



The Advocate

ELECTION EDITION

Welcome to our first issue of The Advocate, the newsletter of AFT Lone Star College (American Federation of Teachers), for the 2024 – 2025 school year. Here’s hoping that the first six weeks or so have been great for all of you!

This issue is going to be unique. In our 44 year history as a union, rarely have we devoted an entire issue of our newsletter to a single theme, and never have we devoted an entire issue to an election. However, this year’s election is turning out to be one of only a handful of absolutely pivotal elections in American history that sets us at a crossroads of two very divergent paths forward. We could not watch silently and let this moment pass us by. We’ll return to themes focused on our daily lives and well-being at Lone Star in our November-December issue.

Of course, the political contests that command the greatest attention from all of us are the national elections – president and vice-president, senators, and congressmen. However, races at the state level will determine the course of the next session of the Texas Legislature which could dramatically affect the future of both preK – 12 and college/university education. Plus, two contested races for the Board of Trustees of Lone Star will impact the course the college follows for many years.

Because The Advocate is publicly distributed over the Lone Star email system which is technically state property we cannot legally use this newsletter to say “You should vote for X!” or “Please don’t vote for Y!” and we are absolutely NOT going to do that. What we are going to do is share some information and insights we

have put together that we respectfully hope will be helpful to you as you consider which choices best fit your vision for the country, the state, and the college. We humbly ask you also to consider sharing this newsletter with friends, family, and neighbors because much of the dialog coming at us every day provides a lot of heat but very little light.

The National Race

The first five articles in this issue focus on the national level although the impact will obviously trickle down to the state and local level. I lead off with two articles contrasting the Republican vision for education (preK-12 and higher education) with the Democratic vision. I write about actual plans each side proposes – not the emotional rhetoric part. Education is certainly not the only issue before all of us as voters this year but, as educators ourselves, clearly education is a central concern for all of us at Lone Star. You will decide for yourself which vision best corresponds to your own personal vision.

Taking it up to the 35,000 feet level, Steve Davis returns with his latest installment of his ongoing column Dispatches from the Front. Steve writes about the absolute essentiality of truth for the functioning of society and politics and draws on the life and writings of George Orwell to draw important parallels to our day. Next, we are very pleased to present two guest articles. (We love contributions from those outside of our regular staff!) Kingwood Government Professor Jay Theis writes about the outsized (and corrupting) role of money both in this election and in poli-

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tics in general, and how we got to where we are. Next, Professor Emerita Dr. Joan Samuelson contributes an article on the historical, political, and social struggle for equal rights and equal participation for women and how that reflects in the potentiality of a first woman U.S. president. All three of these articles provide valuable context to the national election that can help clarify all the noise.

The Board of Trustees

Shifting gears away from the national level, we next turn our attention to the election for Board of Trustees of Lone Star College. School board elections rarely get much attention and, yet, the impact of grass roots elections like these often have a greater impact on our day to day lives than the national ones. Yet, these elections are usually at the very bottom of a ballot that can go on for five or more pages, they are non-partisan so we can't rely on our natural affinity to Red or Blue, and there is little information on who these folks are.

We want to help.

We have created a Voter's Guide for the Board election in the spirit of the famous League of Women Voters guides. AFT Lone Star College invited every candidate for contested positions on the Board to answer a few questions about their connection to Lone Star, their qualifications, and their vision for the College. I am pleased to say that every one of them responded and we are publishing their responses unedited and unredacted so that you can be as informed as possible about these races.

We would especially invite you to share this particular article with friends, family, and neighbors in the community so they can also have information to go on as they make a decision.

State Races

Lastly, we turn to state races. The big positions like governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general are not on the ballot this year but all of the members of the Texas House of Representatives and half of the members of the Texas Senate are up for election. In preparation for the next legislative session, Texas AFT, the state affiliation of educational unions to which AFT Lone Star Col-

lege belongs, has drawn up a legislative agenda of issues we consider crucial to the success of education in Texas. We call it the Educator's Bill of Rights. I cover this agenda in my ongoing column Know Your Rights. Unfortunately, we cannot cover all of the House and Senate races in the Harris / Montgomery County area, but you can lay the Educator's Bill of Rights next to information about the candidates who serve your neighborhood and we hope this will assist in your decision making.

You will hear more from us about the Educator's Bill of Rights when the Texas Legislature returns for business in the spring.

Go Vote!

Early voting runs from October 21 – November 1. Election day itself is November 5. It's right around the corner. For democracy to survive, EVERY eligible voter must make their stand! If you need to know where to vote, or if you would like to see a sample ballot for the neighborhood in which you live, please visit the following websites:

Harris County Voters: www.harrisvotes.com

Montgomery County Voters: <https://elections.mctx.org>
Surrounding counties, for those of you who live farther afield, have similar websites that are easily accessible.

As stated before, we are not going to tell you in this newsletter who to vote for or against. We provide information and insight only. We can report as news, however, that AFT Lone Star College DOES endorse candidates at all levels of government from the presidency to the Lone Star College Board of Trustees. By vote of the Executive Board of AFT Lone Star College, we do so in conjunction and solidarity with the Texas Gulf Coast Area Labor Federation, the federation of 95 local unions in the greater Houston area representing all trades and professions under the umbrella of the AFL-CIO.

If you would like to explore those endorsements for yourself, they may be found at:

<https://www.gcaflcio.org/endorsements>

A Few Small Items NOT Related to Elections

Although I promised that this issue would focus solely on the elections, there are a few unrelated items that I have to share with you before we jump in:



- **Hurricane Helene** – Our hearts break at the destruction and loss of life across the Southeast caused by Hurricane Helene. At the writing of this issue, Hurricane Milton threatens Florida and will probably have hit by the time you read this. You probably have relief organizations that you regularly turn to when you want to help in the aftermath of a tragedy. However, if you are not sure how to help, consider visiting the American Red Cross at <https://www.redcross.org/donate/dr/hurricane-helene.html/?cid=fy25hurhelene&med=cpc&source=google&scode=RSG00000E017&msclkid=2faca3d13c9e16b48733c4d5ed9f520f&gclid=2faca3d13c9e16b48733c4d5ed9f520f&gclsrc=3p.ds>
- **Mandatory Training** – Don't forget that mandatory compliance training for ALL Lone Star College employees is due before Monday, December 2. Non-completion is a firing offense and there are no second chances. **DON'T FORGET!**
- **Webinar on the 2024 Election** – The Texas AFT Higher Education Committee, in conjunction with the Texas AAUP, presents a webinar on the upcoming presidential election on Thursday, October 17 at 6:00 PM. Watch your email for more information!
- **Party Time!** – AFT Lone Star College invites you to our Fall Celebration open to ALL Lone Star College employees. The event will take place on Saturday, November 16 beginning at 5:00 PM at Swanny's near Willowbrook Mall. Refer to the advertisement elsewhere in the Advocate for more details.

Project 2025 and the Republican Vision for Education

Dr. John Burghdoff

Rarely has any organization proposed a vision for a political party's agenda as comprehensive and detailed as Project 2025.

Written by the Heritage Foundation, a "think tank" aligned with the Republican Party, Project 2025 is a 900+ page sprawling treatise covering a vast array of key political proposals. Among many other agenda items, Project 2025 calls for "the most robust protections for the unborn that Congress will support" and blocking abortion pills to be sent by mail, privatizing agencies like the National Weather Service and the Transportation Safety Administration, raising the income tax bracket for the lowest paid earners from 10% to 15% and lowering the income tax bracket for the highest paid earners from 37% to 30% while "eliminating most deductions, credits, and exclusions", and much, much more.

Although Donald Trump has disavowed connections with Project 2025, a number of members of his first administration are co-authors of the work including Ben Carson, Christopher Miller, Russ Vought, Ken Cuccinelli, and Peter Navarro, and many of the tenets of the work are included in the Republican Party Platform which Mr. Trump supports. The president of the Heritage Foundation, Kevin Roberts, endorses Mr. Trump's oft-repeated claim that he did not lose the 2020 election, and states that the purpose of the work is to "institutionalize Trumpism". Trump himself stated of the Heritage Foundation in 2022, "This is a great group, and they're going to lay the groundwork and detail plans for exactly what our movement will do."

Although I have given a few samples of proposals from Project 2025, there is no way to cover everything it says in this newsletter. In this article, I will focus on some of the proposals in the work that relate to education. I will simply state what Project 2025 says. The reader may like what it stands for or dislike it. That is up to the reader. My goal is to supply information for the reader that would help them decide if this is the direction the country should take or not.

As I start, I would like to hasten to state that, no, I have

**AFT LONE STAR
FALL CEEBRATION!**

Live Band
(Featuring Karina Nistal)

spacious outside venue!

Complimentary Beverages!

Lots of Door Prizes!

Free Taco Bar!

WHO: All LSC Employees
DATE: Saturday, November 16th
TIME: 5:00 - 8:00 pm
LOCATION: Swanny's Bar & Grill
 6224 Theall Rd. Houston, TX 77066



not read all 900+ pages of Project 2025. I reference the following respected sources who have staff who have done so. I invite the reader to check the indicated websites for more detail and information.

