



President's Remarks

By: Bernadette Jiron

I am happy to be serving as the new AFT Colorado State President as of May of 2021. It's been a great 3 months! I took a trip to visit Trinidad's local in July with Sarah Mesmer, our AFT Colorado Secretary/Treasurer. The Trinidad Federation of Teachers were in discussion with the district regarding wages. It was interesting listening to their plans and ideas about how to get members involved. The Trinidad School board wanted to dissolve teachers' collective bargaining rights, but the TFT managed to get an extension.

In the beginning of August, I met with the CEA President Ami Baca Oehlert. We had a very good conversation about exploring the idea of merging our organizations through the unity committee. I will report more on the Unity Committee next month. The August meeting was cancelled due to Covid concerns.

I also attended the Denver Area Labor Federation (DALF) endorsement process for DPS School Board Candidates in August. There were some great candidates. Remember to vote in November. Be involved in your community!

Kallie Leyba, Executive Director and I are meeting every other week to discuss and review the issues around the state.

If you want to help in any of the campaigns in your area, contact me at bernie@dfp4463.org or Kallie Leyba at kleyba@aftcolorado.org.

I would love to go visit your local membership meeting-please send me an invite!

In Unity -
Bernadette (Bernie) Jiron
AFT Colorado President
303-744-9962

Paid sick time including COVID vaccine and illness leave

The Colorado Healthy Families and Workplaces Act allows workers in Colorado to have paid sick time. There is also additional time provided for COVID vaccines or illness as specified in the federal "Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act" in the "Families First Coronavirus Response Act".

If you know someone who has put off getting their COVID vaccine because they couldn't take the time off--share this graphic with them. [A Better Balance](#) is a national, nonprofit legal advocacy organization. They have a **free and confidential** legal helpline that can help you understand your workplace rights around caring for yourself and your family members.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

Colorado Healthy Families and Workplaces Act

PAID SICK TIME is now a RIGHT for workers throughout Colorado.

What does Colorado's Healthy Families and Workplaces Act do?
Workers in Colorado have paid time they can use to:

- Recover from physical/mental illness or injury
- Seek medical treatment or preventive care
- Care for a sick family member
- Stay home during a declared public health emergency if their workplace or child's school or place of care is closed due to the emergency
- Address certain medical or non-medical needs when a worker or family member is a victim of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or harassment.

"Family member" includes a child, a person related by blood, marriage, civil union, or adoption, or a person for whom the worker is responsible for providing or arranging health- or safety-related care.

Who is covered?
If you are an employee in Colorado, you are probably covered, whether you are a full-time, part-time, or temporary worker. (Federal workers and certain railroad employees are not covered.)

How much sick time can I earn and use?
You earn 1 hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, and you can earn and use up to 48 hours of paid sick time per year. You can use your paid sick time as you earn or receive it.



When am I covered?
As of January 1, 2021, employers with 16 or more employees must provide paid sick time to its employees. Beginning January 1, 2022, employees are covered regardless of business size.
BUT Colorado workers are entitled to **additional** paid sick time for COVID-19 purposes, regardless of business size.


What if I already have paid leave or paid time off?
If you already get any paid leave (vacation, paid time off, etc.) that you can use as sick time, it's **at least** the same amount you would earn under this law, and it includes the same protections as sick time under this law, the law does not give you any additional paid time off.

COVID-19 note: Colorado's law provides *additional* paid sick time during certain declared public health emergencies, such as COVID-19. As of January 1, 2021, employers in Colorado of all sizes are required to provide additional paid sick leave for COVID-19. To learn more or for updates on COVID-19 sick leave in Colorado, visit [abetterbalance.org](#) or contact us at 1-833-NEED-ABB.

