



For Immediate Release

**Statement by Ted Kirsch, AFT Pennsylvania President
January 28, 2013**

"In an address to the Pennsylvania Press Club today, Budget Secretary Charles Zogby said the governor's budget which will be unveiled next week is predicated on policy changes that only the legislature can enact, and if it fails to enact his agenda then it will have major negative impact spending on education, transportation and other major programs.

"Secretary Zogby indicated that current school employees can expect to see changes in their future pension benefits, and that new employees will have 'a new plan design'. He also hinted the governor will propose different changes for members in the Pennsylvania School Employees Retirement System, which covers teachers and other school employees, and state employees who belong to the State Employee Retirement Systems.

"The governor is telling legislators to accept major changes to the pension systems or cut programs that are vital to their constituents.

"The governor is using the public schools, students and teachers as pawns to advance an agenda that emphasizes privatizing valuable public programs and services.

"There are better alternatives for Pennsylvania to fund its schools and other vital services while maintaining its commitment to pay the pensions that were promised to teachers and other state employees by enacting competitive gas extraction taxes, closing corporate tax loopholes and ending unnecessary corporate tax breaks.

"The best solution to the pension funds' current challenges was implemented two years ago, when legislators passed a bipartisan reform bill that will gradually restore pension funding to sustainable levels. Act 120 was designed to work over the long-term. The governor needs to give Act 120 time to work."

Ted Kirsch is available for interviews at 215-587-6784.

AFT Pennsylvania represents 36,000 public, private and charter school teachers and school support employees; community college and university faculty and staff; and state employees across the commonwealth. AFT Pennsylvania is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and AFL-CIO.

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