



The Advocate

Social Security

The negative effects of current law on Social Security benefits for public education employees continue to gain national attention. Recently, Secretary/Treasurer of the Texas AFT, John O'Sullivan, testified before Congress on this issue. O'Sullivan has spoken a number of times at Lone Star College on the injustices of the WEP and GPO. Below is a summary and photograph from the hearing followed by the full text of O'Sullivan's remarks. It was a proud day for education employees and especially for the American Federation of Teachers which has been fighting this battle for some time on our behalf.

Alan Hall

Social Security Changes Needed, Texas AFT Leader Tells Congress

Congress needs to act to eliminate provisions in Social Security that penalize teachers and other public employees in states that do not participate in the federal retirement program, an AFT leader from Texas told a congressional committee on Jan. 16.



In [testimony](#) before the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee's Social Security subcommittee, John O'Sullivan of Texas AFT (left) said the current system is "unfair and unjust" to public employees like those in Texas and about a dozen other states who don't participate in Social Security.

Two provisions in the current law, the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), result in reduced benefits for public employees who earned Social Security credits through other private-sector jobs during their working lives or have spouses who receive benefits. O'Sullivan, Texas AFT's secretary-treasurer, gave the example of a paraprofessional who retired after 25 years and qualified for a monthly pension of \$1,103 from the state. Because her spouse receives Social Security, the GPO provision would totally eliminate the \$540 Social Security benefit she should have received as part of her spousal benefit.

"It is ironic that spouses who never work a day receive the full benefit, while hard-working public employees lose any spousal benefits," O'Sullivan said. "I don't not have to tell the members of this subcommittee that \$540 a month makes a significant difference in the life of a retiree." The AFT supports a full repeal of the GPO and WEP provisions in Social Security, and passed a [2002 convention resolution](#) on the topic.

One obstacle in the current budget climate is the cost of repealing the

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provisions, which would be about \$80 billion over 10 years. [Dan Gursky, Bill Cunningham/Photo by Michael Campbell] January 17, 2008

House Committee on Ways and Means

Statement of John O'Sullivan, Secretary-Treasurer,
Texas AFT, Austin, Texas
Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Social Security
of the House Committee on Ways and Means
January 16, 2008

Thank you, Chairman McNulty, for inviting me to testify today and for holding this important hearing. Congressman Doggett, as one of your constituents from the 25th District, I appreciate the leadership you have provided on this issue.

The 1.4 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), including the 58,000 members of Texas AFT, support repeal of the Government Pension (Spousal) Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

AFT and Texas AFT members understand the financial challenge involved to make this happen. However, many of our members are bearing the cost of inaction on this issue in the form of reduced Social Security benefits for themselves and their families. These provisions harm more than 1 million retirees and will cost them about \$80 billion over the next 10 years.

Our members are hopeful that the strong bipartisan majority of support for the Social Security Fairness bill leads to progress on this issue in 2008.

This is a very sensitive issue for our members. The baby-boomer cohort of education employees is approaching retirement, paying attention to this issue, and is in clear need of this Social Security retirement income, which is denied them because of the WEP and GPO.

In fact, in my 33 years of service in public education representing education professionals in Texas, I have seldom, if ever, encountered provisions of law which our members view as so unfair. Perhaps if the members of the subcommittee had some examples, it would help them better understand the

intensity of this feeling.

Retirement for educational employees under the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS) is a modest ending to a tough career. I'm confident that Texas is fairly representative of what is happening in the other non-Social Security states. Here is a snapshot of our situation.

* Under the Texas Teacher Retirement System, it takes more than 43 years of completed service to keep the same paycheck in retirement that a person received while still working.

* The Texas TRS has no cost-of-living adjustment, so retirees are faced with uncertainty about their ability to protect themselves against inflation in retirement.

* Most Texas educational employees are women—and many take time out during their careers to raise children. The average TRS employee retires with 25 years of service and receives only about 58 percent of the final average salary.

