



President's Message

Spring Greetings!

By the time you receive this the Legislative session will have ended but not the political season! Winter has passed, spring has sprung and that hour of sleep we lost! Flowers are blooming and weeds are popping! As a gardener that keeps me busy!

There are gatherings being planned for retirees and I would like you to consider attending one that will be in your area, It will be a time to catch up with past coworkers, share your stories and enjoy yourself! Information will be shared with you by our team that is putting these all together. **JOIN US!**

Speaking of sharing, I would like you to consider sharing with all through the *Spotlight*. I know many of you have hobbies that other retirees would like to see and hear about. If you write poetry, short stories, draw, garden, travel, have issues that concern you ... the list goes on, but send us your story so that we can share with all our retirees.

Thank you all for that you do!

In solidarity,

Merrilee Miron



AFT Washington Retirees Rejoin WSARA

We discovered this year that the Retiree Chapter's membership in the Washington State Alliance For Retired Americans had lapsed, and moved to correct that error! Now that the chapter has rejoined, we urge retirees to sign up for their newsletter, at <https://washington.retiredamericans.org/>.

This also gives retirees access to the national Alliance for Retired Americans, including their newsletter, which you can sign up for at <https://retiredamericans.org>. Priority issue areas include the upcoming election and the threats to Social Security and Medicare, as well as other issues that affect all retirees.

Update On Our Resolution Work

By Richard Burton, State Affiliate Political Organizer

Last May, the delegates of the AFT Washington convention unanimously adopted Resolution 2023-04, entitled "Organized Retirees for Action". There were four principal commitments comprising the Resolved sections of this resolution. These were:

- That AFT Washington create an Organizing Project led by the Retiree Chapter to develop and implement a strategic plan with specific numerical goals such as number of contacts or number of new members of activists or number of new emails;
- That AFT Washington would ask AFT National for help with this project, including the possibility of monetary or project staff;
- That AFT Washington urge and encourage AFT Washington Locals to support this project by undertaking some or all of the following activities: To appoint a Retiree representative to the retiree chapter; To invite an organizing project person to a local leadership or membership meeting; To appoint one or two of their local members to join the organizing project team; and
- That AFT Washington work with the project, the Retiree Chapter, and locals to sponsor a gathering for current retirees in at least three congressional districts during the 2023-2024 timeframe, and three more congressional districts during the 2024-2025 timeframe.

Since the adoption of this resolution, steady progress has been made on each of these four commitments. We have created the strategic plan with specific goals, and we are implementing it. Regular substantive communication has taken place with AFT National staff. Locals have been asked a number of times to support this project in the ways outlined, and plans have been made for the three congressional district gatherings.

We have built organizing committees in both Pierce and King counties and are in the process of establishing another two in Snohomish and Whatcom counties. Eleven retiree activists comprise these organizing committees. Retirees have participated in a number of activities, including most recently several advocacy-

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The Legislative Session Has Wrapped

By Jim Howe, Director

The 2024 Legislative session was a short (non-budgetary) one. It moved very quickly, with short deadlines, and often not as much time as we would have liked to have conversations with legislators. There were a lot of important progressive priorities this year, as well, that made the session very lively.

We took advantage of the option to sign in PRO or CON on pending votes and hearings. If you do this, your legislator will be prompted to reply to you. My Senator in District 1 does so promptly and we've established a relationship going forward. He just told me, "HB 1985, about the TRS 1/PERS 1 COLA, is currently being considered by the Senate Ways and Means Committee, and I will encourage my colleagues to include this funding in the final budget."

Our allies at HealthCare is a Human Right held a biweekly Policy Committee meeting during the session that tracks our priority legislation very closely. The Keep Our Care Act made it most of the way through session, with legislators acknowledging that the need to protect access to healthcare is very urgent in the light of continued mergers of Washington's providers. Ironically, the majority of the state's hospital chains are now "faith-based", and the largest of them have been fined for not providing the Charity Care the law requires. AFT Washington Karen Strickland spoke at a rally for HealthCare is a Human Right, laying out where labor should be on universal healthcare very strongly.

When the legislative session ended, the TRS 1/PERS 1 COLA had passed, which is good news for retirees on those plans.

Update On Our Resolution Work

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oriented events in Olympia. The three congressional district gatherings will take place in districts 6, 7, and 8 with the first one to take place this spring in the 7th.

Long term, what sorts of things can our retiree chapter be working toward? Thanks to information from the AFT national staff who work with analogous retiree chapters across the country, here are a few examples of activities and programs that our retiree chapter could be doing. . .

- Pre-Retirement Workshops – helping current members plan for their retirement.
- Supporting locals with their contract or issue campaigns.
- Engaging students and parents with voter registration and engagement.
- Supporting locals in membership recruitment, including at new employee orientations.
- Helping AFT Washington-endorsed candidates with electoral campaign work.

The 2024 Elections

This year's election is shaping up to be particularly significant in the state of Washington. So far, 17 members of the state legislature have announced that they are retiring, not seeking re-election, or otherwise leaving the legislature this year. In addition to that, 5 currently-serving legislators are running for other offices; if they win those elections, they will leave the Legislature, but will retain their legislative seat if they do not win.

AFT Washington's *Legisletter* is published during the election season as well as during the legislative session. If you would like to receive updates, please sign up here: <https://actionnet-work.org/forms/legisletter>.



- Helping local unions to welcome members who have recently joined the union.
- Putting on student debt clinics for members struggling with loan payments.
- Joining in advocacy and lobbying meetings with state and local elected officials.
- Tutoring students.

These are all wonderful initiatives and readers can probably think of other ideas. But note the use of the verb "could be doing". That is, we are not currently doing these things, for the simple reason that we lack the organized people power necessary to undertake them successfully. How can we engage the approximately 1,000 AFT Washington retirees around the state to build this organized people power? The answer is, of course, by organizing! Are you interested in helping us build and organize our retiree chapter? Please contact Richard Burton for more information: RBurton@aftwa.org; Cell: (425) 738-8900.