

UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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WINTER 2025



AFT members from four colleges, C4C, WEA, WSNA, and community groups rally for education on AFT's March 4th Day of Action in Lynnwood.

Photo by Cortney Marabetta

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Welcome, Lexy Aydelotte!

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

We are delighted to welcome our newest Project Organizer, Lexy Aydelotte! Lexy started at AFT Washington in February, taking over our external organizing work.

Lexy brings a rich history of organizing to AFT Washington. Her journey into the labor movement began as a paraeducator, where she learned



first-hand about the security, power, and protection a union can provide. She later became a founding member and the first president of

Workers United (WAWU-UAW Local 4929), leading the union from its infancy through its first contract campaign—including a historic two-day strike—that secured groundbreaking tuition assistance and workplace protections for student employees.

Since then, Lexy has been at the forefront of organizing efforts across Washington, leading new organizing and contract campaigns, coalition-building initiatives, and legislative advocacy to expand labor power and collective bargaining rights. She brings years of experience in grassroots organizing and political strategy to her role and is passionate about empowering workers to take collective action. She believes in the power of democratic, member-led unions to transform workplaces and communities.

Based in the Skagit Valley, Lexy spends her free time painting, playing music, kayaking, and cooking. She's always eager to connect with fellow workers, activists, and community members—so don't hesitate to reach out!

We are looking forward to building on our external organizing wins with Lexy!

The Power Of A Resolution

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

Edmonds College Federation of Teachers, Local 4254, saw an opportunity to use a resolution to make the world that little bit better, and they took it. In January, the local passed a resolution calling on Edmonds College to stop using X, formerly Twitter, on the grounds that X is a platform inconsistent with Edmonds' stated values and goals.

The resolution notes that X has increasingly become a platform that spreads misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech that includes racism, misogyny, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry, all reasons that advertisers and users both have chosen to abandon the platform. These are inconsistent with the stated values of Edmonds College, which is dedicated to promoting equity,

diversity, and inclusion as foundational to its mission to "cultivate success for all students through accessible, equitable, and inclusive learning environments". As a result, using X as an official channel sends a conflicting message to the community.

The resolution passed by the local calls on Edmonds to adopt alternative platforms that more closely align with the college's values and mission. The resolution was passed by the local in January, and the college has agreed to follow its guidance.

Sometimes, a simple resolution makes an important statement. Thank you to Edmonds College Federation of Teachers for being the change!

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Board meetings are usually held on the first Saturday of the month except for holidays and summer months. Board members are elected to two-year terms.

AFT Washington represents over 6,500 members and prospective members in early childhood education, K-12, and higher education in Washington State and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which represents 1.7 million members nationwide.

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Karen Strickland

President's Column

Navigating Challenges and Building Our Power: A Reflection on Our Journey

As of late February, I've found myself at a personal crossroads. My passport has expired, my taxes are due soon. In October, I'll rely on Medicare, and I'm eagerly anticipating an adventure through national parks later this year and into 2026. Gee, what could go wrong?

My personal needs reflect a sample of the potential disruption to our lives wrought by the Trump Administration - the world is changing rapidly, and not for the better. But working people have faced and overcome enormous challenges throughout our history and we will do so again - after all, the Labor movement was born in times like these for times like these!

By the end of the Trump Administration's first 30 days the systems we've come to rely on for everyday needs are under unprecedented threat. Critical services are being diminished through both the purge of federal employees and the creation of chaos, leaving the workforce stretched thin. Tens of thousands of federal workers have been ousted, and 75,000 have taken "buyouts" — more like "get-outs" given promises of severance that are unlikely to hold up.

These workers are our families, neighbors, and friends. Their lives have been disrupted by this hasty and callous attack. The federal agencies that provide the services we depend on are severely weakened, and the void left by experienced professionals will be crippling.

Moreover, the House just passed a budget bill that will slash \$880 billion, largely targeting Medicaid. These moves threaten the healthcare of children, elderly people, and people with disabilities. In Washington 33% of PreK-12 students rely on Medicaid, with some districts seeing numbers as high as 87%. In addition to reducing access for the most vulnerable, school staff won't be able to provide necessary supports to students; our state will scramble to avoid the harm from shifting public funds to pay for a tax break for the wealthy.

But union and community are fighting to protect the progress we've made — from public education funding to workers' rights, to social, racial and economic justice, to the integrity of our social safety net. Thousands of people are showing up at state capitols, local offices and federal departments such as USAID. AFT, Democracy Defenders, Attorneys General and others are employing the law to stop the harm.

When the public good is under attack, what do we do? STAND UP FIGHT BACK!