* The average TRS retiree receives about \$1,807 per month; many paraprofessionals and classified employees receive less than half of this amount. The math is irrefutable. The spousal offset becomes a virtual guarantee that Texas education employees will not receive any spousal benefit. Why? Two-thirds of the TRS pension—the GPO penalty—almost always exceeds the dollar amount of the spousal benefit from Social Security.

Let me give a real-world Texas example. Take the teacher aide who retires at \$20,000 a year and qualifies for \$1,103.83 per month after 25 years of working in our schools. The offset requires that \$731.06 be reduced from her spousal benefit under Social Security. If her husband is fortunate and his Social Security benefit is at the average, he gets \$1,079 for himself, and she should get \$540. Instead, because of GPO, she gets nothing. It is ironic that spouses who never work a day receive the full benefit, while hard-working public employees lose any spousal benefit. I do not have to tell members of this subcommittee that \$540 a month makes a significant difference in the life of a retiree.

The Windfall Elimination Provision is almost as draconian as applied to the Social Security earn-



ings of public employees who have worked for employers that contribute to Social Security. The 21st-year trigger for any reduction in the impact of the WPO becomes a virtual guarantee that education employees will suffer the full 50 percent lifetime penalty, currently a \$355.50 per month reduction in any earned Social Security benefit for life. I do not have to tell you that workers who have taken two jobs, and paid into Social Security taxes in one of them, are outraged by this situation.

The AFT and Texas AFT are grateful that 337 House members are co-sponsoring the Social Security Fairness Act. We hope to bring more co-sponsors on board and spur action on this bill in 2008.

How can anyone take the position that a citizen's Social Security benefit should be cut solely because he or she happens to qualify for a pension from a state retirement system? No federal or state government penalty is imposed on retirees when their retirement system is sponsored by Exxon, or GM or another corporate entity. Why single out public employees who have dedicated themselves to serving their communities?

Not only should the U.S. Congress not penalize public employees in retirement, Congress should be doing more to make sure that all Americans are able to maintain an adequate standard of living in retirement.

We concur with Sen. John Kerry's observations during his subcommittee's recent hearing on this issue when he said that the Congress should work creatively to find ways to expand the number of Americans who can retire in dignity, and not delay action to remove this obvious inequity that keeps 1 million public employees vulnerable to financial insecurity in retirement. Public employees don't want welfare in retirement; we are just asking for equity and fairness.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman and Congressman Doggett for inviting me here to tell you our story.

John O'Sullivan,
Secretary-Treasurer, Texas AFT

What's Going on at the Systems Office?

None of the Faculty Seems to Know.

Since returning to the college after the Christmas break, I have become acquainted with a number of changes that impact the faculty, my job, and my position as psychology Chair at Lone Star College-North Harris. Change can be good, but imposed changes, beneficial or not, are rarely greeted with acceptance and enthusiasm.

In the 28 years in which I have worked at North Harris, the decision making process has generally involved those individuals impacted by the decisions. With the new administration in place, this seems to not be the case.



I was first greeted with the news of a new "Full Time Adjunct" position that was already in existence. What is this position, and why was it created? Is it to provide instructors for distance learning courses which are always stressed by the administration because they are money makers? On the other hand, is it to simply save money since a full time adjunct would cost much less than a full time faculty member? Under what circumstances are these positions to be created and filled? No answers were provided.

Next, it was stated that full time faculty would be limited to one overload a semester and that chairs could not teach overloads at all. The rationale that I received was 1) because it's policy (sounds like "because I said so") and 2) some vague study was cited by District HR that supposedly indicated that faculty who taught "excessive" numbers of classes resulted in a diminished quality of teaching. When asked who performed the study and under what circumstances, I was met with a blank stare. Moreover this decision regarding chair overloads was finalized the Thursday before classes started; therefore, I was left with five days to find a replacement instructor for an upper level Psychology class. Needless to say, this kind of emergency management is stressful.



