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**Statement by Ted Kirsch,
President, AFT-Pennsylvania,
On Gov. Corbett's Call to Freeze Wages for Public Education Employees**

In his budget message to the Pennsylvania General Assembly earlier this month, Gov. Tom Corbett called for a freeze on compensation for public school district employees. The governor would cut more than \$1 billion from K-12 public education. He also proposed major cuts to higher education, chopping support for Penn State and other state-related universities—Temple, Lincoln and the University of Pittsburgh—by 50 percent. Similar cuts would be taken at the 14 state-owned universities.

PHILADELPHIA—Gov. Tom Corbett is arriving late to the cost-cutting ball. Our members—teachers and other staff who are educating students in schools across the state—have already made many sacrifices in contract negotiations over the last few years of economic turmoil.

Before asking Pennsylvania's educators to give up more, the governor should rethink his strategy of balancing the budget on the shoulders of the students who attend our public schools and universities. His budget asks very little from the wealthy and corporate interests. Pennsylvania's teachers understand that our budget crisis requires new fiscal strategies—but necessary sacrifices should be shared sacrifices.

It is not fair to ask the people who make a difference every day in the lives of our children to make further sacrifices in their families' standard of living while others—many of them among the governor's political supporters—are asked to give up little or nothing.

The governor has chosen to ignore a source of revenue that would help alleviate the Commonwealth's financial problems. The energy corporations that are exploiting the rich Marcellus Shale natural gas deposits pay no taxes for the drilling that is producing huge profits. The people of Pennsylvania recognize that is not right. Just last week a poll conducted by Franklin & Marshall College found that more than 60 percent favor ending the tax-free status of natural gas drilling.

Teachers and other public school staff will continue to consider all options to ensure Pennsylvania's children get the best education possible within the state's budget constraints. Each school district faces its own unique fiscal issues, and educators will continue to be part of the solution. But before imposing wage freezes, the governor and his allies in the General Assembly must do more to make sure that sacrifices are shared fairly.

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