The Hechinger Report; <https://hechingerreport.org/how-could-project-2025-change-education/> The Brookings Institute; <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/project-2025-and-education-a-lot-of-bad-ideas-some-more-actionable-than-others/> Education Week; <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/project-2025-and-gop-aim-for-universal-school-choice-what-would-that-look-like/2024/08>

Project 2025 Proposals for Early Childhood Education

- Eliminate the Office of Head Start, closing Head Start child-care programs currently serving 833,000 low income children each year including those in rural areas where childcare options are often sparse.
- Prioritize spending for “home based” childcare favoring parents able to stay home from work to provide care for their children.

Project 2025 Proposals for K-12 Education

- Instruct the National Assessment of Academic Progress to release student performance data based on “family structure” (as well as race and socioeconomic status as is currently reported). Project 2025 explicitly endorses the “natural family structure” of a heterosexual two-parent family because “all children have the right to be raised by the men and women who conceived them.”
- Replace the Department of Education with funding that would go directly to families to promote “educational freedom”. Existing programs pointed to as models include Arizona’s voucher program which places little restriction on how the funding can be used.
- Limit the federal school meals program to children from low-income families. Currently, schools have the option of providing free meals to all students. Being singled out to receive free meals can be stigmatizing to children. Filling out the required eligibility paperwork can be challenging to parents.
- Convert most of the \$14.2 billion dollars currently provided by the federal government for students

with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to “block grants” to states with no guardrails on how those funds would be used.

- Eliminate IDEA requirements that school districts evaluate whether minority students are disproportionately assigned to special education programs, disciplined disparately, or are disproportionately placed in classrooms separate from their general education peers. Currently, schools that find significant disparities are required to spend 15% of their federal funding to correct the issue.
- Convert Title I funding, the largest federal program for K-12 schools which currently provides \$18 billion dollars in funding for K-12 schools with significant low-income enrollment, to block grants to the states, and eliminate the program all together within 10 years. (Some of the block grant funding should be used to fund vouchers.) Incidentally, 8 of the 11 states with the highest percentage of per-pupil spending funded from Title I are Republican dominated states.

Project 2025 Proposals Related to LGBTQ+ Students

- Roll back regulations, including Title IX regulations applying to higher education instituted by the Biden administration, that protect students and employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Agencies will “focus their enforcement of sex discrimination laws on the binary meaning of ‘sex’”.

Project 2025 Statements on Race

- Although specific action is not explicitly proposed, Project 2025 asserts that teachings that explore the long-term structural impact of racial discrimination disrupt “the values that hold communities together such as equality under the law and colorblindness.”
- Project 2025 calls for legislation requiring schools to adopt proposals “that say no individual should receive punishment or benefits based on the color of their skin.” A noble statement on face value, legislation with this language has been used in various places to say that teaching on slavery and discrimination makes white children feel bad which is tantamount to a punishment.



Project 2025 Proposals Related to Higher Education

- Prosecute “all state and local governments, institutions of higher education, corporations, and any other private employers” that maintain affirmative action or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies. (Separately, both Donald Trump and J.D. Vance have endorsed prosecution of colleges and universities that use race in admissions decisions.)
- Add a “risk adjustment” to graduation rates reported by universities to “correct” for low graduate rates in schools that enroll large numbers of at-risk students. This adjustment would disproportionately benefit for-profit institutions that tend to charge high tuition and have low graduation rates.
- Eliminate student loan forgiveness programs such as the program that forgives student loans for graduates who work in public education for 10 years.
- Restrict “borrower defense to repayment,” which forgives loans borrowed to pay for colleges that closed or have been found to use illegal or deceptive marketing.

Of course, it is not at all clear whether a Republican administration would be able to enact all of these changes. However, if these proposals reflect a reader’s personal values, a Republican administration might be a good match for them. If these proposals do not reflect a reader’s personal values, the reader should consider the next article.

I would like to personally thank Mr. Antonio Ingram, Senior Counsel with the Legal Defense Fund of the NAACP, for suggesting resources and checking this article for accuracy.



Kamala Harris and the Democratic Vision for Education

Dr. John Burghdoff

In the preceding article, I wrote about the Republican vision for what they would do with education if Donald Trump is elected president. In this article, I will do the same for the Democratic vision if Kamala Harris is elected. As stated earlier in *The Advocate*, we will not and cannot advocate for you to vote for one candidate over another in this forum, but we can inform. In putting Republican and Democratic plans side by side, we hope to give you information you can use in deciding which candidate most closely matches your values.

The contrast between the goals of Harris and Trump are dramatic in nearly every area and there is no way to cover all those contrasts in this article. So, although there are so many other policy areas that matter to all of us, I am going to focus on those related to education.

What has been accomplished under Biden / Harris

Obviously, one unique factor of Kamala Harris’s candidacy is that she is part of an active administration that is still very much operational. Accomplishments achieved over the last 4 years are very much accomplishments of Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, and a host of cabinet members, advisors, and staff. If elected, Harris has made it clear she would be building on these accomplishments. Those accomplishments include the following:

- The American Rescue Plan earmarked nearly \$170 billion extra dollars for public education – the largest ever single investment in education in U.S. history. These School Rescue Funds are available to states and individual school districts who have wide latitude to use them as local needs dictate. They have been used in various places to expand summer and after school programs, to increase teacher and staff pay, to fund extra school days in high risk schools, to expand high impact tutoring, to purchase equipment that school budgets could not cover, to hire additional counselors and mental health experts, to upgrade old facilities and improve HVAC systems, to provide childcare for children of school employees, and much more. The law requires that schools seek public input on how to spend the funds as well as input from unions representing faculty and staff.



- The Department of Education expanded Title IX non-discrimination protections to include sexual orientation and gender identity, a move, as stated in the previous article, a Republican administration would seek to reverse.
- The Biden administration fixed long standing issues with the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program that promises to forgive student loan debt for college graduates who spend 10 years in public service (including public education at any level). Established in 2007, by the time Biden and Harris took office only 7000 people had actually had their loans forgiven. Since fixing long standing issues early in their administration, 950,000 others have received loan forgiveness.
- The maximum amount a college student can receive in a Pell grant has been increased by \$9000 under the Biden / Harris administration, the largest increase in over a decade.
- Title I funding for schools with a high proportion of low income students has been increased by over \$2 billion dollars per year. (Recall that the Republican plan would phase out Title I over 10 years.)
- The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act provided \$1 billion dollars to fund 14,000 additional mental health professionals in public schools
- The Biden / Harris administration invested a record \$17 billion increase in funding for historically black colleges and universities and a record \$15 billion increase in funding for Hispanic Serving Institutions (of which Lone Star College is one).
- After the 2022 massacre of elementary school students in Uvalde, Biden established the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, sending \$286 million in federal funds to schools to support student wellness and to fund additional school mental health professionals.
- The Department of Education implemented new accountability measures that would strip career training programs of federal funding if their students graduate with high levels of student debt relative to earnings, or if graduates earn less than \$25,000 in their new careers. Another 400 graduate programs at other colleges and universities would have to notify students if their programs failed to meet these metrics although they would not lose federal funding.

What Harris Plans to Work Towards in Her Administration

Looking at the Democratic Platform and speeches and press releases from Kamala Harris, it is clear that her plan is to continue the agenda established by the Biden administration related to education and to build on it. She would endorse and continue all of the accomplishments listed above, but she would also add the following additional goals:

- Expand student loan forgiveness to an additional 30 million Americans (which follows up on Biden executive orders that are currently under court challenges from Republican attorneys general)
- Full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). Funding levels are currently (and have always been) well below the goal of covering 40% of the cost of special education with federal funds envisioned by the act, although the Biden administration boosted spending by 10%.
- Increased spending on education for English learners and multilingual education
- Funding free universal pre-K for all 4-year-old children. Universal pre-K is currently available in six states (not Texas) and the District of Columbia.
- Deemphasizing standardized testing as a measure of school accountability, recognizing the value of other measures of learning, and using an array of measures as a means to inform improvement strategies rather than impose sanctions
- Expanding programs for recruiting and training teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school employees and increasing teacher pay. (A Democratic bill currently before Congress would set a national minimum annual teacher salary of \$60,000.)
- Expanding career and technical education options both within community and technical colleges and in job-training partnerships involving high schools, local industries, and labor unions.
- Making community and technical colleges tuition free



Kamala Harris Speaks to the AFT

One of Kamala Harris's first major speeches as a candidate within a few days of Joe Biden's announcement that he would withdraw from the race was delivered at the American Federation of Teachers National Convention held here in Houston. In that speech she outlined her thoughts both on education and on workers' rights as they relate to education. Watching that particular speech can give the reader a solid overview of her values and agenda which you can then evaluate for yourself. If you are interested in watching, that speech is available online at the following link. I think you could find it helpful:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfNwX_k2wgc

I will close this article by including a few quotes from Harris's speech for your consideration:

"As we work to build a brighter future and to move our nation forward, there are those who are really trying to take us backward, ... to return America to a dark past."

"We are not going back. ... And one of the best ways to keep our nation moving forward is to give workers a voice, to protect the freedom to organize, to defend the freedom to collectively bargain, to end union-busting."