While the present threat is enormous, our track record on fighting back gives me hope. When I took office in 2013, President Obama's second term was under way, and we were in a disparate recovery from the Great Recession. The wealth gap was widening, with the top 1% reaping 95% of wage gains. Fast forward to today, and the wealth of billionaires has surged by 70% during the pandemic, while working people still struggle. Yet we continue to fight for and

win wage increases through collective bargaining and legislative gains in Olympia. Last fall, we were part of the coalition that made sure Washington voters rejected protecting billionaire wealth in a bipartisan statement. We have the power to create the change we need.

Union busting has been and is part of the strategy to pad the pockets of the rich. The Supreme Court's *Janus v. AFSCME* case is a powerful example of how the wealthy class, including the "Freedom Foundation," has tried to squash us. We clapped back to this threat with a recommitment campaign, talking to our members one on one to reaffirm our shared belief *that we are stronger together* - YOU did this, and we are stronger as a result.

We have developed our Powerful Locals program, designed to strengthen our union at the local level through governance, member engagement, collective bargaining, and advocacy. Many of your local leaders have embraced this program and we see the results at every level. For example, more locals are utilizing Contract Action Teams (CATs) to engage union members throughout negotiations to strengthen their position at the table. Members are consistently saying "yes, I'll be there" when asked to join us on Lobby Day, testify on important legislation, or meet with legislators. Members at four locals hosted legislator visits to their work sites to provide a vivid picture of the work they do. We are showing up and demonstrating worker power inside our schools and outside.

While our foes seek to divide and conquer, our commitment to becoming a more inclusive, antiracist union is a thread throughout all that we do. The murder of George Floyd in 2020 forced us to take a hard look at the inequities within our own union and workplaces;

(Continued on pg.7)

Popular, Pragmatic, And Progressive: Taxing Wealthy Individuals And Big Corporations To Fund The Public Good This Legislative Session

By Carolyn Brotherton, Policy Associate, Economic Opportunity Institute

Public programs and services — from healthcare and childcare to community colleges and K-12 education — function better and can do more public good when fully funded. To fully fund these programs and services that are critical to household security and stability, Washington state cannot continue to rely on our out-of-date, regressive tax code, which over-taxes poor and middle-income people while letting those with the dollars to spare off the hook. Instead, lawmakers should take a pragmatic, popular, and progressive approach: They can pass new taxes on big corporations, high earners, and extremely wealthy residents.

As the 2025 legislative session unfolds, lawmakers face a \$12 billion revenue shortfall over the next four years. The need for revenue to fund the public good — from special education and school transportation, to Apple Health, to food assistance for seniors, to the Washington College Grant — is urgent. This urgency is compounded by increasing chaos from the federal government, including cuts to programs like Medicaid and environmental protection, as well as executive orders that threaten the safety and roll back the rights of our fellow Washingtonians, particularly trans and non-binary people, immigrants, and people with disabilities.

The last time our state saw this level of budget shortfall was in the wake of the Great Recession. Cuts made in response to the Great Recession did great economic harm to public sector workers and materially impacted the people who rely on public programs and services. Less funding for higher education resulted

in tuition hikes and stagnated wages for staff, and cuts to health care programs kicked tens of thousands of people off the state's basic health plan. Despite this very recent history, our new governor has called for cuts across the board to nearly all state agencies to address the revenue shortfall.

Austerity budgets undermine the functioning of the public good and erode community members' trust in public programs and services. In other words, passing austerity budgets is the opposite of "Trump-proofing" Washington state.

To protect Washingtonians and to continue to build a state where we can all thrive, lawmakers must pass multiple progressive revenue solutions this session.

Here are some policies that they can and should pass this session:

Address wealth inequality: Tax Wall Street assets of multi-millionaires and billionaires

Financial property such as stocks and bonds are not taxed unless they are sold. Even then, the profits earned from selling Wall Street assets are taxed at lower rates than income earned through a regular job. Closing this loophole through a modest 1% tax on the market value of financial property, exempting the first \$50 million in value from taxation, would bring in billions of dollars each year. With a tax like this in place, wealthy Washingtonians will still see the value of their investments grow each year. Several European nations have similar types of taxes, and the Department of Revenue (which would administer such a tax) has studied the

proposal's details and deemed it doable.

Close a major loophole: Tax employers of high earners through a payroll tax

State and federal payroll taxes for social programs — including Washington's popular Paid Family and Medical Leave program — aren't paid on incomes above \$168,600. This tax would fix this payroll loophole on the employer side (that is, it's a tax on businesses that can afford to pay high salaries, not a tax on individuals). This is similar to Seattle's JumpStart tax, which Seattleites just voted overwhelmingly to expand to include a millionaire surcharge to fund social housing. The statewide version of this tax would bring in billions of dollars each year.

