

UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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March 2022



After months of bargaining and a near-unanimous strike vote, the AFT Renton bargaining team finally settled a Tentative Agreement with the Renton School District that will provide a fair wage increase for ALL our members.

Photo by Ray Carrillo

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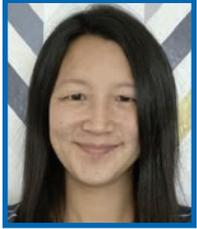
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INSERT: Spotlight On Retirees In Action (2 sided)

Welcome Our New Staff!

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

Since October, AFT Washington has brought on board two new staff, bringing us up to full strength again, with results already showing!



HyeEun Park

In October, HyeEun Park came on board as the Government Relations Specialist. She brings over a decade of community organizing, political campaigns, and government relations experience to the role. Previously, HyeEun served as a senior policy analyst for the Washington Black Lives Matter Alliance, program manager during the 2020 Census for King County, and political strategist for YWCA Seattle, King, Snohomish. She earned her undergraduate degree from the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University and earned her MPA from CUNY Baruch as a National Urban Fellow. Outside of work she enjoys being with friends and volunteering.

You can reach out to her at hpark@aftwa.org. She's been in meetings and conversations over the last four months,



Gissel Uribe

Representative, Gissel Uribe, who commented "I'm really excited to be joining AFT Washington. As we all know, times are changing and with them so are our working conditions and our home lives. I believe having a strong union membership is the best way to get us through hard times and the collective power it will take to create a future we are proud of. I come with many years of experience both in the labor movement and community organizing in California, Arizona, Colorado, and Washington State. My goal is to share the tools I've learned over the years and grow with you all."

You can reach out to Gissel at guribe@aftwa.org. She's working hard to get to know members, so expect to see her soon if you haven't already!

so you may have seen her by now!

Additionally, in January, AFT Washington welcomed the very experienced Union Organizing

Remembering Ross Rieder, 1940 – 2021

By Karen Strickland, President



Ross Rieder

Ross Rieder! What a solid rock he was, both within AFT Washington and in the Labor Movement! He was part of the union since 1962 – first as activist and leader in Local 772, the Everett Federation of Teachers, then as the President of the Washington Federation of Teachers, our Retiree Chapter President, and finally a member of the AFT

Washington Executive Board. In addition, he contributed significantly to the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, creating beautiful and inspiring calendars, teaching labor history classes, and much more.

Ross was always ready to share a bit of history, a bit of

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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

The freedom to thrive is a big idea that has been rattling around my mind for the last several months. I first encountered the phrase in AFT messaging around investments in education, and then as the title of an AFT Human and Civil Rights conference panel our Human Rights Vice President Tracy Lai was part of, Freedom to Thrive: Combating Anti-Asian Hate. A quick internet search introduced me to a national organization based in Portland called Freedom to Thrive. Their work seeks to “build a world where safety means investment in people and planet and an end to the punishment-based criminal and immigration systems.” Their work centers the voices of those most impacted by the system and flips the script from how do we control “bad” behavior to asking the question *what is it that allows people to thrive and bring forth their best selves?* It’s an important question to ask.

As I write, we are halfway through the 2022 legislative session. In small and large ways, legislation introduced has the potential to create the conditions providing people the freedom to thrive. But of course, it can also do just the opposite. Today I read about bills moving through the state House and Senate, HB 2050 and SB 5535, with bipartisan support, that will end the current practice of charging families the cost of locking up their children sentenced to prison time. The existing law is the epitome of a punishment-

driven view of people, and it is devastating to those impacted, who very often struggle with trauma, alienation, poverty and other soul-crushing experiences. First your child goes to prison, then you get the bill. That is just wrong.

Like these two bills, our legislative agenda seek to create conditions that give people the freedom to thrive, such as through liberation from student loan debt, greater access to college and apprenticeships, and making sure everyone, regardless of immigration status, has access to healthcare.

At the federal level, the Build Back Better (BBB) bill is rich with investments in humans. The policies in it are worth a fight. They include expanding the child tax credit, investing in childcare and early learning, making prescription drugs more affordable and capping costs for some, incentivizing clean energy and much more.

No single policy will do the trick, and opportunities exist outside of the legislative process that must be enlisted in this work, but when we operate from the premise that given the opportunity and resources people will strive for good, we can create communities and institutions that provide the freedom to thrive.

