



TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION UPDATE

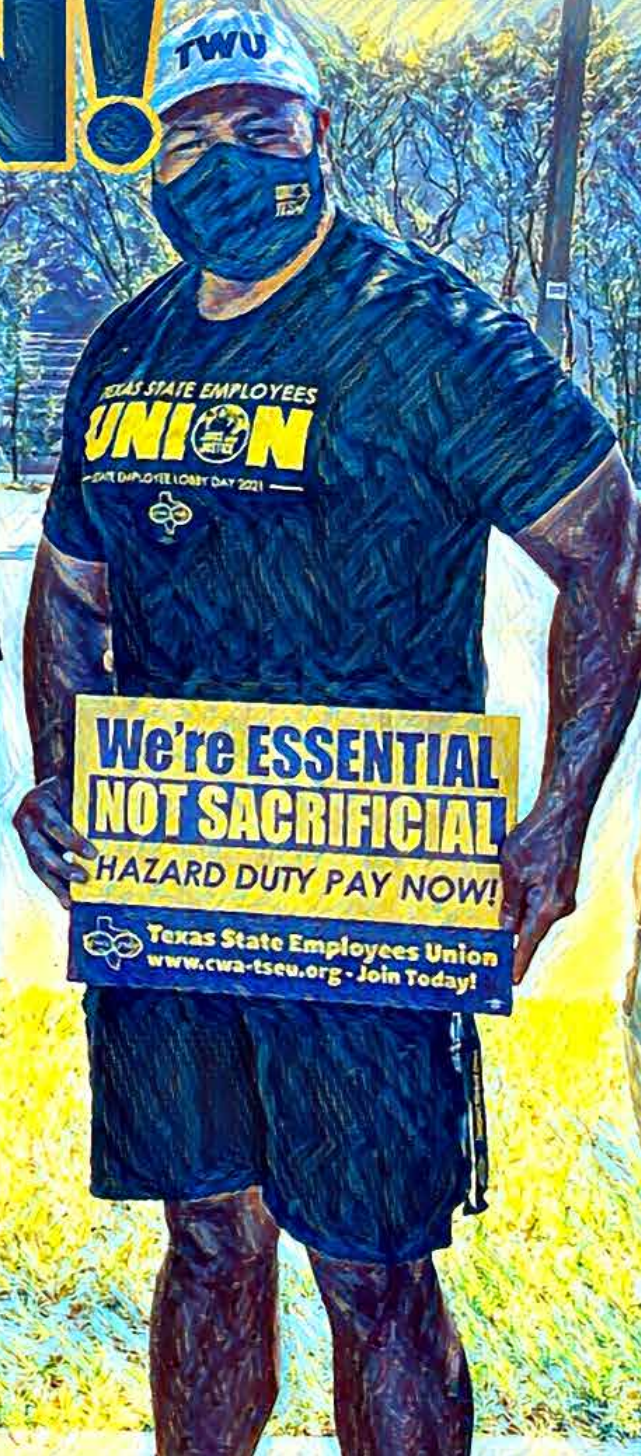


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COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA, LOCAL 6186 / AFL-CIO

JUNE 2021

WHEN WE FIGHT WE WIN!



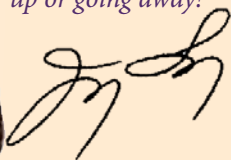
A MESSAGE FROM TSEU PRESIDENT JUDY LUGO:

The 87th Texas Legislative Session is proving to be one of the nastiest sessions ever. The Texas Legislature has historically underfunded our positions, as well as the Employee Retirement System. These actions have led to record turnover and a pension system in need of repair. Many state employees are now choosing to change careers instead of working for Texas.

In 2019, Texas lawmakers approved \$1.1 billion from the state budget to fix the teacher pension fund. This action was celebrated and seen as an overall success. State workers were promised that similar actions would be taken to shore up the ERS system in 2021. Instead, we are now being offered an unacceptable cash balance plan that would automatically enroll new employees into a defined contribution plan similar to a common 401(k) retirement account. On top of this, Legislators seem hell-bent on continuing a dangerous foster-care privatization experiment. This is despite failing contractors putting kids in unsafe living conditions. This Community Based Care has been sold as a new model of delivering care that would rely on local private contractors to improve outcomes and expand foster care capacity. Instead it downsized the State Workforce, and understaffed State Offices are being forced to do contractors jobs.

