



## Confronting the coronavirus

In AFT President [Randi Weingarten's latest column](#), she notes the failures in the Trump administration's response to the coronavirus, underscores steps that should be taken, and highlights our members' contributions in confronting this emergency. Weingarten says, "Trump is not responsible for the new coronavirus, but, as president, he is responsible for his administration's response to it." She also points

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out that “defeating this epidemic must be a whole-society effort. AFT members are stepping up—from nurses administering tests for COVID-19 in New York and treating patients in Oregon and Washington, to educators in Cleveland filling ‘blizzard bags’ with food and at-home lessons, and school employees in low-income communities nationwide working to provide 6 million free books to their students.”

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## AFT endorses Joe Biden as Democratic nominee for president

Acting on a clear mandate from the AFT’s membership, the AFT executive council passed a resolution March 22 [endorsing Vice President Joe Biden for president](#). After more than a year of member engagement on the endorsement process—with more than 300,000 AFT members nationwide participating in candidate events, town halls, polls, regional conferences and other efforts—new membership polls show strong support for Biden. “Before the COVID-19 epidemic, the 2020 election was

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about the soul of our country,” says AFT President Randi Weingarten. “Now it’s about our soul, our safety, our health, our security and our economic well-being. Joe Biden is the experienced and empathic leader our country needs right now.”

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**“Healthcare workers have shown their commitment to patients and the public. We need the same level of commitment from the Trump Administration and we need it now.”**

– Donna Phillips, Nurse

#GetUsPPE

## Help healthcare workers get the protective equipment they need now

A [petition created by registered nurse Donna Phillips](#), who is an AFT member in Alaska, calling on the Trump administration to do more to ensure the production and distribution of masks, other personal protective equipment, and ventilators has garnered more than 125,000 signatures (and growing) nationwide. Phillips’ petition calls for the administration to use its authority under the Defense Production Act to compel action by private industry. The MoveOn petition is circulating organically on social media and is being supported by the AFT. Phillips writes: “Healthcare workers

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have shown their commitment to patients and the public. We need the same level of commitment from the Trump administration, and we need it now. We urge you to honor the bravery of healthcare workers by implementing the recommendations listed [\[in the petition\]](#). The nation's health and our lives literally depend on it."

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## Focusing on members' health, safety in the fight against COVID-19

The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is spreading rapidly across the country, and the World Health Organization has declared it a global pandemic. As clusters of coronavirus cases continue to emerge in communities where our members live and work—and transform daily life—[the AFT is focused on prevention and precaution, treatment and the long-term economic impact of the outbreak.](#)

"Our attention has been on the health and safety of our families, friends and communities. We are working constantly to help you all and the people we serve

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navigate this virus, and buffer against the economic impacts," said AFT President Randi Weingarten during a telephone town hall earlier this month to discuss the coronavirus outbreak.

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## School nurses working COVID-19 testing sites in Connecticut

Connecticut closed its schools March 13 in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. The school closures meant school nurses like Toni Pederson would be out of work for at least several weeks. As fate would have it, however, the [state established COVID-19 test sites at local hospitals, and nurses like Pederson were needed on the frontlines.](#) Pederson and other school nurses employed by the Visiting Nurse Association of Southern Connecticut and represented by VNA of Southeastern CT Union Local 5119/AFT Connecticut were hired to perform COVID-19 testing at the drive-through testing center at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital in

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New London. In fact, members of the local negotiated with the VNA to get the nurses assigned to this role during the crisis. “It is a great example of solution-driven unionism and shows how collective bargaining empowers members to apply our faith, strength and willingness to work together—the union way—to get everyone through this,” says Ann Ryan, president of Local 5119.

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## Worth a read

- [Front-line health workers push back against CDC mask guidelines for coronavirus](#)
  - [PEF members keep New York state alive](#)
  - [Montana nurses call for expanded closures to slow coronavirus](#)
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