



President's Update

By: Kallie Leyba

Again, we find ourselves in a time when Americans recognize the heroic nature of public servants. Our state workers have been on the front lines of the global pandemic at a time when their promised collective bargaining hangs in balance. There has never been a time when it was more clear how much the members of Colorado Wins need the protections of collective bargaining. Our higher education members have pivoted to all-remote instruction and undoubtedly met the challenge with exceptional performance. Our K-12 nutrition workers have continued to serve meals--putting their own health in the balance without a second thought because so many of our students would not have food without them. Our paraprofessionals have stepped up to support students in creative ways while being a resource and support for teachers. And our teachers have given more of themselves than usual, in a time when they may have less to give, to connect with and continue to educate students and support parents.

All of this has been done with our usual limited resources and support.

Unfortunately, the economic effects of the pandemic nationally, statewide, and locally are predicted to be nothing short of devastating. Colorado is currently predicting a deficit of \$3.3 billion dollars for next year. We have not recovered from the recession twelve years ago, and this is more monumental than that. Without a change, I can't imagine we will recover for decades.

There IS hope, however. Initiative 271 is not the panacea, but it would alleviate much of the damage and Coloradoans overwhelmingly agree on a tax system that is fair for each taxpayer. We must all do our part to ensure 271 is placed on our ballot in November. That means we ALL need to get a petition and commit to obtaining a minimum of only five signatures--typically we would ask fewer people to gather more signatures each, but with social distancing, the new model is EVERYONE getting a petition and gathering fewer signatures each. Read more below about Fair Tax Colorado and how to get involved. **NONE OF US CAN BE ON THE SIDELINES FOR THIS.**



A PLAN TO SAFELY REOPEN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

*Guidance for imagining a new normal for public
education, public health and our economy in the
age of COVID-19*

The AFT has published a [Plan to Safely Reopen America's Schools and Communities](#).

This is a comprehensive document I encourage everyone to read and share with your colleagues and employers. It outlines the considerations employers and employees together need to implement to keep us all safe while moving forward with reopening our schools and other parts of our community that have been physically closed. The document highlights the importance of Collective Bargaining and collaboration between labor and management:

All community members are struggling with the fear and anxiety of reopening before a vaccine is widely available. In order for communities to trust reopening plans, they need a seat at the table to make decisions, and to feel engaged and empowered to help their community implement them.

Please continue to take great care of yourselves and your loved ones through this challenging time and know you are not alone--you are a member of the AFT Colorado and you have all of us standing with you.

In solidarity,

Kallie Leyba
President

AFT Colorado Endorses Initiative 271 Fair Tax Colorado

AFT Colorado has endorsed Initiative 271, known as "Fair Tax Colorado." This initiative is the culmination of a five-year collaborative effort among hundreds of organizations and individuals seeking to address two interrelated issues: Colorado's inadequate and inequitable tax structure and the resulting chronic underinvestment in the state's public structures. By making the tax code more fair and making new revenue available for teacher pay, higher ed, transportation, public health, and other critical services, Initiative 271 was designed as a timely and prudent investment in the vitality of Colorado's communities, the well-being of its citizens, and the long-term competitiveness and economic health of the state.

Now, with the unprecedented social and economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Initiative 271 is a lifeline for the state of Colorado that can (1) act as a stimulus and mitigate the depth of cuts to critical services in the short-term and (2) allow the state to recover with the economy in a way that was impossible after the Great Recession because of Colorado's existing fiscal constraints.



Fair Tax Colorado

The Proposal:

Fair Tax Colorado:

- Provides an income tax cut to 95% of Colorado taxpayers.
- Creates Fair Tax increment tax rates starting at \$250,000 of taxable income. The top rate starts at \$1 million in taxable income.
- Helps equalize across all taxpayers the portion of their income they pay in state and local taxes.
- Raises what was estimated (before the COVID-19 pandemic) to be \$2 billion in revenue that is exempt from revenue limits.
- Requires that at least 50% of that revenue be spent on P-12 education, reversing cuts from the Great Recession from which schools have never recovered (\$572 million in the FY19-20 alone).
- Makes significant revenue available for other state priorities including transportation, health care, public health, and reserves.
- Requires only “50%+1” for passage.

