



WHEN SOLIDARITY WORKS

Faculty stand with classified against threat of layoffs

Jennifer LaBounty has lived with stress since state budget projections began crashing more than two years ago. As the last employee hired in the EOPS/CARE office at Orange Coast College, LaBounty knew she had less seniority than all her coworkers.

“If I lost my job, I wouldn’t be able to afford rent, and my four teenagers and I could wind up homeless. It’s a stretch to go from rumor to becoming homeless, but that’s where your mind takes you,” said LaBounty, who is also an officer of the Coast Federation of Classified Employees, which represents 720 staff members on three campuses and in the district office.

At one point, said Local 4794 President Ann Nicholson, the Costa Mesa-based district



Jennifer LaBounty worries about losing her income — and the job that she loves.

separations, classified and faculty agreed to two furlough days and suspended step and column increases. On the plus side, Nicholson added, staff recovered a floating holiday

northern Sonoma coast, administrators are claiming poverty despite a 27 percent budget reserve that far exceeds the mandated 5 percent.

School officials recently sent layoff notices to every classified employee, according to Cheryl Gostisha, who runs the district kitchen and is classified vice president of the Horicon Elementary Federation. During a normal day Gostisha cooks 30 breakfasts and 55 lunches, orders all food and supplies, and cleans the kitchen. “The district says it wants to reduce our time, but we’re not sure how much.”

Local 4415 represents all nine teachers and 12 classified

employees in this small rural district with about 70 students.

Times are hard and job openings rare out here. Schools are the largest employer, and because the K–8 district is so small, students from two grades are often grouped together.

“The school board has always chosen to have a paraprofessional in each classroom,” said kindergarten teacher Nancy Donald, union president. “These positions have been limited to four hours, and most of their paychecks go to pay for healthcare.”

Horicon faculty and classified work together, negotiate contracts together and, even though no teachers are facing lay off, are standing together. “This is a small school in a small town. We’re neighbors, not just coworkers, and we want the best for our children,” said Sue Regona, aide for the fifth-sixth grade classroom.

“Cutting food service, maintenance, or libraries affects all students. As it is, we no longer have sports, music, or counseling. There’s nothing for kids to sink their teeth into except reading, writing, math, and some science.” Donald agrees, saying the cuts are “supposed to be farthest from the students.”

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— Sue Regona, classroom aide

planned to cut \$2.3 million from classified staff and about \$2.6 million from faculty.

Nicholson said the district agreed to avert worker layoffs when “it realized we were working with them on long-term changes. Nobody knew what to expect from negotiations, but we all came out pretty good.” The administration reduced its targeted cuts to about \$1.4 million from each unit. After nearly 70 voluntary

and can access one class each semester using professional development funds.

Although the threat of layoffs now appears remote, LaBounty said “these are definitely scary times. Besides worrying about my financial problems, I worry about losing a job I love — helping students to achieve their dreams of academic success.”

UP NORTH, WHERE the Horicon district hugs the

Take Action
Demand “Yes” votes on tax extensions and AB 1130!
Ask your state legislators to vote “Yes” to extend current taxes and to raise new revenues by approving a 1 percent increase on the top 1 percent of income-earners in California. It’s time to demand fair taxation!

Classified lobby Capitol lawmakers, oppose Diastat bill

A DELEGATION OF experienced and budding classified advocates lobbied legislators twice this spring on a broad range of bills.

“I love being able to walk into a legislator’s office and let them know that classified workers have voices and are there to be heard,” said Carolyn Richie, president of the Compton Council of Classified Employees. The experience changes the

way union members relate to politics, she said. “People feel less intimidated and disconnected from the system after they have lobbied their representatives. They feel empowered.”

Richie first made the rounds in Sacramento arguing against Senate Bill 161 (Huff, R-Diamond Bar). Since then, the fight to stop SB 161 — which allows unlicensed school employees to inject Diastat



Classified not only lobbied legislators, earlier this year, they met the governor.

rectally to a child experiencing an epileptic seizure — has become intensely personal. A nephew has been diagnosed with a condition that leaves him prone to seizures the drug is used to control. Richie has testified against SB 161 three times in 30 days. “This is a very invasive process. I wouldn’t want an untrained person administering Diastat to my nephew.”

On June 2, however, the Senate passed SB 161 without

debate by a 32 to 4 vote and sent it to the Assembly, where CFT has already challenged it.