"In this moment, across our nation, we witness a full-on attack on hard-won, hard-fought freedoms. While you teach students about democracy, ... extremists attack the sacred freedom to vote. ... They have the nerve to tell teachers to strap on a gun in the classroom while they refuse to pass common sense gun safety laws. And while you teach students about our nation's past, these extremists attack the freedom to learn and acknowledge our nation's true and full history. ... Just think about it. ... We want to ban assault weapons, and they want to ban books."

"We each in our country face a question. ... What kind of country do we want to live in: a country of freedom, compassion and rule of law, or a country of chaos, fear and hate? The beauty of our democracy is that we each have the power to answer that question—when we vote."

In these two articles, I have endeavored to highlight briefly the agendas of the two major parties and their

candidates as they pertain to education. Each of us have other areas of concern that we must evaluate as well but, as people who are devoting our lives to educating the next generation, these agenda items are surely near the top of the list for us all. As we approach the November election, I hope these two articles will assist you in deciding which of these agendas best reflects your values.

Sources referenced in preparing this article:

- <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/where-does-kamala-harris-stand-on-education-inside-the-2024-democratic-platform/2024/08>
- <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/three-years-bidens-american-rescue-plan-buoys-millions-students-and-educators>
- <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2024/02/02/joe-biden-30-policy-things-you-might-have-missed-00139046>
- <https://www.whitehouse.gov/therecord/>

Dispatches from the Front #11 "Truth Telling"

Steve Davis, Professor of History, Lone Star College -Kingwood

This year is the 75th anniversary of the publication of George Orwell's classic dystopian novel, *1984*. Accordingly, several new books on this indispensable writer have recently appeared. Since the summer, I've been doing a deep dive into some of them. Orwell is my favorite writer and I'm keen for any fresh interpretation as an excuse to revisit his work. There is no better time than the present political moment to do so.

Historian Laura Beers is the author of one of those new titles, *Orwell's Ghosts: Wisdom and Warnings for the 21st Century*. Having it on this coffee table while I write takes me back to a breezy afternoon in July when I read it sitting in the shade on a park bench in Lisbon where I had retreated for some R&R just after teaching Summer I. What a pleasure that was! Beers tells us that the people who know Orwell only from reading his bestsellers *1984* and *Animal Farm* (the two my students always cite when I ask them about Orwell books) often have a limited knowledge of what he actually stood for. He tells us



directly in his timeless 1946 essay, "Why I Write": "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, **against** totalitarianism and **for** democratic socialism, as I understand it."

I first became aware of this political side of Orwell when I read his memoir, *Homage to Catalonia*, at age 20 while a history major at the University of Houston. I was writing a term paper on the Spanish Civil War, the conflict in which Orwell had gone to fight against Franco and fascism in late 1936--the reason for that date's reference in the prior quote. He had volunteered to counter the growing threat of Hitler and Mussolini, both of whom gave crucial aid to Franco's assault on the Spanish Republic. Their evil was already well-established. But while there, Orwell saw firsthand the mendacity and viciousness of the Communists, who often undercut the Republic's military defense while they advanced Stalin's Soviet agenda. Hence, Orwell's stated opposition to totalitarianism, whether of the left or right-wing varieties.

It's interesting to see how often political extremes combine to attack democracy. Recently, there has been a flurry of reportage on the self-styled MAGA communists. Led by some young refugees from the Bernie Sanders presidential campaigns, these political exotics see multi-billionaire Donald Trump as a working-class champion who can defeat global elites and ultimately prepare the terrain for a radical, anti-capitalist movement in this country. Like Trump, they praise Putin, trash NATO, and express misogynistic feelings. These disaffected "Bernie Bro's" are the kind of young men who spend their lives sitting in front of screens and yet think the world owes them something. I guess their dream is a kind of Marxism-Leninism comes to Mar-a-Lago. This is a classic case of history not exactly repeating but rhyming when one recalls the way the Nazis and Communists combined to undermine Germany's democratic Weimar government, paving the way for the Third Reich in the early 1930s. In the past few weeks, the neo-Nazi *Alternative für Deutschland* and a new party of the populist/nationalist left called the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance have rocked German politics with their shocking vote performances in state elections. The beat goes on.

Orwell literally fought against all of that, almost losing his life to a sniper's bullet on the Aragon Front in 1937.

But what Americans too often are ignorant of is what he fought **for** and that is the value of the quote from "Why I Write." He tells us in his characteristically direct style that some form of democratic socialism ("as I understand it") is his political North Star. Children of the Cold War like me weren't taught that. It complicated the binary simplicity of the Free World vs the Communist Bloc in Eisenhower and Kennedy's America to imagine that a radical, democratic alternative to capitalism and Sovietism was possible. Our own society was full of what Orwell would have called "hired liars" for the prevailing system in the 1950s and beyond--the years in which books like *1984* and *Animal Farm* were co-opted by conservatives to defend the social and political status quo. That lot would be scandalized had they studied Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn* in which he details his vision of English socialism. It would involve objectives like the abolition of private education, the end of the monarchy and the House of Lords, soak-the-rich taxes that would seek a ten-to-one ratio between highest and lowest incomes in the UK, and government takeover of key industries such as mines, banks, and rail lines. This constituted a truly revolutionary social democratic program, one nowhere close to being attained in Orwell's native country to this day, even though the Labour Party (which he supported) has enjoyed multiple periods of power.

Aside from his fight for democracy and for radical change, another constant in Orwell's work was his commitment to truth telling. This is again revealed in "Why I Write":



"When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, 'I am going to produce a work of art'. I write it because **there is some lie that I want to expose** (emphasis added), some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing." This is reflected in *1984*. Big Brother's mendacious and hateful regime notoriously contends that war is peace, ignorance is strength, and that two plus two equals five. Objective reality no longer matters to the ruling Inner Party elites who compel lead character Winston Smith to constantly rewrite the past from his post in the shamelessly misnamed Ministry of Truth. The world of Airstrip One that Orwell depicts is a veritable cuckoo kingdom of alternative facts.



If Orwell were still with us, his imperative to expose lies would turn him into a blur of perpetual motion given the prevarications that color the current political scene. Examples are legion, but let's just use the September 10 presidential debate as a fresh and especially telling case study. I watched it on the big screen at LSC-Kingwood with about seventy students, faculty, and community members attending an event sponsored by our Center for Civic Engagement. Laughter filled the room on several occasions, invariably prompted by Trump's whoppers. The most egregious and lasting example was his riff on Haitian (legal) immigrants eating cats and dogs in Springfield, Ohio. The following Sunday during an interview with CNN's Dana Bash, Trump's running mate, J.D. Vance, got stunningly honest: "If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people, then that's what I'm going to do." Clearly, truth is secondary to the campaign narrative.

Trump was Trump through the debate, lying without shame or equivocation. He lied when he claimed an inflation rate under Biden of 21%, when he said all legal scholars and Democrats and Republicans alike wanted Roe v Wade repealed and abortion returned to the states, when he denied he had lost the 2020 election, and when he asserted that hordes of illegal immigrants are voting. He lied when he claimed that crime rates are "through the roof" and that FBI statistics to the contrary are fraudulent. He told the huge lie that anyone who criticizes the Netanyahu government's indefensible policies in the current Gaza war "hates Israel." He persisted in his racist lie that the Central Park Five "killed a person" and pled guilty. He lied when he said of his opponent "she's a Marxist." The truth is that this profoundly ignorant former president wouldn't know a Marxist if it bit him right on the bottom.

Trump lied before the debate when he repeatedly said that Kamala Harris wasn't very intelligent, and he lied afterward when he crowed that he had won it and that all the polls said so. The conspiracy nuts among his supporters lied when they claimed that Harris had prevailed due to the use of an earphone embedded in her earring.

Lies, lies, lies. The ultimate lie is that this man is fit for any office above the level of dog catcher. And I hate to

even concede that post given the unsavory attention the country's canines have recently received due to his mis-statements.

At this critical point in world history, what would George Orwell do? I can imagine how he would use his writerly brilliance. I know how hard he would fight for the core values of liberty and equality that he cherished. One of these days, I hope to make a personal pilgrimage to the churchyard grave where he lies in a patch of earth that is forever England. In the interim, I remain inspired by his words and his example. I picture him as he once did Charles Dickens, "laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity." Orwell left his London home, crossed the Channel, and then traveled by train from Paris to Barcelona in December 1936 to fight against falsehood and fascism. All we have to do is vote this November.

Money and Politics

Jay Theis, Professor of Government, LSC-Kingwood

"Hillary Clinton, I said be at my wedding, and she came to my wedding," the reality-star-turned-politician said at the first GOP presidential debate of 2016 in Cleveland. "She had no choice because I gave to a foundation."

"I gave to many people before this," Trump said at that debate. "When they call, I give. And you know what, when I need something from them two years later, three years later, I call them. They are there for me."

"You've donated to several Democratic candidates. You explained away those donations saying you did that to get business-related affairs," Kentucky Senator and fellow candidate Rand Paul said at that debate. "And you said recently, quote, 'when you give, they do whatever the hell you want them to do.'" <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-money-drew-hillary-clinton-wedding/story?id=32936868>

This exchange illustrates what virtually all Americans instinctively know about our political system. The wealthy don't contribute thousands of dollars or more simply because they believe in the candidate. There is a transactional quality to contributions. Every student in my Introduction to American Government class under-



stands that when someone contributes thousands, tens of thousands, or even millions of dollars to try and get a candidate elected, it is because they want or expect something in return.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics which runs the website OPENSECRETS, in the 2020 election, almost 8 billion dollars was spent in the 536 federal races by campaigns and an additional 6 billion is estimated to have been spent by “interested” groups. This doubled the previous record in 2016. In 1990, the average winning House campaign cost \$407,600 and the average winning Senate campaign cost \$3.87 million. In 2020 those figures were \$2.79 million for the House and \$26.53 million for the Senate, more than triple the inflation rate.

