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Label Letter

Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

AFT Releases Science-Based ‘Plan to Safely Reopen America’s Schools and Communities’

As our country continues to battle COVID-19, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has released what it calls a “flexible blueprint for imagining a new normal for public education, public health and our society.”

The five-point plan, which AFT says is based on science as well as educator and healthcare expertise—not politics or wishful thinking—calls for a gradual reopening. The plan acknowledges the eagerness of people across the U.S. to return to some “semblance of normal,” while outlining the need to follow guidelines until a vaccine can eradicate the virus.

Calling the report a “living document,” the AFT explains that they expect the plan to evolve and adapt over time.

In its current iteration, the report states, to gradually reopen we need to:

1. Maintain physical distancing until the number of new cases declines for at least 14 consecutive days. Reducing the number of new cases is a prerequisite for transitioning to reopening plans on a community-by-community basis.
2. Put in place the infrastructure and resources to test, trace and isolate new cases. Transitioning from community-focused physical distancing and stay-in-place orders to case-specific interventions requires ramping up the capacity to test, trace and isolate each new case.
3. Deploy the public health tools that prevent the virus’ spread and align them with education strategies that meet the needs of students.
4. Involve workers, unions, parents and communities in all planning. Each workplace and community faces unique challenges related to COVID-19. To ensure that

reopening plans address those challenges, broad worker and community involvement is necessary. They must be engaged, educated and empowered.

5. Invest in recovery: Do not abandon America’s communities or forfeit America’s future. These interventions will require more—not less—investment in public health and in our schools, universities, hospitals, and local and state governments. Strengthening communities should be a priority in the recovery.

In a related document, ‘Guide to Community Conversation on Reopening America’s Schools Safely,’ the AFT has outlined how to implement its five-point plan. Emphasizing the “power of union and community coming together,” the addendum offers tools and resources to help workers participate in the safe reopening of our schools and communities.

Dr. Lorretta Johnson, AFT Secretary-Treasurer, believes that the AFT’s plan can be used by the Trump Administration and individual states and cities as a blueprint for reopening.

“The most important thing to consider before reopening is the health of our students, teachers and other school employees,” says Dr. Johnson. “And let’s be clear, none of this can be done unless the HEROES Act is passed. We need funding in order to safely open our schools. State revenues are down, and schools were already underfunded before COVID-19. Without the federal funding provided by the HEROES Act, we can’t get to a place where we can safely reopen.”

“This isn’t about politics. This is about people’s lives. A crisis like this should be bringing our communities together, not pit-




Dr. Lorretta Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

“The most important thing to consider before reopening is the health of our students, teachers and other school employees.”

— Dr. Johnson

ting neighbor against neighbor. We believe that our guide provides a real path forward and gives our communities the tools they need to begin the conversations that need to be had about how best to get our teachers and students safely back to school.” ■



DO BUY

UNION PRINTING

Unions around the country often have products printed for their members. Whether they are sold by the union or given away at meetings and conventions, they all should have one thing in common: the union “bug.” The Union Label and Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO, frequently receives requests for a list of union printers and providers of promotional products.

YOU CAN USE THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES TO FIND UNION PRINTERS:

- www.cwaprintshops.com – website that allows you to submit a request for a bid from union vendors for printing, embroidery, silk screening, engraving and other promotional products. The site is run by the Printing, Publishing and Media Workers Sector-CWA (PPMWS).
- www.Alliedlabel.org – a database of GCC and CWA union printers that allows you to search by city, state, or even label number to find a printer near you.
- Other unions, including the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), United Auto Workers (UAW), and International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), can print with a union label.

LOOK FOR THE UNION “BUG” ON YOUR PRINTED MATERIALS





Zenei Triunfo-Cortez, RN, President of the National Nurses United (at podium), leads a rally in support of HR 1309 in Washington, DC.

Walk in My Shoes

Meet the NNU Nurses

Zenei Triunfo-Cortez, RN, President of National Nurses United, California Nurses Association, National Nurses Organizing Committee

I have been a registered nurse for 41 years, all but one at Kaiser Permanente South San Francisco Medical Center. I started in the medical/surgical unit and then worked in other areas, including intensive care, before I landed in the perioperative unit, where I care for patients before and after surgery.

