



President's Remarks

By: Bernadette Jiron

The rally held at Valdez Elementary school, on May 16, 2022 was very well attended. Pictures are below. I was pleased to see so many members attending the rally. We had some special guests attending, including Mr. Fedrick Ingram, AFT National Secretary-Treasurer; Sarah Hamilton, Southwest Regional Director and Kallie Leyba, Executive Director of AFT Colorado.

Also, in attendance was Veronica Martinez, Denver Association of Educational Office Professionals DAEOP President; Marlene Jimenez, Communications Workers of America (CWA) Vice President local 7777; Debbie Medina President of CWA local 7777 and Jamal Love, President of the Association of Building, Grounds & Warehouse (ABGW). We thank all of you for your support and leadership!

In Unity -

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



In memoriam, Robin Handy



Robin pictured (third from the left) in 2018 at the *Red for Ed* rally at the Capitol with Kallie Leyba, Kelli & Steve Brockmeyer.

On Thursday, May 12, we lost an important voice for public education when Robin Handy died.

Robin taught Spanish at Castle View High school, was a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) in the Assessment Office at Wilcox and loved data related to teaching. Robin was highly proficient in technology, ultimately becoming a technology instructor at Arapahoe Community College.

Robin was a go-to person in her building relative to DCF. She believed in the power of unions to help students and teachers.

Following her retirement she was a member of the DCFR and representative for a number of years on Secure PERA. Robin became the DCFR President when Joanne Slanovich stepped down, and served us well for several years leading our retirees.

Sarah Mesmer, DCF Vice President and AFT Colorado Secretary Treasurer, remembers that when she “was with [Robin] we laughed, and I almost always walked away feeling lighter than when we met. She will be deeply missed by so many people in so many ways.”

As a tribute to Robin, amplify your voice in collective action, kindness, and laughter.

An advertisement for AFT Union Plus benefits. It features a teacher sitting on a desk in a classroom, smiling at students. The background is a red banner with white text and icons. The text reads "Benefits Designed with AFT Members In Mind". The icons represent Credit Cards, Mortgage Program, and Car Rental. At the bottom, there is a link to unionplus.org/aft and logos for AFT and Union Plus.

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Designed
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Learn more at unionplus.org/aft

AFT+ Member Benefits

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From your Executive Director:



It's been a whirlwind quarter as your Executive Director—a bit exhausting if I'm being completely honest, but also invigorating. However, I know that the life of a teacher, professor, or school support professional is a special kind of exhausting—so I am not complaining!

With the legislative session in full swing, I have been focusing much of this quarter on the work previously a part of our Political Director's role. Fortunately, I have help from both our lobbying team and AFT. Thank you to all our elected member leaders who have stepped up to attend meetings, speak on AFT's behalf, give bill testimony and more. AFT is made strong by our volunteer activists.

In addition to the legislative focus, I have also been able to work closely with many coalition partners on a variety of issues, as well as supporting some of our locals. This work is incredibly fulfilling and brings me hope. As we know, hope is what keeps us moving forward in this work.

As we head into summer, you may be hesitant about volunteering for the November election but democracy and public education are on the line, again. Please make a commitment NOW to get involved in our elections, either on a ballot initiative, a state race, or a federal race. Together we can elect pro-public education candidates and advance school funding in our state. But we cannot sit back and simply hope it will happen. Please [email me RIGHT NOW](#), to tell me I can count on your support for election volunteering.

I'll highlight **some** of this quarter's work below. Thank you all for your continued commitment to education and to AFT's work.

In solidarity,

Kallie Leyba

Legislative Session: wins, losses, and in-between

The AFT Colorado Legislative Committee took a position on over 100 bills. Here's a sampling of some of the most important bills.

Support

SB 22-230 Collective Bargaining for County workers

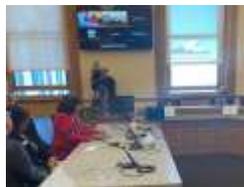
- Originally envisioned to include all public workers
- Narrowed to include higher education and county workers
- Eventually narrowed to only county workers
- Introduced April 27, 2022 - testified in support
- Five and a half hours of testimony, much of it opposition
- Supportive testimony by: Kathy, Kallie, AAUP, WINS, and AFSCME among others
- Awaiting Governor's signature (as of 5/18/2022)



Support

SB 22-171 Privacy protections for educators (aka "anti-doxxing")