This session TSEU has had a constant battle to preserve what we have, and our fight is far from over!

Now, more than ever, it's important to get involved in the final days of our legislative process. COPE, Organizing Committees, and Caucuses are leading the fight for our jobs, our benefits, and for the services we provide. I encourage you to get involved, and take action. We are gearing up for a long summer and preparing to be an ever-present force in "Special Session" discussions on redistricting, and the allocation of federal funds for an across-the-board pay raise! TSEU is not giving up or going away!



State workers shouldn't be tricked into accepting a 'CASH BALANCE PLAN'

What is a Cash Balance Plan?

A cash balance plan is a twist on the traditional pension plan. Like a traditional pension, a cash balance plan provides workers with the option of a lifetime annuity. However, unlike pensions, cash balance plans create an individual account for each covered employee, complete with a specified lump sum. Workers can find themselves bringing home lower pensions despite serving the same number of years then coworkers hired before 2022.



Why is it bad?

- **Switching to a 'Cash Balance' plan will do nothing to strengthen the current ERS Pension**

According to the Actuarial Valuation for Funding Purposes as of August 31, 2019: based on current expectations and assumptions, ERS is projected to remain solvent until the year 2075. However, based on volatility in the financial markets, there is a strong possibility that ERS will become insolvent in a 30 to 40 year timeframe which is within the current generation of members. State contributions must materially increase in the next legislative session to secure the benefits for current members. SB321 is a bill to switch new employees over to a cash balance plan, but all claims of "saving the ERS Pension" are from promised contributions based off the 2019 Actuarial Valuation and should be appropriated without sacrificing future generations of workers.

- **Cash balance plans are not effective recruitment tools**

State employee pay has never been good. For decades it has been getting worse, and is now far behind private sector pay. Workloads for state employees have always been high, and they have been getting worse in recent years. For decades, for thousands of state employees, it is the benefits that made the difference. Our major benefits – pension and health care – help make it possible for state agencies and universities to attract and keep skilled, dedicated employees. The other parts of the state employee package: low pay, poor job security, constantly increasing workloads, and on-the-job stress, all discourage people from applying for state jobs in this first place, and drive away good employees. The 'Cash Balance' plan is a subpar benefit for a highly skilled employee looking to join the workforce. The State of Texas is competing with City, County, Public Schools, and Universities for employees, we can't afford to let quality workers look elsewhere.

On just 16 hours' notice, TSEU activists show up to OPPOSE Senate Bill 321!

On Tuesday, May 4, more than two dozen TSEU active employees and retirees testified for over three hours against Senate Bill 321 which would convert the defined-benefit Employee Retirement System (ERS) pension to a cash-balance plan.

If passed, SB 321 would worsen a crisis in state employee turnover, weaken morale, and enable future attacks on Texas's chronically underfunded public pensions.

"For years the Legislature has balanced the budget on the backs of state employees, who don't receive across-the-board pay raises and work in agencies with high turnover," explained Janice Zittelman, a TSEU retiree and former two-term ERS board member. *"Texas has a responsibility to its employees: fund the pension we have."*

"Why did I work for the state—and specifically the State Supported Living Center—beyond believing that I was contributing something positive to the residents?" asked Janet Cook, a TSEU retiree. *"It wasn't the salary. It was the benefits, including the pension."*

TSEU members in higher education, served by the Teacher Retirement System (TRS), testified in solidarity with their ERS counterparts. *"I am getting married and I want to start a family. I need that state pension,"* said Frank Netscher, an active employee at UT Austin. *"What you do to ERS this session, you will likely do to TRS next session."*

Fatima Frosto, like many state employees, has years of service in both ERS and TRS which are currently transferable between the two plans. SB 321 and the proposed defined-contribution plan do not have any provision for continuing this necessary system.

"The state service credit between TRS and ERS encourages us stay for the long haul," explained Frosto, who works in public health. *"I just reached five years of service, which was only possible because my years in graduate school—in TRS—were counted. Most of my cohort sought to work for DSHS and HHSC because we wanted to help our fellow Texans, and nearly all had prior state service in TRS."*

TSEU members' powerful testimony prompted many committee members legislators such as Rep. Erin Zwiener, Rep. Donna Howard, and Rep. Toni Rose to thank TSEU members for their testimony and share their own positive experiences with ERS.