In other lobbying action, Los Angeles member Mike Romo testified on behalf of CFT-sponsored AB 617 that would provide survivors of classified employees in CalPERS the realistic cost of a dignified funeral. Romo, whose wife died, pointed out that an average funeral cost \$6,560 in 2009, and that classified receive only \$2,000.

CFT-sponsored bills for classified

Room security locks

AB 85 (Mendoza, D-Artesia)

Adds community colleges to the requirements established last year that K-12 school rooms with occupancies of five or more persons be locked from the inside.

Evaluation of Personnel Commission directors

AB 451 (Hall, D-Los Angeles)

Requires personnel commissions

in school and college districts operating under the merit system to evaluate the performance of the commission director annually, and include classified in that process.

Death benefit equity

AB 617 (Davis, D-Los Angeles)

Increases the post-retirement death benefit paid to the beneficiary of a classified employee member of CalPERS from \$2,000 to \$6,163.

Convention moves to strengthen classified-faculty unity



SHARON BEALS

could split faculty and classified members. “That’s why it has never been more important to stand together to defend our jobs and hard-won workplace protections.”

The resolution recognized that workers will need solidarity to successfully confront budget cuts, pension assaults, anti-union “reforms,”

and shifting healthcare costs. It also restated support for creation of a classified-faculty unity training module.

In the workshop “Building Power through Classified and Faculty Unity,” panelists listed issues of common interest to faculty and classified members, and discussed methods to enhance team building, respect,

and collegiality through shared governance. Participants in the overflow audience asked for suggestions on how to break down barriers between the two groups. Others offered advice, such as “avoiding problems before they begin” by lobbying governing boards together to present unified solutions.

Delegates also passed a resolution creating a standing committee to promote diversity in the CFT. The ad hoc group created in 2010 included classified from Los Angeles, Lawndale, Compton, San Francisco, and Berkeley. More than 300 delegates signed cards pledging their commitment to diversity.

DELEGATES TO THE annual CFT Convention approved a classified-sponsored resolution creating a new CFT standing committee called Classified and Faculty Unity.

There is a danger, warned newly elected CFT President Josh Pechthalt, that the current assault on public education

Officers of CFT classified division reelected

Reach out to the leaders of the CFT **Council of Classified Employees!**

President Velma J. Butler vbutler@aft1521.org

Northern Vice President Janet Eberhardt jeber07@aol.com

Southern Vice President Mary VanGinkle vanginm@email.laccd.edu

Secretary Carl Williams carl_williams@lawndale.k12.ca.us

Butler was reelected, and Williams elected, to the 24-member CFT Executive Council.

OCTOBER 14-17 • SAN DIEGO

Don't miss the Classified Conference!

MAKE PLANS NOW to attend the annual Classified Conference in San Diego this fall. Why? Here's one good reason: San Diego Assemblymember Marty Block will discuss the latest political developments affecting the state budget and public education.

Not enough? Workshops on professional and union issues offer 10 more good reasons, from "Building Classified-Faculty Unity" and "The Art of Lobbying" to "Ask the Attorneys" and "How to Run a Union Meeting." Still not convinced? If you don't attend the party on Saturday, October 15, you will never stop hearing about all that you missed.

The deadline for conference registration is September 21. Fees are \$100 for one person, \$75 each for two people, and \$50 each for three or more.

> **To learn more,** telephone Rosanna Wiebe at 510-523-5238 or visit cft.org/classified.



Classified and paras learn and laugh at the annual Classified Conference.



What does PSRP mean, anyway?

THE AFT GROUPS classified employees, support staff, and paraprofessionals together in its Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) division, representing more than 360,000 workers in K-12 districts, colleges, and universities across the nation.

The work of the PSRP division is directed by the PSRP Program and Policy Council, an appointed leadership group of 28 members. This group provides guidance and advice on new programs and services for PSRP members, helping to enrich the lives of both members and students.

Speaking for California on the council are CCE President Velma Butler from the Los Angeles colleges, and former CCE President Robert Chacanaca from the Santa Cruz city schools.

Each year, the PSRP division hosts a three-day conference with a pre-conference health and safety training. (See right) PSRP members also receive the *PSRP Reporter* newsletter five times a year as a benefit of membership.

> To sign up for AFT's new monthly PSRP email newsletter and others on professional issues, go to aft.org/subscribe.

Two Los Angeles classified workers made trek to Madison

FOR NEARLY A month last winter, Wisconsin workers held the world's attention as they defended their union rights against a Tea Party-backed governor and Legislature. Thousands of supporters, including two from the AFT College Staff Guild, traveled to the snowy state capital in solidarity.

