



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)**

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MAKING THE CONNECTION - ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

Black History Month: Civil Rights and the Labor Movement

Coretta Scott King, remembered as the First Lady of the Civil Rights Movement, died on January 30. As this year's Black History Month gets under way, Americans are remembering Mrs. King as well as Rosa Parks, who died in late 2005, and other luminary African-Americans for their work in advancing freedom and social justice. To learn more about Black History Month, visit www.historychannel.com/blackhistory/.

While many Americans know the importance of the civil rights movement in gaining and protecting freedom for all people, fewer may understand how connected African-American leaders, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, were to the labor movement. In fact, Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968, after coming to Memphis to support 1,300 sanitation workers in the throes of a bitter strike. The night before he was murdered, King delivered his eloquent "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech to unionists, their family members and supporters who had crammed into Mason Temple in the city.

That speech underscored King's commitment to the labor movement. His numerous historical references and Biblical stories firmly established the link between the union members' battle for fair treatment and equality on the job with the broader, fundamental battle for basic human rights. Martin Luther King Jr. recognized that labor's fight for economic justice and dignity were intertwined with the civil rights movement.

As Black History Month is recognized in American cities and towns, we are reminded of the struggles that have come before us. As early childhood educators, we must continue to fight for the economic justice and fair treatment we deserve. When we fight for these basic human rights, we continue the rich legacy of important leaders such as Dr. and Mrs. King and Rosa Parks.

To learn more about the connections between civil rights and unions, visit the AFT's Web site, www.aft.org/topics/civil-rights/mlk/connect.htm.

Family Child Care Providers Rally in New York City

Home-based child care providers, fed up with overdue reimbursement rate increases, protested and rallied in New York City this month. They were joined by United Federation of Teachers (UFT) president Randi Weingarten and New York ACORN's executive director Bertha Lewis.

Last October, New York's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) approved a reimbursement rate increase for home-based providers. However, according to the providers, that news was never shared with them and they have yet to be paid at the new rate. The providers have turned to the UFT for help as they move to start a union. "When we saw this situation last year, we said 'Let us take the risk of



unionizing them,' and we now have 6,000 of the 30,000 who've signed cards and say they want to be represented," says Weingarten.

OCFS says it will address the providers' concerns and properly compensate them as soon as possible. For more information about the efforts to organize home-based providers in New York City, visit the UFT's Web site at www.uft.org.

POLICY

Two Governors List Pre-K and Teacher Pay as Top Education Priorities

In an unusual blending of priorities among K-12 and early childhood education, governors from Virginia and Iowa last month called on their states to fund what they see as key components of education reform: universal pre-K *and* teacher pay. The typical "either-or" scenario that often plays out between these two areas of education was absent as the governors proposed plans and budgets to address both the expansion of early childhood programs and pay for K-12 teachers.

In Iowa, Gov. Tom Vilsack announced that "the Legislature cannot and should not leave town until they have addressed the issue of preschool and teacher compensation." He has proposed an extra \$30 million a year for five years to boost teacher pay and \$15 million a year for five years to make preschool available to all 4-year-olds. In addition, he signed two executive orders allowing home-based child care providers to join a labor union. Two unions, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), have organizing drives among these workers.

In Virginia, Gov. Timothy Kaine outlined his plan to fund an expansion of the state's prekindergarten programs. Unlike other state proposals that often take a rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul approach, Kaine's plan to expand pre-K would not divert money from core K-12 priorities nor put an extra financial burden on local school districts.

To learn about the views on universal pre-K of the 50 governors and mayor of the District of Columbia, visit www.preknow.org/documents/LeadershipReport.pdf.

Virginia Business Leaders Set To Invest in Training for Early Childhood Educators

In other news from Virginia, a group of business leaders in Fairfax County recently decided to invest \$300,000 to improve the education and training of early childhood educators. PNC Bank, the Freddie Mac Foundation and Raytheon have donated funds to the School Readiness Network, a partnership of county agencies, businesses and community groups, to ramp up the qualifications of the workforce.

The network plans to add this funding to other resources from foundations and the county to offer English language classes and training in child development and early childhood education to Spanish-speaking providers. In addition, the project is linking public schools to community-based child care centers through a partnership between elementary schools and child care providers in four neighborhoods.



To learn more about the project, visit www.fairfaxfutures.org/.

LEGISLATION

More States Seek To Increase Minimum Wage

Low-wage workers, many of whom are employed by early childhood programs, may soon see welcome relief in the form of higher paychecks. Although the federal government hasn't raised the minimum wage since 1997, many states have taken the initiative and passed laws above the current federal floor of \$5.15 an hour. The trend of states and localities raising their minimum wages despite federal inaction shows no sign of fading:

- In January 2005, Maryland became the 18th state to set a minimum wage higher than the federal level when the Maryland General Assembly overrode the governor's veto of a bill raising that state's minimum wage to \$6.15 an hour.
- New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson (D) recently proposed raising his state's minimum wage to \$7.50 an hour over the next three years.
- In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has called for a \$1 increase, from \$6.75 to \$7.75.

Ballot initiative campaigns are under way in six states—Arizona, Arkansas, Michigan, Montana, Nevada and Ohio—according to the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center. Raising the minimum wage has long been recognized as an effective strategy for raising living standards for low-income people. As a matter of social and economic justice, CCW/AFTEF and the AFT will continue to fight on behalf of working people to increase the minimum wage.

For more information about the minimum wage, visit www.epi.org/content.cfm/issueguides_minwage_minwage.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES

The Effects of Investing in Early Education on Economic Growth [excerpted from a Brookings Institution working paper, January 2006]

Economists have long believed that investments in education, or "human capital," are an important source of economic growth. Over the past 40 years, worker output has grown about 3.5 percent a year and the productivity of labor has grown about 2.4 percent per year. Estimates of the contribution of education to labor productivity growth vary from 13 percent to 24 percent or more, with its contribution to total growth being about two-thirds of that. Whatever the past contribution, many people believe that investments in human capital will become more important than investments in physical capital as we become a postindustrial, knowledge-based economy, and they worry that we're not paying enough attention to this issue. Click here for more, www.brookings.org/views/papers/200601dickenssawhill.htm.



Georgia Early Childhood Study Shows Children Make Gains in School
[excerpted from "The Georgia Early Childhood Study, 2001-2004 Final Report"]

Children in Georgia made significant gains from the beginning of preschool to the end of first grade in terms of their skills compared to national samples of children their age. Georgia's preschoolers began the school year significantly behind peers their age across the nation. However, by the end of first grade they exceeded the national norms on overall math skills, phonemic awareness, expressive language, and letter and word recognition. Moreover, the children increased the absolute number of correct answers on all assessments of language and cognitive skills at each testing period. Click here for more,
<http://aysps.gsu.edu/publications/2005/EarlyChildhoodReport.pdf>.

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.