

## NATIONAL PRESS CLUB SPEECH TALKING POINTS

- The AFT always has been prepared to take on the tough issues. We were the first union to fight for collective bargaining, the first to oppose segregation in our locals and schools, the first to embrace education reform and the principle that all students need to be able to achieve high academic standards, and the leader in the fight to turn teaching into a true profession.
- The present difficult economic conditions already have led to cuts in many vital services, including education. This is a mistake. We should reinvest—not disinvest—in education. The long-term health of our economy requires a well-educated and well-prepared workforce. And we shouldn't make cuts in our children's future.
- Investing in education means more than funding. It means investing in sound programs and policies that help improve teaching and learning in all our schools.
- Every child deserves a world-class, well-rounded education; schools that are safe, clean and well-equipped; a rich and broad curriculum that feeds the mind and stirs the imagination; and teachers who are well-prepared in every school, in every classroom, every day.
- This cannot be done without shared responsibility—from parents, teachers, administrators, and business, labor and community leaders. Public schools must be the public's schools if they are to succeed.
- We believe that—with the exception of vouchers, which siphon off limited funds from our public schools—nothing should be off the table, **provided it is good for children and fair to teachers.**
- We welcome discussions of tough issues like tenure, teacher assignments and differentiated pay.
- The AFT is not new to these discussions. During our last convention, our delegates approved a resolution calling upon our national unions to make the tenure process more rigorous through peer assistance and review. And six years ago, we passed a resolution that provided for differentiated pay—not in isolation, but as part of a successful reform effort.

- No successful reform can be achieved without the input of teachers. As President-elect Obama said throughout the campaign, reform must be done *with* teachers, not *to* them.
- This cannot be done if teachers are demeaned, if the unions that represent them are demonized. We should respect our teachers and the important work they do, and make them a part the vital discussion of how we can improve our schools.
- For the past eight years, NCLB has been a stand-in for real discussions about education policy. We urge Congress to move beyond NCLB to pass and fully fund an education law that has strong and common standards, and real and workable accountability, and that will help provide students and teachers the tools they need to do their best.
- In the meantime, the AFT today proposed **10 smart investments** that Congress, governors, mayors and school districts can and should consider right now. (**SEE ATTACHED SPEECH.**)