We need your help to get this important ballot initiative on the ballot. Two ways to help:

1. Click [here](#) to have your local endorse
2. Click [here](#) to carry a petition

More questions go to <https://fairtaxcolorado.org/>

Especially in light of the economic devastation that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens, Initiative 271 is the right proposal at the right time. If resourced to communicate and organize at the scale necessary in these unique times, “Fair Tax Colorado” will position this state for a nation-leading recovery and long-term economic vitality.



We can't cut our way to recovery.

Initiative #271 means we don't have to.



95% of Coloradans would get a tax cut

- All Coloradans with a taxable income less than \$250,000 a year will see their income tax rates decrease to 4.58%.



Every Coloradan pays their fair share

- It's unfair Colorado's middle class pays more in taxes than the top 5%. By asking the wealthiest Coloradans to pay a little more, we can make our tax code fair.



Guaranteed funding for schools and teachers

- Half of the \$2 billion raised by creating a fair tax code will go toward increasing pay for our teachers and student support staff.
- The other half will go to other critical needs, including affordable housing and health care, road repairs and maintenance, postsecondary learning opportunities, child care, and worker supports — the areas Fair Tax Colorado advocates have been working on for several years.



Sign up to receive a petition for Initiative #271.
Every signature counts!

www.FairTaxColorado.org



FairTaxColorado



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@FairTaxColorado

Will State Budget Cuts Hurt PERA?

As part of the unprecedented budget balancing efforts to address the drastic shortfall from the COVID-19 pandemic, Colorado's Joint Budget Committee (JBC) is weighing big decisions that will likely affect all areas of the state budget. This could include its obligations to PERA.

As you know, in 2018, the Colorado legislature enacted significant reforms, SB18-200, to put PERA on the path for full funding for each of the divisions within 30 years. As a part of SB18-200, the state was directed to make a \$225 million direct contribution to PERA to catch up from the state's past under funding of the system. Further, it implemented the "auto-adjust" provision that increases or decreases contribution rates to keep the system on track to meet the 30-year fully funded timeline.

Now, the JBC staff (who work with the JBC and help them put together the state budget every year) has recommended several actions that would impact PERA:

1. Suspend the FY20-21 payment of \$225 million.
2. Move the payment date for the \$225 million from first day of each fiscal year (July 1) to the last day (June 30). Combined with the first action, this would mean PERA would not receive this payment until June 30, 2022.
3. Delay the 2020 Auto Adjust for one year. The auto adjust feature is set to kick in July 2020 with a .5% increase for both employers and employees.
4. Shift at least 2.5% and up to 5% of the state's employer PERA costs onto state employees and delay the state employee PERA increases. This would result in a reduction in salary for employees of between 1.25% to 3.75%.

There are many concerns about the actions the JBC could take:

1. Should the state not make these contributions, the ability of PERA to meet the 30 year fully funded timeline will be significantly harder. While we are waiting for the 2019 CAFR report from PERA and anticipate a rate of return significantly higher than the assumed 7.25%, we know that at the end of 2018, the state division was on track to be fully funded in 28 years. This could change that.
2. Further, all retirees, employees and employers across all divisions could bear the brunt of this action. This is because of the auto adjust feature automatically makes changes to contribution rates and retiree COLAs to keep the system on track to hit the 30 year timeline.
3. Finally, if you remember, one of the reasons we were told we needed the reforms from SB18-200 was because the unfunded liability hurt the state's credit rating. In 2017, S&P downgraded the state's credit rating due to several factors, which included the state not paying its share of their pension obligations. Increasing the unfunded liability by not paying the state's obligations again could send the state's credit rating down.