All covered workers are protected against being fired or punished for using or requesting sick time.
If you have a problem—or want more information—call A Better Balance's free legal clinic at 1-833-NEED-ABB.

a better balance
the work and family legal center
[abetterbalance.org](#) 1-833-NEED-ABB

 [Facebook.com/abetterbalance](#)
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Ballot Measures to Watch

Initiative 19: [Requirements for Spending Custodial Money](#)--this would require the General Assembly to approve ALL state spending, and is a constitutional change that would bring all fees into the same oversight as taxes. Currently, when emergency funding from the Federal Government comes to Colorado, our Governor and appropriate departments (example, CDE, CDPHE, etc) can distribute those funds where they are needed. If this initiative were to pass, the legislature would need to be in session in order for those funds be distributed, which would create costly special sessions, or Colorado would hold the money for up to eight months until the next session. Fire or flood relief money, COVID relief monies, etc. would be affected.

Initiative 25: [Learning Enrichment and Academic Progress Program](#)--AFT Colorado's Executive Board has voted to oppose this measure that would:

- Create a private government agency with an unchecked, appointed board to administer the new bureaucracy;
- Redirect millions of dollars of public-school funds from the State Land Trust (created in the state's Enabling Act to fund only public schools) to fund vouchers to private for-profit entities for extra-curricular activities;
- Draw resources from public schools to fund testing and private data collection;
- Further reduce funding to our already underfunded teachers and classrooms;
- Operate with no oversight or accountability to Coloradans

The state's [Fiscal Impact](#) describes how the land grant funds are affected:

Diversions and transfers of state funds. The initiative will divert \$21.0 million in FY 2021-22 and \$22.0 million beginning in FY 2022-23 in state land board revenue from the Permanent Fund to the State Public School Fund. The initiative then transfers a corresponding amount of revenue each year from the General Fund to the newly created Learning Enrichment and Academic Progress Fund. The money transferred is not subject to state constitutional spending limits.

Initiative 27: [Property Tax Assessment Rate Reduction and Voter Approved Revenue Change](#)--this would reduce the tax rate for residential and non-residential properties, impacting the general fund negatively and resulting in even more inadequate funding for preK-12, higher education, and many other public services in Colorado. Higher education funding was significantly slashed recently, and preK-12 stats are shown below (from [Great Education](#)).


Colorado Ranks


- **50th** in teacher wage competitiveness—compares teachers to non-teachers with similar education, experience and hours worked (Education Law Center, [Great Ed national comparison chart](#))
- **49th** in number of novice teachers in the classroom ([Education Week, October 2016](#))
- **45th** in % of Taxable Resources Spent on Education (Ed Week, [2021 Quality Counts](#))
- **44th** in math gap (Ed Week, [2016 Quality Counts](#), 2013 4th grade NAEP scale score)
- **43rd** in spending on education adjusted for regional cost differences ([Ed Week, 2021 Quality Counts](#))
- **42nd** in poverty gap (Ed Week, [2016 Quality Counts](#), 2013 data)
- **41st** in pupil-teacher ratio ([National Center for Education Statistics 2017](#))
- **39th** in reading gap (Ed Week, [2016 Quality Counts](#), 2013 4th grade NAEP scale score)

Note: The above stats are based on most current information available. Data are lagging indicators due to auditing.


Only Florida reports a higher proportion of novice teachers in the classroom ([Education Week, October 2016](#)).

There are other initiatives that are still circulating petitions or in earlier stages of the process. We will update our members of changes in our next newsletter.






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DALF Candidate Interviews

The Denver Area Labor Federation (DALF) hosted three days of candidate interviews by member-volunteers, and the DALF COPE committee met on August 26, 2021, to vote on endorsement recommendations. The committee then brought those recommendations to the Executive Board and Delegate Assembly for votes. The endorsements will be made public soon. Thank you to our members who took part in the process.

Updates from the AFL-CIO

On August 20, 2021, the AFL-CIO Executive Council elected Liz Schuler as President of the AFL-CIO and Fred Redmond with the United Steelworkers as secretary-treasurer. Here is President Liz Schuler's and Secretary Treasurer Fred Redmond's acceptance speeches and the statement from the national AFL-CIO. We are proud to have them continue the legacy of Richard Trumka.