My shift starts at 6 a.m. with my pre-surgery assessment: taking vital signs, starting the IV, making sure patients haven't had anything to eat or drink. I talk to the patients, letting them know what to expect. Some will go home the same day and others will be admitted for recovery. Then I care for post-surgery patients.

I saw the power of the union early in my career when I wanted to transfer to an open position in a different unit, but was told that unit had too many Filipinos. My union helped me win my discrimination grievance. We also fought for and won safe nurse-to-patient staffing limits in California, great contracts, and more, over the years.

Nowadays, I wear an N95 respirator mask and a face shield at work. Surgical patients are supposed to be tested for COVID-19 prior to surgery, but some do not get the test results until after surgery. That's why we need optimal personal protective equipment (PPE)—and since January, my union has been leading the fight for it. We have written to every international, national, and local agency we could, held hundreds of actions at facilities across the country, and spoken out everywhere for safe protections.

We have already won fights. In my facility, we were able to secure some PPE and push back on some practices we know are unsafe. But we still need more. Frontline workers need optimal protections, and union members will never stop fighting until we have them.

Amy Arlund, RN, California Nurses Association Board Member, Fresno, California

I have been a registered nurse at Kaiser Permanente Fresno Medical Center for my entire 19-year nursing career. I work in the intensive care unit (ICU). Since March, I have been caring for COVID-19 patients. My unit has one side for COVID-19 patients and one side for non-COVID patients.

Whenever I am in a patient room, I wear a gown, gloves, N95 respirator mask, and a face shield. Outside a patient room, I wear a surgical mask and face shield to give myself a break from wearing the N95. Because of COVID, I have to do other jobs in addition to nursing care. I'm the janitor, cleaning the rooms and emptying the trash. I'm the respiratory therapist and the phlebotomist drawing blood. I do all these jobs because the ancillary staff will not go into a COVID-19 room.



Amy Arlund, RN CNA

Being an active member of CNA has given me the support, education, and training to be a stronger activist and advocate for my patients. It has empowered me to be a better nurse. I used to be easily intimidated by management. CNA helped me realize that it's my duty as a union nurse to decrease risks to patient safety as much as possible. It's why I'm on the infection control committee. It's why I speak out about the PPE and staffing issues at my hospital. I know my union will support me and fight for me. The strength of the union is in its members becoming actively engaged. I want to show other nurses, "This is how you advocate, this is how you fight."

Marissa Lee, RN, Nurse Representative, Board Member, National Nurses Organizing Committee, National Nurses United Vice President, Kissimmee, Florida

I have been a registered nurse for 36 years, nearly all of them in labor and delivery. For the past 15 years, I have worked the night shift at Osceola Medical Center. Because of my skill level and experience, I am multifunctional and can care for patients at different stages of their pregnancies.

My routine and my relationship with patients has changed because of the pandemic. Now I wear a hat, an N95 respirator mask, and a face shield. I have that face shield on during my entire 12-hour shift. It's hard to wear for so many hours. Because of COVID-19, I have to keep my distance from patients and the patients suffers. I can't comfort patients. I can't hug them anymore.

I have been a union activist ever since I helped to unionize the nurses at my hospital in 2009. We are fighting for safe staffing and PPE — gloves, shoes, and gowns. I'm very militant. I am also a vice president of NNU and I'm an elected board member of the union. As a board member I speak to nurses from Maine, DC, Texas, and all over Florida. I learn about what their issues are and how we can merge all our issues into one.

I want to put nurses' voices out there. In July, I participated in a health care workers' roundtable on Florida's surge in COVID-19 cases, hosted by Congresswoman Val Demings and State Senator Vic Torres. I lobby my congress members. I talk to reporters and educate the community. ☐



Marissa Lee, RN, NNU Vice President, Kissimmee, FL

Recently Appointed Postmaster General DeJoy Sabotaging the USPS

In an internal memo leaked by the Washington Post, major Trump donor and recently appointed Postmaster General Louis DeJoy informed employees that the United States Postal Service (USPS) would have to make 'difficult' changes to cut costs. The changes stated in the memo included leaving mail behind at the distribution centers if it delayed letter carriers from their routes. Multiple media outlets report that previously carriers were trained to never leave behind mail and to make multiple trips if necessary.

