee, Tracy Lai of AFT Seattle Local 1789, said "For me, it has been a

privilege to see Karen rise and develop in her leadership, beyond our local 1789 where we both got started."

The Living the Legacy Award is given by the AFT Women's Rights Committee. Established in 2000 as part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the women's rights movement in the United States, the award is in recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of female members and leaders who have been reformers, risk takers, and role models in the AFT. It is an award rooted in recognizing the outstanding union leaders who have made a difference for children, families, and communities in the teachers' union movement, in the labor movement, and in their communities.

Congratulations to President Strickland!

AFT Washington Executive Board

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- Vice President At-Large Pos. 2
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Board meetings are usually held on the first Saturday of the month except for holidays and summer months. Board members are elected to two-year terms.

AFT Washington represents over 6,500 members and prospective members in early childhood education, K-12, and higher education in Washington State and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which represents 1.7 million members nationwide.

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Karen Strickland

President's Column

Greetings Union Family, and welcome to Autumn. It seems mere weeks ago I bemoaned the onslaught of election texts and emails a year and a half out from the election. Well, now we're just weeks away from, yes, the most consequential election of our lifetimes! Indeed, each big election in recent years has been called the most consequential (or insert whatever superlative you like) because it is ... until the next one rolls around. Given this, our theme for the year, Democracy is a Verb, is timely.

Our final article on this theme is written by Carl Livingston, longtime AFT Seattle, 1789 member, leader, political scientist, attorney, writer and pastor – you can find it on page 5 of this issue. He writes about the ongoing obstacles to and attacks on voting, perhaps the most foundational way to participate in our democracy. I'm sure I'm stating the obvious, but the only reason to attack voting rights is because your vote matters. I'm going to focus on why we need all hands on deck in the November 5th election. What threat can we avert by treating democracy like a very active verb!

While I would prefer to make the case for why you should vote for Vice President Harris – her commitment to public education and the rights

of working people are good starting points - the danger of a Trump/Vance administration is clear and present. It must not be ignored. As Maya Angelou said, "When someone shows you who they are, believe them."

We have seen the damage Trump will do to increase his power and constrain the rights and opportunities of working people and the institutions we value. We have seen who Trump is and it's not good. He's not on our side.

Add to that the multiplier effect of J.D. Vance. He is a small man, so threatened by anything "not him" that he dares to vilify women without children, including our president Randi Weingarten and many of our members! He's reported that teachers who don't have children "disturb" him, a blatant reflection of his misogyny and his desire to place women in tiny boxes to constrain us. This is just plain weird and he cannot be trusted to understand or care about the needs of working Americans.

Other Trump "accomplishments" in his last term are still harming us today. Tax breaks to corporations and wealthy people allowed the deficit to grow to \$7 trillion! A Supreme Court that ensured women would lose their rights and face dire threats to their health and well-being by reversing Roe, and that also reversed decisions on everything from gun control to environmental protection. Dehumanizing immigration practices - including convincing Republicans in Congress to kill a solution-focused immigration bill for purely political reasons. Trump promises to do more of the same if he's reelected.

Beyond the harmful policies that Trump implemented in his first term, this election features the specter of Project 2025, a playbook for how to kill democracy written by Trump's close advisors and friends; his denial of any

knowledge of it is just another lie of the self-serving kind we have come to expect from him. As Tim Walz stated in his DNC speech, if you put effort into writing a playbook, you plan to follow it. Project 2025 would eliminate the Department of Education, strangle Head Start, weaken minimum wage and overtime laws, end child labor protection laws, and undermine working people by dismantling their right to organize. Project 2025 goes after voting rights and efforts to dismantle systemic oppression by eliminating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion offices in federal government.

On top of all of this, Trump is also setting the stage to claim election fraud if he loses. We saw where that leads on January 6th, 2021.

Fortunately, we have many reasons to vote for Vice President Harris! Her focus on real-world economics, like grocery, childcare and healthcare costs, alongside living wages and a more balanced tax system, will make a real difference in the lives of our members. We can expect strategies that address climate change and a just transition, and gun safety measures that move us away from active shooter drills in schools and lead to kids and our members feeling safe at school again.