The rationale for such limitations is unclear and/or nonexistent. First of all, if “faculty” can teach an overload each semester, chairs, who are considered faculty, should also be allowed to teach an overload. We are given a release time to perform chair duties, which results in a “full-time load.” If we are getting the job done, why can we not teach an overload? How can you arbitrarily separate chairs from full time faculty?

Secondly, we hire adjuncts who work full time elsewhere and, in addition, can teach three classes for us. Are we concerned that their work load will diminish their effectiveness in the classroom? Shall we only hire adjuncts who work fewer than 35 hours a week? Significantly, we’re being forced to hire an unknown product instead of supplying an experienced and tested professor in the classroom. I thought the District was concerned about the students. This policy doesn’t support that contention. This policy also sends qualified faculty to other institutions in order to earn the monies that they need to send their children to college, support aging parents, or provide for their families.



I turned 60 last year; I’ve taught for over 35 years, and I think I am old enough and experienced enough to know what I can handle and what I cannot. Most chairs teach in order to maintain their sanity in the face of mundane paperwork and the frustrations in dealing with the unpredictable issues associated with the job. Trying to find an adjunct on Sunday night to fill a Monday morning class is not a pleasant experience. Previously we could fill it with our own expertise and enjoy the rewards of the classroom. Now we’re expected to find a last minute warm body to occupy the classroom.



It has also been stated that full time faculty will not be paid to substitute for absent faculty members, but adjunct faculty who substitute will be paid. Again, what is the logic in this proposal?

I’m fine with monitoring an exam for a colleague without pay, but if I’m expected to hold a 90 minute class, engage the students, and provide information, I feel I should be given the same acknowledgement as an adjunct; i.e. I should be paid for my time. This policy will lead to more walks, something the administration does not favor.

This decision appears to be a cost saving measure. I find it strange that the EC would make such a decision.



Here we have administrators who make from \$187,000 to \$341,000 per year quibbling over paying faculty \$22.05 per hour for our teaching time. Their cost - saving interests, one could argue, need to be more globally focused. The administration is making the “big bucks” while the faculty is being “nickel and dimed to death.” Where is the logic; where is the morality?



I feel the overall issue with the policies that have been arbitrarily handed down with no discussion is a lack of full collaboration in the decision making process. We, as professionals, don’t mind adhering to policies and procedures, but we would like to participate in the decision making process that deals specifically with instruction and would like to understand the rationale behind such decisions. The faculty are the classroom leaders; we are the people “in the trenches,” so our experience should be worth incorporating into the decision-making process. We expect to have our opinions respected and solicited; moreover, no one appreciates being told what s/he can or cannot do. Policies and procedures that impact employees need to be discussed in a collegial fashion, not handed down from some omnipotent authority. Even the decision to change the names for the colleges and centers seems to have been made unilaterally. This is a source of high frustration.

Finally, in the field of leadership and organizational theory, leadership is defined as the ability to influence people to work towards a common goal. This definition contrasts with management which is task oriented and typically accompanied by rules, policies, and regulations.



Managers typically have little faith that their people will work to achieve the goals that have been set. **Leaders** have faith that those in the organization will work to fulfill their own goals and those of the organization. I see much emphasis on “management” currently within the Lone Star System. I see little in the area of leadership

Donald M. Stanley, Ph.D.
Chairman, Behavioral Sciences
North Harris

Participatory Management

Don Stanley certainly raises major concerns in his article. I want to add to his focus by providing more detail on one issue that he addressed, the “Contract Instructor.”