- Testified in support along with three DCF members (Kevin, Lucy and Kathy)
- DCF President testified in support in House committee as well
- Awaiting Governor's signature (as of 5/18/2022)



Support

HB 22-1029: Compensatory Direct Distribution To Public Employees' Retirement Association

- Testified in support along with two DCF members (Kathy and Tara)
- Amended
- Awaiting Governor's signature (as of 5/18/2022)

Support

HB 22-1060 Contribution Limits School District Director Candidates

- Provided lobbying to support
- Attended bill signing ceremony



Support

SB 22-097: Whistleblower Protection Health & Safety

- Kevin, DCF, testified repeatedly
- Signed by Governor Polis

Support

SB 22-069: Learning Disruption Effect on Teacher Evaluation

- Testified in support
- Amended
- Awaiting Governor's signature (as of 5/18/2022)

Neutral

SB 22-070: Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade Licensed Personnel Performance Evaluations

- Awaiting Governor's signature (as of 5/18/2022)

Oppose

HB 22-1206: Prohibit Discriminatory Practices In Schools

- Like other bills we have seen across the nation attacking the teaching of honest history
- Testified against, bill died in House committee

Oppose

HB 22-1106: Concealed Handguns On School Grounds

- Neville bill that is introduced every year
- Testified against, bill died in House committee

Oppose

SB 22-197: Innovation School Zones with Alternative Governance

- Testified against in Senate Committee, passed committee
- Bill passed with amendments that tempered it. We remained opposed.
- Awaiting Governor's signature (as of 5/18/2022)

Please email me if you have any questions on these or other bills KLeyba@AFTColorado.org.

AFT Leader Conference - Las Vegas in April

Kallie, along with Kevin and Lindsay from the DCF and Hilary and Skip from Colorado WINS attended the conference in Las Vegas. (Bernie attended another session).



Colorado WINS - First Contract Celebration

We were all invited to celebrate with Colorado WINS' ratification of their first contract after gaining collective bargaining rights with the bill passed in 2020.



Public Worker Collective Bargaining Bill

While Higher Education was eventually stripped from the Collective Bargaining Bill - we know we left it all on the field. We had many legislators on our side, but unfortunately the pressure from the institutions of higher education, coupled with some in labor opposing the inclusion of higher education in the bill, ultimately led to the narrowing of the bill to only county workers. AFT is committed to organizing higher education in Colorado and we will not stop fighting for collective bargaining rights for those members, as well as our K12 members.

We held countless meetings with legislators, many attended by our members from MSFF, to talk about why collective bargaining is needed and how it will strengthen Colorado's institutions. Our members showed up to the Capitol along with our brothers and sisters with AAUP for an

energizing lobby day with our leaders from our national organizations, Randi Weingarten and Irene Mulvey. This is only the beginning.



Craig Svonkin, Randi Weingarten, Bernie Jiron



Caprice Lawless, Craig Svonkin, Irene Mulvey, Randi Weingarten



Kallie and Umesh joined AFSCME for their lobby day.



We are very pleased that our brothers and sisters in AFSCME did gain increased rights for collective bargaining for County workers. We expect Governor Polis to sign this into law.

Initiative 63

The Great Schools Thriving Community coalition has been working together for years on ways to increase funding for Colorado's K12 schools. We are currently working on Initiative 63 and the media release below explains

Media Release from GSTC:

Great Schools Thriving Communities Coalition Launches Volunteer Petition Signature Drive for Initiative #63 to Better Support Students and Teachers without Raising Tax Rates

Advocates: "Teachers: We see you. We appreciate you. Help is on the way."

Denver – Stating that Colorado voters should have the opportunity to decide whether they want to harness the state's economic rebound to address Colorado's teacher shortage, the *Great Schools, Thriving Communities* (GSTC) Coalition this week launched their volunteer petition signature drive for [Initiative 63](#). The ballot measure would divert annually over \$800 million in *already collected* income taxes to the State Education Fund, where it must be used to "attract, retain, and compensate teachers and student support professionals."