With a Harris/Walz win we continue the important trend of putting an educator in the White House, first with Dr. Jill Biden, next up Tim Walz! He shares our dedication to strong communities through public education; we can trust he'll keep his eye on the best possible future for all of us.

As I write this article on Labor Day, we're looking at just over 60 days to make sure that democracy is, indeed, a verb amongst our members. We will have made phone calls, sent texts, knocked on doors, and participated in AFT's Real Solutions for a Better Life

(Continued on pg.7)

Increasing Member Involvement In Bargaining Gets Big Wins

By Enrie Marusya, Union Organizing Representative

This has been a big year for higher ed faculty bargaining, including at Clover Park Technical College Local 3913 (CPTC Faculty) and Bates Technical College Local 4184, both of whom ratified their Collective Bargaining Agreements this summer.

Notable wins for CPTC Faculty included a reduction in contracted days from 208 to 202, and the option for some faculty to not teach in summer. Faculty counselors also now have the same number of days as all other faculty. Some gen ed classes now have enrollment caps, and it's easier for faculty to attain professional development increments. Finally, the part-time Adjunct credit rate increased significantly, meeting and in some cases exceeding AFT Washington's pay equity goals of 85% per credit hour compared to full-time faculty!

"This process went as it should go. It was collaborative, mutually beneficial, and even at times fun," Kathryn Smith, a member of the faculty bargaining team, stated. Faculty Union President Diane Follett added that "The contract negotiations team was integral in planning and executing proposals, creating talking points, and showing

up during negotiations to support and present on key issues." The larger contract negotiations team, which met regularly between bargaining sessions, consisted of faculty representing as many departments as possible, who served as two-way communicators between the 3-member bargaining team and the larger faculty body.

Bates Technical College Faculty Local 4184 similarly owed much of their success to a large number of faculty getting involved in bargaining, with a faculty team of approximately eight members. They saw significant wins in terms of faculty pay increases and stipends for adjuncts to perform additional work beyond their regular teaching duties. According to faculty Union Vice President and bargaining team member Amy Mackey, "The negotiation process between Local 4184 and the Bates Technical College Administration was collaborative and constructive.... The involvement of representatives from various faculty departments, including advisors, career training faculty, and general education faculty, ensured that a broad range of perspectives were considered.



Members of the Faculty and Administrative bargaining teams go to lunch after their contract is settled. Photo credit unknown



Diane Follett (President, Local 3913) and Dr. Joyce Loveday (President at CPTC) sign their 2024-2027 Contract together. Photo credit James Neblett

Communities For Our Colleges Is Making Big Moves

By Elisa Westcreek, AFT Renton Local 3914

I had the pleasure of attending the Communities for Our Colleges (C4C) conference this year, and what a wonderful experience it was. C4C and AFT Washington work closely together every year, and especially in the legislative session. In this past legislative session C4C pushed HB 1889; which allows persons to receive professional licenses and certifications regardless of immigration or citizenship status. C4C is also helping to broaden the conversation around free college in Washington state.

This year's conference covered a wide range of topics, such as what C4C's vision for higher education is, how to write a letter to the editor, phone banking, and how to organize and build power in your community. There was also a presenter from the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN) to talk about what to do if ICE shows up at your door or stops you in a traffic stop. The conference also covered things such as the difference between mobilizing and organizing and how movements are the most successful

when they react in real-time to the changing landscape in both their communities and the legislature.

I highly recommend their conference to those who are looking to get into lobbying with our legislature and want to know the ins and outs of lobbying, mobilizing, and organizing around a movement. C4C is getting set to be bigger and stronger, and this conference was a great look at how!

Voter Suppression, Voter Empowerment: How We Can Make The Vote More Accessible

By Carl Livingston, Seattle Central College
Local 1789

Civil rights leaders have called voting the crown jewel of civil rights, and rightly so. Simply put, voting makes democracies democratic.

Ten short years ago, that jewel in our state was tarnished. Think back to 2010 when Latinos in Yakima were the majority at 53% but were gerrymandered out of being able to elect a majority on the city council. To put it lightly, that was not democratic! Yet, to their credit, Latinos in Yakima sued. In 2016, they won a court order that provided them three majority Latino districts. The case reminds Washingtonians that we have in the past discriminated against women and communities of color, such as in the 1990s when we had felony disenfranchisement.

