



AFT New Mexico AFL • CIO
A Union of Professionals
530 Jefferson St. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87108

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POWER THROUGH ACTION!



WELCOME TO THE UNION! UNITED ACADEMICS OF UNM WIN ELECTION

After a multi-year organizing campaign, faculty members at all five branches of the University of New Mexico (Main, Valencia, Gallup, Los Alamos, and Taos) voted **UNION YES!** Roughly two thirds of eligible voters participated in the union election in mid-October, with both proposed units winning the election by strong majorities. Five days later, the local labor board certified the election. The new local will be jointly affiliated with AFT New Mexico and the American Association of University Professors.

Myra Washington, Associate Professor in Communication and Journalism, and one of the members of the UA-UNM organizing committee had this to say about the successful effort:

"The win today signals a victory not just for me and my colleagues who have worked together to build United Academics of UNM, but for all of us at UNM. Our fight for the recognition of the power of our collective faculty voice, our push for transparency, and our desire for more equitable working conditions—these have taken a huge step forward. We look forward to sitting down with the administration to bargain a fair collective agreement for our faculty."

With the election now over, the next focus will be to continue to engage the faculty at the University and work towards establishing a structure for the new union, as well as to determine the process for bargaining the union's first contract.

The new union will be comprised of a bargaining unit for full-time faculty and one for part-time faculty. 1,192 of the 1,516 eligible voters between the two units participated in the election. 62% of full-time faculty voted in favor of the union, and 89% of part-time faculty voted in favor of the union.



Faculty union members Manel Martinez-Ramon, Jessamyn Lovell, David Correia and Matías Fontenla greet colleagues in celebration shortly after ballots were counted Friday afternoon. PHOTO CREDIT: HANNAH COLTON /KUNM



ENGAGING OUR MEMBERS

AFT NM is always engaging with our membership and potential members. In the last few months, we have interacted with nearly 2,000 of our current members, and 500+ new members (in addition to our UA UNM victory) have joined their union.

Whether it's through school visits, phone calls, home visits, monthly meetings, or newer technology like texting or messenger platforms, this important field work helps to keep us informed and allows us to better serve our members!

AFT VOTES!

Did you know that AFT has an entire website dedicated to the 2020 Presidential endorsement process?

AFTVotes.org is a one-stop location where you can engage directly in the process that our union will use to make an endorsement in next year's election.

AFT President Randi Weingarten said the following:

"Our number one goal is to elect a president who shares our values and that means beating Donald Trump. But to win our endorsement, candidates will have to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. As we look ahead to Election Day, we are committed to engaging our members every step of the way."

Visit AFTVotes.org today and complete the survey to let AFT know what YOUR priorities are, sign up to volunteer in 2020, learn more about the candidates, or watch one of the numerous town halls AFT has hosted with candidates for President.

AFT NM RETIREES LOCAL #8029



AFT NM Retirees started the school year with a "NOT Back To School" celebration. A list was made of the many ways to enjoy free time. Because AFT NM Retirees includes retired union members from all over New Mexico, the October monthly meeting was held in Los Alamos. Plans were discussed for having a spring meeting in another part of the state.

Fall is a season for gratitude and retirees are grateful for they don't have to set the morning alarm clock! But that doesn't mean they weren't busy. Many retirees were involved in the recent elections, and three AFT Retirees ran for a seat on their local school board. Dawn Jalbert in Los Alamos and Barbara Petersen in Albuquerque won. Unfortunately Laurie Harris lost her bid to represent Albuquerque's westside on the APS school board but she had a good voter turn out. Retirees are involved and informed because activists never retire!

AFT NM Retirees have members who attend Educational Retirement Board and New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority meetings. They are there to monitor the benefits for retirees, but also to see that pension and health insurance are there for active employees far into the future.

AFT NM Retirees are always ready for new members, so if you want to get involved, send us an e-mail at aftnewmexicoretirees@gmail.com!