"My parents were lifelong adult state employees, and wanted the same for me" said Rep. Howard. *"I can rest assured that they are still taken care because of the benefits and pension they accrued from their lifelong service to Texas."*



Frank Netscher from UT-Austin testifies against SB321



Public workers have been fighting this transition for years

Attacks on our pension and health care plans in the Texas Legislature aren't new. There have been attempts since 2003 to begin converting our health care plan to "health savings accounts". There were numerous proposals to cut our pension plan or to convert it to a multitude of defined contribution plans. In late 2015, Governor Abbott even appointed former anti-pension and pro-defined contribution activist Josh McGee as Chairman of the Texas Pension Review Board, the state agency that oversees all public pension funds within.

Texas Comptroller announces new rules for "Union Membership"

TSEU has repeatedly defended the right of state employees to join their union at the Texas state legislature, and defeated laws that would make joining a union even more difficult. Since our opponents failed to pass laws that would weaken our union, they are now changing tactics. In May of 2021 Glen Hegar announced a bureaucratic rule change, that could make it more difficult to join TSEU. State agencies are now required to collect applications directly from workers bypassing all worker organizations. TSEU still doesn't know what this will officially look like, because for large part, state agencies were unaware of this transition. This news is a shock because TSEU members and allies sent thousands of letters to Rob Coleman, Director of the Fiscal Management Division and Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar. TSEU activists also testified in virtual hearings in which no individual spoke on behalf of the proposed rule change. This attack is retaliation for a series of victories TSEU has had in the Texas legislature defending the right of state employees to have the freedom to pay union dues from their paychecks. **As more news breaks, we will keep our membership informed and will be prepared to keep fighting to preserve our right to exist!**





Privatization fails as workloads rise and Texas kids suffer

On May 11, private contractor Family Tapestry/ Children's Shelter announced they would be abandoning their contract as the Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) for Community Based Care (CBC) in the DFPS privatization of Bexar County.

Community Based Care has been sold as a new model of delivering care that would rely on local private contractors to improve outcomes and expand foster care capacity. This has not been happening. Contractors like Family Tapestry/Children's Shelter have continued to place kids far from home and in dangerous residential treatment centers - exactly the problem that these contractors were hired to solve, not perpetuate.

Prior to walking away from the contract, a facility operated by Children's Shelter, the Whataburger Center, was also shut down in late 2020 because of repeated violations of minimum standards and numerous incidents that endangered the safety of children. Despite the closure DFPS administrators allowed Family Tapestry to continue placing foster children at Whataburger Center for several months.

The use of unlicensed placements such as offices, church halls, hotels, and other donated space is endangering the safety



of foster children and staff in CBC foster care regions. Despite the failure of private contractors to improve the foster care system or even keep kids out of dangerous facilities, legislators are proposing expanding privatization to four more catchment areas at a cost of \$74.5 million.

House Bill 3691 would also further expand the scope of private contractors to include Family Based Safety Services. The previous FBSS privatization experiment failed in El Paso when the private contractor HomeSafe similarly walked away from their contract in 2020.

The problems plaguing DFPS and the foster care system will not be solved by privatization. Unrealistic workloads, stagnant pay for many critical positions, long hours for Day Watch / Children Without Placement, and a shortage of placement options all need to be addressed by legislators and agency officials instead of being punted to private agencies.

Texas deserve a publicly funded, properly staffed Department of Family Protective Services that will be there year after year to provide the quality services these kids need. Legislators need to get serious about solving the problems of this agency, not distracting from them with risky privatization experiments.

TSEU Austin hosts COVID vaccination clinic for members



This past March 10th, staff and volunteers set up registration tables, pop up tents, and chairs inside and outside the Austin TSEU union hall. Many folks eager for their vaccine showed up early, and when we started the clinic, the line went out of the parking lot and down the sidewalk on South First street. TSEU staff and Austin ROC volunteers created a registration website, emailed and called every retired member in Central Texas to ask them to RSVP for our first vaccine clinic. Office Manager Margaret Allen stepped up to assist those without computer access, allowing them to call our TSEU office to register over the phones. In addition to sharing our event with TSEU members, we reached out to allies at the Texas Alliance for Retired Americans, AFSCME Retirees, the Austin Central Labor Council, and the broader community. Many members were able to get their elder parents, neighbors, and immune-compromised friends to attend the TSEU clinic.

