



# Colorado Connection

4th Quarter 2023



## President's Remarks

By: Bernadette Jiron

Happy Fall everyone!

AFT Colorado campaigned very hard for the United Auto Workers union (UAW) and we picketed in solidarity with the Communications Workers of America (CWA), with CSSA and the Denver Federation for Paraprofessionals and Nutrition Service Employees [DFPNSE](#). We also did door knocking for [Douglas County Federation](#) for the school board candidates and a big, big congratulations to DCF for their big big win. All three candidates that we endorsed won!!



Unfortunately, I can't say that for the DPS school candidates that AFT Colorado endorsed. (We will fight harder next time?)

I attended an AFT PPC council meeting November 5th through the 8th.



In national legislative news, Senator Edward Markey (D.Mass) developed a proposal for a [Bill of Rights](#) for Paraprofessionals and Educational Support Staff that you'll find that attached. Wayne Scott, AFT Colorado Vice President, and I spoke to Colorado Senator Michael Bennett's staff urging them to support the proposed Bill of Rights. More to follow on the Support Staff Bill of Rights that Senator Markey has proposed.

Happy Holidays to all. Be safe - we want to see you back here in January!

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



## From your Executive Director

By: Kallie Leyba

It's truly extraordinary that we are going from election season to a special legislative session in six days. It's a first for me if not for Colorado! With the failure to pass Initiative HH, the Governor has called the special session of our legislature to address the increased

property tax bills homeowners in Colorado are facing. While we know our members are affected by this, we certainly have concerns about any efforts to cut taxes in our state. The important work you all do is funded through taxes—that's the nature of public service. Fortunately, Democratic leadership at the Capitol has released a statement that confirms their continued commitment to fully funding K-12 education and finally getting rid of the Budget Stabilization (BS) Factor. I certainly don't know how that can be done while lowering property taxes but we will continue to advocate for adequate funding for K12 AND for higher education in our state.

We had a mixed bag of election results in 2023, including:


- Denver Public School Board candidates endorsed by DFPNSE (Denver Federation for Paraprofessionals and Nutrition Service Employees) and DALF (Denver Area Labor Federation) both lost (Kwame Spearman and Scott Baldermann),
- Douglas County School District candidates endorsed by the Douglas County Federation (DCF) all won (Susan Meek, Valerie Thompson and Brad Geiger),
- Douglas County School District mill levy override passed – this will mean salary increases for teachers and staff, and
- Douglas County School District bond failed – this would have helped build schools in neighborhoods that have no schools or where there is overcrowding as well as ongoing maintenance of buildings.
- We know that many of our members worked hard on these elections and we salute your commitment to walking and knocking, texting, calling, writing postcards, donating to COPE, donating to candidates or committees, painting car windows, and talking to your friends and neighbors. We absolutely have the power to make changes when we work together!





As we approach the regular legislative session, legislators are having stakeholder meetings to discuss legislation they are planning to run. They are asking for our feedback and support. I'm excited about some of the bills, and I'm ready to fight some of the others if needed. Typically, I have given testimony on bills at the Capitol. As the new AFT Colorado lobbyist, I am going to need our members to step up to give testimony. The lawmakers don't want to hear from the lobbyist during committee hearings – but they do want to hear from our members. Testifying is easy – you can do it remotely or in person and have a few minutes to share your story. I can help write the testimony or help you prepare however you would like and will be in the room with you when you do it. Please email me at [KLeyba@AFTColorado.org](mailto:KLeyba@AFTColorado.org) and let me know that you will step up in this important role. I welcome any members to come hang out with me in the Capitol as well. I'll show you around and we can watch the sausage being made together.

In solidarity,  
Kallie Leyba  
Executive Director  
AFT Colorado





A photograph of a male teacher with dark hair and a beard, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and khaki pants, sitting on a desk and smiling at a group of young students. The students are sitting on the floor, facing the teacher, with their hands raised in excitement. The background shows a classroom setting with a whiteboard and colorful decorations.

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# Local Union Updates



## Thank You for the Win

I am so grateful!

In Douglas County, we were able to secure a win for all three of our endorsed candidates, Jenna Thompson, Brad Geiger and Susan Meek, and pass an MLO that will get our staff a raise they deserve.

I am thankful for the efforts of our members and DALF partners during this busy election cycle. It's clear that this win would not have happened without the help of teachers and support staff.

As union members, we worked alongside administrators and parents to get the bond and MLO passed. Together we:

- created targeted voter lists
- Provided a canvassing list app for tracking
- Organized and hosted 8 canvassing weekends
- knocked 15,000 doors
- texted 68,000 voters
- wrote 16,000 postcards
- The vast majority of postcards were written by teachers
- Donated postage
- Painted nearly 200 cars
- distributed yard signs across the county
- turned out more voters than 2021

I think it's safe to say "mission accomplished!"

At the same time, we want to keep pushing. Money is one thing, but what we really need is a union contract. We need a voice in decision making and we won't stop short of collective bargaining.

Douglas County teachers and support staff are the only group working without a union contract in the Denver-metro area. DCF plans to change that. We need a permanent place at the table. We need a voice, clear expectations, and stability.



After the work we accomplished this election cycle, I know we can get a contract. I am hopeful.

In Unity -

Lucy Squire  
DCF President

## 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](http://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.

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 \_\_\_\_\_

WORK LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

#### 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.