



AFT New Jersey
State Federation, AFL-CIO
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AFTNJ COPE CONSTITUTION
Adopted by AFTNJ's Delegate Assembly on October 26, 2026

Article I - NAME

This Committee shall be known as the AFTNJ Committee On Political Education (AFTNJ COPE).

Article II – PURPOSE

The purpose of the AFTNJ COPE shall be:

1. To gather and share information about policies, legislation, and candidates' positions, including incumbent candidates' voting records, that affect workers' rights and economic interests.
2. To improve union members' understanding of policies and legislation of state and local governments, and workers' rights.
3. To educate members on voter registration requirements, the mechanics of voting (including early voting, vote-by-mail, and provisional ballots), and how to interpret ballot questions, and to promote informed voter participation among AFTNJ's membership.
4. To educate members on key ballot questions, legislative proposals, and policy issues under consideration by local, state, and federal government, and their potential impact on public education and higher education, so that members have the information needed to cast an informed vote.
5. To encourage the participation of the members in good standing in political activities.
6. To work with the AFTNJ president and executive vice presidents of higher education and PreK-12 divisions to determine recommendations for political action.
7. To promote public and government support for public education.
8. To recommend to the Delegate Assembly endorsement of candidates for local, state, and federal elected offices that represent the residents of the state of New Jersey.
9. To promote and support political candidates and issues on the local and state level that support and further the mission and objectives of AFTNJ.

Article III – MEMBERSHIP

1. Eligibility
 - a. Only those who are members in good standing of AFTNJ chartered affiliates and contribute to their local COPE fund shall be eligible for membership of AFTNJ COPE.
 - b. For members in good standing whose affiliates do not have a COPE fund, and who wish to serve on the AFTNJ COPE may do so if:
 - i. the member contributes a minimum of \$5 per month to AFTNJ's COPE Fund; or
 - ii. the member's local contributes to AFTNJ's COPE Fund annually based on membership size:

# Members	Amount
0-50	\$50
51-250	\$250
250-500	\$500
500-1000	\$1,000
1000-2000	\$1,500
2000+	\$2,500

2. Committee size, terms, and appointment
 - a. The committee shall consist of nine members in good standing, as described above, who have
 - i. volunteered
 - ii. and been appointed by the AFTNJ president to a one-year term.
 - iii. AFTNJ's Executive Board has final review and approval of the committee's representation per AFTNJ's Constitution and Bylaws.
 - b. The PreK-12 Division and Higher Education Division shall each have a minimum of four members.
 - c. A member of AFTNJ's retiree chapter may serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the committee to liaison with AFTNJ's retiree chapter.
 - d. The president of AFTNJ shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member.
3. Member's duties
 - a. Each member must attend a majority of meetings.
 - b. Each member must vote on requests for fundraisers for endorsed candidates or officeholders.
 - c. Each member must participate in at least one NJ AFL-CIO Central Labor Council and one AFTNJ get-out-the-vote activity (GOTV). GOTV activities may include labor walks, phone banks, text banks, or postcard campaigns, for every general election in November.
4. AFTNJ members who seek or who hold elected public office are ineligible to serve on AFTNJ COPE.

Article IV - OFFICERS

1. Chair and vice-chair terms and appointment
 - a. The officers of the COPE shall be a chair and vice-chair, who will be appointed by the AFTNJ president for a term of two years.
2. The chair and vice-chair, with support from AFTNJ's political director, shall be responsible for:
 - a. Conducting a minimum of four COPE meetings per year.
 - b. Coordinating communications with COPE members on upcoming meetings and political activities.
 - c. Facilitating the COPE process for recommending to the Delegate Assembly candidate endorsements for New Jersey local, state and federal elected offices.
 - d. Overseeing the COPE approval of the disbursement of COPE funds (i.e. political contributions).
 - e. Providing a written or oral report of COPE and its activities to the Delegate Assembly.
3. AFTNJ's Treasurer shall serve as AFTNJ COPE treasurer.
4. The treasurer shall be responsible for:
 - a. Processing and distributing all authorized expenditures from AFTNJ's COPE Fund.
 - b. Filing all required reports with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (NJ ELEC).
5. The chair, vice chair, and treasurer shall be required to complete the online NJ ELEC training following their initial appointment.