RECORD NUMBER OF AFT NM LOCALS PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL BOARD RACES

2019 marked the first time that local school board races were conducted alongside regular municipal races. This change happened because of recent amendments to the Election Code that were approved during the legislative session in January of this year. House Bill 403 consolidated stand-alone elections (like school board elections) with other municipal elections with the goal of increasing turnout and saving money by reducing the number of times voters have to go to the polls.

Regardless of when school board elections happen, it is critical AFT NM locals think about how they can participate and impact the outcomes of those elections - after all, the make up of our school boards dictate both student learning conditions and our working conditions.

This year, several locals (Socorro, Los Alamos, and Taos) took important first steps in communicating with their membership and establishing local structures such as forming Committees on Political Education (COPE), writing local questionnaires for candidates, or communicating with their membership about the importance of school board elections. Many of their endorsed candidates were successful!

Other locals (ATF, AFCP, Gadsden, Rio Rancho, MCFUSE, and CSEC-LC) built upon prior work in school board elections and expanded upon it by running coordinated programs for "Getting Out the Vote", phone banking, canvassing, producing radio ads, member-to-member letters, and direct mail to voters, resulting in additional wins for endorsed candidates.

Overall, we flexed our organizing muscle as a union, and we are proud of the work done to help our endorsed candidates. *Let's win even more in 2021!*

SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars for December 11, 2019 at 6pm for AFT NM's second annual tele-town hall in advance of the 2020 Legislative Session. We will hear from NM Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth and Speaker of the NM House of Representatives Brian Egolf, as well as other legislators, about what we can expect in the upcoming 30-day Legislative Session.

AFT NM members are invited to submit questions to be asked during the town hall, so make sure to watch your inbox for complete details and submit your question to AFTNMTELETOWNHALL@gmail.com

SPOTTED IN DC



US Rep. Debra Haaland was recently spotted in Washington, DC wearing an AFT New Mexico hat given to her by our union during her historic election in 2018 as one of only two Native American women to serve in Congress.

Rep. Haaland wore the hat during the annual Marine Corp Marathon, which she ran to honor her father, who was a Vietnam Veteran.

An AFT NM endorsed candidate, Rep. Haaland has been a consistent supporter of public education and organized Labor during her time in Congress. She also has been a champion for increasing awareness and action around health and safety for Native American communities, especially women's safety.

STATE OF THE STATE

Stephanie Ly, President, AFT NM

I was recently attending an AFT conference for State Federation presidents in Chicago, and we were briefed on what was working well in places for our unions (and unions in general), and where challenges still exist for our profession and our movement as unionists.

During that conference, we had the opportunity to hear from our President Randi Weingarten. Among the words she shared with us, a few resonated with me: **Power, Relevance, Engagement, and Trust.**

Each of these words mean something different depending on the reader, but what struck me was that these words really sum up some of the main goals we strive for, not only as educators, but also as unionists.

POWER: This one is pretty obvious - we organize for power. Power to create better learning conditions for our students at every level, power to collectively bargain for better working conditions, power to work together to change laws when they are not serving our schools and places of learning, and power to change the people who make those laws.

RELEVANCE: Unions (including our own) can't just be about getting higher salaries and better benefits. Yes, that's part of the equation, but in many places - and I would argue this is true for New Mexico - unions and educators are the last line of defense for our students. A recent University of Georgia study showed that in states where there is a strong educational union presence, educational funding stayed higher through the 2008 recession, and continues to be higher than in those states where there is less of a union presence. So much of our work is beyond the contracts we bargain, it must always be first and foremost about the students and families we serve and ensuring they are receiving the public education they deserve - a point made by President Weingarten during her September testimony to the NM Legislative Education Study Committee in Silver City.