Mercedes Gaitan said occupying the Capitol with her brother, Joaquin, and other union members was an unforgettable experience. "It was like a society all centered on the union. Wherever you went, people were union supporters. Store



Mercedes Gaitan

windows had signs saying, 'Union Members Welcome.'"

One lesson Gaitan, who walked eight days in last year's March for California's Future, brought home was that union members must stay active politically. "Even with a friendly majority in Sacramento, we can't pass a budget to save our schools because a few conservatives hold us hostage."

Wisconsin voters have since gathered enough signatures to recall six legislators, which could end the conservative majority. More importantly, the glowing spark of union solidarity has spread.

Classified Calendar

Council of Classified Employees, the CFT division representing classified workers and paraprofessionals, meets **September 23** at the Marriott Manhattan Beach. **State Council** meets the following day, **September 24** at the Marriott. Members are welcome to attend.

National School Lunch Week is **October 9-15**, and **National School Bus Safety Week** is **October 17-21**.

Classified Conference is open to all classified employee and paraprofessional members in CFT. It will be held **October 14-16** at Humphrey's Half Moon Inn in San Diego. (See story above)

CFT Convention will be held **April 13-15** at the Fairmont Hotel in San Jose. Mark your calendar now and consider running to be a delegate from your local union. **The Council of Classified Employees** will meet Friday evening, **April 13**.

AFT PSRP Conference, hosted by AFT's Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel division, is an information-packed and fun-filled event that will be held **April 20-22** in Washington, D.C.. There is a pre-conference **Health and Safety Training** on **April 19**. Learn more at aft.org (click on Your Work > PSRP).

Billrey best choice for CalPERS seat

MICHAEL BILBREY is the union's choice in a run-off election to fill an open seat on the 13-member CalPERS Board of Administration. Billrey has served as a statewide leader of classified employees for more than 18 years and understands the issues of working people. He will work to protect the defined benefit pensions of CalPERS members, preserve and improve healthcare benefits, and increase transparency in the nation's largest retirement system.



Michael Bilbrey

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Vote Michael Bilbrey for CalPERS Board

CALPERS MEMBERS: Watch your mailbox after June 30 for the CalPERS run-off election ballot. Return your ballot by July 28 so it can be counted on August 1. CalPERS members employed as of June 1 are eligible to vote.



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Take a stand for fair taxation and an end to cuts

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC education in California hangs on the outcome of the current fight to balance the 2011-12 state budget.

Since he was overwhelmingly elected last November, Gov. Jerry Brown has tried to close a \$26 billion budget gap through a mix of service cuts and tax extensions. Brown and the Democratic majority in Sacramento agreed to nearly \$12 billion in cuts, but the minority party continues to block a special election to let voters decide whether to extend some current taxes. If the roadblock remains, or if voters turn down the tax extension, one alternative is an all-cuts budget.

Every working Californian will feel the first \$12 billion in cuts. Higher education will be hit especially hard. Community colleges will lose \$400 million and plan to increase student fees from \$26 to \$36 per unit. Under an all-cuts budget, fees would jump as high as \$66 per unit, and at least 400,000 more students would be

turned away. Be prepared for catastrophic course reductions, no winter or summer sessions, and no athletics.

The first wave of cuts largely spared K-12 education. Small comfort. An estimated 110 California school districts are already in trouble, after losing nearly \$7 billion since 2009. An all-cuts budget would strip away up to \$6 billion more.

But here's another alternative: Make sure that the most fortunate in society pay their fair share. Raising the income tax 1 percent on the wealthiest 1 percent of Californians, as proposed in Assembly Bill 1130, could contribute \$2.3 billion in additional revenue. In a recent poll sponsored by CFT, 78 percent of likely voters liked the idea. Even 60 percent of registered Republicans agreed.

So many people have been hurt during the last four years that it's easy to forget that corporate America benefited from the crisis. The wealthiest Californians quickly recovered their losses. It's time to tax an additional 1 percent from the top 1 percent. And it's time for classified employees to help lead the fight to end the cuts and ensure fair taxation!



By **Velma J. Butler**
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CFT Council
of Classified
Employees

California Federation of Teachers
AFT, AFL-CIO
A Union of Professionals

Classified Insider is published by the California Federation of Teachers, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. The CFT represents faculty and classified workers in public and private schools and colleges, from early childhood through higher education. The CFT is committed to raising the standards of the profession and to securing the conditions essential to provide the best service to California's students.

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