Public education supporters who want to get involved in the statewide volunteer effort can sign up immediately at a [one-stop website](#), where they can get more information, request a petition to circulate, pledge to sign, and/or make donations. <https://www.greatedaction.org/>

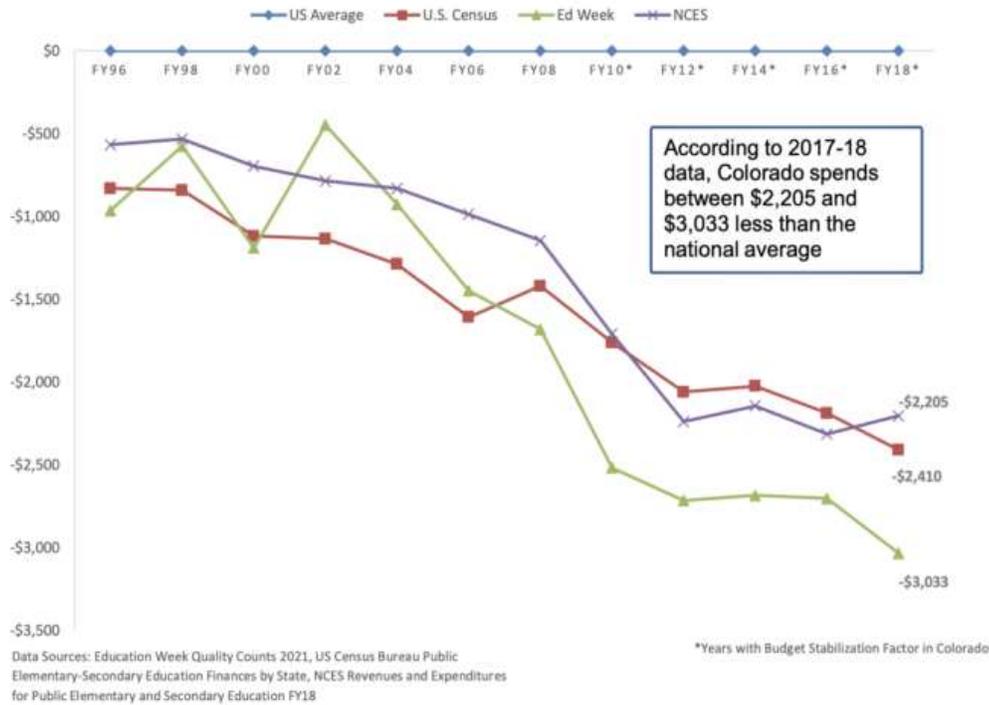
"We are hearing from parents, students and teachers that we simply can't wait. If we want experienced professionals in our schools, we have got to let our teachers know: We see you, we appreciate you, and help is on the way," noted Lea Steed, a proponent of the initiative and Director of Equity Matters at Great Education Colorado.

Colorado currently holds the distinction of the [least-competitive teacher salaries](#) in the nation, a consequence of per pupil funding that has fallen to [more than \\$2,000 per pupil behind the national average](#). (Graphs below.)

Notably, the initiative does not affect – and is not affected by – the recently announced plan to provide \$400 TABOR "surplus" rebates checks in August. Those funds are rebated from the current fiscal year that ends on June 30 of this year. Initiative 63 would go into effect on January 1, 2023.

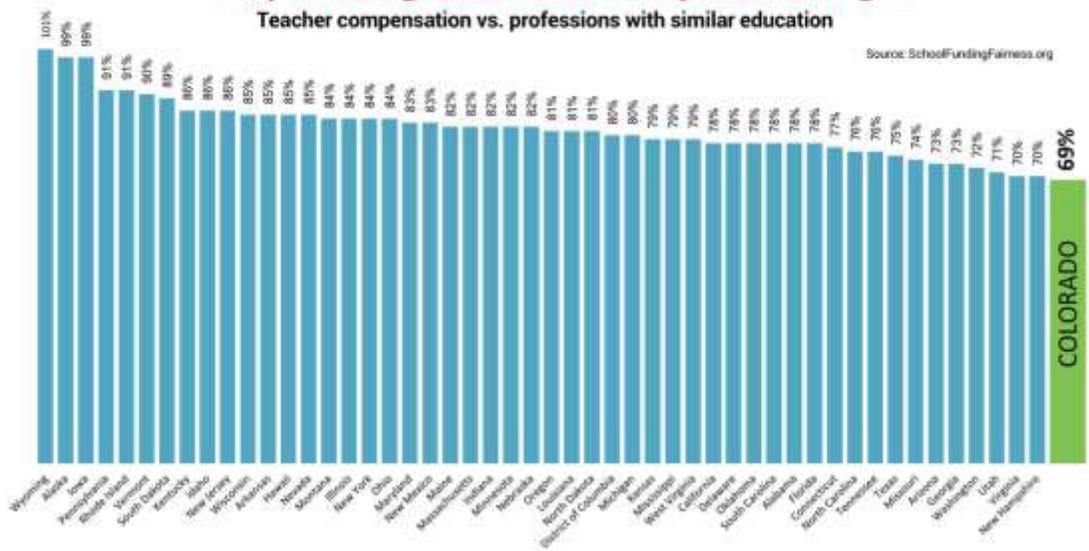
For additional quotes and information link [here](#).