Article V – AUTHORITY OF THE COMMITTEE

The COPE shall have the authority, with the support from AFTNJ's political director to:

1. Carry out activities related and limited to the achievement of its purpose.
2. Evaluate candidates using questionnaires, candidate interviews, and voting records on issues related to New Jersey public education and labor.
3. Make recommendations by a simple majority of its members to the AFTNJ Delegate Assembly regarding endorsements of candidates for New Jersey local, state, and federal elections.
4. Approve the disbursement of COPE funds by a simple majority of its members for political activities subject to applicable laws and regulations.
5. Conduct committee proceedings governed by *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.
6. Deliberations regarding candidate evaluations, interviews, and questionnaire responses shall remain confidential to the committee unless and until a recommendation is formally presented to the Delegate Assembly.
7. A committee member with an employee-employer, familial or financial relationship with a candidate under consideration shall disclose the relationship and recuse themselves from discussion and voting on that candidate's evaluation or endorsement.
8. The COPE Constitution must be compliant with the AFTNJ Constitution and Bylaws.

Article VI – REMOVAL AND VACANCIES

1. Grounds for removal are failure to
 - a. attend three consecutive meetings of the AFTNJ COPE without being excused by the chair or vice-chair,
 - b. fulfill the duties of a member or officer,
 - c. or remain in good standing.
2. Removal process
 - a. The member and committee shall be notified, by the chair or vice-chair, ten days prior to the next AFTNJ COPE meeting, of the removal.
 - b. The member may be present and provide a statement at the meeting.
 - c. The member may be removed at said meeting, upon motion, second, and a majority vote of the members present.
3. Vacancies shall be filled by selection from the Delegate Assembly at its next regular meeting after due notice to all member affiliates.
 - a. The President may appoint a member of the Delegate Assembly to fill said vacancy until the next meeting of the Delegate Assembly.

Article VII - AMENDMENTS

1. Changes to the COPE Constitution may be proposed by AFTNJ members
 - a. who are designated delegates of chartered affiliates in good standing and contribute to their local COPE fund,
 - b. or who contributes to AFTNJ's COPE Fund as an individual,
 - c. or whose affiliate contributes to AFTNJ's COPE Fund.
2. A proposed constitutional amendment may be presented in writing to the chair or vice-chair for consideration at the next COPE meeting.
3. The COPE shall administer a vote on the proposed amendment among the nine voting members within 90 calendar days of the submission of the proposed amendment.
4. AFTNJ's Delegate Assembly may vote on the proposed amendment if recommended by the COPE at the first meeting that follows the COPE recommendation.

AFTNJ COPE Bylaws

Article I – Contributions to Candidates

1. Contributions to candidates will only be made:
 - a. after AFTNJ has endorsed a candidate,
 - b. and if a member of AFTNJ COPE, AFTNJ's executive officers, or AFTNJ's divisional VPs can attend the event.
2. Should no member of the AFTNJ COPE, AFTNJ executive officer, or AFTNJ divisional VP be able to attend an event pursuant to an approved endorsement, the committee may move to identify a representative from an impacted local who shall be vetted and then approved by the AFTNJ COPE to ensure its values, ideas, and beliefs are represented by said appointee.
3. Should no member listed in Article I, section 1.b. be able to attend, the committee may move to waive the attendance requirement.

Article II – Endorsement Process

1. After the NJ AFL-CIO Endorsement Conference in June, the AFTNJ COPE will meet to determine
 - a. whether or not to endorse the same candidates,
 - b. or make modifications to the NJ AFL-CIO endorsed candidates.
2. The committee shall only recommend endorsement of candidates for local, state or federal office in New Jersey.
3. The committee will present their endorsement recommendations at the last Delegate Assembly meeting of the fiscal year.
4. The committee aims to avoid primary candidate endorsements but may under exceptional circumstances recommend a primary endorsement at the March Delegate Assembly meeting, which must be approved by 2/3rds or higher vote.

Article III - Meetings

1. There shall be a minimum of four AFTNJ COPE meetings per year.
2. Every member of AFTNJ COPE shall be notified in writing via email of each meeting at least seven days before each meeting.
3. A tentative agenda for each meeting shall be included in meeting notifications.