First, let me emphasize that this title is a new category of faculty member, something in which faculty have a keen interest. Past practice has been for the administration to inform faculty leadership of significant changes on the horizon and to invite a conversation on those changes. That practice was not followed in the creation of this new faculty category. The first time that senate presidents and I were aware of this proposed change was when it appeared as an agenda item for the December 6, 2007, meeting of the Board of Trustees. That item sparked an e-mail conversation among the senate presidents and me that began by asking for thoughts about this surprise item. I found that agenda item disconcerting. Let’s not kid ourselves. We do not have shared governance at Lone Star College in spite of what anyone claims. We have participatory governance in which faculty leaders are asked to offer insights/opinions on various issues. However, in the case of this new faculty category, all but one of the faculty leaders believe themselves to have been shut completely out of the discussion.



The Board agenda included a rationale for the new category: “In order to provide consistent instruction in emerging disciplines, colleges need

the ability to attract qualified teaching staff but need to retain flexibility to adjust the teaching staff levels on an annual basis depending upon enrollments.” The rationale goes on to hold up Houston Community College as a model for using this new faculty category. Houston Community College. The agenda also included responsibilities and compensation and rights (none) associated with the new category. The senate presidents and I had a number of questions and concerns not addressed in the Board’s agenda, and we communicated them to the administration. Ultimately, the day of the Board meeting, the senate presidents and I sat down with the college presidents and Jean Grove, Associate Vice Chancellor, Human Resources and Diversity, to discuss our concerns--one hour before the Board was due to act on the proposal. I won’t discuss the specific content of the meeting but will say that there were a number of issues that had not been thought through. Even the college presidents had questions and asked for clarification on some of the issues.

At the end of the hour, we reached sufficient agreement that we felt the position could move forward with the proviso that the faculty leaders would submit additional questions and concerns to be reviewed by a committee. My expectation is that a number of faculty members will be on that committee. One would hope for a balance of faculty and administration. Although the Board approved the new position, faculty leaders are withholding judgment pending the review by the committee. To date, no movement on the formation of the review committee appears to have occurred. Some of the faculty leaders recall that an agreement was reached that the college presidents and the faculty leaders would meet early this semester to continue the discussion, but that meeting has not yet occurred.

One of my main concerns in this situation is fairness. Is this position one that benefits the college system and adjuncts, or does it create a two tiered employee system? A two-tiered system has enormous possibility for abuse of adjuncts. It may turn out that this new employee category will be



beneficial to all concerned. In fact, the AFT has called for a special category of adjuncts that recognizes and rewards longtime adjuncts, in the system. Some people might expect the union to simply declare victory. We won't do that because we don't know yet all the details of this new category. What I do know and can state unequivocally is that the total exclusion felt by the majority of faculty leadership in the early conversation on this issue damaged the process.

If Lone Star College is to achieve all the aspirations that we have for it, then it must operate in an open manner. Decisions cannot be made unilaterally. The administration must consult with appropriate faculty leaders and engage in meaningful dialogue. The AFT is committed to being engaged in the process of improving the college. We call on the administration to cease such unilateral decision making in the future---to make sure that the appropriate parties are involved in the discussion.

Alan Hall

Another Way to Look at Salaries

Last semester the AFT published two articles on employee salaries. As a short summary, the chancellor position's salary increased from 2006/07 to this year by 29.5%. Again, to be clear, Dr. Carpenter did not get a raise. He accepted the salary offered for the position. That salary was changed by the Board from last year to this year. In addition, based on Human Resources recommendations, upper administrative positions were adjusted 14.4 %. However, most other employees only saw a 5% adjustment in their salary, something the union, and many others I might add, see as patently unjust. One wonders how Board members could see the need to adjust these administrative positions and not see the need for other employees.

For the upper administrative adjustments, Human Resources used national market surveys to determine national averages and recommend these ad-

justments. As best we can tell, state averages were used in determining faculty raises. When the AFT raised the question of why Human Resources would use different averages for administrative and faculty salaries, we were told that it had to do with the pools from which the college must draw for administrators. The November/December 2007 Advocate refuted that theory with the chart on page seven. Whatever benchmark employed should be used for all employees.