The HEB Pharmacists and Technicians arrived to cheers, and quickly started giving shots in the converted TSEU printing room. By the time the clinic wrapped up three hours later, nearly 200 people had gotten their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Three weeks later, the staff, volunteers and HEB employees did it all again for the second dose.





*I am Neika Clark and I will fight for our health care AND our pensions!
As an ERS Board of Trustees member, I will work for ways to ensure stability
without shifting the costs to my fellow state employees or our state retirees.*

*I look forward to carrying on the hard work of our union sister Ilesa Daniels whose
term on the board expires this year. I will proudly represent the interests of ALL front-
line state employees while working to improve our benefits and protect our pensions.*

PLATFORM:

- **KEEPING OUR ERS FUNDS STRONG:**
Neika will push for increased state contributions to our health care plans and pension fund and support continued responsible investing to strengthen our pension fund.
- **FIGHTING FOR WHAT WE DESERVE:**
She will oppose attempts to convert our pension plan to a 401(k) style plan and new high-deductible, consumer-driven health plans that undermine our benefits.
- **A COST OF LIVING RAISE FOR RETIREES:**
Neika believes state employees should be able to retire with dignity. That means cost of living increases that actually keep up with the rising cost of living. ERS retirees have not seen a COLA since 2001. That's way too long!
- **LISTENING TO THE NEEDS OF WORKERS:**
Accessible to assist any employee with health care and/or pension issues, Neika will be THE voice of front-line state employees on the ERS Board.

BACKGROUND:

- 22 year experience as a state employee
- Training Specialist with Community Care Services and Eligibility
- TSEU member and activist for more than 20 years

ENDORSED BY:

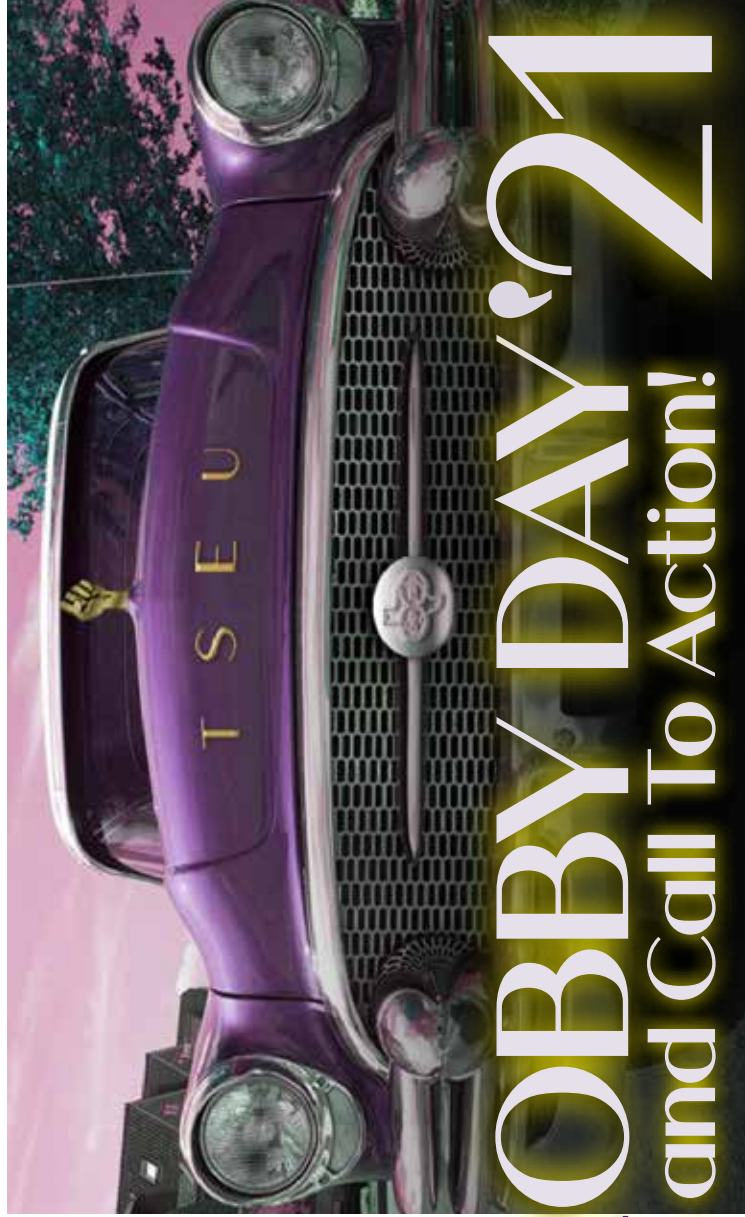
- Texas State Employees Union, CWA 6186
- Current ERS Board Chair: ILESA DANIELS,
- Former ERS Board member: YOLY GRIEGO