We also want to thank everyone who has come out to support striking BCTGM workers at Nabisco in Aurora throughout the strike. Thanks to everyone that has donated to the strike fund. The support is so important to the workers and their families on the strike line. We saw folks from APWU, SMART 202 and TD, Colorado WINS, BALC, NCLC, IWW, CSALC, CWA, OPEIU, AFT, NEA, IBEW, UFCW, the Teamsters and many more. Join them throughout the week at Nabisco/Mondalez 17775 E. 30th Ave. in Aurora from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm; there will not be a picket during the weekend. If you haven't seen it, this Vice article is a good summary of the strike.

If you'd like to donate to the strike fund, send checks to "BCTGM Local 26" with "Strike Fund" included in the memo. All donations received will be given directly to the striking workers to help them pay for bills and other essentials. You can mail checks to:



BCTGM Local 26
925 S. Niagara St Suite 380
Denver, CO 80224,
or you can contact Nic Hochstetler at nh.bctgm26@gmail.com.



August 27, 2021, Strike Line



Local Union Updates



Update from the Douglas County Federation

The Douglas County Federation (DCF) was happy to be part of the New Teacher Orientation with the Douglas County School District (DCSD) thanks to Kathy Dorman - recently retired after 36 years of teaching science. Kathy, along with Julie Lopez, another local DCF teacher, spearheaded this event with two full sessions of new teachers receiving part of AFT's first session of *Foundations of Effective Teaching*. We continue to advocate for opportunities to offer professional development for our members and staff of DCSD.

A smooth transition to school opening was on track, but COVID threw a curveball. Viruses doing what viruses do, our plans for a worry-free beginning of the school year were upended. We are fortunate in Colorado to have many advocates for public education and public health, working in conjunction with school leaders to facilitate keeping students and staff safe. For those who can be vaccinated and also wear masks, we are able to maintain the in-person, connection-building aspect of what makes teaching possible. The DCF continues to advocate for safe, in person instruction and have reached out to Douglas County School District to help facilitate this effort. We are extremely thankful to have complete support from AFT for the full return to in person learning.

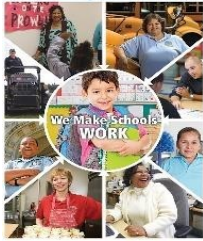
Like many communities, we have a school board election coming up in November that will be met with some traditional concerns over education but also with distractions from a small but vocal faction of the community who are actively working against public education. The DCSD passed an Equity Policy last spring that lays out a clear expectation for supporting all students and staff. DCF supports this policy and the work of staff, parents, and students to ensure a safe working and learning environment exists. A group of protesters, who are opposed to wearing masks, marched at the District's Administration building on Tuesday, August 23. One member of this group expressed derogatory comments about individual students' sexual orientation. We do not condone or tolerate this type of discrimination.

The beauty of public education is the ability to bring people of different backgrounds together to build a community. Maintaining our focus to support the improvement of education for students and staff guides our work. We will not let these distractions weaken our resolve.

DCF's contribution to improving education in Douglas County is not limited to educating members. We support all staff being able to improve and grow their knowledge and skill sets. Our commitment to collaborating with the stakeholders in education has not wavered nor has our commitment to keeping school buildings open five days a week. We are confident that we will continue to expand our members' opportunities for growth now and in the future.

DCF's Foundational Truths - bit.ly/DCFTruths

DFPNSE



Denver Federation for Paraprofessionals and Nutrition Service Employees

DFPNSE finished negotiations with the district in July. WE DID NOT GIVE UP! The District's first offer was for 1.5% COLA and .5 for working during the school year 2019-2020. The teachers will now receive a net increase of 4.77%. DFPNSE finally received 4.7% which is 2.5% COLA and 2.2% in one lump sum as compensation for working during the Covid epidemic for all our valued employees in DPS. WE WON!

Our new minimum wages for GA Paraprofessionals and Food Workers are now \$15.87 in DPS.

Some Highlights:

- We increased the payout for sick time for paraprofessionals retirement.
- Our CSO'S received a great pay increase. They were almost 10% below the state average.
- Our food workers received 2 additional personal days.
- Food workers call-in policy changed (in the workers favor)!
- It's great to get back into the schools and to see our members!

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 _____

HOME PHONE _____ WORK PHONE _____

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

HOME EMAIL _____ LOCAL _____

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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.