The 2024 election promises to shatter previous records for campaign spending as candidates at all levels are raising record amounts of money. How did we get here? In the early 1900’s President Theodore Roosevelt argued for campaign finance reform and Congress responded with the Tillman Act which prevented corporate contributions to campaigns. The Federal Corrupt Practices Act placed general limits on campaign contributions. Subsequent acts and their amendments capped expenditures and extended the ban on corporate contributions and labor union contributions. However, the biggest reform came in 1971 with the Federal Election Campaign Act, which instituted disclosure requirements for federal candidates, political parties, and political action committees. The 1974 FECA amendments created the Federal Election Commission to enforce a comprehensive set of regulations on campaign contributions and spending including public funding of presidential campaigns.

Over the next 40 years, parties and candidates sought loopholes and found ways to get around the laws whether it was the rise of soft money or Barack Obama deciding not to abide by the voluntary limits on campaign expenditures (something all candidates since have joined him in doing), but the basic system remained in place.

A seismic change in campaign finance occurred with the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. the FEC*. The Supreme Court ruled, in *Citizens United*, that restrictions on organizations that accept corporate or

union money from running “electioneering communications” were unconstitutional on free speech grounds. ‘In the court’s opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote that limiting “independent political spending” from corporations and other groups violates the First Amendment right to free speech. The justices who voted with the majority assumed that independent spending cannot be corrupt and that the spending would be transparent, but both assumptions have proven to be incorrect.’ <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/citizens-united-explained>

So we have a campaign system that is awash with money and most Americans are not as naïve as the Supreme Court in believing that money doesn’t lead to corruption. But if that wasn’t enough, in 2024 the Supreme Court issued another decision, that while not as widely publicized, added to the corrupt system of politics in the US. James Snyder was elected as the mayor of Portage, Indiana in 2012. In 2013, the mayor oversaw the bidding process for new trash trucks for the city with the bid for 5 new trash trucks eventually going to Peterbilt. In January 2014, just one month after the contract was awarded, Snyder received \$13,000 from Peterbilt for “insurance and technology consulting.’ The Department of Justice prosecuted him on charges of bribery and in two separate trials (the first conviction was overturned and he was granted a new trial) he was found guilty. The Supreme Court overturned the conviction since the government could not prove a quid-pro-quo and the gift was given after the awarding of the contract. The Supreme Court, in a 6-3 decision, ruled that it was a gratuity and therefore not covered under the anti-bribery statute.

Things in Texas are even worse. Non-judicial candidates are allowed to receive unlimited contributions from individual donors, per election cycle while judicial candidates are limited to accepting maximum contributions of \$5,000 per donor. In addition, candidates are allowed to receive unlimited contributions from political action committees (PAC), per election cycle. This leads to head-scratching results. Jeff Yass has given \$10 million to Governor Greg Abbott in this election cycle and Abbott is not even running. In addition, Jeff Yass does not even live in Texas, he is a Pennsylvanian.

Is Trump right? Do contributors get what they pay for? Research by economist Emanuel Saez shows that to-



day, the richest Americans pay a smaller percentage of their income in combined federal, state, and local taxes than everyone else (even the poorest Americans). <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/10/06/opinion/income-tax-rate-wealthy.html> Corporate subsidies are at record levels (<https://www.hoover.org/research/welfare-well-how-business-subsidies-fleece-taxpayers>) even as Americans are told that programs such as social security (the only pension most Americans have) are going to go bankrupt. To this observer, Trump is absolutely right. Politicians know that to continue raising the large sums of money they need to stay in office, they have to reward the contributors. Unfortunately, while Trump can identify the problem, he has no issue with it. At a meeting at Mar-A-Lago in April, Trump told oil executives that they needed to give him \$1 billion. As the Washington Post reported “giving \$1 billion would be a “deal,” Trump said, because of the taxation and regulation they would avoid thanks to him”, according to people at the meeting.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/05/09/trump-oil-industry-campaign-money/>

We have gotten to a point in American politics where wealthy individuals and corporations can spend unlimited amounts of money in elections to promote their issues and then reward elected officials with “gratuities” when they get the decisions they want. These decisions were made entirely by the conservative majority on the Supreme Court, every one of whom was appointed by Republican presidents. If we saw these sorts of things happening in any other country, we would have no problem laughing at the corruption in those countries.

Donald Trump knows what donors can expect because he was one of those donors for many years. He also knows what he is going to have to do when elected to keep those donors happy. Fortunately for us, Donald Trump is willing to say it out loud, so we all know what is going to happen. Unfortunately for us, he is fine with the system and has no desire to try and change it. It is just business as usual. It is time for Americans to stand up and tell both parties that enough is enough. Money corrupts and we are not going to take it anymore.

You're Invited!

AFT Lone Star FALL CELEBRATION!



It's that time of year again!

AFT Lone Star is looking forward to seeing YOU at our 2024 Fall Celebration! Join us at Swanny's Bar & Grill to celebrate the fall season! What can you expect?

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<https://bit.ly/AFT-LoneStar-FallCelebration2024>





Kamala Harris: Political Contexts and the 2024 Presidential Election

Joan McAninch Samuelson, PhD,
Professor of English Emerita, Retired, LSC-Kingwood

Political Contexts for Feminism, the Women's Movement, and the U. S. Presidency

The birth of Feminism and the Women's Movement, advocating suffrage and personal freedom, began in the mid-19th century. It included the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls in 1848. Later in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Sojourner Truth stood up within the crowd and gave her famous speech, "Ain't I a Woman." The movement strengthened further into the 1870s. It included some of the bravest women of the past 200 years: Abigail Adams, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others. Eventually, through the hard work of feminists for decades--both women and men--women finally earned the right to vote with the 19th Amendment in 1920. But women were still fighting other battles on various fronts including equal pay, equal opportunity, and equal rights at every level in business, education, politics, and more. In short, women still did not have equal rights.

When the strength of the women's movement resurfaced in the 1960s, across the country and especially on college campuses and in town centers, Baby Boomers like this writer inspired by our sisters of the 19th and early 20th centuries, were at our strongest: we marched on Washington and state capitals around the country. It was an exciting time, and we were so strong that we eventually ensured Roe v Wade was passed by the Supreme Court in 1973. We did this in the face of our worst enemy—Phyllis Schlafly (we called women like her "Queen Bees") who ironically was a lawyer, comfortable wife, and mother working against equal rights for other women--never acknowledging the irony because she enjoyed it and the fame. But we kept her at bay and did finally make inroads, building a new feminist movement thanks to brilliant heroines like Angela Davis, Shirley Chisholm, Betty Friedan, Barbara Jordan, and many more along with the image of Rosie the Riveter as women worked in Defense plants during WW2. In 1971, Gloria Steinem founded *MS* magazine which, though not as politically strong as it was then, 53 years later is still in publication

and one of the most important resources for the feminist voices growing stronger every year.

But, though women won certain fronts like abortion rights and equal opportunity to some extent, the movement made a dangerous mistake. Along with the struggle for the vote and abortion rights as well as control of their own bodies (which women are now losing again), happy with the successes but also exhausted and sick of dealing with the queen bees working against their sisters, the movement slowed, and the ERA was not ratified by the deadline. However, people kept working in Congress and states' ratifications, and it finally happened in 2020, but the fate of the Amendment is still challenged. The irony is obvious, but the tragedy was not as clear then as it is today.

Women still do not have an Equal Rights Amendment added to the Constitution, which keeps open the door of discrimination against women's rights not only to control their own bodies but also against women's rights to be treated fully as American citizens with inalienable rights. Now we are back where we started and worse because the rights earned through Roe v Wade are extinguished, and the ERA continues to be blocked—though in more irony, when it was in its strongest position, both parties supported the Amendment.

However, at the same time, women have been winning state and local elections and moving into positions of power throughout the country—and that has remained true during the past two centuries. The determination and courage of Americans who supported women's rights remained strong, keeping the doors open for women to continue working and running for office. This history, with its central truths, leads directly to the current Presidential race in America and VP Kamala Harris.

Women and Presidential Politics

Of the previous women presidential candidates, two were fairly successful but temporarily.

Victoria Claflin Woodhull (1872) – was a dynamic, brilliant woman and public speaker, a suffragette, newspaper publisher, and the first woman to run for the United States Presidency—over 100 years ago. She was such an interesting and lively character in many ways that she was not taken seriously, but though she was not yet 35,



she still was and remains accepted historically as the first woman to run. Though Woodhull was not successful, her personal story is fascinating and an enjoyable read.

Shirley Chisholm (1972) [it had taken another 100 years], was the first black woman elected to Congress, the first woman candidate of a major Party (Democrat), and the first Black candidate to seek the Presidency. Unlike Woodhull, Chisholm was accepted as a candidate and taken seriously. Though she was constantly blocked by racism along the journey, she remained in competition and won 10% of the delegates' votes. Afterwards, she continued serving in Congress until the end of her term, taught college, and remained politically active.

