



Colorado Connection

1st Quarter 2025



HAPPY MARCH!



This year is flying by! I want to take a moment to recognize Kallie Leyba, our Colorado State AFT Executive Director and political advocate, who will be leaving AFT Colorado on March 15, 2025. She has accepted a position with The SEIU State Council—composed of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Colorado Workers for Innovative and New Solutions (WINS) as their Executive Director. Kallie has served as our Executive Director for the past five years, and we sincerely thank her for her dedication and hard work. We wish her the best in her new role—good luck, Kallie, and stay in touch!

STAY INFORMED Be sure to visit our website: [AFT Colorado](#) for updates on legislative bills, upcoming events, and important union news, including details about our upcoming AFT Colorado Convention.

SAVE THE DATE! Mark your calendars for the AFT Colorado State Convention on Saturday, April 26, 2025, from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM at: 304 Inverness Way South, Centennial, Colorado 80112

Check with your local union for registration forms. The registration fee is \$25.00. I encourage all members to attend, as we will be holding nominations for all officer positions and presenting awards. Our guest speaker will be Sarah Hamilton, Regional Director for the Southwest region. Don't miss this important event!

CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY! St. Patrick's Day is on March 12th—don't forget to wear green!

UPCOMING NATIONAL EVENT I am excited to share that I will be attending the Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) Conference from April 3-7, 2025, representing Colorado's PSRPs. This division of the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) represents more than 350,000 school support staff in K-12 districts, colleges, and universities nationwide.

Enjoy your spring break, and I look forward to seeing you at the AFT Colorado Convention!

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



From your Executive Director

By: Kallie Leyba

I will be ending my tenure as your Executive Director effective March 14, 2025 after nearly 12 years in the organization. It has been a great honor to fight for the rights of our members. I will always be proud to be associated with the AFT Colorado and the AFT. I will remain a member of the Douglas County Federation Retirees—so many of you will continue to see me at events.

Until then, I am working hard at the Capitol as your lobbyist. Colorado's 2025 legislative session is challenging for many, especially for education. The state budget is facing a [projected shortfall](#) of a billion dollars. Given that K-12 education makes up about a quarter of Colorado's budget, (down from nearly 40% in 2007) we are being told there will be cuts only one year after [our Governor and Legislature celebrated the end](#) of the Budget Stabilization Factor. The AFT and CEA stand united in our message to the legislature – we will accept [no cuts to education funding](#). From 2008 - 2024 the state's budget was balanced on the backs of K12 and it's unacceptable to do it again. Additionally, two adequacy studies were just completed and both studies agree that Colorado needs an additional [\\$3.5 - \\$4.1 BILLION](#) to adequately educate our children.

I encourage you to sign onto the [GET IT DONE](#) campaign where we are asking our lawmakers to commit to finding a way to adequately fund education in Colorado.

While advocating for education funding I am also watching 72 other bills (so far) ranging from school cell phone and book ban policies, to additions to graduation requirements, and voting rights.

The AFT Colorado Legislative Committee meets weekly to discuss proposed legislation and our positions. If you are interested in learning more, [send me an email!](#)

I will be presenting this year at [TEACH](#). If you can make it, TEACH is the most impactful professional development you will likely ever receive. I can't recommend it emphatically enough. And I hope you'll attend our lunch and learn session where we will watch the 36 minute documentary: [Columbine 2024: 25 Years of Trauma](#) followed by a panel discussion on the impact gun violence has on educators.

At this time in the United States, unions are more important than ever to uphold democracy and to protect our most vulnerable community members. Thank you for being a member of the AFT Colorado. Please talk to a colleague today and ask them to join you as a member. It's important to participate in the calls, meetings, and webinars that our National organization, AFT, is holding. If you aren't receiving emails from the AFT, [let me know](#).