As of now, although these are very real actions the JBC can take, no final decisions have been made. The legislature is set to reconvene on May 26th, so in the meantime there are things we all can do to let them know these changes are unacceptable.

What can you do?

1. Virtually attend your legislator's town hall. Many are having online townhalls that you can join and raise this issue. You can use the points from this article to discuss why the state needs to maintain its commitment. Visit your legislator's website, Facebook or Twitter pages to get details on their next townhall. [Find your legislator here.](#)
2. Share about what your pension means to you on your social media. Be sure to use the hashtag #coleg in your posts.
3. [Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper](#) about the positive impact your pension has in your community, especially if you are a retiree in a rural community. [Check out this great graphic](#) from PERA detailing the power of our pensions around the state.

State Budget and Education Funding Moving Forward

Recently, Joint Budget Committee (JBC) staff and the Office of State Planning and Budgeting (OSPB) presented their updated forecasts for the budget. [In short, we are in for a tough road ahead.](#) The state is facing a more than \$3 billion revenue shortfall and significant cuts to the budget will be made. This includes an over \$800 million revenue shortfall for the 2019-2020 fiscal year and a more than \$2.5 billion shortfall for FY 2020-2021. Expectations are to see a 10% reduction across all state spending and up to 25% reductions on the General Fund. The forecasts anticipate several years of shortfalls and several legislators have warned that we should anticipate years of financial challenges - up to \$6.8 billion in shortages over

the next three years compared to December projections.

This is all happening because Coloradans are losing their jobs and shopping less, decreasing projected income and sales tax revenue which funds many crucial services, including K-12 and higher education. There will be significant shortfalls to property tax revenues because of the Gallagher Amendment. One figure presented to legislators estimated we could see a reduction of nearly \$500 million in the local share of school district funding from this decrease in local property tax revenues.

We could be looking at cuts in the range of at least \$500 million in education funding in Colorado.

These cuts won't be isolated to just this year. In 2008, the worst consequences took place in the years after the onset of the Great Recession. **Colorado's education system has never recovered from that economic crisis.** We now face an even tougher problem, with state and local revenues expected to decline over the coming years because of near-unprecedented unemployment levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The consequences are dire. Up to 5,500 teachers could lose their jobs, students will face the prospect of learning with even fewer resources, and the "Budget Stabilization Factor," a measure of how far behind inflation Colorado is in education funding, could almost double and approach \$1 billion.

Because we are still operating under TABOR, there aren't many ways to get out of this devastating financial hole, beyond [passing Initiative 271](#). There is also a little known provision in TABOR that allows the institution of a temporary emergency tax with a 2/3 vote by both chambers of the Colorado legislature that would provide urgent relief to our State. So attend your legislators' townhalls, write them an email, or give their office a call to let them know now is the time to do whatever it takes to save Colorado from the devastating effects of this pandemic.

Voting in the June 30th Primary and Beyond During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Union members, more than others, understand the elevated importance of an election in a time when our elected officials are making decisions about the global pandemic and economic crisis.

Thinking about voting given today's realities, let alone thinking about *who* to vote for, may seem overwhelming for some of us, but we want to assure you the Secretary of State's office has taken steps to [ensure voting in person in the upcoming June 30th primary and the November 3rd general election is as safe as possible](#). With that said, Colorado is in a much better position than most other states, considering every registered voter will already be receiving a ballot in the mail. We highly recommend you vote from the safety of your own home and drop-off or mail your ballot. In addition to having the ability to already mail in your ballot, there will be efforts to increase the amount of drop-off locations statewide to make it easier to vote without unnecessarily exposing yourself to other people.

June 30th Primary and AFT Colorado Endorsements

In the upcoming Primary election Democrats will be selecting the US Senate candidate who will run against Cory Gardner this fall. Voters will also have the opportunity to choose various other state and local level candidates from the State Board of Education, State Senator, down to County Commissioner.