These women, and others who remained strong and determined, made it possible for more women to keep trying. And of course, in 2016 Former First Lady, US Senator, and Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** won the popular vote by three million, but lost the electoral vote, coming the closest to being elected during the long journey to become the first woman President of the United States. Though being blocked from the highest seat in the land is frustrating when other countries such as India, Israel, Argentina, Germany, Britain, and now Mexico have elected women leaders, they represent the success of women and men who worked hard for decades and slowly paved the way through their interest in running and having the courage to run despite the daunting odds against them for hundreds of years.

The courage, dedication, and determination of the women who sought the presidency, became candidates despite the odds and often cruelties, with the help of their supporters for 200 years, set the path for women to continue their quest for the presidency—especially Kamala Harris today.

“The World Will Be Saved by the Western Woman”

--Dalai Lama

Kamala Harris and the Spirit of Joy

First detected in some of Kamala Harris's campaign videos and later in the various DNC halls, her Joy strengthened and spread almost immediately, flowing from the VP's obvious happiness within her character, and in the roles she would be playing over the weeks ahead. Demo-

cratic leaders and campaign workers picked up on the Joy theme, which became a dynamic rhythm throughout the Convention and campaign. It wouldn't carry her to the White House, for she must earn that, but it would ease the way for her natural personality and positive attitude to gain support. And it would begin lifting the cloud that had settled over politics for almost ten years.

Commentators on the last night of the Convention and days ahead were struck by the vitality of VP Harris, her supporters, and her family. Some commented that Kamala was already presidential in her command of the setting and her expertise. The convention hall itself was also joyous. The audience was delighted with the evening's music and calm professionalism. She had already made clear that the party and country owed Joe Biden. But she also knew she had been working hard all her life and now as VP around the country and globally. She felt she was ready as did President Biden. And that became the focus they must now prove to the voters watching that night and the days ahead.

And they did it perfectly: The major speakers were a former presidential candidate and two First Ladies along with the Governor of Minnesota, now Kamala's VP choice (lovingly called “Coach Walz” because he is)--all active politically. These three gave the warmest speeches in a Convention that was right with them throughout the week. And despite Donald Trump's fabrications, it was and remains standing room only at every subsequent gathering. The Convention and the Country moved women front and center, with the joy and humor that permeated the week, but also with professionalism, expertise, and seriousness that centered and controlled the final night people will be writing about for years.

VP Kamala Harris, whose demeanor is one of joy and professionalism perfectly mixed, was ready to close the night and the convention.

Daughter of two Berkeley PhD's who brilliantly excelled in their fields of science and economics, she is brilliant in her own right, acquitting herself for years as a prosecutor and slipping comfortably into the role of Vice-President.

In addition, she has a support team beginning with President Biden, whose brave decision put country first, and



staff who helped her quickly learn her roles in Washington, and throughout the country and travels abroad. When Pres. Biden made the decision to step down, she was ready to slip almost effortlessly into her new role—heading one of the most vigorous campaigns in our history and doing so as quickly as the country needed. She was gracious to her boss, and also to her new constituents, learning all the while in record time: because she had to.

Kamala Harris and her team bring to the election and the office of the Presidency what the Women's Movement and Feminism have stressed for decades: Professionalism, Expertise, Intelligence, Education, Experience, Grace, and Courage. She has acquitted herself throughout her career as Prosecutor, VP, and now Presidential candidate with the knowledge and experience the country needs to recover from a decade of chaos since Donald Trump landed on the public scene.

VP Harris and the Debate

Kamala Harris won the debate hands down from the beginning--when she effortlessly dodged Trump's attempt to dodge her handshake. Both the tone and direction of the debate were then set--by the Woman who knew who he was and exactly how to handle his attempt to duck. While her opponent slipped and fell before the entire country, VP Harris remained calm, professional, occasionally bemused by Donald Trump's behavior, but still respectful as she had been from the beginning. Above all, she had a plan and grew stronger in her responses as the evening wore on. Knowing though not admitting he was beaten, the former president has refused to debate the VP again.

And now Kamala Harris, accompanied by her VP candidate, Gov. Walz, and a Democratic Party re-invigorated by her skills and support around the nation, has stepped onto that stage and into the venue other women have tried to win, and she has the best chance thus far. The nation is tired of the blather, wants to get back to work, and needs to heal. The healer is VP Kamala Harris, with her team, and the skills of professionalism, expertise, kindness, dignity, and joy. She is the Western Woman--not just in her ethnic background of Islander, Hispanic, Asiatic, and African, but also as the indigenous woman. She is beautiful, brilliant, joyous, and ready--for she is in her rightful place where her time has come.

Sources:

- Center for American Women and Politics
- Pew Research Center

Acknowledgements:

To the following who read and commented on the essay, making it better

- Steve Davis
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- Paul Samuelson
- Judith Watson



2024 LSC Board of Trustees- A Voter's Guide

The ballot for the upcoming November elections will be huge and will include many high-profile races of intense national and state interest. Often times, it's not the "big" races that have the greatest daily impact on our lives, but the local ones that don't get much media coverage. Sometimes, when we get all the way down to them at the bottom of the ballot, we don't even recognize the names.

One race that will be profoundly important to employees and students is the race for Lone Star College Board of Trustees. The Lone Star College Policy Manual, in Section I.D.1.04, defines the role and authority of the Board of Trustees as follows:

"The Board, composed of lay Trustees, exercises a traditional, time-honored role—the keystone of the College's governance structure. The Board (a) preserves institutional independence and manages College affairs through its chosen administrators and employees; (b) enhances the College's public image; (c) interprets the community to the College and interprets the College to the community; (d) nurtures the College to achieve its full potential within its role and mission; and (e) insists on clarity in the College's focus and mission.

"The Board ensures that the College is integral to its community and serves its ever-changing needs. Trustees are accountable to the community for the College's performance and welfare. The Board functions as a cohesive



group to articulate and represent a balanced College and public interest, establish a climate for learning, and monitor the College's effectiveness. The Board does not do the College's work; rather, it establishes vision for the College's work by adopting policies."

The Lone Star College Board of Trustees consists of 9 trustees who each represent a geographical district within the LSC taxing district and who serve 6-year terms. In November of each even numbered year, three of those positions are up for election. In November, Districts 1, 2, and 8 will appear on the ballots of those voters who live within those districts. (Mr. Mike Sullivan, the incumbent in District 8, is running unopposed. Voters in that district will see a notice of the race but will not be asked to make a selection.)

To assist employees, and the community at large, in making informed decisions about these important races, AFT Lone Star College has prepared this Voter's Guide. We asked each of the candidates in the open races in Districts 1 and 2 the same three questions about their background, qualifications, and vision, and we are pleased to print their answers, in their own words, unedited and unredacted, to assist you in making the decision that you feel would be best for Lone Star College.

We have listed each district separately with a hyperlink to a map of the district, a list of voting precincts assigned to the district, and a list of the Lone Star College campuses and centers within that district to assist you in finding out whether you live in one of these districts. Within each district, the names of the candidates are listed exactly as they will appear on the November ballot in the order that they will appear.

For more information on voting in these and all other races, including locations for early voting (October 21 – November 1) and election day voting (November 5), and sample ballots for your specific home address please visit these websites:

Harris County Voters: www.harrisvotes.com

Montgomery County Voters: <https://elections.mctx.org>

Districts 1, 2, and 8 all lie completely within Harris and Montgomery Counties. Similar voting sites exist for other surrounding counties.

Please read the responses the candidates have graciously provided us, and share this article with your neighbors as well. Most importantly, don't forget to vote and don't forget to vote all the way to the bottom of the ballot!

DISTRICT 1

<https://www.lonestar.edu/departments/webservices/LS-C-Trustees-District1.pdf> (includes the main CyFair campus, and the CyFair – Cypress Center)

Michael (Mike) Stoma

1) Please tell us how you are currently involved with Lone Star College and/or how you have been connected to us in the past.

"I've served the last six years as LSCS Trustee, District 1 and the last two years a Board Chair. My accomplishments are: 1. Lead initiative to lower property taxes which were adopted in the LSCS 2024 Operations Budget. 2. Lead initiative to increase homestead exemption what was adapted in the LSCS 2024 Operations Budget. 3. Supported the expansion of the LSCS Online Campus, increased funds for Pell Grants and other financial aid, including Workforce Program that carries no tuition or fees for qualified students, and supported Dual Credit Programs with local ISDs. In my second term, I will continue to champion and support these initiatives.

"I am a former student and employee working as an Instructor (we were not known as "Professors" at the time) in Electronics Engineering Technology for over 5 years."

2) What qualifications and experiences do you have that make you a great candidate to serve on the Lone Star College Board of Trustees?

"See answer to Inquiry 1."

3) What are a few of the goals that you would like to accomplish if you are elected to the Board that would help take Lone Star College to the next level of success for students, employees, and the community?

"1. No new taxes, continue trend to lower property taxes.

2. Continue the trend to increase Homestead Exemptions.

3. Support no increases in student tuition and fees.

4. Support the expansion of dual credit programs.

5. Explain Workforce offerings to dual credit programs."



Shashanka P Ashili

1) Please tell us how you are currently involved with Lone Star College and/or how you have been connected to us in the past.