ENGAGEMENT: As I outlined in my speech to the assembled delegates at AFT NM's 2019 convention, I promised a renewed effort to be "in the field" to visit you in your locals and places of work. As noted in this newsletter, we have redoubled our efforts to engage our membership in their home districts, bringing the union to you, and not the other way around. I appreciate being welcomed into your locals and classrooms, but I want to challenge our locals to do the same - engage your members through surveys, monthly meetings, professional development opportunities, or maybe more simply, just some old-fashioned quality time. I guarantee your efforts in engaging your members will be illuminating and bear fruit.

TRUST: This one is a big one. Whether it is parents who trust us to educate their student, the community members who trust us to advocate for better public education, the local member who trusts us to bargain on their behalf, or the trust you place in me to lead our union both in New Mexico and to be involved on the national level, we must always strive to honor and respect the trust placed in us as educators and union leaders, because once it's gone, it's hard to get back.

I hope you'll consider how these words fit into the work you're doing every day for our students and our union. All of your efforts are truly valued - I look forward to seeing you soon in the field!



WELCOME, AFCP

In late summer, the members of the Albuquerque Secretarial and Clerical Association (ASCA) voted to merge with the Albuquerque Educational Assistants Association (AEAA).

As a result, the members of AEAA, which includes not only educational assistants, bus drivers and transportation workers, and now the former members of ASCA, voted to change the name of their local to Albuquerque Federation of Classified Professionals (AFCP).

KNOW YOUR AFT HISTORY!

Higher education faculty were among the first to join the education union movement when the American Federation of Teachers formed in 1916.

Professors at Howard University in Washington, DC formed the first AFT higher education local in 1918, followed by faculty groups at colleges and universities in New York, Illinois, and California.

These early actions quickly defined the AFT as a progressive union that would eventually lead the movement for collective bargaining in higher education. (From AFT.org)



Additionally, longtime champion on this issue, NM Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero, penned an editorial in the *Albuquerque Journal* (10/6/19) to bring this issue to the attention of the general public:

"College should lead to opportunity, not financial ruin. Student loan debt has become a \$1.6 trillion black hole and a full-blown crisis across the country – with New Mexican student loan borrowers being among the hardest hit, facing the second-highest rate of default in the nation . . . Student loan servicers are legally responsible for providing people with correct repayment information and helping borrowers access the affordable repayment plans they have a right to under federal law. However, complaints to consumer protection agencies show a systemic practice of steering borrowers away from these plans and leaving them in even greater debt . . . Student debt and abuses by loan companies are keeping New Mexicans from economic mobility and pursuing a career in their chosen field . . . Teachers are getting saddled with debt that should have been discharged. Military members are being blocked from accessing the financial protections they earned through service to our country. Communities of color are often hit the hardest by predatory lending practices and disproportionately face loan servicing breakdowns."

AFT NM IN THE FIELD



President Ly meets with hard-working food service workers in Carlsbad Public Schools. (Carlsbad Federation of United School Employees)



Los Alamos Federation of School Employees President Whitney Holland reads to her 3rd grade class during a recent school visit.



Rio Rancho School Employee's Union members meet with NM PED Secretary-Designate Dr. Ryan Stewart to discuss education policy at their local monthly meeting.

AFT NM BUILDS COALITION TO ADDRESS STUDENT DEBT IN NM

Our union has long advocated for greater oversight in our state on behalf of student borrowers. Unlike many other industries which involve lending and borrowing, currently, student loan lending in New Mexico is largely unregulated.

This unregulated industry has created compounding challenges for borrowers, many of whom wind up paying far more than originally borrowed due to deceptive practices, loan debt being sold to third-parties, and lack of clear communication from lenders about opportunities for debt reduction for public service (like teaching). Statistics show that debt burdens are higher for communities of color (especially among Native Americans), veterans, and women.

AFT NM has partnered with the NM Center on Law and Poverty to build a coalition of stakeholders around this issue to put pressure on Legislators in Santa Fe to take action, as many other states have done. In October, we sent a letter to Governor Lujan Grisham to inform and educate her on this critical issue, which was co-signed by dozens of stakeholder groups representing communities impacted by the student debt crisis.

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