As educators we see the power of policies that open doors to learning and growth and create space for healing. What is education if not liberation? This premise is also congruent with our work in the labor movement. What is the labor movement if not a force to “*combat resolutely the forces that seek to undermine the democratic institutions of our nation and to enslave the human soul,*” as the Washington State Labor Council constitution inspiringly asserts?

From the right, however, we see a pattern of policy designed to constrain, limit, and squelch. Proposals that seek to stifle academic freedom with prescriptions about what can and cannot be

taught abound, both here in Washington and throughout the country. Book bans are rampant, intending to narrow exposure to the full range of human experience. Efforts to force people in the LGBTQIA+ community back in the closet steal their freedom to thrive. Denying the cultural diversity that has built our country and enriches our communities steals the freedom to thrive from all, especially those whose histories are made invisible. Narrowly defining ways to be, on any criteria, opens people to harassment, discrimination, and violence, the very opposite of liberation and freedom to thrive.

As we look at our work this year, we must remain committed to protecting and expanding our collective liberation. When our legislative session wraps up on March 10th, we will shift to electoral work, endorsing candidates and mobilizing to get them into office. This will be no ordinary election year. A backlash to the progress from last year’s legislative session is showing up now. Legislators we have endorsed who supported that progress are at risk of losing their seats and will need our help.

We can expect the use of disinformation, the exploitation of economic insecurity and the promotion of hostility and violence as tactics used by those who seek to smother our freedom to thrive. But we know the tactics, and we know how, and why, to defeat them.

You, as a member, play an important role in this work, no matter how you choose to be involved. If you’d like to help decide which candidates we will support this year, our Committee on Political Education can always use more members. Our Human Rights Committee and Institutional Equity and Accountability Alliance create space for sharing both threats to our collective freedom to thrive and seize opportuni-

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Breaking The Misinformation Cycle

By Lauren Bryant, Usability & Web Librarian, Shoreline Community College; Greg Bem, Faculty Library Coordinator, Lake Washington Inst. Of Technology; and Meredith Forney, Librarian at Large, Pacific Lutheran University

“**M**isinformation.” A word that’s popping up all over the place, often matched with tones of disdain and frustration. Misinformation, defined by Merriam-Webster as “incorrect or misleading information,” can be found from newspaper articles to social media posts, but what does it say about our culture of information sharing? As librarians, we are concerned with both the created information as well as how it is engaged with and then distributed.

Two years into the Covid-19 pandemic, it seems like each day there is new information we need to digest in order to keep us safe as guidance evolves. However, there are many sources out there claiming to be experts on topic, that instead produce easily-shared false or misleading media. Is reading and analyzing information required? Of course not. Part of this behavior is due to the nature of information: something exciting creates a sense of urgency, and often the urgency to share is at odds with reliability. There is an intense need to understand what is going on and how to fix it. Even the most reliable of sources are doubling back and releasing seemingly (or actually) contradictory information as health care experts make discoveries. The production, dissemination, and consumption of information happens in a cycle. The “first wave” of that cycle arrives before fact checkers, be they you, your neighbor, or organizations like **Snopes** and **PolitiFact**, have a chance to check and crosscheck the details. As such, overeager information sharers, even if they have the best of intentions, often find themselves spreading misinformation under the guise of truth.

One contributor to the spread and source of misinformation is social media, an

increasingly-used space where we all go for ideas and information, which historically lacks system-wide tools for evaluation and review, and is ever available to inundate and overwhelm the user. Some social media platforms are making efforts, causing us to pause and consider the articles we’re encountering: Twitter detects whether the article has been viewed and asks the user if they would like to read the article before retweeting. But even this measure is easily ignored, and most social media platforms do not have such features.

Librarians are consistently encountering the relationships students and educators have with information in this fast-paced reality. With so many sources to sift through, many do not feel they have the time or skills to suss out which articles or posts are reliable. We encounter clickbait, where the title of an article seems engaging, impactful, and shareable, but the content of the article ends up being fluff. We also see media where small slivers of information are pulled from articles and given out of context. We encounter anonymous articles on professionally-designed blogs, articles lacking context from local news channels, and even articles that are a few sentences, having been published before full reports are ready. A professional-looking blog can have nicely formatted articles that are intended to look like news reports and even librarians have to use our evaluation checklist to discover that many of these are intended to push a political agenda or endorse an underlying service or product.