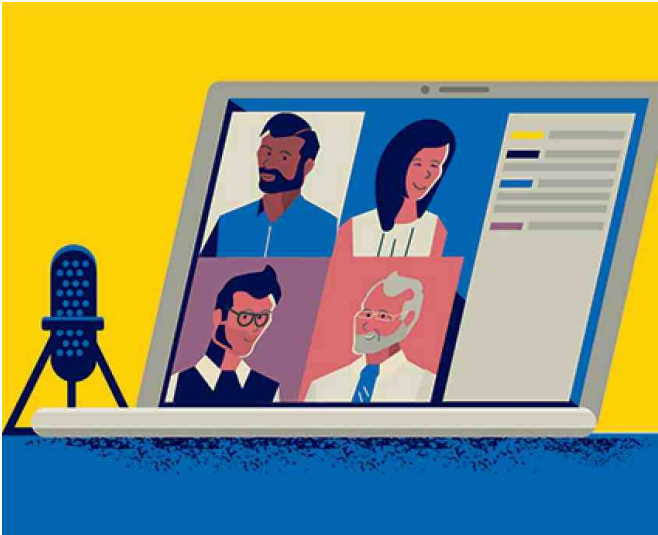
Our endorsement process is underway, but has been delayed due to the pandemic, so to-date we have only made decisions in the current state Board of Education races, and one CU Regent race. We will be releasing more information in the coming weeks, so keep an eye out for communications from us.

Board of Education Endorsements

- District 1 (Denver) - **Lisa Escárcega** - <https://www.lisaescarcega.com/>
- District 3 (Pueblo, Southern & Western CO) - **Mayling Simpson** - maylingforschools.com
- District 7 (Jefferson & Adams County) - **Karla Esser** - <https://www.karlaesser.com/>

American Federation of Teachers Executive Council

Votes to Move July Convention Online



The national leadership of the American Federation of Teachers has voted to hold the union's biennial national convention virtually this year, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This marks only the third time since the AFT's founding in 1916 that the event will not been held in person. The convention, which typically draws thousands of educators, nurses and public employees from around the country, was scheduled to take place in Houston July 27-30, but will now **be held online July 28-30.** Delegates will consider constitutional and by-law changes and resolutions at the convention, but the election of AFT officers and executive council, which normally happens at the convention, will be conducted among those delegates via U.S. mail.

The AFT notes that at the time the decision was made, many of the localities in which its members serve, as well as the city of Houston and Harris County, Texas, were still abiding by physical distancing guidelines.

"Our No. 1 priority during this crisis is the health and safety of our members, their families and the people we serve," said AFT President Randi Weingarten. "We considered several options and did a lot of soul searching, but ultimately, in the absence of a vaccine, and with adequate testing and tracing likely still months away, we could not, in good conscience, put people at risk by asking them to gather in a large group in Houston.

"We also recognize that the economic toll of this pandemic represents a massive challenge for all of us, and we want to be prudent given the many months of recovery that lay ahead. While we're disappointed we won't see everyone in person in Houston, we look forward to exploring new ways to honor our members' work, particularly on the frontlines of this crisis; chart our path forward; and welcome many special guests from a safe distance this year."

A copy of the full resolution can be read [here](#). To register go to <https://cms.aft.org/landing>. To ensure participation in the convention, complete your delegates' registration as early as possible, but no later than June 27. 2020 Convention Schedule <https://www.aft.org/convention/schedule>



AFT's Endorsement of Joe Biden

EARNING THE AFT ENDORSEMENT

After the most extensive, transparent and inclusive presidential endorsement process in AFT history, which included more than 300,000 members engaging, Joe Biden has earned the endorsement of the AFT for the Democratic primary.

The AFT's endorsement is based on three criteria: a candidate who shares our values, who has the support of the members and who can defeat President Trump. Biden has met all three, now having consensus support of the AFT membership by a 2 to 1 margin.