The good news is that Washington has improved, and in many ways where we made gains, we lead the country. For instance, one of the biggest democratic improvements occurred with the passage in 2018 of the Washington Voting Rights Act (WVRA). Long time Pasco resident Bertha Aranda Glatt learned the power of the WVRA. The City of Pasco frustrated the lawsuit Ms. Aranda Glatt first filed in 2015. However, in 2018, Pasco conceded that its election system violated the WVRA. That's power!

With the gains we have made, particularly in the last ten years, we now live in a state that is one of the best in terms of voting access and accessibility. Washington joined California to become one of only two states in the country which passed the Voting Rights Act. It provides same day registration, waives physical address mandates, and protects minority voting rights. In Washington, we no longer suffer from gerrymandering,

rampant voter suppression, or felony disenfranchisement.

It is for these reasons that the Cost of Voting Index (COVI), which measures how restrictive voting is across the country, lists Washington second only to Oregon. Because of this, Melissa Santos stated in Axios Seattle, "It's easier to cast a ballot in Washington than in almost any other U.S. state, according to a nonpartisan study published in the Election Law Journal." For these improvements, Washingtonians rightly deserve praise.

However, before we get lost in self-congratulations, we would do well to look at some of the more voter-friendly measures countries employ around the world. Perhaps we can find new areas within which to blossom. Here are three areas we might consider.

First, Washington should automatically register all residents to vote. The state already does something related when it automatically restores felons' voting rights once they complete physical custody. We should take our cue from both Sweden and Germany here. They automatically register their citizens to vote.

Second, we should bring clarity to our ballots. Too often, lawyers write the levies and constitutional proposals on which we vote. You've read the long sentences that are overly complicated. They can be a maze. At times, they are even written in the negative so that a vote for is, in effect a vote against what it concerns. Why do we allow that? Instead, all such levies and proposals should have to pass the scrutiny of an impartial panel of English teachers who are skilled at revising language plainly, and in the active voice. This would ensure voters know what they are voting for, and in the process improve their voting experience. That makes

voters more likely to vote again.

Third, we could consider making voting required, but have the penalty for failure to do so small, such as \$10 or \$20. Chile, Belgium and Turkey do this, and so do 27 other countries globally. Why should we be behind Turkey in voter enfranchisement? I can't think of a reason. In these ways, we can do more to encourage all Washingtonians to vote.

Yet, we live connected to other states whose residents are not so fortunate. Some states, especially in the South, are treating their residents markedly worse today than Washington ever treated its residents in the 90s. Texas is gerrymandered. South and North Carolina are rampant with voter suppression. Our fellow citizens around the country are politically under siege and could use friends in the northwest.

So, even if the three items above are a "bridge too far" for Washingtonians in the foreseeable future, we should be able to do these two things: First, support the protection of voting rights nationally, as gerrymandering and voter suppression are major issues around the country. Send \$5 or more to the civil rights groups fighting these measures. Thousands of us sending a little becomes a lot of money. Join protests locally in league with protests in other states decrying voting rights violations. Lobby the U.S. Justice Department to do more investigations and to bring more suits. Promote the passage nationally of Voting Rights Acts like Washington's and Oregon's.

Second, do more to help Washingtonians electorally: make a big push amongst your family and friends to ensure they vote. Perhaps you could do this by figuring out something to do for them—making a spate of complimentary voice

(Continued on pg. 7)

Our Endorsements For The General Election

By AFT Washington Staff

These are the 2024 general election endorsements of AFT Washington, as approved by the AFT Washington Committee On Political Education (COPE) committee and the Executive Board. Dual endorsements are indicated by &. If you're interested in getting involved with COPE, contact us at rburton@aftwa.org.