We reported in the November/December newsletter that an article in Community College Times actually showed upper administrative salaries to be \$12,981 to \$119,371 above national averages for 2006. The AFT did not choose the national average as a benchmark; Human Resources did. We have simply been responding based on that data. However, it has been suggested to me that it is unfair to use national averages because those averages include some very small community colleges, and their inclusion has the effect of making Lone Star College's administrators' salaries look excessively high. Not fair was the claim. Instead, it was pointed out that the union should be comparing actual salaries of our administrators to actual salaries of the top five urban community colleges in Texas. Fair enough. The union is certainly willing to take a look at that perspective.

We are working on gathering the data and will report what we find. We will also take a look at how our faculty salaries compare to the top five community colleges. Harder to determine will be the salaries of professional and support staff. The administration and Board must keep in mind that these employees' salaries must also be part of the discussion.

Alan Hall



Union Name Change



The AFT executive committee recently changed our name to **AFT—Lone Star College**.





Some Thoughts on Personal Leave

E.3.04 - Personal Leave: Policy

Employees may use a maximum of two days of sick leave per year for personal leave. Advance approval of the immediate supervisor is required.

Faculty should give sufficient notice of their need to take a personal leave day to the Dean to ensure appropriate class coverage

The new Lone Star policy manual is getting ready for the final draft, and I am concerned about the section on personal leave. Currently employees get a total of 2 personal days per year which are taken out the employee's sick days. These two days are not enough to cover the possibility of a friend's funeral, a wedding, graduation or other special occasion that occurs in an employee's life during a year. This topic has been discussed in and supported by Faculty Senate and in the open meeting at North Harris when the new policy manual was discussed. Above is the policy that is set to go into place in the new manual. It is the same as it has always been. Most public school teachers get a total of 5 personal days in a year, also used against sick days. This current policy may encourage employees to take a sick day instead calling it a personal day. The cost to the employee may be hundreds of dollars, which far exceeds the cost of a sub. I sent a response to General Counsel, and I hope she will reconsider this policy. If you would like to support this change, please respond to General Counsel at generalcounsel@lonestar.edu

Megan Franks
Professor, Kinesiology
North Harris

Policy

When I first learned that the current Board policy manual would be revised, I took the opportunity to express concern regarding some troubling language affecting faculty in current policy. Current

language states that "tenure is defined as a multi-year contract acted on each year. All faculty with multi-year contracts shall be annually approved by the Chancellor and ratified by the Board for a one year extension of their contracts." However, under DMA, "Change in Status", current policy states that a faculty member may be returned to an annual contract if it is deemed to be "in the best interest of the college." This language is too vague, and the AFT recommended changing the language in the proposed new policy to reflect that "a faculty member on a multi-year shall be renewed annually unless there exists a legitimate cause not to do so."

However, the proposed policy states the following: "Change in contract status is not a discharge for cause. It is a decision made within the terms of the contract in order to meet the best interests of the College and/or District." When I inquired about the AFT's recommendation to change the language, I was told that "the language of the best interest of the college was intentionally left in the new policy" by the committee reviewing the policy.

Prior practice has been for the administration to show cause for a change in contract status. Policy language should reflect that practice. In the wrong hands, the current and proposed language of the "best interests of the college" is dangerous. Many faculty legitimately consider basing something as significant as a change in contract status on such vague and subjective language to be threatening. The language should change.

Alan Hall

**The popcorn is expensive
+ but the tickets don't have to be.**



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Substitute Pay

Recently the Vice Presidents of Instruction, at the request of the System office, began enforcing policy that asks full time faculty to substitute for their colleagues as an unpaid professional courtesy.

There are several problems with this practice.

First, the professional courtesy substitution policy, which first appeared in the proposed policy manual, has not been adopted by the board. In addition, substituting is not a costless activity for faculty. As a professional courtesy or for compensation, substituting adds to the workload of faculty. Regular faculty responsibilities go unfinished and have to be completed at a later date or time. Substitution pay is not costless for the System either. However, faculty who abuse the current policy should be held accountable.