TSEU is pleased to announce the upcoming appointment of Neika Clark to the ERS Board of Trustees. Neika was the only candidate to meet the requirements for the 2021 ERS Election; since she was going to be running un-opposed, the elections governing board decided to not hold an election this year! Neika has always been an advocate and leader within TSEU. We are confident in her ability to represent frontline employees on the ERS Board and can't wait for her to get started!



On April 7th, members of the Texas State Employees Union and allied local legislators held simultaneous car caravans and press conferences outside state buildings and legislative offices in Austin, El Paso, the Valley, DFW, San Antonio and Houston. Attendees were calling on elected officials to support pay raises and to also stabilize the ERS (Employees Retirement System).

TSEU Car Caravan



State employees have not received a meaningful across-the-board pay raise since 2013, when the Legislature gave a meager 1% or \$50 per month in 2013 and 2% or \$50 per month in 2014, not even keeping pace with inflation. The buying power of state employee salaries has steadily declined as the cost of living has skyrocketed and their pay has stagnated. Moreover, these inadequate state employee raises have left out university workers for two decades.

workers for two decades.

Union members called for legislators to include a \$6,000 raise in the state budget to begin to keep up with the increasing cost of living. **“State employees work hard every day to provide essential services. During the last year, we have been here to serve families in our community affected by the pandemic that has claimed the lives of more than half a million Americans – and has sickened or claimed the lives of our coworkers. When we heard that our pay raise was left out of the current budget, it feels like a slap in the face. We are asking legislators to fix it.”**

said Teresa Jaramillo, a union member who works at UTRGV in Edinburg.

During the pandemic, front-line state employees and university workers risked contracting Covid-19 and faced dangerously low staffing levels at many workites, while most received no hazard duty pay. The 5% cuts for many agencies mandated by the Texas Legislature last summer further tightened already threadbare budgets.

“High turnover and low staffing made Covid spread.” says Yolanda White, a direct support professional and shift lead at Lufkin SSLC. **“When units would have an outbreak, staff from other units would have to come expose ourselves and work at the COVID unit to cover for vacancies, because we are always working without the proper staffing ratios.”**

Retired state employees drew attention to the years of underfunding by the legislature which has prevented an increase to pension payments. State retirees are approaching 20 years since the last pension increase and they say it is past time for legislators to view this as an emergency.

Diana Alvear, a retired state employee from Brownsville, was incredulous that legislators had improved their own pensions three times since 2001, but ignored state employees who had dedicated their careers to serving Texans. **“It is outrageous that legislators didn’t forget to help themselves while retired state employees are struggling to buy groceries.”**

Union members decorated their cars with signs, streamers, balloons, and slogans for boisterous car caravans. TSEU members streamed TSEU’s playlist on Spotify, honked their horns, cheered, blew bubbles, and waved at onlookers as they slowly drove through bustling city streets to car rallies and press conferences. Lori Spencer, an HHSC worker from Arlington, said that she felt it was important to be part of Lobby Day. **“I am here to be part of the advocacy with my Union brothers and sisters. We showed up and made some noise with our car caravan, and it was a call out to our lawmakers to support state workers. We deserve fair pay for the work we do. We won’t back down. We will continue this fight.”**






THE GOOD THE BAD & THE UGLY

Bills of the 87th Texas Legislative Session

THE GOOD

- **HB917 by Rep Ana Hernandez and Sen Eddie Lucio II**
Allows retirees to run for ERS Board
STATUS: Signed by Governor! - **MAJOR TSEU VICTORY**