“I grew up in a humble farming family in Southern India, spending weekends and summers working on our small farm. My parents, despite limited means, instilled in me the belief that education is the key to a brighter future. At just 15, I left home to pursue a technical degree in Electronics, which eventually led me to one of India’s top institutions.

“Though my direct involvement with Lone Star College has been as a resident and taxpayer, I have nearly two decades of experience in academia as a student, employee, and scientist. I’ve collaborated with educators from small colleges to Ivy League universities, witnessing both the transformative power of education and the effects of inequality. I know the immense potential of post-secondary education to elevate individuals and communities.

“Now, I am driven to unlock that potential at Lone Star College. Together, we can create pathways to high-paying careers and ensure the college becomes a global model of educational excellence and economic empowerment. It’s time to dream big and build a future where every student will have the opportunity to soar, regardless of their background or circumstances.”

2) What qualifications and experiences do you have that make you a great candidate to serve on the Lone Star College Board of Trustees?

“I have spent nearly 20 years immersed in academia and research as a student, employee, and scientist, witnessing both challenges and transformative opportunities in post-secondary education. My journey began in 2000, when I came to the U.S. to pursue a master’s in electrical engineering at Wright State University, followed by a Ph.D. in Optical Science at UNC Charlotte. After completing a Surgical Innovation fellowship at the University of Missouri, I joined Arizona State University to advance cancer research.

“Venturing into tech startups, I patented a groundbreaking solution, built global teams, and raised capital. My

work in the poorest and most violent neighborhoods, like Erie and Chester, PA, opened my eyes to the impact of educational inequalities.

“As the founding CEO of CureScience (a translational medicine research non-profit organization), I have focused on digital and personalized medicine, honing my leadership skills in transparency, accountability, and mission-driven impact. Now, I am driven to apply my diverse experiences to reimagine education and create pathways for all. My journey across seven states has deepened my commitment to the vision of “Education for the Future”—a future where every student will have the opportunity to succeed.”

3) What are a few of the goals that you would like to accomplish if you are elected to the Board that would help take Lone Star College to the next level of success for students, employees, and the community?

“Students, faculty, and staff are the heart and soul of any educational system. Administration, as a crucial pillar, plays a transformative role in turning visions into reality and empowering students to achieve their dreams, guided by dedicated faculty and staff.

“Together, we have the power to create life-changing opportunities that propel students toward high-paying careers and brighter futures. To truly succeed, we must foster a culture of transparency and accountability. Unfortunately, a gap has persisted between the administration (including trustees) and staff, hindering progress. As a Trustee, I am dedicated to bridging this gap and uniting all stakeholders in a shared mission of elevating student success and potential.

“Since the Y2K era, IT and STEM fields have shaped the future of education, paving the way for countless families to rise from lower-income backgrounds to middle-class. I have seen firsthand the profound impact of these opportunities. At Lone Star College, we have the chance to lead the way by integrating emerging economic trends into our curriculum and moving beyond outdated checklists. Now is the time for bold, evidence-based reforms and innovation. Let’s inspire our students to reach for the stars, equip them with the skills to succeed, and transform Lone Star.”



Paul A. Santillan

1) Please tell us how you are currently involved with Lone Star College and/or how you have been connected to us in the past.

"I have a personal connection with Lone Star College through my nieces, little cousins, and friends, many of whom are either attending or have attended the college. I've also supported various clubs and organizations by attending events on campus, allowing me to witness firsthand the positive impact the college has on its students and community."

2) What qualifications and experiences do you have that make you a great candidate to serve on the Lone Star College Board of Trustees?

"I regularly engage with current Lone Star students and teachers to understand both what they appreciate and what they believe could improve at the college. Communication is key, and I make it a point to ask them about the changes they would like to see. Reflecting on my own college experience, I know how important it is to have a voice in shaping the future, and I'm committed to bringing those voices forward."

3) What are a few of the goals that you would like to accomplish if you are elected to the Board that would help take Lone Star College to the next level of success for students, employees, and the community?

"If elected, I would focus on three primary goals: increasing community engagement, ensuring that students and teachers are always a top priority, and improving employee retention. We have a strong foundation with our Chancellor's leadership, and I fully support his vision of elevating Lone Star College. My role on the Board would be to advocate for what's in the best interest of both students and staff, helping to take the institution to the next level."

DISTRICT 2

<https://www.lonestar.edu/departments/webservices/LSC-Trustees-District2.pdf> (includes the main North Harris campus, the North Harris - CHI School of Cosmetology, the North Harris - Health Professions Building, and the North Harris – Transportation and Global Logistics Technology Center)

Daniel "Danny" Meza

1) Please tell us how you are currently involved with Lone Star College and/or how you have been connected to us in the past.

"I am a graduate of Lonestar North Harris '14 and have continued to live and work in the community I was raised in. I have worked in increasing civic engagement in the community for many years now and have developed great partnerships and connections within Lonestar to serve students and constituents as well as the amazing staff that have helped me directly years ago. I have spoken at public college events, been published in college publications, helped to register hundreds of students to vote, and kept strong friendships with several staff and professors."

2) What qualifications and experiences do you have that make you a great candidate to serve on the Lone Star College Board of Trustees?

"Knowledge and experience within the community make me the best candidate to serve it. I've grown through the system as a high schooler to a student and then frequent partner or special guest. I believe that I can continue to strengthen the community that helped me succeed by ensuring the college and the next generation of students succeed. I believe I am equipped with an open mind and ability to learn quickly so as to make an impact as best I can."

3) What are a few of the goals that you would like to accomplish if you are elected to the Board that would help take Lone Star College to the next level of success for students, employees, and the community?

"I would like to increase our student enrollment as well as staff retention. We should work to offer more opportunities to students whether that is more scholarships or programs. I benefited from both scholarships and outreach and would like to expand our range and reach within the community. I believe Lonestar can help the community prosper and would like to be a part of working towards that."

Ernestine Pierce

1) Please tell us how you are currently involved with



Lone Star College and/or how you have been connected to us in the past.

"I am the incumbent LSC Trustee District #2 running for re-election in the November 2024 general election.

"I retired from public school education in 2015 after a forty-year career mainly in high schools. I served in several capacities (teacher, coordinator, administrative support, and administrator).

"Before running for Trustee in 2018, I was an adjunct professor at Lone Star College (2015-2018). This experience gave me a bird's eye view as to what was occurring on campuses with reference to students and faculty. I also had an opportunity to observe first-hand the conditions of campus facilities and equipment.

"I had the unique opportunity to meet and talk with students - taking notice of their needs and frustrations. I had the same opportunity to speak with faculty and other staff."

2) What qualifications and experiences do you have that make you a great candidate to serve on the Lone Star College Board of Trustees?

"I have six years of experience as a Trustee which has provided me the opportunity to become familiar with state legislative measures as they relate to higher education (specifically community college funding and other allocations).

"I'm also familiar with the LSC budget and how it affects salaries and maintenance of campuses, etc.

"I share the Chancellor's vision for the college system's future. I'm dedicated and committed to the success of every student."

3) What are a few of the goals that you would like to accomplish if you are elected to the Board that would help take Lone Star College to the next level of success for students, employees, and the community?

- "Continue to work to maintain LSC's status as the largest college system in Texas and the second largest in the nation as well as the best workplace for employees"
- "Bring our faculty salaries up to par with neighboring community colleges - if not the highest in the

area allowing us to be competitive statewide"

- "Sponsor more family-friendly events that engage students, staff, students, families and the community. (i.e. soccer, volleyball, girl's basketball, etc.)."
- "Offer more workforce programs (both certified and non-certified)"
- "Increase dual credit opportunities for students"
- "Improve recruitment efforts with area high schools"

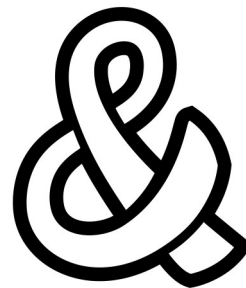
DISTRICT 8

<https://www.lonestar.edu/departments/webservices/LSC-Trustees-District8.pdf> (includes the main Kingwood campus, the Kingwood – Atascocita Center, and the Kingwood – Process Technology Center)

Mike Sullivan is running unopposed in District 8. AFT Lone Star College congratulates Mr. Sullivan on his election to another term on the Board of Trustees.



stay informed




Go Vote!



Educator's Bill of Rights

Know Your Rights



**By: Dr. John Burghduff,
Professor of Mathematics. LSC– CyFair**

Education in Texas, from Pre-K through Doctoral level, is under severe stress. Per student funding is near the bottom in the nation. Threats exist to syphon off public resources to fund private education. Academic freedom is under assault at both the public school and higher education level. The rights of faculty and staff are being challenged. School facilities are often outdated and in need of maintenance. Curriculum decisions are often based on ideologies rather than academic principles. In a Texas AFT 2022 survey of public independent school districts, 70% of Texas teachers responding stated that they had contemplated leaving the profession at some point during the previous year.

If it were a country, Texas would have the 8th largest economy in the world. The United States is the birthplace of the concept of free public education for everyone. We can and must do better.

