



Contact:

Public Affairs Dept.  
202/879-4458

**EMBARGOED UNTIL:**  
**12:01 a.m. Thursday, July 15**

## Maine Ranks Among Lowest in the Nation for Teacher Salaries

**Washington, D.C.**—Maine's teacher salaries for the 2002-03 school year ranked among the lowest in the nation, according to the American Federation of Teachers' annual teacher salary survey released Thursday.

Maine ranked 35th for its average teacher salary for 2002-03 at \$38,518, up 3.3 percent from the previous year. The state's national ranking dropped even further, to 47th for its average beginning teacher salary at \$24,631, up 2.4 percent from the previous year. The AFT estimates that Maine's average starting salary for the most recent school year, 2003-04, rose to \$25,419.

Regionally, Maine trailed its neighboring states significantly for average teacher salary. Vermont ranked 24th at \$42,038; and New Hampshire was 25th at \$41,909.

Across the country, teachers' salaries remained relatively stagnant while their share of health benefits rose at all-time rates, making it difficult to attract and keep good teachers at a time when they are increasingly needed, the report said.

Nationally, the 2002-03 average teacher salary, which is the most recent figure available, was \$45,771, up 3.3 percent from the previous year, and the average beginning teacher salary was \$29,564, up 3.2 percent from the previous year. But AFT's report noted that teachers' share of health insurance costs spiked an average 13 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"Exorbitant health insurance costs are taking an intolerable bite out of already inadequate teacher salaries. Teachers are being asked to do more, shortages persist in the most challenging areas to teach, yet compensation packages are insulting," said AFT Secretary-Treasurer Edward J. McElroy.

Furthermore, the AFT noted, superintendents' average salaries are as much as four times higher than teachers' average pay. "States and school districts are crying poverty when it comes to teachers' pay yet somehow find money for extravagant administrator salaries," McElroy said.

California led the nation with the highest average teacher salary for 2002-03, at \$55,693. South Dakota had the nation's lowest average teacher salary at \$32,414. Alaska led the nation with the highest average beginning teacher salary for 2002-03 at \$37,401. Montana had the nation's lowest average beginning teacher salary at \$23,052.

###

*The AFT represents 1.3 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; nurses and healthcare workers; and federal, state and local government employees.*