



A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals

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California affiliate of the AFT, AFL-CIO representing education workers in public and private schools and colleges, from early childhood through higher education

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Fact Sheet

What is the California Federation of Teachers?

- The CFT is a union of educators and classified professionals affiliated with the 1.7 million member American Federation of Teachers, and through it with the AFL-CIO.
- The CFT comprises 140 local unions chartered by the AFT. Each local is affiliated with its regional AFL-CIO Central Labor Council and the California Labor Federation.
- Through its local unions, the CFT represents more than 120,000 educational employees working at every level of public and private education from Head Start to the University of California.
- In all segments of education, the CFT is committed to promoting high-quality education and to securing the conditions necessary to provide the best services to California’s students.

Why is there a CFT?

- The CFT was founded in 1919 to provide a labor union alternative for classroom teachers. To gain employee rights taken for granted by other workers, CFT lawyers and courageous teachers tested the courts again and again, building a strong body of case law. One observer said, “The AFT in California is responsible for having won 90 percent of the cases dealing with teachers’ rights during the 1960s.”
- To provide essential workplace rights, the CFT in 1953 introduced the first teachers’ collective bargaining bill in the California Legislature. It reintroduced similar bills for the following two decades, until passage of the Educational Employment Relations Act in 1975 finally brought collective bargaining rights to K–14 teachers and classified employees working in public education. Since then the California Federation of Teachers has represented these employees in professional and employment-related matters.
- Three years later, in 1978, CFT helped pass the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act, bringing the benefits of collective bargaining to university employees. Today the CFT represents lecturers and librarians at the University of California.

What has CFT achieved?

PRE-K AND K-12 TEACHERS

The CFT leads the state’s movement for quality education based on high academic standards for both students and teachers. Through the collective bargaining contract, AFT unions became trailblazers in establishing successful peer assistance and review programs, and other professional development, still in place today. CFT works to secure universal preschool for all California children as well as life-long learning for adults.

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES AND PARAPROFESSIONALS

The union works to ensure that classified employees are recognized for the valuable work they perform. CFT believes the work of qualified school and college support staff is essential to building strong campus communities and enhanced student learning.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY

Representing a majority of faculty in California, the CFT supports a strong core of full-time faculty and seeks to reach the system goal of having 75 percent full-time and 25 percent part-time faculty. To better the working conditions of more than 30,000 part-time faculty, CFT has worked in coalition to win equity funding to boost salaries. The CFT continues to seek legislation that will end the exploitation of part-time instructors.

UC LIBRARIANS AND LECTURERS

The CFT represents world class librarians working at the University of California and has negotiated one of the best contracts in the nation for non-tenured faculty.

PRIVATE SCHOOL AND COLLEGE FACULTY AND STAFF

The CFT organizes education workers at private schools and colleges, Head Start, and job training centers who need a union on their side to secure the most basic employee rights.

VICE PRESIDENTS

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Kati Bassler

Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers

Mary Bravewoman

San Francisco CC Federation of Teachers

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Lynn Wang

Cerritos College Faculty Federation

Kent Wong

UCLA Faculty Union

DIVISION PRESIDENTS

Steve McDougall

Early Childhood/TK-12 Council

Carl Williams

Council of Classified Employees

Jim Mahler

Community College Council

Mia McIver

Universities Council

Dennis Kelly

Council of Retired Members

Who are the CFT's elected officers?



JEFFERY M. FREITAS, a math teacher, was elected CFT President in 2019. He has advocated on behalf of members for nearly two decades as president of the Carpinteria

Association of United School Employees, AFT Local 2216, as elected CFT Secretary Treasurer for eight years, and prior to that, as field representative and lobbyist for the Federation.



L. LACY BARNES, serves as CFT Secretary Treasurer. Prior to this position, Barnes served as CFT Senior Vice President. Barnes holds a doctorate and is an instructor of psychology at Madera Community College; she is former president of the State Center Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 1533.



JUAN RAMIREZ, serves as CFT's Executive Vice President. Prior to this position, Ramirez served as UTLA's AFT Vice President. Ramirez has 24 years of teaching experience in kindergarten and grades second through fourth. He also taught adult education for nine years.



STEVE MCDUGALL, is president of CFT's Early Childhood/TK Council 12th-grade education division council of locals. He is a rank & file member of the Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers Local 1020 and has served in numerous leadership roles since 2006, including local president and chief negotiator.



CARL WILLIAMS is president of the CFT Council of Classified Employees, the division of support staff and paraprofessionals. Williams has led the Lawndale Federation of Classified Employees, AFT Local 4529, for 11 years representing staff in the Los Angeles County elementary district where he has worked for 25 years and is a senior custodian.



JIM MAHLER is president of the CFT Community College Council and leader of the AFT Guild, San Diego and Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community Colleges, Local 1931. Mahler serves on the executive board of the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council and teaches engineering, math and physics in the San Diego district.



MIA MCIVER is president of the CFT Universities Council and past president of UC-AFT Local 1474. Mia teaches at UCLA.



DENNIS KELLY is president of the CFT Council of Retired Members. He is currently chair of UESF Retired Division. Formerly, he was UESF president; AFT & CFT vice president; 26 year CFT parliamentarian; SF Labor Council Executive Board; and a 35 year classroom teacher. Kelly received the Ben Rust award in 2018.

How does the CFT work?

- The highest political body of the CFT is its biennial Convention. At the Convention, hundreds of delegates elected in local unions throughout the state debate and decide issues facing the organization. Delegates also elect the CFT President, Secretary Treasurer, and 24 Vice Presidents.
- Between Conventions, the State Council, to which all local unions may send delegates, makes decisions for the CFT. Between these meetings, the Executive Council, comprising the officers of the CFT, makes decisions for the Federation.
- At State Council and Executive Council, the CFT Committee on Political Education (COPE) reviews ballot propositions and political candidates and their positions on issues. Through COPE, the CFT participates in the campaigns of endorsed candidates.
- Four CFT division councils correspond to the major groups of education employees: EC/TK-12, Classified, Community College, University. Retirees also have a division. The councils meet quarterly to share information and formulate policy proposals for the CFT governing bodies. Council officers are elected by their constituent local unions.

Where can the CFT be found?

- CFT officers and staff work at larger offices in the Bay Area, Los Angeles County, and Sacramento plus numerous field locations.
- AFT local unions can be found from Del Norte County in the north to San Diego in the south. Many locals employ their own staff.