- **HB 1076 by Representative Terry Meza**
Studies the long term effect of tuition regulation
STATUS: No hearing in Higher Ed - DEAD
- **HB1376/SB1410 Rep Toni Rose and Sen Roland Gutierrez**
Would provide high injury risk pay to SSLC/SH employees
STATUS: No Hearing in House Human Services or Senate State Affairs - DEAD
- **HB2063 Representative Ordaz Perez**
Establishes a state employee family leave pool
STATUS: Has passed House and received hearing in Senate State Affairs - ALIVE
- **HB264/SB1302 Rep Phillip Cortez/Sen Cesar Blanco**
Restores grievance procedure for HHSC and DFPS
STATUS: No Hearing in House Human Services or Senate Human Services - DEAD
- **HB 3307 Representative Ana Hernandez**
Establishes a \$15hr minimum wage for SSLC employees
STATUS: No hearing in Human Services - DEAD
- **HB3393 Representative Terry Meza**
Includes TJJJD officers in LECOSRF 20yr retirement plan
STATUS: No hearing in House Pensions - DEAD
- **HB3427/SB2056 Rep Ryan Guillen/Sen Jose Menendez**
Creates a salary career ladder for all state employees
STATUS: No hearing in House State Affairs - DEAD
- **SB2138 Sen Cesar Blanco**
Removes disability parking fees from state universities
STATUS: No hearing in Senate Higher Ed - DEAD
- **HB815 Representative Vikki Goodwin**
Increases longevity pay
STATUS: No hearing in House State Affairs - DEAD
- **SB44/HB1345 Sen Judith Zaffrini/Rep Jeff Leach**
Provides leave for State employees that volunteer for disaster relief STATUS: Sent to Governor!

THE BAD

- **HB 1516/SB 657 Rep Tan Parker and Sen Drew Springer**
Performs an efficiency Audit on TANF program including outsourcing as an option
STATUS: Passed house, pending in Senate - ALIVE
- **HB2374/SB1577 Rep Sanford and Sen Lois Kolkhorst**
Performs an efficiency Audit on DFPS program including outsourcing as an option
STATUS: Passed house and Senate - ALIVE
- **HB1437 Representative Gary Gates**
Converts ERS to a Hybrid retirement plan
STATUS: No hearing in House Pensions - DEAD
- **HB4534 Representative Gary Gates**
Studies ERS to determine alternative plans
STATUS: Passed house, pending in senate - ALIVE
- **HB1438 Representative Gary Gates**
Converts ERs to a Cash Balance plan
STATUS: No Hearing in House Pensions- DEAD
- **HB1028 Representative Gary Gates**
Converts ERS to a defined contribution plan
STATUS: No hearing in House Pensions - DEAD
- **HB577 Representative Phil Stephenson**
Studies using life insurance to generate alternative TRS revenue STATUS: No hearing in House Pensions - DEAD
- **HB571 Representative Gary Gates**
Bundles health care and directs State Employees to lowest cost surgery centers
STATUS: Did not pass house by deadline - DEAD

- **HB1/SB1 Representative Greg Bonnen/Sen Joan Huffman**
The State Budget - likely to not include an across the board pay raise STATUS: In Conference Committee - ALIVE

THE UGLY

- **SB321 Sen Joan Huffman and Rep Greg Bonnen**
Converts the ERS defined benefit plan to a Cash Balance plan, includes \$510 mil a year to pay off ERS unfunded liability in 34 years
STATUS: Passed Senate, ending House floor vote - ALIVE
- **HB3691 Rep James Frank**
Expands community based care privatization of DFPS statewide STATUS: Passed House, pending in Senate - ALIVE
- **SB1660 Sen Paul Bettencourt**
Removes the ability of public sector unions to collect dues by payroll deductions
STATUS: No hearing in Senate State Affairs - DEAD



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BUILDING OUR POLITICAL MUSCLE WITH CWA-COPE



State employees and our state services are under constant attack - COPE is one way to build the political power to FIGHT BACK. Politics affects our lives every day. Budget cuts, privatization, and our own salaries and health care are all controlled by the Texas Legislature and other elected officials. Money counts in politics. Candidates must win elections before they can help make laws. Grass-roots volunteer work is important in winning elections, and so are other forms of campaigning that cost money. Wealthy corporations and individuals give lots of money to get their friends elected. We need more of our friends in elected offices. As state employees, we can't afford large individual contributions. But we can make our voice heard by pooling many small contributions so they have a large impact. CWA-COPE allows us to gain a stronger voice in the political process.