Publications matched with witticisms and trendy language carry and build the messaging across platforms, often reinforced algorithmically through clicks, and psychologically through likes.

Especially when the content is upsetting and threatening, this process can be exhausting. Feeling a responsibility to be informed, students and educators alike are overwhelmed and burnt out through information overload and the drive to connect to everything at all. Information and misinformation, in the end, compounds and can be very defeating.

The effects of overload not only overwhelm but reduce our critical thinking and distort our awareness. It can even leave our biases unchecked and, over time, reinforce beliefs and fears, and prevent us from deeper connections to science, data, and truth. Our stances are reinforced. We are driven to lean into what we know and what feels comfortable. And while on the surface they may feel normal and easy, conversations become more challenging as we lose that ability to have discourse, to connect, to learn, and be educated, both alone and with others.

Do not despair! You are not alone and help is available. The same tips, tools, and strategies librarians have always promoted to support research in the academy and everyday life are just as relevant in today’s information and media landscape. We believe that slowing down and asking questions about information can help disrupt the spread of misinformation by acknowledging there is a cycle to information and we all have a role to play in that cycle. These strategies are practical, and contribute to an, universal skillset we librarians proudly praise: information literacy.

When it comes to misinformation, first consider the source. Beyond the organization’s name, what is the role of the author and their platform? Second, how is the publication being fiscally

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Adjunct Faculty To Take Further Action For Job Security and Pay Equity with State Board

By Jacqui Cain, Vice President for Contingent Faculty, and Enrie Marusya, Union Organizing Representative

Regular readers may recall the action that adjunct faculty took back in October 2021: dozens of adjuncts and their tenure-track peers attended a meeting of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to present a petition reminding the State Board of their obligations to treat faculty equitably under RCW 28B. Many gave testimony about their experiences with loss of work during the pandemic. Since then, we have attended subsequent meetings with the goal of sparking a commitment.

These actions included meetings of the entire board and also conversations with some board members.

We've made our goals clear to the State Board. They include adding benchmarks to the State's *Best Practices for Part Time Faculty* (which you can find on the State Board's website at <https://www.sbctc.edu>) of 85% pay parity per credit hour for adjuncts, and moving towards 70% full-to-part-time faculty ratios.

As of yet, the Board hasn't taken any actions on these issues. Instead, they are continuing their practice of "informal conversations" with no resulting commitments. We need to make sure they know the lack of progress on these issues is hurting adjunct faculty. The Contingent Faculty Issues Committee (CFIC) is asking members to prepare for another action at the next State Board meeting on March 30th-31st. Public comment tends to be on Day 2, so stay tuned and mark your calendars!

How To COPE With It All

By Anna-Marie Magdalena, State Affiliate Political Organizer

At AFT Washington we work to elect candidates who represent our values of fully funded public education, good quality living wage jobs, and an economy that reflects racial, social and economic justice and the freedom to thrive.

One of the ways we do this is by endorsing and contributing to candidates for elected office who share our values and pledge to support our members. Members are involved in the endorsement process from beginning to end through involvement in our Committee On Political Education (COPE). COPE is led by Travis Margoni, AFT Yakima Faculty, Local 1485 and AFT Washington VP for COPE.

How does the candidate endorsement process work?

Our endorsement decision is based on the candidate's response to a questionnaire developed by members of COPE. We establish a low and a high cutoff, below which candidates don't get an endorsement and above which they do. The group in the middle is evaluated

by the committee members; in addition to the candidate's values, we consider their analysis of the issues and opportunities our members face, their ideas and plans for addressing community needs, and other work they have done to strengthen communities. We also consider the legislative scorecard we maintain for incumbents, the WSLC scorecard, and the candidate's responsiveness.

After this process is concluded, the committee's final recommendations are made to the AFT Washington Executive Board at the May board meeting.

Contributing to candidates who represent our values

The contributions the committee makes to candidates come from the voluntary donations our members make to our COPE fund. We know that private companies that profit from student debt, privatization of our public education system, and keeping workers' wages low make major contributions to candidates.