TRENDS IN PER PUPIL SPENDING: COLORADO VS. NATIONAL AVERAGE FY 1996-2018



For over fifteen years, the per pupil spending gap between Colorado and the U.S. average has continued to grow. In the early to mid-90's the gap was less than \$500 per student. By 2017-18 the gap increased to between \$2,200 to more than \$3,000 per pupil.

Colorado ranks last in the nation on providing teachers a competitive wage.



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The Great Schools Thriving Communities (GSTC) Coalition, is an ongoing inclusive, diverse group of organizations committed to increasing adequate and equitable funding for Colorado public schools.

Local Union Updates

DFPNSE



Denver Federation for Paraprofessionals and Nutrition Service Employees

On Monday, May 16, 2022 at Valdez Elementary School, the Denver Federation of Paraprofessionals (DFPNSE) in a rally organized by Coloradans for the Common Good regarding higher wages for Educational Service Providers (ESP) in Denver Public Schools. We had two speakers, including our AFT National Secretary-Treasurer Fedrick Ingram. We had a very good turnout.





Update from the Douglas County Federation

As we approach the end of the school year, the Douglas County Federation would like to acknowledge and celebrate those who have contributed so much to the strength of our organization.

First, congratulations to Bernie Jiron on her election as President of AFT Colorado last May! Bernie also serves as the President of the Denver Federation for Paraprofessionals and Nutrition Services Employees Local 4463 in Denver Public Schools.

We have a new Organizer, Lindsay Moraczewski, who has been a phenomenal addition to our team. Through Lindsay's outreach, we have been able to engage members in our "My students succeed because I . . ." campaign on social media. Check out our [Facebook posts](#) to see some of Lindsay's amazing work. Lindsay brings a positive energy and enthusiasm to our members and it is reflected in member engagement.

Our community hosted special reception events for two much-loved leaders and champions of public education in our school district: Sid Rundle, former teacher, principal, and special education advocate and Corey Wise, former Superintendent of Douglas County School District. Both events drew a diverse contingency of educators, parents, and students in honor of these two individuals who contributed so much during their many years of service in our school district. These events and similar social activities show how our greater community supports public education and recognizes the partnership necessary to build a long term alliance to ensure the success of our public education system.

Douglas County Federation has gained the ongoing support of two different parent groups; The [DougCoCollective](#) and [Douglas County Parents](#). Public parental support of DCF has provided members a feeling of appreciation and belonging from the community. The effect of this type of support is difficult to measure in a traditional sense, but many of our members have expressed gratitude for the backing of these parent advocacy groups.

The DCF supports the recommendation for a mill-levy override and bond for Douglas County Schools. Support from local leaders through public actions, including written support in the [local newspaper](#) would show a greater sense of community. Please don't hesitate to write a letter to the editor supporting the mill-levy override and bond. As with many other areas in Colorado, Douglas County is facing a staff shortage, and without a mill-levy passage, the ability of our local schools to provide the desired high quality education will be jeopardized.

Finally, we would like to pay tribute to Robin Handy, a longtime friend, member and advocate for public education and DCF, who passed away on Thursday, May 12. Robin was a devoted career teacher in DCSD and most recently the President of the DCF Retiree chapter. Robin's positive and enthusiastic attitude coupled with her selfless devotion to the service of her fellow teachers and friends will be greatly missed.

Our school year for teaching staff will wrap up on Thursday, May 26th. In addition to those recognized above, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to you, the teachers and staff, who have

persevered through the hardships and challenges of this past year. You are the ones who provide a future for the children whose lives you touch every day. I wish all of you a safe, enjoyable, and relaxing break between the end of your school year and the next endeavor you tackle. For individuals who are not taking a summer break, may you find extra time for relaxation and enjoyment.

DCF members unwind and share happier moments together at Brothers Bar & Grill on Friday, May 13.

Sincerely,
Kevin DiPasquale



AFT COLORADO

STANDING TOGETHER: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Committee on Political Education (COPE) Deduction

925 S. Niagara St., Suite 600, Denver, CO 80224 www.aftcolorado.org 303-947-6709

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.

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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.