BIDEN—A LIFETIME OF SHARING OUR VALUES

Biden is a man whose character was forged in Scranton, Pa., where his family faced the economic and social ups and downs faced by so many families. He has been tested by unspeakable loss and grief in his life, and has been nurtured through public service, a love of people and the belief in the dignity of every human being.

It is through these life experiences that Biden has developed an empathy and understanding of what our members, communities and country need. Whether as a U.S. senator, where Biden earned a lifetime AFT voting record of nearly 100 percent, or as vice president, where he provided a voice for the middle class and workers and helped ensure passage of the Affordable Care Act, Biden has a demonstrated commitment of listening to and fighting for working families.

As vice president, he was our "go to" person in the Obama administration, always being willing to listen and to be helpful on the issues we had with policy, like the overemphasis on high-stakes standardized testing, which was ultimately mitigated in the new federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed in 2015.

As president, a Biden administration would continue to put middle-class values front and center. He is with us on investing in public education; making healthcare and college more affordable; knowing that healthcare is a right, not a privilege; and rebuilding an economy that puts the needs of everyday people first. His agenda and proposals reflect these priorities, including:

- Tripling funding for Title I, fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, investing in school infrastructure and expanding community schools;
- Building on the Affordable Care Act and making healthcare more affordable by offering a public option and reducing prescription drug prices;



For more information about the endorsement process, visit [AFTvotes.org](https://aftvotes.org).

- Offering free tuition to attend public colleges and universities for families making less than \$125,000, and providing \$10,000 per year of student debt relief for those working in public service;
- Protecting the rights of workers to collectively bargain and making it easier for workers to join a union, including supporting the PRO Act and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act; and
- Ensuring the United States achieves a 100 percent clean energy economy and reaches net-zero emissions no later than 2050.

BIDEN—THE RIGHT LEADER AND THE RIGHT TIME

Over the course of the primary season, Biden was counted out so many times. He has shown fight and resiliency, and an ability to build the necessary coalitions of support to defeat Trump. Those victories came because voters recognize that he is the strong, effective, experienced, compassionate leader that this country needs right now, with an agenda to address the problems facing this country.

The fight for the soul of America is now more important than ever. In this moment of extreme crisis, it is clear that Trump poses an existential threat not just to our democracy but to our health and safety, as well as to our economic well-being and security as a nation. As our country navigates the worst crisis we have had in generations, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever that we rally around one candidate who can show courage in the face of uncertainty, and leadership that has been so clearly absent from the Trump administration. We need a standard-bearer who is actually looking out for us, and who has a proven track record of steering the country successfully through economic upheaval.

We need decency over cruelty, compassion over fear, effectiveness over bluster, and a proven track record to help save lives and ensure people's economic well-being.



A home financing program created just for AFT members

Amalgamated Bank's Home Financing Program offers competitive rates, exclusive discounts, and more!

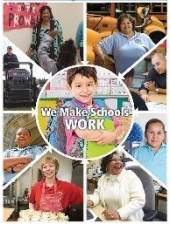
Learn more at aft.org/benefits or call 800.701.8409.