Federal

President: Kamala Harris

Congress

Senate: Maria Cantwell
CD 1: Susan DelBene
CD 3: Marie Gluesenkamp-Perez
CD 5: Carmela Conroy
CD 6: Emily Randall
CD 7: Pramila Jayapal
CD 8: Kim Schrier

Statewide

Governor: Bob Ferguson
Attorney General: Nick Brown
Insurance Commissioner: Patty Kuderer
Superintendent of Public Instruction: Chris Reykdal

Ballot Measures

Oppose Initiative 2066
Oppose Initiative 2109
Oppose Initiative 2117
Oppose Initiative 2124

State Supreme Court

Position 2: Sal Mungia
Position 8: Steven Gonzalez
Position 9: Sheryl Gordon McCloud

State Legislature

LD 1
Senate: Derek Stanford
House 1: Davina Duerr
House 2: Shelley Kloba

LD 3
Senate: Marcus Riccelli
House 1: Natasha Hill
House 2: Timm Ormsby

LD 4
Senate: Miguel Valencia

LD 5
Senate: Bill Ramos
House 1: Victoria Hunt
House 2: Lisa Callan

LD 10
Senate: Janet St Clair
House 1: Clyde Shavers
House 2: Dave Paull

LD 11
Senate: Bob Hasegawa
House 1: David Hackney
House 2: Steve Bergquist

LD 14
Senate: Maria Beltran
House 1: Chelsea Dimas
House 2: Ana Ruiz Kennedy

LD 17
Senate: Marla Keethler
House 2: Terri Niles

LD 18
Senate: Adrian Cortes
House 1: Deken Letenich
House 2: John Zingale

LD 21
House 1: Strom Peterson
House 2: Lillian Ortiz-Self

LD 22
Senate: Jessica Bateman
House 1: Beth Doglio
House 2: Lisa Parshley

LD 23
Senate: Drew Hansen
House 1: Tarra Simmons
House 2: Greg Nance

LD 24
Senate: Mike Chapman
House 1: Adam Bernbaum
House 2: Steve Tharinger

LD 25
Senate: Kenneth King
House 1: Cameron Severns

House 2: Shellie Willis

LD 26
House 1: Addison Richards
House 2: Tiffany Mitchell

LD 27
Senate: Yasmin Trudeau
House 1: Laurie Jinkins
House 2: Jake Fey

LD 28
Senate: T'wina Nobles
House 1: Mari Leavitt
House 2: Dan Bronoske

LD 29
House 1: Melanie Morgan
House 2: Sharlett Mena

LD 30
House 1: Jamila Taylor
House 2: Kristine Reeves

LD 32
House 1: Cindy Ryu
House 2: Lauren Davis

LD 33
House 1: Tina Orwall
House 2: Mia Gregerson

LD 34
House 1: Emily Alvarado
House 2: Joe Fitzgibbon

LD 35
House 2: James DeHart

LD 36
House 1: Julia Reed
House 2: Liz Berry

LD 37
House 1: Sharon Tomiko Santos
House 2: Chipalo Street

LD 38
House 1: Julio Cortes
House 2: Mary Fosse

LD 40
Senate: Liz Lovelett
House 1: Debra Lekanoff
House 2: Alex Ramel

LD 41
Senate: Lisa Wellman
House 1: Tana Senn
House 2: My-Linh Thai

LD 42
House 1: Alicia Rule
House 2: Joe Timmons

LD 43
House 1: Nicole Macri
House 2: Shaun Scott

LD 44
House 1: Brandy Donaghy
House 2: April Berg

LD 45
House 1: Roger Goodman
House 2: Melissa Demyan & Larry Springer

LD 46
House 1: Gerry Pollet
House 2: Darya Farivar

LD 47
House 1: Debra Entenman
House 2: Chris Stearns

LD 48
House 1: Vandana Slatter
House 2: Amy Walen

LD 49
Senate: Annette Cleveland
House 1: Sharon Wylie
House 2: Monica Stonier

Moving Washington Forward

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

This election is a big deal. As President Strickland noted in her letter on page 3, every election feels like the election of a lifetime – right up to the next one where the stakes are somehow even higher! This issue of the *Spotlight* is reaching you right around the time your ballot arrives, and if you have questions about our endorsements, they're on page 6. We also keep voting information on our website at www.aftwa.org.

But this year is, indeed, different even from other presidential elections. This year, the billionaire-backed Let's Go Washington put 4 initiatives on the ballot. Any one of them is devastating to Washington; taken as a whole, they would radically reshape efforts for a cleaner, healthier state, with a stronger educational system, and with long-term care for the aging members of our communities. Even individually, they make deep changes to our state.

