



Presidents Report

Sarah R. Mesmer, President

It is an understatement to say that it has been an extraordinary fall. AFT members across the state knocked on thousands of doors and made tens of thousands phone calls in an effort to stop the advance of DeVos style educational reform in Colorado and to improve school funding. In a stunning victory, pro-public education candidates swept all four board of education races in Douglas County. In Denver, one of the four candidates our AFT local endorsed was victorious, and although that means we have more work to do in Denver, there is one less reformer in power in the largest school district in the state. On a national level the tide is beginning to turn as well. We are making progress and it feels great!

In victory as well as in defeat, there is knowledge to be gained. What we know,



and has been demonstrated once again, is that the power lies with the people “in the trenches.” It was teachers and classified staff speaking to the voting public that made the difference. What we also know is that the day after an election, win or lose, is really the beginning. We must continue to engage in dialogue about what is best for our students and staffs. Whether in Douglas County, or in Brighton where voters did not support a mill levy increase for school funding, it is time to double down on growing our membership and talking about what works from preschool through higher education. We have a lot to say!

Keeping the Momentum Going!

AFT Colorado would first like to take another opportunity to thank all the volunteers who came out to make phone calls and knock on doors during the Douglas County school board election. Without the dedication you demonstrated in making Douglas County School District a better place to work and educate our kids, there is no telling where we would be right now. It goes to show that when we put our minds together, as union brothers and sisters, we can face any challenge.

We are stronger when we work together towards a common goal. We should be very proud of what we accomplished together this year, but the reality is there are going to be many more battles coming our way. The Colorado State Assembly's legislative session begins in two short months, and just like we did during this year's school board election, we are going to need to rise to the challenge.

Based on recent recommendations from the Colorado PERA board, there could be drastic changes to your pensions and, unless we are proactive in protecting your retirement security, the changes could be

Keep an eye out for updates on these issues and look for more opportunities to get involved and to speak out on behalf of your fellow union members. Let's keep the momentum going!



severe. You have worked hard to plan for your future and that's why we have and will continue to advocate on your behalf in the State Capitol to protect your PERA. But, our legislators need to hear from the people who will actually be affected by these potentially damaging changes. Be prepared to write and/or call your state legislators. Come to the capitol to share, with our elected officials, the importance of this issue.

There are other areas where we can also band together, as union brothers and sisters, to ensure a better future for us all. Just as we did during the previous legislative session, we will continue to work with other groups and have conversations with legislators about protecting those of us who have student debt from abusive student loan servicers. We were able to build momentum on this issue last session, and with your help, we could be successful in instituting more stringent oversight around student loan servicers in Colorado.

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Local Union Updates



Eight years ago, our district, Douglas County School District, was taken over by DeVos style reformers. Five years ago they refused to renew our collective bargaining agreement. Since then, academic achievement has slipped--the district used to be “accredited with distinction” by the Colorado Department of Education, and now is only “accredited.” Teacher and staff turnover has increased since the reforms as well. Last week, four pro-public education candidates were elected to the seven member board. In 2015, three pro-public education candidates had been elected--meaning the board has seven members who are supportive of public education. The Douglas County Federation members worked hard educating their community about our district and their dedication has paid off.

AFT COLORADO
STANDING TOGETHER: MAKING A DIFFERENCE
Committee on Political Education (COPE) Deduction

www.aftcolorado.org 720-443-8032

What is COPE? COPE is how AFT Colorado raises and collects voluntary political contributions from members. COPE is a non partisan political education committee. These voluntary funds are used statewide to help back candidates and committees that support education and labor. There is one reason AFT Colorado needs to grow our COPE program, **YOU**. With the current economic environment our priorities are vulnerable and are constantly being targeted for reduction. Education budgets, programs, and services are often first on the chopping block when states face dwindling tax revenues. Along with decent working conditions, retirement, and health care. All vitally affect our lives. A strong COPE program will protect our various interests.

At the local level COPE is essential. AFT Colorado will use your voluntary funds to assist in school board races, levies, and referendums in your district. Reductions in state education aid and inflation have made local budgets even more of a challenge. We use COPE dollars to work with labor and education friendly supporters on both sides of the aisle.

FIRST NAME _____ LAST NAME _____

BILLING ADDRESS _____

BILLING CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

HOME PHONE _____ WORK PHONE _____

MOBILE PHONE _____  wish to receive periodic text messages and accept the associated charges.

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*Due to the associated fees, we prefer that you sign up for **bank draft** payment.*

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Fill out below or simply attach a voided check.

BANK NAME _____

ROUTING NUMBER _____ ACCOUNT NUMBER _____

CREDIT/DEBIT CARD: If you choose this method, we will follow up with you to change to bank draft at a later date. CARD

TYPE: VISA MC

NAME ON CARD _____

CARD NUMBER _____ EXP DATE _____

I hereby authorize a monthly contribution to the AFT CO COPE (AFT CO COPE) in the amount indicated above. This authorization is signed freely and voluntarily and not out of any fear of reprisal, and I will not be favored nor disadvantaged because I exercise this right. I understand this money will be used to make political contributions by AFT CO COPE. AFT CO COPE may engage in joint fundraising efforts with AFT COPE and/or the AFL-CIO. This voluntary authorization may be revoked at any time by notifying AFT CO COPE in writing of the desire to do so. Contribution or gifts to AFT CO COPE are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Contributions cannot be reimbursed or otherwise paid by any other person or entity.