Calling his plan a long-overdue "operational pivot," the PMG's memo read, "all trips must depart on time; late trips are no longer authorized or accepted."

In response, staunch USPS supporter, Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) responded, "the deliberate delaying of American's mail delivery would be a stunning act of sabotage against our Postal Service. If these reports are accurate, Trump and his cronies are openly seeking to destroy the Post Office during the worst public health crisis in a century."

When asked about the operational changes, the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) said, "NALC has not received any notification or information on operational changes from the Postal Service. Once we have had an opportunity to review any such changes,

we will use existing processes to address any service or compliance issues."

According to the Washington Post, the memo says the agency will "prohibit overtime and strictly curtail the use of other measures local postmasters use to ameliorate staffing shortages."

American Postal Workers Union (APWU) President Mark Dimondstein told the Washington Post that "overtime is being used because people need their packages in this pandemic. They need their mail in this pandemic. They need their medicines in this pandemic. They need their census forms. They need ballot information."

Vote-by-mail advocates say any new policy which slows deliveries might mean bad news for mail-in ballots.

MJ Hegar, Democratic Senate candidate in Texas is quoted in a salon.com article as saying, "the people in power are trying to keep voter turnout low, and they're hoping that fear keeps us from exercising our constitutional right to vote so they can stay in power."

"This attack on the USPS is just another, in a long line of attempts by this administration to privatize the Postal Service," said Union Label and Service Trades Department President Richard Kline. "For years, Trump has wanted to sell the USPS. We cannot allow that to happen, not now, not ever." ■

Penn State University Libraries Unveil Digital Archive of Labor History

Penn State University recently unveiled a digital archive of labor history. The digital project, 'Beneath the Surface and Cast in Steel: Forging the American Industrial Union Movement' is the culmination of three years of digitization and preparation by the Penn State University Libraries. Financed by a two-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives awards program, the project includes materials that document the historical connections among three important American labor organizations: the United Mineworkers of America, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers.

In a statement announcing the collection, Penn State University Libraries writes, "A core component of this extensive labor and management relations repository is the inclusion of collections, photograph and historical scrapbooks that provide context to the labor movement in Pennsylvania. One of these is the UMWA's poverty survey of miners in Appalachia during the 1940s, used to make the case for better housing and living conditions."

The materials document the struggle for workers to establish safety and health regulations, health insurance, pensions and other key victories for the labor movement.

You can view the archives online at: <https://sites.psu.edu/industrial-unionism/> ■

FLRA Finalizes Rule Allowing Federal Employees to Cancel Union Dues

In yet another blow to federal workers, the Federal Labor Relations Authority finalized its rule allowing dues-paying employees to cancel payments to federal unions at any time, rather than the once annual window they now have.

In a 2-1 decision, the FLRA ruled that federal union dues paying members can revoke their payments at any point during the year, as long as they've been in the bargaining unit for one year.

The rule went into effect on August 8, 2020, and will apply to dues assignments

authorized on or after the rule's effective date.

In February when the FLRA opened the proposed rule for comments, the American Federation of Government Employees President Everett Kelly wrote, "This meritless action by the FLRA is yet another step toward this administration's goal of busting labor unions and making it even harder for rank-and-file federal employees to speak up, defend their rights and serve the American people." ■

New Study Analyzes the Economic and Financial Impact of Right-to-Work Laws



In a new study published in the *Journal of Financial Economics*, researchers from the Scheller College of Business at the Georgia Institute of Technology analyzed the economic and financial impact of right-to-work (RTW) laws in the U.S.

Using data from collective bargaining agreements, the authors show that there is a decrease in wages for unionized workers after RTW laws are enacted.

The authors of the report state that they use “wage growth data from 19,574 CBAs in the U.S.” and specifically focus on the introduction of RTW laws across “five states during 1988-2016: Oklahoma, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and West Virginia.”