Our 6,500 AFT union members make

up part of the larger labor community through the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), which represents more than 550,000 union members throughout our state. We are encouraging each local to make sure they have representation at this year's WSLC COPE Convention on Saturday, May 21st as we discuss our endorsements and our plan to win for labor and working people in 2022 mid-term elections.

How can you and your local be involved in the process?

1. Join the AFT Washington COPE Committee
2. Contribute to the voluntary COPE fund
3. Volunteer to represent your union during candidate interviews
4. Speak to your local leadership about representing your local at the WSLC COPE

For more information contact Anna-Marie Magdalena, State Affiliated Political Organizer at amagdalena@aftwa.org.

Breaking the Misinformation Cycle

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supported? Are there ads within the work? Is the material being supported and promoted to align with another agenda? Third, have the statements in the article been aligned with other articles, publications, or events that support the statements, and are the citations for those external sources available? Fourth, when it comes to the graphs and other visual representations of information, what data is included and what's left out?

Limiting your media intake or depending only on the most reliable publications is one great way to avoid burnout. Some of the best sources for health sciences articles that are peer reviewed include PubMed, run by the National Library of

Medicine; Google Scholar; and the health sciences focused database, CINAHL.

The brutal truth is that in most situations, our emotional reaction to information, and the sense of urgency to share the information, will take over before each of us can stop to question. And in such a tumultuous time, taking extra care to seek out only the most reliable sources of information can contribute to our emotional well-being. That is why we firmly believe that this work is not for the individual, but for the community. Academic and school librarianship is often concerned with individual information needs, but misinformation reflects a systemic nature and communal imperative. Discuss the information you find, your questions about it, or your feelings about the onslaught of news with your friends and colleagues. They might be feeling the same way, and may have insight or experience that you have not yet considered. Remember, misinformation and the burnout that it causes is a community issue, so talk about it with your community.

So our final strategy: when in doubt, or

even when you just have a few moments, bring it to your local librarian, and let's talk about it. We obsess over this kind of stuff, and we work alongside wonderful projects like UW's Center for an Informed Public (creators of **Misinformation Day!**) and the **News Literacy Project** to bring resources and trainings to our communities. Additionally, we strive to find the best sources of information available to educate and evolve our reading, analyzing, and sharing. We are also of the community, and want to promote our communities' safety.

The sheer volume of reliable and unreliable information we encounter everyday can make us feel as though we will never be able to understand our current world. We empathize with this feeling and even those among us with excellent research skills feel uncertain and confused at times. However, by remembering to slow down, wait for the facts, ask a few practical questions, and engage in thoughtful, supportive discussion with your friends, colleagues, and librarians, you too can tackle misinformation and information overload.

NewsGuard Subscriptions Available

The AFT is partnering with NewsGuard, a service that rates news and information sites to combat misinformation. If you are interested in getting access, fill out the form at <https://www.newsguardtech.com/aft>

President Message

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ties to expand that freedom. I invite you to reach out to our office (aftwashington@aftwa.org) to get involved.

When we work to expand the freedom to thrive, we will be joined by working people throughout our country. At the beginning of the pandemic, we saw the stark holes in our safety net. We came face to face with the hypocrisy of naming essential workers who then were treated without regard for their safety and well-being. And we saw that being in a union made a real and posi-

tive difference when faced with dramatic changes in the workplace. People are saying **NO** to demeaning workplaces and **YES** to figuring out how we do it better. We who believe in the freedom to thrive have the opportunity and the power to push us closer to that ideal...we need simply to seize it!

Stay tuned - you will hear from us in the coming months, calling for you to join us in the work to make real the freedom to thrive for all!

Student Debt Success Story!



Kathryn Smith is getting her student loans discharged, thanks to the changes to PSLF. "I wasn't eligible until the temporary expansion went into effect in October. I was on an extended repayment plan, and these student loans would have continued into or delayed my retirement. I am so relieved my loans will soon be forgiven. It's like a tremendous weight was lifted."

Check out <http://www.aft.org/pslf> to see if you qualify!

Grays Harbor Professional Staff Go Union With AFT

By Bob Downing, Union Organizing Representative

Student Support Specialists, Program Coordinators and Directors, Education Navigators, and other professional exempt staff at Grays Harbor College have organized their union with AFT! The Public Employees Relations Commission certified the new bargaining unit in December following a showing of more than 78% of employees in favor of unionization.