Why we need to build COPE!



THE COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION

**I want to build our
political power
by joining COPE!**



I authorize TSEU to draft my account monthly for the amount that I have indicated and to forward these funds to CWA COPE.

HELP MAKE SURE OUR UNION IS UNBREAKABLE!

If dues deduction from my salary/wages becomes prohibited by law, I hereby authorize TSEU to commence and continue deducting monthly TSEU dues from the bank or credit union account identified here, in the same monthly dues amount as then on file with TSEU.

INITIAL

NAME _____ SOCIAL SECURITY # _____

MAILING ADDRESS (STREET/PO BOX, CITY, STATE, ZIP) _____

(_____) HOME PHONE _____ (_____) WORK PHONE _____

EMAIL _____ AGENCY, UNIVERSITY, ORGANIZATION _____

MONTHLY DEDUCTION (CHECK ONE): COPE CLUB [] \$5.00 [] \$10.00 [] \$20.00 [] \$30.00 [] OTHER AMOUNT []
[] I'm using this form to make my union UNBREAKABLE

BANK NAME _____ BANK ADDRESS _____

ROUTING # _____ ACCOUNT # _____

DRAFT FROM (CHECK ONE) [] CHECKING [] SAVINGS DRAFT BEGINS MONTH OF _____, 20____

This authorization is voluntarily made based on my specific understanding that the signing of this authorization card and the making of contributions to CWA COPE PC are not conditions of membership in the union nor of employment with the company that I may refuse to do so without fear of reprisal.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____



TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION / CWA

1700 South 1st Street, Austin, Texas 78704 (512) 448-4225

T.I.N. No. 15102561097-001



SECTION A: AGENCY USE ONLY			
AGENCY NAME	AGENCY#	UNIT#	FIRST ACTIVE DUTY DATE

SECTION B: EMPLOYEE INFORMATION		
SOCIAL SECURITY #	NAME (LAST, FIRST, MI)	
EMPLOYEE ID #	E-MAIL ADDRESS (SUITABLE FOR RECEIVING TSEU CORRESPONDENCE)	
HOME STREET ADDRESS	CITY / STATE / ZIP	
HOME PHONE ()	WORK PHONE ()	CELL PHONE ()
AGENCY / UNIV.	FACILITY / LOCATION	
PROG / DEPT / UNIT	JOB TITLE	WORK HOURS



N UPG RR ORG: _____

SECTION C: MEMBERSHIP AND AUTHORIZATION	
Membership dues and effective date of payroll deduction: the 1 st day of _____, 20____ (MONTH)	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$17.00 salary below \$20,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$21.00 salary \$20,000-\$25,000
<input type="checkbox"/> \$28.00 salary \$30,000-\$40,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30.00 salary \$40,000-\$50,000
<input type="checkbox"/> \$13.00 part time	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25.00 salary \$25,000-\$30,000
<input type="checkbox"/> other - \$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32.00 salary over \$50,000
AUTHORIZATION: I authorize the monthly deduction from my salary or wages for membership dues to TSEU. I understand that I may revoke this authorization at any time by written notice.	
_____ EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE	_____ DATE
I agree to comply with the rules adopted by the Comptroller concerning deductions for membership dues.	

Calling all TSEU members, MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Summer 2021 COPE Blitz

TSEU is carrying out a massive Summer COPE Tour/Organizing Blitz in every region of Texas. Our goal is to grow our union power and increase TSEU visibility by signing up new members, COPE members and just getting back into local offices.

Texas is facing increasing turnover rates as workloads climb and our pay stagnates. This legislative 2021 session is one in which most our demands fell upon deaf ears.

The Summer Cope Tour/Organizing Blitz will help build momentum in our ongoing fight for an across-the-board raise, increased staffing levels, and an end to privatization while legislators are in their home districts. Gov. Abbott announced a 'Fall Special Session' for redistricting, and allocation of federal funds. We must continue pressure and build up to this Special Session while 100% holding State Representatives and Senators accountable for the 2021 Legislative Session.

TSEU will be conducting organizing events, legislative meetings, and visibility actions throughout the Summer of 2021. To get involved in organizing this 2021 Summer COPE Tour/ Organizing Blitz, or to plan an event out at your workplace please contact TSEU's Legislative Director Tyler Sheldon (email: tsheldon@cwa-tseu.org / phone: 512.448.4225).