Often, we at Lone Star College don't feel the crisis to the same degree that students, faculty, and staff feel at community colleges, universities, and independent school districts that are less well funded, and less professionally managed than we are. However, our students come from, and often transfer to other places. The problems of ANY educational entity in Texas are the problems of EVERY educational entity in Texas. Too often a sense of solidarity across ALL levels of education has been lacking to the detriment of us all.

Specifically related to higher education, early "wish lists" for legislation circulating around Austin include

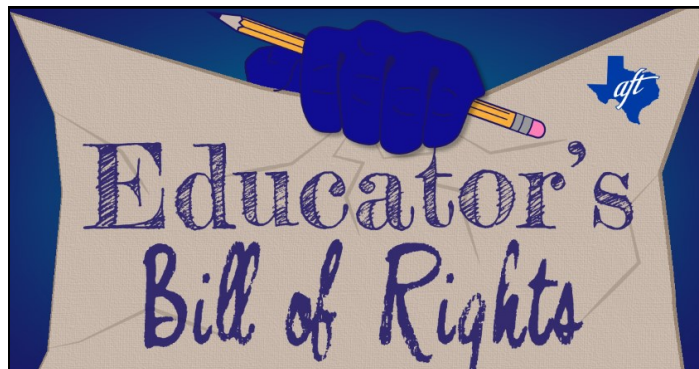
bans on teaching content that somehow could be classified as promoting "diversity, equity, and inclusion" with possible threats of termination. There is even a vague proposal to regulate the activities of faculty senates and "similar" organizations.

In response to these challenges, Texas AFT, the state affiliate to which AFT Lone Star College belongs, has written an Educator's Bill of Rights. This Bill of Rights is designed to be our union's agenda for the next session of the Texas Legislature beginning in January. If fully adopted, these resolutions would revolutionize education at all levels in the state. Pro - public education legislators from BOTH political parties are already in contact with Texas AFT to discuss how to translate these principles into legislation.

We know that progress in Texas is an uphill battle, but great public schools, colleges, and universities are neither Red concerns nor Blue concerns but TEXAN concerns. YOU can help make a difference. How?

- 1) Read the Educator's Bill of Rights which I am copying below in full.
- 2) If you agree that this is what Texas needs, sign on to support the Educator's Bill of Rights at <https://secure.everyaction.com/OUKYWOfOUy0zcAZ4TvMqg2?>
2. Speak to your family and friends about the challenges to and opportunities for education in Texas at all levels.
3. Participate in the legislative process starting in January. Write in support of these principles to your senator and representative in Austin. Watch for opportunities sponsored by Texas AFT to contact your legislators and even to testify before the Texas Legislature on the issues that matter to you the most.





Texas AFT – Educator's Bill of Rights

1. Right to Reasonable Working Conditions

Our Texas Needs Teachers report found that working conditions were even more important than compensation in retaining educators by an almost 2-to-1 ratio. When the state underfunds local school districts, teachers and all staff are saddled with more and more duties, exacerbating high turnover rates and hiring costs. Ultimately, it's our students' academic and emotional well-being that suffers.

2. Right to Fair Wages

Texas teachers earn over \$9,000 less than the national average and receive \$5,000 less in per-student funding; on average, their inflation-adjusted salaries are 6% lower than they were in 2015, contributing to an educator shortage statewide. In 2022, 70% of Texas AFT members surveyed said they were thinking of quitting, and many support staff are living on poverty-level wages. The same is true of higher education, particularly for adjunct professors.

3. Right to a Secure Retirement

Our educator workforce deserves to retire in dignity and security, and we can't do that on the \$2,199 per month the average teacher receives from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas. Texas voters turned out in force in 2023 to support Prop A, the first statewide TRS cost-of-living increase in nearly two decades. But that was a one-time Band-Aid. Texas needs to join almost every other state in making sure its retired educators get annual, automatic pension increases that are tied to inflation.

4. Right to Quality Childcare

In our 2024 Texas AFT member survey, 45% of educators who needed regular childcare said they had trouble accessing or affording it. Additionally, more than half of Texas counties are considered childcare deserts. This isn't just a childcare problem — it's an educator retention problem. If our teachers and school staff can't find or afford quality childcare for their own kids, how can they stay in the classroom taking care of our students?

5. Right to Healthy, Safe, and Secure Working Environment

Safety is a prerequisite for learning. Right now, Texas is failing our students and educators on multiple fronts in providing them with a safe learning and working environment. In Texas AFT's 2024 member survey, gun violence prevention was ranked as the No. 1 priority out of 11 community and social justice issues. But this back-to-school season, we've also seen the other hazards in our schools, with campuses across the state struggling to keep buildings sufficiently cooled in blistering summer heat and districts scraping by with crumbling facilities that have

lead in the drinking water and asbestos in the walls.

6. Right to Academic Freedom

Any assault on public education is an assault on our freedom as Texans and on our professional duties in educating the next generation of citizens. Ending classroom censorship by repealing book bans and limitations on classroom instructional materials is vital to fostering critical thinking skills in our students and to retaining caring, dedicated teachers to nurture those skills. The same is true in higher education, where protecting tenure and shared governance ensures Texas colleges and universities can recruit and retain the best and brightest academic minds to open the world to our students.

7. Right to Meaningful Training and Development

The Texas Legislature has a disturbing addiction to placing unfunded mandates on our school districts. Most of those then fall on the backs of our educators, through shoddily conceived, burdensome, and unpaid trainings like House Bill 3's despised reading acade-



mies. Educators are professionals; it's time this state treated them like it by reducing the annual requirements for continuing education and encouraging educators to select professional development opportunities that actually pertain to them and will help them improve their students' success. That professional growth also shouldn't be restricted to classroom teachers; we have dedicated and knowledgeable support staff and paraprofessionals who would be great teachers if given the time, space, and funding to pursue their credentials. That's what solutions to the educator retention crisis really look like.

8. Right to Organize

Empowered educators produce engaged students. History consistently shows how unions can raise the bar for all of us. And that includes our children's teachers and school staff. The working conditions for educators are children's learning conditions. If educators have a voice in their workplace, free from fear of retaliation, they can negotiate and win better working and learning environments — the same right their fellow public employees, firefighters and police officers, already have codified in Texas state law. It's time for Texas educators to have the right to collectively bargain so we can finally achieve a public education system that works for every Texan.

9. Right to Democratic Representation

The past several years have shown just how brittle the bones of democracy are in Texas, from our gerrymandered legislative districts to elected leaders' continued witch hunts for mythical voter fraud to the state's forcible takeover of its largest (B-rated) school district. Our Texas Needs Teachers report highlighted a deep concern among Texas educators about the lack of teacher input into state-level policies such as testing, school funding, licensure (renewal), and

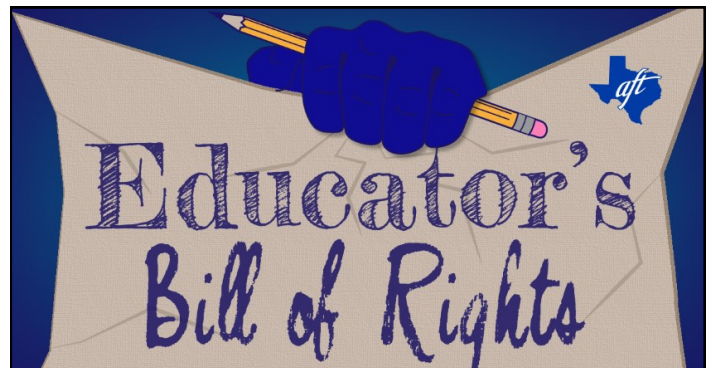
evaluation. The only way Texas educators feel they can shape policy right now is by voting with their feet and walking right out of their profession.

10. Right to Freedom of Religion in Schools

Our public schools ought to be safe spaces for every Texas child, regardless of their race, socioeconomic background, gender identity, or religious upbringing.

Increasingly, state leaders are blurring the lines between church and state, and that includes inside our public school classrooms. Whether it's through a voucher push that would funnel taxpayer dollars to religious private schools or new state-created curriculum that's chock full of biblical material, we are enduring an unprecedented, big-money assault on religious freedom in Texas. Our educators

are being put in the unconscionable position of choosing whether to violate their students' constitutional rights or violate the state's mandates to force religious instruction upon them.



Help Support Texas AFT's Educator's Bill of Rights for the 89th Legislature. By signing on to this petition, you will be showing your support for Texas educators in all roles who work every day to help Texas students thrive, from pre-K classrooms all the way to post-doctoral programs.

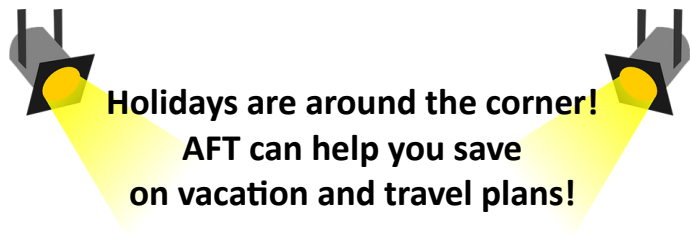
Support Texas AFT's Educator's Bill of Rights TODAY!

<https://bit.ly/EdBillOfRights>





AFT Discounts & Savings: Travel and Vacation Perks Spotlight!