The larger problem, though, is presupposing the faculty work day begins at 8 and ends at 5. Many faculty work well outside these hours, and as we increase our efforts to become a leader in distance learning education, more and more of our classrooms will be open 24 hours, 7 days a week. Faculty should be encouraged to adopt flexible work schedule to meet the needs of this growing population. Policies and procedures that restrict the faculty work day to an 8 to 5 model limits our ability to serve students and fail to recognize the professional judgment of faculty to set our own work schedules.

This is not to say that the professional courtesy policy is without merit. Faculty should be given the option to substitute as a professional courtesy to their colleagues or be compensated for it. Many faculty at our colleges already substitute as a professional courtesy and many will continue to do so under the proposed policy. Ultimately, however, the faculty reserve the right to be paid for classroom substitution, and policy and procedural language should reflect faculty choice.

David Putz
Professor, Political Science
Kingwood

New Ideas at Work at Tomball College

Over the past few semesters, our college has been hosting a series of Friday afternoon discussions referred to as the Faculty Learning Circle. This semester's focus is academic ethics (including faculty codes of academic ethics) and faculty responsibilities. Some of the topics include what we should do with student cheating, why we have a professional obligation to take part in shared governance, and how conforming academic institutions to corporate models affects the quality of our teaching. The more we as faculty are attuned to these issues, the more likely we are to work collectively and constructively in exercising our rights. After all, we can't fight for our rights if we don't know what they are, and we can't exercise our rights if we haven't been vigilant about securing them. For more information and a reading list, contact Dr. Van Piercy (English Dept.) at Van.A.Piercy@lonestar.edu.

Catherine Olson,
AFT Faculty Secretary
Tomball

Editor's note.

We who work on The Advocate all the time are very gratified to see the number of articles from so many different members at the various col-



leges. It has been our long-time hope that more and more members (or nonmembers) would come to see our newsletters as a strong, safe voice for the employees of this System as well as a strong supporter of all we do throughout our huge area. We envision The Advocate as a platform for the exchange of idea from anyone and everyone from the trustees to the administration to faculty to staff, and we invite varying points of view. We see our newsletter as an engine for democracy and for any strong, viable organization such as ours.

Pat Gray, editor
North Harris



Straight Talk About Dues

At our last union executive committee meeting, a question was raised as to how our members’ dues dollars are being spent. The idea, at least in part, is to reassure all members, but especially those who are strapped for cash, that their dues dollars are well spent and are still a bargain.

As your treasurer, it is my responsibility to keep track of all group income and expenses, and I will do my earnest best to give this dues accounting. Be prewarned, however, that I cannot give a perfect dollar-for-dollar accounting, particularly for our local operations which are too ad hoc and varied for exactness. For that matter, our monthly income totals are completely unpredictable, as some members pay their monthly dues faithfully and regularly, and some do not.

Here is a blow-by-blow accounting of our required – and therefore absolutely predictable and regular – monthly expenses (paid for out of collected dues):

	<u>FACULTY</u>	<u>STAFF</u>	<u>PART-TIME STAFF</u>
AFT per capita	\$14.70	\$7.35	\$3.68
AFT accidental insurance	\$.25	\$.25	\$.25
AFT liability insurance	\$.50	\$.50	\$.50
State affiliation fee AFL-CIO	\$.70	\$.70	\$.70
TX AFT per capita	\$10.00	\$5.00	\$2.50
Harris County AFL-CIO	\$.54	\$.54	\$.54
Local Legal Assistance Fund	<u>\$.25</u>	<u>\$.25</u>	<u>\$.25</u>
	\$26.94	\$14.59	\$8.42

The above figures are as far as any exact, dollar-for-dollar accounting can go. The remainder from each member’s monthly dues goes to cover our local operating expenses, such as Advocate print costs, AFT sponsored events on all five LSCS campuses, printing of monthly dues drafts (for members on our automatic monthly dues-deduction system), legal defense, and our member assistance program. Some of the variables in this regard are frequency of occurrence and the number of people and items involved.