Now professional staff will join with Grays Harbor faculty in having a voice over working conditions as they prepare to bargain their first union contract. The faculty local 4984 is taking steps to include the professional exempt staff as part of their local, which means one big AFT local will include a broad range of Grays Harbor College employees.

Associate Director of Running Start Lori Christmas was central to the organizing drive. As she said, "I was a student here once. Now I help future students enroll. We want our students to succeed, and our college to succeed. By having a union, now we have more tools to ensure our voice is being heard and respected at every level of the institution."

Building A Better Future Starts With Lobby Day

By Anna-Marie Magdalena, State Affiliate Political Organizer

AFT Washington's Lobby Day 2022: Building a Better Future was a huge success thanks to our union members' participation. Members representing locals in communities of all sizes met with legislators across the political spectrum.

The goal of Lobby Day is to inform our legislators about our top legislative priorities for the 2021-2022 session. This year we focused on:

- Funding a robust wage increase to education workers so they can afford to live in the communities they work in.
- Making higher education more affordable and accessible by increasing the Washington College Grant from 50 to 70% of the median family income and creating a bridge grant program.
- Providing information about the federal Public Student Loan Forgiveness program to public employees and setting a multiplier for adjunct faculty hours.
- Fully funding School Employee Benefits for Federation of Head Start Employees Local 6153 members.

Throughout the day, members had the opportunity to hear from a variety of organizations, union members and

leaders. Yakima Comité students Yadira Chavez, Nancy Cruz, Miguel Rojas and Xochilt Lopez shared their group's work to support students at Yakima Valley Community College and the support students need from faculty to organize successfully on campus.

Conversations with Senator Emily Randall (D-26), Chair of the Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development Committee and Vandana Slatter (D-48), PharmD, Chair of the House College & Workforce Development Committee included learning about their legislative priorities for the 2021-2022 legislative session and how they plan on making substantial investment in our CTCs in the next biennium.

In addition to speaking with legislators, our members had opportunities to hear from Karen Richter from Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action on their legislative agenda, which prioritizes access to basic needs such as healthcare for retirees. Nicole Grant, from 350 Seattle, spoke on the intersection between climate justice and labor, and Cherika Carter, Political and Strategic Campaigns Director with the Washington State Labor Council spoke

on how our members can increase our political power, including through the council's Labor Neighbor program to get out the union vote in the upcoming 2022 primaries and elections.

AFT Washington Executive Board and (Re)Invest in Our Colleges team members Tracy Lai, VP of Human Rights and Jacqui Cain, VP of Contingent Faculty Issues, spoke on the Road to 2023 about their work to get funding for our Community and Technical Colleges, specifically on the issues of pay equity. They shared their strategies on membership engagement and their locals' organizing capabilities.

Our participation in events like Lobby Day sets us up for success in the next session, when the biennium budget will be decided. We will be requesting major investments in our CTCs, and that strategy will be decided by our members participating in AFT Washington's several political advocacy committees.

If you are interested in finding out more or deepening your political engagement, please reach out to Anna-Marie Magdalena, State Affiliated Political Organizer at 206-475-8775 or email amagdalena@aftwa.org.



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Ross Reider

(from pg. 2)

perspective, a bit of humor and a bit of agitational inspiration – from which we all gleaned knowledge and wisdom.

Ross served an important role on our board, analyzing issues with a historical perspective and clarity of values. He was always prepared to speak up and reinforce solidarity with our union family in ways big and small, from using our members’ dollars with integrity to broadcasting the union story on his radio show on KSER. Ross urged us to set a high bar for the impact we could have, whether in terms of turnout at rallies or engaging our members in the day-to-day work of the union. Finally, Ross was always quick to share a funny story or laugh at someone else’s. He took the work of the union very seriously, and himself just a little bit less so. He was a

towering figure in the movement, and we will miss him.

Ross is survived by his wife Brenda Doolittle, sons Stephen (Mary) Rieder and Michael Rieder, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Remembrances may be made in his name to the Alzheimer’s Association (<http://www.alz.org>) or the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, P.O. Box 75662, Seattle, WA 98175.

Scholarship Now Open!

The 2022 AFT Washington/ Barnard Iglitzin & Lavitt Scholarship is now accepting applications! We will award at least two \$1,500 scholarships for the 2022-2023 academic year. You can get the application and more information on our website. Applications are due by May 23rd.