Initiative 2109, regarding the capital gains tax passed in 2021, if passed would reverse efforts by the Washington State legislature to improve the fairness of our tax system. The capital gains tax is 7% on extraordinary profits, profits that come from the sale of stocks, bonds, or other investments that net more than \$250,000 for the seller. The money that the state collects from the capital gains tax goes into the Education Legacy Trust Account (ELTA), which funds affordable childcare, early education, special education, and school construction. Cutting that money from the budget will remove approximately \$5 billion from ELTA over the next 6 years. The tax is paid by fewer than 4,000 individuals in the state of Washington; 99.8% of Washingtonians will never incur this capital gains tax.

The 2021 Climate Commitment Act (CCA) would be heavily impacted by Initiative 2117, which prohibits the

state from imposing any kind of carbon tax credit trading, and directly repeals the CCA's "cap-and-invest" program, where money realized from sales of carbon credits are invested into climate programs. Those programs – essential investments in every county in Washington – are investments in clean air and water, forests and farmlands, and jobs, and include programs such as utility bill discounts for low-income households, fish habitat repair, and wildfire prevention programs. Repealing cap-and-invest would push the cost of addressing pollution from polluters onto working families and their communities.

Initiative 2124 makes participation in the state's Long Term Care Trust program voluntary and opens the door for private companies to offer similar long-term care coverage for expenses not covered by Medicaid or traditional insurances, such as wheelchair ramps in a home. The

(Continued on pg. 8)

President's Column

(from pg. 3)

campaign bus tour. Few people actually volunteer, making democracy a verb in these ways - a 2020 PEW study showed just 8% of Biden voters volunteered for a campaign or candidate! Can we raise that up?

I think we can! Talking to other people has great value, and not just because we may be able to convince them to

vote. When we talk to our union siblings, our neighbors, our friends and family, we come to understand their needs and hopes more fully. And when we disagree, we find out that usually that works out okay. More generally, as we talk with one another we create a climate where it's a little easier to engage, to get involved, to add one's voice to the mix, ultimately leading to

greater understanding, less polarization and stronger solutions. We are the experts on what we need at home, in our workplaces, and in our communities.

Our voices and our votes matter.

And that is what it looks like when
Democracy is a verb!

Voter Suppression, Voter Empowerment

(from pg. 5)

or text messages, invitations to a spaghetti dinner, giving of a small gift. The aim should be to make them feel something special for voting. It may sound corny, but as the old Alka Seltzer commercial said, "try it, you'll

like it." Let's do what we can to make Washington and this country more democratic. If we do, we will bring an iridescent luster to the crown jewel of our civil rights.

Carl Livingston is the lead Political Science Professor at Seattle Central

College and a member of AFT Seattle Local 1789. He is the author of several books, including Affirmative Action On Trial: The Retraction of Affirmative Action and the Case for Its Retention. He is also the senior pastor of Kingdom Christian Center in Tacoma.



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Moving Washington Forward (From page 7)

history of private long-term care insurance suggests strongly that premiums will spiral upwards and some insurers will leave the Washington market, leaving their clients without long-term care funds for those uncovered expenses.

The newest initiative, Initiative 2066, forces public utilities to offer natural gas whether or not there are cheaper, cleaner, better options available for consumers. It prohibits public utilities – often large polluters in their own right – from developing plans that do not include natural gas, and ends several programs that allow Washington State’s

residents and small-business owners to transition to cleaner sources of power, such as rebate programs for heat pump conversions.

The first three initiatives have deep fiscal impacts, and all four will negatively affect Washington State. The funding necessary for a strong educational system doesn’t appear out of thin air; passing Initiative 2109 would force the Legislature to either underfund or defund parts of the educational system (and you all know how hard we’ve all been working to get that funding up!) or defund other critical priorities to find the money for education. The impact of

climate change is very real and growing every year, and the costs associated with addressing it will be passed on to consumers if polluters get a free pass.

It’s very clear that these four initiatives have been brought forward in an effort to benefit the very few in Washington, at the expense of the rest of us. We cannot build a strong, responsive, healthy state that provides opportunity and safe communities for all without money to do so, and these initiatives all seek to cut off that money and take it back out of the pockets of working Washingtonians.