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Local Union Updates

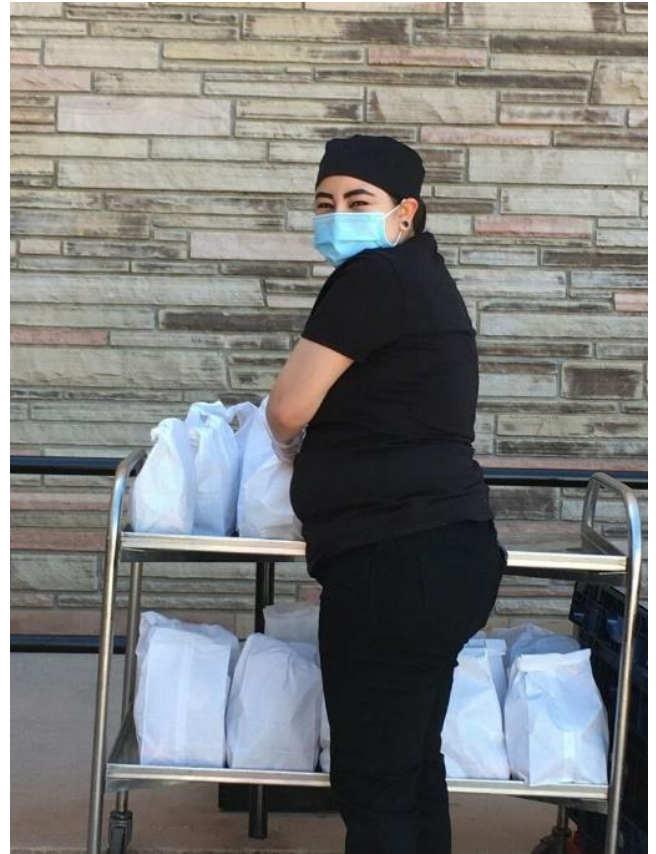


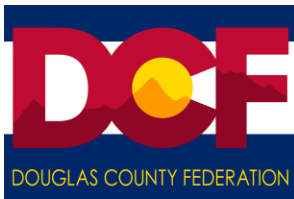
DFPNSE

Denver Federation for Paraprofessionals and
Nutrition Service Employees

A BIG Thank You to all the Food Service Workers,
working daily to feed students breakfast and lunch.

They have served over 385,000 meals and will continue
to serve breakfast and lunch over the summer at the
same sites.





Update from the Douglas County Federation

The DCF has been hosting telephone town-halls with different guest speakers, and we have had great member participation. It has been a way to engage our membership in numbers we haven't before seen. Our first town-hall featured the DCSD Superintendent. Joining us for the second were Treasurer Dave Young, Colorado Fiscal Institute's Carol Hedges, and Great Education Colorado's Betsy Bevis. We will continue to provide information and opportunities to have questions addressed

Join the Douglas County Federation on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 4 pm for a telephone town-hall with Education Commissioner Katy Anthes, to discuss the reopening of Colorado's schools and other COVID related education topics.



Katy Anthes, Ph.D.

Colorado Commissioner of Education

RSVP: bit.ly/DCFMayTTH

Please submit questions for Commissioner Anthes to bit.ly/DCFMay20Questions by May 18, 2020.

through the telephone town-hall format. We have several scheduled in the future and we would love for other AFT Colorado's members to [join us for our next call with Colorado Education Commissioner Katy Anthes. Please submit questions to \[kaleyba@dougcofed.org\]\(mailto:kaleyba@dougcofed.org\) ahead of time.](#)

Upcoming Events

We have partnered with the Colorado Education Association to host a virtual meet and greet with Colorado's Secretary of State, Jena Griswold, on May 19, 2020 at 4:30 pm. Please join us. Secretary Griswold is planning to answer your questions and talk about Colorado's all mail in voting process.



Please join us for a telephone town-hall meet and greet with Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold, hosted by the Colorado Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers Colorado.

Date: May 19, 2020 at 4:30 pm

RSVP to: bit.ly/MeetGreetGriswold



AFT COLORADO

STANDING TOGETHER: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Committee on Political Education (COPE) Deduction

925 S. Niagara St., Suite 600, Denver, CO 80204 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 _____

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

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PAYMENT

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

MONTHLY COPE AMOUNT ☐ \$5 ☐ \$10 ☐ \$15 ☐ \$OTHER _____

BANK

DRAFT ****PREFERRED METHOD****

Fill out below or simply attach a voided check.

BANK NAME _____

ROUTING NUMBER _____ ACCOUNT NUMBER _____

CREDIT/DEBIT CARD: 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.