



RIGHTS, RAISES, RESPECT
News and Issues for the Early Care and Education Workforce

A monthly electronic newsletter
From the Center for the Child Care Workforce,
A Project of the AFT Educational Foundation (CCW/AFTEF)

MAY 2004

THIS MONTH:

Making the Connection

- Share your Worthy Wage Day activities with us!

Federal News

- Early Childhood Educators Targeted Under New Overtime Regulations
- New Higher Education Proposal that Benefits ECE Teachers
- New Measure to Increase the Minimum Wage

State News

- Early Care and Education Staff in New Jersey Join Bargaining Unit

Resources

- A New Report on California's Higher Education Programs in ECE
- State Funding for Pre-K Efforts Still Lags Behind
- Pre-K Policy Framework



MAKING THE CONNECTION

Share your Worthy Wage Day activities with us!

Once again, we have honored the early care and education workforce by celebrating Worthy Wage Day. Many communities planned exciting events to raise awareness about the need for better wages, benefits and working conditions for early care and education staff.

If you organized or participated in an activity to honor Worthy Wage Day 2004, let us know about it! We would like to create a special edition of our newsletter to feature all of the wonderful Worthy Wage Day events that took place nationwide.

Please share details of your event with us. We are particularly interested in hearing about:

- ** The planned activity
- ** The date WW Day was held
- ** Who participated in the event
- ** Reactions (Did the event receive any press coverage?)
- ** Lessons learned

If you have pictures that we can post, please share these with us as well.

You can e-mail your information to ccw@aft.org, or mail it to: Center for the Child Care Workforce, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001. Thank you for all you in do in furthering the cause of Worthy Wages!

FEDERAL NEWS

Early Childhood Educators Targeted Under New Overtime Regulations

In late April, over the objections of bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate, the Bush administration issued final rules restricting overtime eligibility for millions of U.S. workers.

Unfortunately, the newly created rules would be detrimental to many people in the early care and education workforce, disqualifying teachers of "kindergarten or nursery school pupils" from earning any overtime pay. Workers covered under the rules must be employed by an "educational establishment," defined as a K-12 or higher education institution as recognized by state law, but may also include kindergarten or "nursery" programs.

Further, under these new rules, workers who no longer qualify for overtime pay need not be paid the exempt employee minimum (at least \$455 per week), nor must they be paid on a salary basis. A "teacher of nursery school pupils" earning \$7.00 per hour, for example, would not be entitled to overtime pay.



One week after the new rules were introduced, Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) introduced an amendment opposing them, which was passed by the Senate. Several days later, however, Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), unsuccessfully attempted similar action in the House of Representatives.

If the House does not act to reject the rules, or if the Bush administration does not decide to overturn them, they will take effect in August. If the rules do take effect, we anticipate considerable contention, and possibly several lawsuits, around the definitions of early childhood educators. CCW/AFTEF will work closely with other advocates to uphold the early care and education workforce's right to overtime pay.

New Higher Education Proposal that Benefits ECE Teachers

Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) made a good start in gearing up for the upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) by introducing Senate Bill 2335, which includes professional development opportunities and recruitment grants for early care and education teachers.

The bill would require that states and partnerships receiving recruitment grants must include in their plan "effective mechanisms, including a professional development system and career ladders, to ensure that early childhood education programs are able to effectively recruit and retain highly competent early childhood education providers." The recruitment grants can also be used for compensation initiatives linked to education and training, such as T.E.A.C.H.™ Action on the Higher Education Act is not expected until next year.

To view the bill, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov> and type in S.2335 in the bill number search.

New Measure to Increase the Minimum Wage

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) have introduced a measure to increase the federal minimum wage from the current \$5.15 to \$7.00 per hour. The increase would occur in three phases: 60 days after passage of the measure, the minimum wage would rise to \$5.85 per hour, and then to \$6.45 and \$7.00 per hour in the two succeeding years.

This increase would be beneficial to a significant portion of the early care and education workforce, as some states report assistant teacher wages as low as \$5.45 per hour.

The minimum wage measure is expected to be linked to the welfare bill, which is likely to be voted on this summer. To view the bill, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov> and type in S.2370 in the bill number search.



STATE NEWS

Early Care and Education Staff in New Jersey Join Bargaining Unit

In April, head teachers, assistant teachers and providers in the early childhood education department at the Betty and Milton Katz Jewish Community Center in Cherry Hill, NJ voted to join the New Jersey State Federation of Teachers (NJSFT), a state affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). NJSFT will represent the unionized workers and assist in the upcoming phase of contract negotiation.

Members of the department expressed an eagerness to join the union so that they could have a voice in setting their working conditions. "The union is good for the employer and the employees," said Elba Villarini, a head teacher for the toddler room at the Katz JCC. "Being part of a teachers' union allows parents and other teachers to know that we take early childhood education seriously."

The AFT represents 1.3 million Pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; nurses and health care workers; and federal, state and local government employees.

For more information about the New Jersey unit or the AFT's early childhood workforce organizing efforts, contact Jessica Smith at jsmith@aft.org.

RESOURCES

A New Report on California's Higher Education Programs in ECE

The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment has released a new report, "Training the Next Generation of Teachers: A Preliminary Survey of California's Higher Education Programs in Early Childhood Education and Child Development." This report highlights the increased attention to raising educational requirements for teaching staff in plans for universal preschool in California. It assesses the state's existing college and university offerings, including associate, bachelor's, master's and PhD programs in early childhood education and child development.

The Center is also collaborating this year with the National Prekindergarten Center to conduct a nationwide survey to collect further data on higher education programs. Data from the survey will be available by the end of 2004.

"Training the Next Generation of Teachers" can be downloaded at http://www.iir.berkeley.edu/cscce/pdf/training_next_teachers.pdf.

State Funding for Pre-K Efforts Still Lags Behind

A new report by the Trust for Early Education (TEE), "State of the State Pre-Kindergarten Report, 2004," examines the 50 state governors' budget proposals for the coming year, and finds that in most states, funding dedicated to Pre-K efforts is minimal at best. While 16 governors mentioned Pre-K or other early childhood education efforts as a priority in their 2004 State of the State addresses, only 11 of

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the 41 states with state-funded Pre-K programs are proposing to increase state involvement. Sixteen states have frozen their Pre-K budgets, and four have proposed decreases.

To view the report online, go to: www.trustforearlyed.org.

Pre-K Policy Framework

The National Prekindergarten Center (NPC) has developed a Pre-K policy framework to assist federal, state and local leaders in developing and implementing high-quality Pre-K programs. The framework provides extensive details on a variety of topics, including finance, governance and program standards. The framework specifically addresses the teacher qualifications that define high-quality programs.

To view the framework, visit <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/%7Enpc/framework/>.

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The Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) was founded in 1978 as the Child Care Employee Project, and in 2002 merged with the American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (AFTEF). CCW/AFTEF is a nonprofit research, education and advocacy organization committed to improving early care and education quality by upgrading the compensation, working conditions and training of early childhood professionals.