ROC STARS: Activist members of the Retiree Organizing Committee (ROC) are known as our ROC STARS; who despite no longer working at state agencies or universities, they continue fighting and building a stronger union in retirement!

TSEU recognizes Barbara and Danny Fetonte

Our "ROC Stars" for this Update are Danny and Barbara Fetonte. Anyone active in ROC or TSEU across the State of Texas is familiar with the leadership and drive of these two!

Barbara and Danny first met in Buffalo, New York at Buffalo State University during a Teamsters Union Drive while Danny was working in a large bookstore's mailroom.

Barbara is from a Buffalo union family; Danny had grown up in New York City.

Some of the successes that the Fetontes look back on with pride include winning payroll deduction for TSEU, affiliating the independent University Employees Union at UT Austin with TSEU, winning the right to organize at the Texas

Youth Commission, \$800,000 in back pay for African American employees at Stephen F. Austin University, and half a million dollars in back pay for employees at the Health Science Center at UT Tyler, both university drives in partnership with the NAACP.

Some of TSEU and the Labor Movement's challenges for the future include working to bring collective, direct action for on the job issues, State Employee Pensions, using social media as a tool, not as a replacement for human contact and building Organizing Committees and other organization that are committed to building TSEU. And don't be afraid to offend people!

The Fetontes look with hope to the future of TSEU and the Labor Movement in Texas!



TSEU EXECUTIVE BOARD

Judy Lugo (HHSC, El Paso, retired) President
Joe Montemayor (TSEU Austin/DFW) Vice President
Joanne Day (DSHS, Austin) Secretary
Samm Almaguer (TWC, Houston) Treasurer
Albert Zepeda (HHSC Brownsville) Region 1
Arthur Valdez (DSHS-Retired, San Antonio) Reg. 2
Yvette Sherman (FPS-Retired, San Angelo) Reg. 3
Rodney Brown (Dallas) Region 4
Yolanda White (HHSC, Lufkin SSLC) Region 5
Ilesa Daniels (HHSC, Houston) Region 6
Freddie Greer (HHSC, Mexia SSLC) Reg. 7
Anne Lewis (UT-Austin) Region 8

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TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION

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TSEU successful in electing long time activist Neika Clark to the ERS Board of Trustees

Throughout the history of TSEU, we have encouraged union members to run for the Employee Retirement System Board of Trustees. We do this to give state employees a direct voice on the ERS Board, which oversees the ERS pension and makes key decisions regarding state employee healthcare. Despite its relevance to state employees, most of the members on the Board are actually political appointees or agency managers that earn six figures. At our last General Assembly in September 2020, TSEU's membership voted overwhelmingly to endorse Ms. Neika Clark, a Houston-based HHSC employee of over 20 years and union member of two decades, for ERS Board of Trustees candidacy.

Even with the constraints of COVID-19, TSEU mobilized an excellent virtual campaign. From Zoom meet-and-greets

with union members to member textbanks to a coordinated social media campaign, TSEU members supported Ms. Clark enthusiastically. Additionally, Ms. Clark earned the endorsement of other state employee organizations such as AFSCME Retirees with her charisma, knowledge, and commitment.

Despite appearing on the nomination form alongside three other candidates—one of whom makes six figures as a prison warden for TDCJ—Ms. Clark was the only candidate to pass the 300 signature threshold for appearing on the ballot. Therefore, Ms. Clark has been declared the unanimous winner of the ERS election and will be sworn into the Board later this summer. Ms. Clark's win is a historic victory both for TSEU and for ERS: Never in the history of the Board of Trustees has a winner been crowned unanimously without need for an election!

Neika Clark (center) celebrates her upcoming appointment to the ERS Board with Houston union members and TSEU staff. ▼



THIS WIN IS JUST A BEGINNING

While on the Board, we can be sure Neika will work to defend and expand our pension system and our health care coverage!

HELP SPREAD THE WORD:

Even though there is no election this year, show your support by removing the (would-be) election poster from the center spread of this UPDATE and displaying it in your office or workspace. Not only does it show you backed a WINNER, the poster could be a starting point for educating co-workers about ERS and the ongoing fight to maintain and strengthen employee benefits!

Contact your TSEU office or organizer for more supplies.