In their findings, the researchers state that “RTW laws reduce nominal wage growth by 0.6 pp [percentage points] over approximately one year. The unconditional average wage growth in our sample is 2.9% and average consumer price index inflation is 2.6%, suggesting that RTW laws eliminate a substantial fraction of real wage growth...”

The average worker in a RTW state makes \$6,109 less per year than a worker in a free-bargaining state, according to the AFL-CIO.

The researchers conclude that the five states that have enacted RTW laws since 2010 have seen a negative impact on union bargaining power and thus a negative impact on wage growth of unionized workers. They found that the introduction of RTW laws reduced wage growth for workers covered by CBAs and state that the report provides “empirical evidence that is consistent with declining union strength.”

As well, the report states that “while our simple conceptual framework does not explicitly predict an effect of RTW laws on executive compensation, there are reasons to expect such an effect. One reason is that firms invest more in physical capital and hire more workers following RTW passage. We know from the existing literature that firm size is one of the main determinants of executive compensation. Therefore, it is plausible to expect that RTW laws lead to an increase in executive pay.”

They further found that RTW laws reduce the number of existing CBAs and increase the severity of the “free-rider problem between workers at unionized firms. This suggests that the effect on wage growth occurs through the union bargaining power channel.”

The researchers also show that firms located in states where RTW laws were enacted increase investment and employment but reduce their “use of strategic

leverage,” noting that these actions are all “consistent with a shift in bargaining power from workers to firms.”

“Our CBA-level and firm-level evidence suggests that the decline of unions, and the corresponding decline in workers’ bargaining power, has contributed to a decline in wage growth of unionized workers in states that have RTW laws,” the report concludes. ■

RIGHT TO WORK IS



WRONG FOR WORKERS

NLRB Reviewing Contract Bar Doctrine

The Trump National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) will study the “contract bar doctrine,” in a dispute over decertifying the union representing workers at the Delaware-based Mountaire Farms poultry processing plant.

The vote to push out the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 27 at the plant is being spearheaded by the National Right to Work Committee Legal Defense Fund on behalf of an employee identified as Oscar Cruz Sosa.

The “contract bar doctrine” is an FDR-Era union protection rule that guarantees that once a contract is executed, no representation elections are permitted in the unit covered in the agreement until the contract expires, or for at least three years.

UFCW Local 27 officials argued after the petition’s filing that the “contract bar” should block the decertification election but the NRTWC claims the doctrine is not part of the laws related to the NLRB.

The company is complicit in the NRTWC filing, sending a press release in late June in which it “applauded a recent NLRB decision that will allow an election to proceed, giving employees at the company’s Shelbyville processing plant the chance to vote on whether they want to continue to be represented by the UFCW.”

The NRTWC argues that the “contract bar” is not based on the text of the National Labor Relations Act but is a creature of the NLRB jurisprudence and “unnecessarily stifles employee free choice.” The board is expected to solicit stakeholder feedback on the matter.

In an interview with The Young Turks (TYT), AFL-CIO General Counsel Craig Becker told TYT, “This [NLRB] board is very aggressive in its attempt to displace unions and so it’s highly likely they’re going to cut back on the contract bar rule in some way.”

Becker explains that eroding or eliminating the contract bar could hurt companies by destabilizing corporate relationships with unions.

“One of the arguments in favor of these bars is it gives both sides an incentive to be reasonable...as opposed to feeling you’ve got to fight to the hilt about everything,” says Becker.

Chicago-Kent College of Law professor Martin Malin agrees, telling TYT that the doctrine “always had the support of not only unions, but employers. The only one who doesn’t like it is the National Right to Work Committee.”

The NRTWC is asking the NLRB to “overrule or greatly narrow” the contract bar doctrine. ■

What's in the HEROES Act

MORE MONEY FOR EDUCATION

- » \$90 billion for state fiscal stabilization grants to support schools and public post-secondary institutions and \$10 billion in relief for colleges and students.

AID TO STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- » Provides more than a trillion dollars to state and local governments.

CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND COVID-19 MITIGATION

- » Includes \$175 billion to reimburse healthcare providers in an expanded version of the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund from CARES Act.

OSHA EMERGENCY TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT STANDARDS

- » Requires OSHA to issue an emergency temporary standard within seven days of enactment to protect healthcare and other workers at occupational risk of exposure to COVID-19.

ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS FOR WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES

- » Funds for hazard pay, supports for nine months of COBRA, provides that uninsured who are newly covered through Medicaid will be able to receive free treatment, extends unemployment benefits, increases support for nutritional assistance, and helps with student debt.
- » Includes \$25 billion for the U.S. Postal Service to compensate for foregone revenue and repeals restrictions on \$10 billion in borrowing authority provided in the CARES Act.
- » Increases the federal Medicaid matching rate by 14% through June 30, 2021.
- » Includes \$850 million in funding to states for family and child care for essential workers.
- » Cushions the economic blow of COVID-19 with a second round of more substantial economic impact payments of \$1,200 per family member, up to \$6,000 per household.
- » Extends weekly \$600 federal unemployment payments through next January, providing a vital safety net for the record number of Americans who are unemployed. ■

Historic Drive to Unionize Nurses in NC

The National Nurses Union may make inroads into the highly anti-union, right-to-work state of North Carolina. Nurses at Mission Hospital made clear their intent to unionize when they filed a petition in March with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The nearly 1600 nurses who are thought to be eligible to vote sought to unionize after the hospital was purchased by HCA Healthcare, the nation’s largest hospital corporation.

NURSES SAY PATIENT CARE, WORKING CONDITIONS HAVE SUFFERED SINCE HCA TOOK OVER

In May 2019, four nurses began the nurses’ organizing drive, citing staff cuts, poor communication and lack of access to supplies and PPEs. In an interview with Labor Notes, trauma nurse Kelly Tyler said that unionizing would enable her and her

coworkers to get back to the job of being nurses instead of scrambling to put out fires all day.

Tyler, who began her career in 1985 said she is one of the “older people on the unit. A lot of the nurses at Mission are younger and new. They were taking it as this is how the job is supposed to work and how nursing is.”

Tyler told Labor Notes that she explained to the younger nurses that they have rights, like being able to eat during a shift or use the bathroom.

“I really need the newer nurses to have a voice and to speak up and say when things are not safe.”

HCA has pushed back on the union drive. The company has a reputation of being fiercely anti-union. Most HCA facilities are in right-to-work states like North Carolina, Florida and Tennessee. ■

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PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME VALUE

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UL&STD thanks Ullico for supporting our mission.

EndNotes



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Union Label & Service Trades Dept., AFL-CIO
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E-mail: ULSTD@unionlabel.org
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RICH KLINE, President and Editor

VICE PRESIDENTS: Debby Szeredy, Kenneth W. Cooper, Otis Ducker, Kenneth Dean, George Galis, Loretta Johnson, Patrick Kellett, Edward Kelly, Amy Wiser, Richard McClees, Nicole Rhine, Carlos San Miguel, James B. Wood.

By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*

In Midst of Spiraling Epidemic, Trump Politicizes Crisis



Millions of Americans face devastation. Financial relief programs expire, legislation designed to help the unemployed sits on Sen. McConnell's desk, food assistance for children is set to go unfunded, schools may be forced to reopen without adequate protections for teachers or students and millions of Americans who are without health insurance may be joined by millions more if Republicans kill the Affordable Care Act.

Unfortunately, the list of calamities goes on. In the midst of a spiraling epidemic, Donald Trump politicizes every aspect of the crisis while essentially ignoring science and common sense. His actions are tearing the social fabric of our nation and undermining our institutions as economic inequality and racial injustice become ever more plain.

The Labor Movement and its allies seek to expand unemployment benefits, to create a safe workplace standard that hold employers accountable, to make schools safe and to provide health insurance to the uninsured.

One major effort is to pass the Heroes Act, which addresses many of the pressing concerns faced by laid-off and working Americans. Too many of us face economic disaster as we also confront a health crisis that has sickened millions and killed tens of thousands in United States. Passage of the Heroes Act is a necessity. ■

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