As a proud member of this union, as well as its treasurer, I will add one more bit of commentary. When I joined this group in 1980, I had no particular concerns about the dues amount or how the dollars might actually be spent. I joined primarily to promote the ideal of unionism and to be of help to other people. Serving these purposes is what I then assumed (and now, as treasurer, I have come to know) would be the basis of allocating my dues payments. If I personally never receive a direct benefit from my dues payments, I will nevertheless always consider this to be money well spent – and a bargain, to boot! This perspective does not make me a better person than anyone else, but I do believe it is a viewpoint worthy of consideration – and repeating.

As you union vets well know by now, your treasurer likes to conclude these serious dues discussions by letting AFL founder and labor hero Samuel Gompers have the last word: “There is not a dollar which the working man or woman pays into a labor organization which does not come back a hundredfold.”

Allen Vogt
Treasurer



Faculty and Staff Excellence Winners



Faculty	Staff
Hope Beggan	Sherry Bienek
Madeline Brogan	Vivian Brecher
Bertha Ibarra-Parle	Juan Primo
Janet Muzal	Velma Trammel
Kelly Weller	Ethel Lewis Greenspoint Center

Faculty	Staff
Karen Buckman	Joseph Maurer
Beth Engel	Gema Nunez
Greg Ristow	Sandra Valdez Gonzalez
Mark Stelter	Steven Rosita
	Elaine Kirten University Center



Faculty	Staff
Marsha Irwin	Kathy Adkins
Dalia Khalaf	Torris Badger
Cora Ann Williams	Garrick Joubert

Faculty	Staff
Joe Cahill	Kathleen Diamond
Van Piercy	Deena Donaho
Jane Simons	Gwyn Reynolds
Patty Zachary	

LSC—Systems Office



Staff
Linda Peters
James Silva

Faculty	Staff
Mjacarena Aguilar	Elvira Cavazos
Kimberly Hubbard	Paul Cipolla
James Seymour	Maria Del Carmen Gehring
Elise Sheppard	

Congratulations to All!

Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full and part-time faculty and staff up through the dean level. If you would like to join or find out more information about membership, please contact any of the officers listed on page 20 of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at: www.aft-nhmccd.org.

Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$29.30
Full-time Professional Staff	\$25.50
Full-time Support Staff	\$21.90
Adjunct Faculty & Staff	\$10.00



Campus Updates

NORTH HARRIS COLLEGE

Due to the cooperative efforts of administrators, staff and faculty alike, we continue to enjoy a palpable (and visible) revitalization here at Lone Star College-North Harris. The AFT representatives hereabouts have been busy of late with several personnel matters. In the wake of a departmental staff reduction, we're assisting staff members in their efforts to find other positions within the Lone Star System. We are also working to reconcile a few personnel issues for adjunct faculty members and part-time staff members. As the new, robotically-intoned Lone Star radio commercials would say: That is all.

Bruce Machart, AFT Faculty VP

KINGWOOD COLLEGE

The winds of change are blowing even stronger at Lone College-Kingwood. The big news is that our President, Dr. Linda Stegall, has announced her retirement. Everyone at Kingwood wishes Dr. Stegall the best! As Faculty Senate President and AFT Vice President, I have had the pleasure of working with Dr. Stegall and would like to personally thank her for her leadership during her tenure at Kingwood. Dr. Carpenter has announced that he is forming a search committee, and we are looking forward to the process. Dr. Terry Sawma (Vice President for Continuing Education and Student Services) will also be moving on as his wife, Dr. Christal Albrecht (Vice President, Instruction @ Cy-Fair College), has accepted the Presidency at the Desert Vista Campus of the Pima Community College system in Tucson, AZ. Dr. Sawma has no specific timetable for his departure and we wish him and Dr. Albrecht the best. Congratulations go out to AFT-Staff Vice President Laura Yates (Codner) on her marriage to Richard Codner. They are expecting and we will keep you posted! It's going to be a very busy spring and summer at Lone Star College-Kingwood.