End an arbitrary giveaway to big tech: Eliminate the higher education funding cap for Amazon and Microsoft

The funding structure for the Washington College Grant includes an arbitrary giveaway to multi-national technology corporations. Currently, tech companies with more than \$25 billion in worldwide revenue have the taxes they pay toward the Workforce Education Investment Account capped at \$9 million per year. This reform will end this unnecessary tax break, bringing in hundreds of millions of dollars that can be spent to expand wrap-around services for students, fund living wage salaries for staff and faculty, and more. Representative Reed introduced House Bill 1839, which proposed eliminating this big tech giveaway and was heard in committee in late February.

Inject greater progressivity wherever

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Popular, Pragmatic, And Progressive *(from pg. 5)*

we can: Expanding WFTC, reforming REET and B&O

One way that the tax code has become fairer in the last few years was the passage of the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), which is a tax credit similar to the federal earned income tax credit (but with greater eligibility, including those who are out of work and are not citizens). In fact, before the passage of the WFTC, Washington was in last place for how unfair our tax code was compared to other states. Passage of the WFTC helped move Washington to the second most unfair tax code in the nation. Expanding who's eligible, such as through the WFTC age expansion legislation (Senate Bill 5768), or the amount of money available

for the WFTC would help make the tax code more equitable and counteract the impacts of the regressive taxes still on the books (namely the sales tax).

Another way to make progress is by tweaking existing taxes to make them more progressive. For instance, the Affordable Homes Act is a reform of the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET). This would add a surcharge for properties selling for more than \$3 million. Another idea on the table for this session is a big business surcharge. The Business and Occupation (B&O) tax is our state's main business tax. It is a tax on "gross receipts," meaning the cost of doing business is not taken into account. This can be tough for low margins businesses. Adding in a surcharge for

businesses that post big profits is one way to amend the B&O to make it more progressive and bring in revenue from companies that can afford it.

Washington state lawmakers have a clear choice this session: They can make cuts to the public good, undermining Washingtonians' well-being and threatening our future. Or they can pass new progressive taxes and reform existing ones. There are many great options on the table this session that will bring in billions of dollars from those who can absolutely afford it. This is the sustainable, practical, and simply quite popular option. Let's do what we can to advocate for this more hopeful future.

Remembering Mark Millbauer

By Jaeney Hoene, Vice President for Legislative Affairs

We honor the passing of Mark Millbauer (1925-2025), after battling ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's Disease).

Mark taught Autobody at Green River College from 1993 to 2015. He chaired the Trades division and, from 2009-2015, served as President of the Green River United Faculty, AFT 2195.

Mark led the faculty in resisting the college president's attack on unions and faculty voice. Through multiple rallies, Votes of No Confidence, and, in his reports to the Board of Trustees, he demanded accountability and removal of a toxic president.

Mark's refusal to back down made him

the first target of politicized program cuts. The Autobody program was closed in 2015, eliminating his position. The following year, inspired by Mark, the faculty rallied to strike against the administration, resulting in removal of the college president.

Mark embodied the spirit of Mother Jones, "Pray for the dead, and fight like hell for the living." He was also a good friend, funny as hell, stubbornly honest, and generous with his love. He was a fabulous teacher, a sailor, an athlete, and always a father to his four children, who are a testament to him.

Mark's family invites us to honor Mark by "laughing with loved ones, dancing to a favorite song, enjoying a favorite

hobby, or donating funds to The First Hunt Foundation, a mentorship program dedicated to passing on the 'forgotten rites' of hunting skills and conservation knowledge."



Mark Millbauer addresses striking Green River faculty in 2016. Photo credit: unknown

Lobby Day Was Amazing!

By Richard Burton, State Affiliate Political Organizer



AFT Washington, PSE, PTSA, SEIU 925, WEA, and more came together at the Temple of Justice to rally for School-Related Personnel wages. Photo credit: Cortney Marabetta

This year's Lobby Day in Olympia involved over 100 member activists, from 23 different affiliated locals, and 27 different legislative districts – all participating in over 80 legislative meetings. It was a busy day!

In addition to those in-person meetings, members also participated in a rally in support of improved wages and staffing for School-Related Personnel, joining with hundreds of such workers and allies from Teamsters Local 763, SEIU Local 925, Public School Employees of Washington – SEIU Local 1948, the Washington Education Association and the Washington State Parent-Teacher Association. If you saw last year's rally, this one was even bigger, and we made our voices heard, very literally -

Larry Delaney, president of WEA, led rally attendees in chants that echoed off the buildings. One of our own local leaders, Kari Madden, President of the Tacoma Federation of Education Support Professionals, Local 461, spoke powerfully about the need for respectful wages.

