

Thank you. I want to start by thanking President Weingarten for her incredible leadership of this union and this movement. And thank you to the AFT for inviting me. It's an honor to be here.

We are living in a golden era of labor organizing. Workers have made monumental strides over the last few years from auto factories in the Midwest, to the AFT's major victory last month in Fairfax County, Virginia, one of the largest school districts in the country.

1

Last summer, I joined the Writer's Guild of America on the picket line to hear about the challenges they faced. They shared what so many workers across America have seen firsthand: that when markets become consolidated, with economic power concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, working people lose out.

The agency I chair, the Federal Trade Commission, was created more than a hundred years ago. It was a time when the Industrial Revolution had transformed the American economy, but robber barons and industrial titans had amassed enormous power that they could use to coerce consumers, workers, and small businesses. Congress passed the antitrust laws and created the FTC to crack down on illegal business practices and stand up for everyday people, including workers, against unchecked corporate power.

We are still doing that, 110 years later, by making sure that our markets are fair, honest, and competitive—and that all Americans can get a fair shake.

Ultimately, labor law and antitrust law are fighting for the same thing: your freedom in the marketplace: the freedom to get a better job in a tight labor market, the freedom to strike out on your own and start a small business, the freedom to organize; and the freedom to play employers off of each other when it's time to renegotiate your contracts.

One of the biggest threats to workers' freedom is a market where corporations don't have to compete hard for your labor, and instead can get away with squeezing or abusing their power.

¹ Press Release, AFT, More than 27,500 Fairfax County (Va.) Education Workers Overwhelmingly Win Historic Union Elections (June 10, 2024), <https://www.aft.org/press-release/more-than-27500-fairfax-county-va-education-workers-overwhelmingly-win-historic-union>.

Take non-compete clauses, for example, which lock millions of workers into bad jobs and block them from taking better ones. All too often, employers quietly tuck these clauses into

During the pandemic, when you needed personal protective equipment to do your jobs safely, some vendors required massive minimum orders of 10,000 masks or 200,000¹³ gloves. Giant hospital systems could afford to buy in bulk like that, but if you were ~~local~~ a provider, or a teacher in a rural area, you just had to put on a garbage bag and hope for the best. Luckily, the AFT secured PPE to keep you safe. And the FTC has scrutinized supply chains to keep our markets safe and resilient through ~~health~~ ~~petition~~.¹⁴

Consolidation can have consequences in every sector. When big banks merge, they may become ~~big-to-fail~~ and need bailouts. When film studios merge, sometimes certain stories don't get told. And when tech companies ~~merge~~ ~~ways~~ that undermine competition, they can degrade product quality, ~~threatening~~ our safety and privacy online.

When social media and gaming platforms turn a blind eye, children can be exposed to sexual harassment and abuse ~~we~~ met with parents who have lost their kids due to bullying on these platforms. No business should ever place profits over children's safety.

The AFT is fighting this with your Real Solutions campaign, and the FTC is focused on

- The NLRB is cracking down on labor rights violations like surveillance and securing remedies for workers whose rights are violated, including back pay.
- The Department of Labor made four million more workers eligible for overtime pay, which adds up to over seven billion dollars in lost wages for teachers.
- The Department of Education is continuing to work with state and local leaders to address our nation's educator shortage.

And of course, President Weingarten and the AFT are helping lead