Rich Almstedt, AFT Faculty VP

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

I am excited to serve as acting faculty vice president for Montgomery while Julie Alber is on sabbatical. At the moment, all is quiet at the Montgomery front for now.

Martina Kusi-Mensah, AFT interim Faculty VP
Cheri Riggs, AFT Staff VP

CY-FAIR COLLEGE

There have been some rumblings about Chairs/overtime and non-payment of sub work. But no one has brought up any specific case to me at this time.

Robert McGehee, AFT Faculty VP

TOMBALL COLLEGE

Well mates, the overhaul is complete, the new colors applied, and the ship's registry finalized. The LSC-Tomball has left port with sails raised and wind sound and steady. The officers and crew are tending to chores with an eye toward Port Spring Break. As of this log the waters have been smooth and clear with hardly a wave crest to hinder the voyage. As is usual with all new passages, there was some difficulty about appointments and assignments, but these were handled on board without having to be brought before a board of inquiry.

One problem that did linger for some time was with the signal corps and the Lieutenants assigned to instruct recruits stationed on other ships (distance learning to you landlubbers). It seems as if every time the signalmen attempted to use signal flags, the signal portion of the flag would fall off and the Lieutenants would have to wait for repairs to begin their instruction again. The real problem was the slippery nature of the elusive eel causing the flags to fail, and it took some time to nail the lid on the slimy critter before the signalmen were able to transmit class instructions with confidence. It is hoped by all (Lieutenants, recruits, and signalmen) that these concerns are behind us.

Other than interesting scuttlebutt around the water barrel, there is nothing else to report. The lookouts will remain vigilant lest the whale of acrimony arises from the briny deep unannounced.

Til next report from the Ship's log.
Richard Becker, AFT Faculty VP



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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We invite all employees to send us their opinions, news, questions, and so forth. *The Advocate* is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your articles to **Pat Gray, Editor**, NHC, ext. 5545 or e-mail: patsy.gray@nhmccd.edu, or **Heather Mitchell, Assistant Editor**, CFC, ext. 3254, or e-mail: heather.mitchell@nhmccd.edu or submit to any of the other following officers:

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Membership Has Its Benefits

The union encourages employees to join because they believe that college employees should have a voice in their professional lives. We don't encourage employees to join because they anticipate conflict or are already engaged in a conflict. In fact, if they are already embroiled in a situation, we are unable to help them. It is all too common for someone to approach the AFT and say something like, "I've been an employee for the district for several years, and I've just recognized the importance of joining." Typically, following that comment is, "I'm in trouble and need help." I finally lost track of how many times in the last year I've had to say, "I'm sorry, but member benefits don't cover anything that pre-dates membership." The individuals to whom I had to say that were invited to join and provided some advice on how to proceed with their

situation, but assistance ended there. Were they members, a host of benefits would have been available. The AFT provides its members with advice and guidance as well as representation in conflict resolution and grievances. We have our own local attorney and can seek legal advice and counsel for members. We maintain a local legal defense fund. In addition, membership dues include, at no extra charge, \$8 million in professional liability insurance for claims arising out of professional activities.

Most of our members don't join because they believe that they may need the AFT's help in a conflict. They join because they believe in the values of the AFT— that employees should be treated with dignity and respect, that employees should help each other, that employees should have a voice in their professional

lives, that employees deserve fair pay and good working conditions, and that the district needs a system providing checks and balances. They join because they want to support an organization that helps others in so many ways. A nice benefit is that, if they do need help, it's there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. The AFT advocated effectively for the raise employees received this year. The annual membership dues are a small percentage of the raise. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

Alan Hall