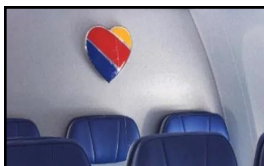
HOTEL DISCOUNTS

As an AFT member, you can choose from two options for hotel discounts—Hilton and Wyndham properties. You will save up to 20% off the 'best available rate' at over 9,000 participating Wyndham hotels worldwide; and 12% chain-wide discount at all global Hilton hotels.



SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

AFT members can receive discounts on domestic flights through our SWABIZ® account. SWA is offering an 8% discount off Business Select® fares, 6% discount off Anytime fares and a 3% discount off select Wanna Get Away® fares for travel, along with other benefits. (For members only; login required)



VACATION TOURS

Take the vacation of your dreams. Save on travel destinations around the world using your AFT discount.



CAR RENTAL

AFT members and their families save up to 25 percent with car rental discounts.



THEME PARKS

Members can receive great discounts on water and theme park admissions, including Disney, Universal Studios, Six Flags Sea World and many more.



ENTERTAINMENT & SHOPPING

Union members and their families can save big with discounts on shopping, restaurants, movie & concert tickets, and more!



AFT MEMBERS:

DO YOU HAVE HOUSEHOLD DEBT?

Get the funds you need today!

- Texas AFT
A Union of Professionals
- Loans starting at \$2,000*
- Payments made over 16 months*
- Biweekly payments of \$75.00*
- Apply regardless of your credit score

The Texas American Federation of Teachers has partnered with **BMG Money**. Get access to reliable, affordable online installment loans to help you regardless of your credit history.

[BMG Money - Affordable loans and financial wellness solutions for employees and retirees](#)

Sign up now at

app.bmgmoney.com/signup and **TYPE** "Texas American Federation of Teachers" as the name of your employer

DO YOU HAVE STUDENT DEBT?

LOWER MONTHLY PAYMENTS

Enroll in income-driven repayment (IDR): IDR is a free federal program where repayment plans are based on your personal income. Summer helps find the best IDR plan to lower your monthly payments (with possible forgiveness as well).

LOAN FORGIVENESS

Certify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF): You may qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), a program that will forgive ALL of your remaining loan balance after ten years. In order to enroll in PSLF, you must also be enrolled in an IDR

This is a **FREE** benefit for AFT Members!
[Join today!](#)

Summer

- My Plan
- My Student Loans
- Tools ^
- Income-Driven Repayment
- Public Service Loan Forgiveness
- Forgiveness Finder
- Refinancing
- Extra Payments
- Resource Center
- Support



Joining AFT-Lone Star is the best thing you can do to ensure that you have a voice on work-related issues that matter to you!

Whether you have been at LSC for a long time or are just beginning your career, joining AFT-Lone Star is the best way to ensure your voice at work on issues that matter to you.

Our Union has a solid history of going to bat for our members when they need help and speaking up on issues that concern our members system-wide.

- If you believe faculty and staff should have a voice in educational issues, you should join.
- If you believe employees should have a voice in the political process, you should join.
- If you believe in the value of employees advocating for each other, you should join.
- If you believe employees should be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect, you should join.

Your dues help support these values.

Membership should not be thought of as only for "protection," but if you need help in a conflict, we will be there for you.

Don't join because you think you might get into trouble; join because you embrace the values we embrace.

Join AFT-Lone Star

[Click here to Join AFT Lone Star](https://bit.ly/AFTLONESTAR-JOIN)
TODAY!

<https://bit.ly/AFTLONESTAR-JOIN>

Join Today!



A Union of Professionals

AFT-Lone Star College

A union of Professionals

- \$8 million in professional occupational liability insurance (in case you get sued)
- Local staff and leaders ready to assist you when you need help and information
- Legal defense funds (in case you need an attorney)
- \$ 36,250 Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy
- Strong leaders and lobbyists advocating for your rights at the local, state, and national levels
- \$5,000 free term life insurance for your 1st year of membership
- AFT PLUS savings and discounts for you and your family
- Educational resources and publications
- No conflict of interest– Administrators cannot join
- Strong. Active. Vocal. When you join AFT-Lone Star, you join the best!
- Pay your dues via bank draft or credit card by signing up online! <https://bit.ly/AFTLONESTAR-JOIN>
<http://www.aftlonestar.org>

WEB: www.aftlonestar.org

PHONE: 281-889-1009

E-MAIL: aftlonestar@yahoo.com



AFT-Lone Star College

AFT Local Union # 4518

GOALS

- To promote academic excellence
- To protect academic freedom in higher education
- To preserve and protect the integrity and unique identity of each of the institutions of higher education in Texas
- To protect the dignity and rights of faculty against discrimination
- To ensure that faculty have an effective voice on all matters pertaining to their welfare
- To secure for all members the rights to which they are entitled
- To raise the standards of the profession by establishing professional working conditions
- To encourage democratization of higher education
- To promote the welfare of the citizens of Texas by providing better educational opportunities for all
- To initiate and support state legislation which will benefit the students and faculty of Texas
- To promote and assist the formation and growth of Texas AFT locals throughout Texas

Membership provides professional career protection and a united voice at work.

BENEFITS

- \$8,000,000 Occupational Liability Insurance provides
 - security while teaching
 - protection against litigation
 - malpractice protection
- \$30,000 Accidental Death Insurance
- Legal Assistance
 - Free consultation and representation on grievances and job related problems
 - Services of leading labor attorneys
 - Legal Defense Fund protection
- Political Power
 - Texas AFT lobbyists in Austin
 - AFT lobbyists in Washington
 - Representation at the Coordinating Board
 - Support for local electoral work
- Affiliations
 - Affiliated with the Texas AFL-CIO
 - Affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and Texas AFT
- Staff Services
 - Professional representatives to assist and advise in processing grievances

24-25 Monthly AFT Dues

Full-time Faculty	\$51.00
Full-time Professional Staff	\$33.00
Full-time Support Staff	\$33.00
Adjunct Faculty	\$20.00
Part-time Staff	\$20.00

Membership Eligibility

Membership in the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is open to full-time 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 the back of this newsletter, or check out our online information and application at:

www.aftlonestar.org

American Federation of Teachers
Texas AFT
AFL-CIO



www.texasaft.org



www.aft.org

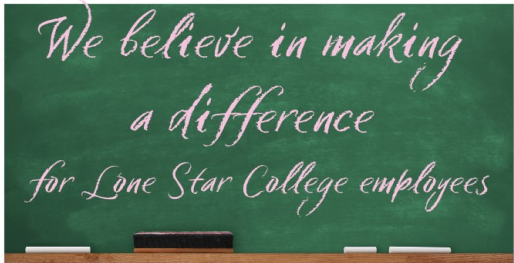


JOIN AFT - LONE STAR TODAY!



www.aftlonestar.org

We are here for YOU!



If you are interested in membership, benefits, or would like to discuss a work-related issue, our AFT Faculty and Staff Vice-Presidents are here to assist.

Please reach out to them!

See back page of this publication for a list of our officers.

Offset your membership dues by using your AFT PLUS BENEFITS to save money!

Union membership gives you discounts on things you need every day.

Our members enjoy savings on an array of goods and services with our Union PLUS benefits and discounts!

AFT SHOPPING DISCOUNTS:

- ◆ Computers and retail merchandise
- ◆ Dining, movies and entertainment
- ◆ Electronics
- ◆ Personal vacations, hotel & car rental
- ◆ Save on Southwest Airlines
- ◆ 15% off AT&T
- ◆ Plus much more!



AFT BENEFIT PROGRAMS:

- ◆ Life, auto, home, and pet insurance
- ◆ Credit counseling
- ◆ Home mortgage and home buying
- ◆ Dental, prescription, vision and hearing programs
- ◆ Scholarships for members and their family members
- ◆ Trauma coverage
- ◆ Plus much more!

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Stay Connected with AFT Lone Star!

www.facebook.com/AftLoneStarCollege





Call for Articles



New mailing address:

AFT- Lone Star College
 PO Box 310404
 Houston, Texas 77231

We're on the Web!

www.aftlonestar.org



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 ideas. Send your articles to **John Burghduff** via e-mail: aftlonestar@yahoo.com , or submit to any of the following officers.

First Name	Last Name	Officer title	Campus
John	Burghduff	President	Cy-Fair
Alan	Hall	President Emeritus	At-Large
Earl	Brewer	Secretary	At-Large
Britney	Hall	North Harris Staff Vice President	North Harris
Pat	Chandler	Kingwood Staff Vice President	Kingwood
Cliff	Hudder	Montgomery Faculty Vice President	Montgomery
Martha	Neely	Montgomery Staff Vice President	Montgomery
Adrienne	Patton	Cyfair Faculty Vice President	Cy Fair
Cindy	Hoffart-Watson	Cyfair Staff Vice President	Cy Fair
Van	Piercy	Tomball Faculty Vice President	Tomball
Stephen	Washington	Houston North Faculty Vice President	Houston North
Cathleen	Quayle	System Office, Staff Vice President	System Office
Cassandra	Khatri	University Park Faculty Vice President	University Park



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 give this message 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, AFT is there for them.

If you believe in these values and are not a member, now is the perfect time to join. If you believe in our values, take action now and join the AFT.