Another rally at noon drew widespread involvement from our member activists, as we joined with Communities for our Colleges and shared their call for Cost-Free College and Paid Pathways, aka SB 5115, the Washington Dream Service Incentive Grant. Another of our local activists, Joseph Colón from Tacoma Community College Federation

of Teachers, Local 2196, served as a co-MC at this rally. In addition to our own members, there were higher education students and community members in attendance from Spokane, Bellingham, Yakima, Tacoma, Everett, Bellevue, and Seattle.

This was an exciting day with many rallies and allied organizations in Olympia. The meetings and conversations that members had sparked the kinds of ideas and collaborations that strengthen us as a union. But we know – at both the state and national level – there is more work we need to do. We will continue to advocate for our priorities and for progressive revenue from our state lawmakers from now until the end of April. And we must redouble our efforts to engage our communities in the struggle against attacks from the other Washington to defend the very existence of public education itself. Onward!



Speakers at the Communities For Our Colleges rally advocated for investing in our future by supporting undocumented students and passing cost-free college. Photo credit: Cortney Marabetta

President's Column

(from pg. 3)

one strategy to disrupt systemic racism is our Anti-Racism in Collective Bargaining project, providing clear principles for promoting equity and eliminating discriminatory practices.

Our commitment to anti-racism, unity, and inclusion is more vital than ever as Trump's administration seeks to stop progress toward racial justice by diminishing the capacity of Title IX and other laws to protect vulnerable groups and erasing important aspects of history. Narrowing the concept of gender to strip away the complexity inherent in human beings, removing all reference to transgender people in the Stonewall Memorial, and threatening to end grants to schools and colleges seeking to address historic disparities and create a level playing field are three harmful examples. We must stand in solidarity to fight hate and protect the rights of victims of discrimination and bigotry.

The current attacks that position oligarchs against the rest of America make clear that *community is our super power!* In fact, our Executive Board has chosen "Union and Community: Meeting the Moment" as our 2025 convention theme. We have embraced the power of coalition-building, working in partnership with other unions, students, and community organizations. The School-Related Personnel wage campaign and the Communities for Our Colleges Coalition (C4C) are two current examples

of our collective action in pursuit of better outcomes for our members and the broader community. The former is focusing on wages and builds on previous collaborations with education unions on transportation and healthcare. C4C was launched just as the pandemic emerged and we've won legislation to open access and increase success in each legislative session since then. The power of solidarity is undeniable!

A reflection on the challenges of the last 12 years wouldn't be complete without mentioning the COVID-19 pandemic. You rose to the challenge, adapting quickly, moving classes online, switching jobs on a dime to provide childcare to essential workers, delivering food to children instead of children to school, revamping food prep and in other ways ensuring that our students were supported during a life-changing crisis. You did this even as you dealt with the personal impact in your lives.

Now, it's 2025 and the emergency lights are flashing. In spite of a booming economy, our state budget is short on revenue and President Trump is creating a trail of destruction, failing to do anything that will actually improve our lives as he destroys the systems that would...and fostering hate and division at every turn. And yet, I know we will prevail. We have a track record of professional gains and union strength to rely on, as we join with our community to

reject austerity and hate.

The last 12 years makes me proud of the work we've done and the progress we've made. Despite the challenges, we've come together and emerged stronger each time. And I know that we will continue to do so. Our collective strength and partnerships have helped us weather significant threats from those who fear the collective power we hold and we will keep pushing forward — driven by the principles of the labor movement and our shared commitment to a better world.

I appreciate deeply the opportunity I've had to work with you to improve your work life and strengthen our communities. I hope that, like me, you take pride and find strength in our track record and that you join with your union siblings to build our collective power and strive together to achieve the better world we know is possible. In a few short months delegates will prepare to fight for the future we deserve with a new president at the helm. If you've been a leader in your local, please keep it up. If you've actively participated, find ways to do a little bit more. And if you've stayed on the sidelines, now is a great time to get in the game. We need every one of us to dig deep and do a little bit more to make sure all of us truly have the *freedom to thrive!*

It's Time For The AFT Washington Biennial Convention!

By Cortney Marabetta, Communications Specialist

It's time for our convention! On May 17th and 18th, we will convene in Tacoma at the Murano Hotel for the 84th Biennial Convention! Our theme is Union And Community: Meeting The Moment, and we look forward to seeing that theme in action as we come together as a union

to set our direction for the next two years.

If you are interested in being a delegate, running for a seat on the AFT Washington board, bringing a resolution, or nominating someone for an Executive

Board award, talk to your local president about next steps. Information is available in the Pulse and on our website, as well. There are many ways to get involved with the work of the convention, and we encourage you to do so!



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