In solidarity,
Kallie Leyba

SAVE THE DATE

AFT Colorado Bi-Annual Convention

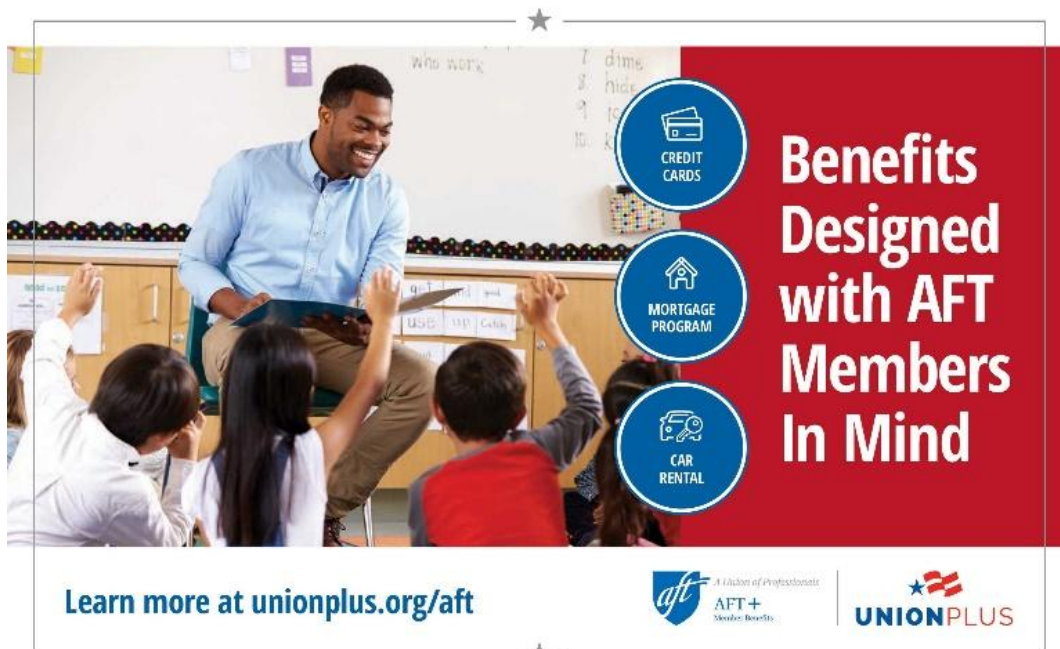
Saturday, April 26, 2025

Members may contact their local union if they are interested in running for any officer position or would like to attend as a delegate. Terms of office are for two years.

AFT Colorado will be awarding The Meyer/Mall Volunteer, Ellen Slatkin Loyal Unionist and Friend of Public Education Awards at Convention. Contact your local union to nominate someone who is deserving of one of these awards.

The AFT Colorado Convention delegates will consider proposed amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws, and proposed resolutions. Delegates will also nominate and elect State Federation officers.

We encourage you to take part in this process. Please contact your local union leader if you wish to attend, nominate an officer, or recommend an award recipient.



A promotional graphic for AFT benefits. On the left, a photograph shows a male teacher in a light blue shirt sitting on a stool in a classroom, smiling and interacting with a group of diverse young students. The background includes a whiteboard with some writing and classroom lockers. On the right, a red vertical banner contains the text "Benefits Designed with AFT Members In Mind" in white. To the left of this text are three circular icons: a credit card labeled "CREDIT CARDS", a house labeled "MORTGAGE PROGRAM", and a car labeled "CAR RENTAL". At the bottom of the graphic, there is a white bar with the text "Learn more at unionplus.org/aft" on the left, the AFT logo (a blue shield with "aft" in white) and "AFT+ Member Benefits" in the center, and the "UNIONPLUS" logo (a red star above the text "UNIONPLUS") on the right. Small stars are placed at the top and bottom center of the graphic's border.

STANDING TOGETHER: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Committee on Political Education (COPE) Deduction

1777 S. Bellaire St., Suite 440, Denver, CO 80222 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.

SIGNATURE: _____ Date: _____