

AFGE



THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

For current and retired government workers and their families since 1933 • American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO

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BIG ENOUGH TO WIN

AFGE on the Rise

AFGE Reaches New Heights as Locals Implement
Big Enough to Win Plan Across the U.S.

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A Message from AFGE's National President *J. David Cox Sr.*

When hundreds of AFGE members came together in Orlando for the leadership conference two years ago, none of us were guaranteed a successful result. Still we brought our best ideas and hard-won experiences to the table, and developed a visionary plan to bring our union to the next level: Big Enough to Win.

Since that conference we have seen our share of triumph and tribulation: the government shut down, but we reopened it and won full back pay; pay increases remained at 1% but we ended the freeze and won locality pay for more than 110,000 employees across the country; cuts to agency budgets put thousands of jobs on the chopping block, but we saved thousands of them and continued to add membership. Every time Congress came after government employees, we hit back hard and came out on top.

AFGE's recent success is more than just luck – it is the result of your hard work in making our Big Enough to Win vision a reality.

The Big Enough to Win plan emphasized four key strategies that made our union strong enough to win these battles and position us for a better future: mobilizing an army of legislative and political activists, growing the size and influence of the members, educating and engaging the membership and the public, and building strong, vibrant local unions.

Since day one following the Orlando conference, AFGE has worked day and night to implement every aspect of the plan within our power. We've recruited and trained over 500 Legislative and Political Correspondents across the country, dramatically expanded our organizing rebate programs, increased access to leadership training, and invested in cutting edge technologies to grow our PAC and deliver AFGE's messages to millions of Americans.

The results speak for themselves. In addition to winning major victories on pay, benefits and jobs amidst the most anti-union environment in a century, we've beat back several attacks on your union rights and we

set new records for PAC dollars raised and total membership. Today, AFGE stands at 296,199 members strong.

As we enter our 40th National Convention in Orlando this August, we need to make the bold choices necessary to finish what we started two years earlier. We must double down on these strategies and grow our union to the point where we're winning real pay increases, expanding retirement and health care benefits, and improving job security for all government employees.

A better future is out there for the taking, and we must not miss our opportunity to seize it.

In Solidarity,

AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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AFGE Adds 13 More Pay Localities; Wins Pay Raise for 110,000 Federal Employees



In May, AFGE won its long struggle to expand locality pay areas and pay raises for 110,000 federal employees across the country.

The changes, which take effect in January of 2016, will increase the number of individual locality pay areas from 33 to 46, not including the Rest of U.S. locality.

In addition, OPM has proposed adding nearly 70 new counties to 21 of the existing locality pay areas--boosting pay for thousands.

Employees in these locations have been receiving salaries that are substantially below what businesses and local governments pay in their region for people doing similar jobs. In the 13 metropolitan areas being added to the locality system, each has a measured pay gap of 10 percent above the catch-all Rest of U.S. locality.

The actual increase employees will receive is still unknown. Locality pay rates are set annually by the Office of Personnel Management, and the president has discretion to determine what portion of the annual pay

raise is allocated to locality pay. We expect more details on pay rates and affected counties to become available in the fall.

The 13 new locality pay areas are:

- Albany-Schenectady, N.Y.
- Albuquerque-Santa Fe-Las Vegas, N.M.
- Austin-Round Rock, Texas
- Charlotte-Concord, N.C.-S.C.
- Colorado Springs, Colo.
- Davenport-Moline, Iowa-Ill.
- Harrisburg-York-Lebanon, Penn.
- Laredo, Texas
- Kansas City-Overland Park-Kansas City, Mo.-Kan.
- Las Vegas-Henderson, Nev.-Ariz.
- Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, Fla.
- St. Louis-St. Charles-Farmington, Mo.-Ill.
- Tucson-Nogales, Ariz.

OPM also has proposed adding 69 counties to existing locality pay areas. A detailed list of those counties, and up-to-date information about the pay raise can be found at www.afge.org/MyRaise.



Are you signed up for AFGE Text Alerts?

Text "AFGE" to 225568 for all the latest updates on legislation, events, and opportunities for action.

From your personal phone and never from a government phone.



296,199 STRONG

Membership Soars as Locals Implement Big Enough to Win Plan across the Country

When 700 AFGE activists gathered in Orlando, Florida, to develop a strategic plan two years ago, there was no guarantee it would amount to anything. But thanks to the focus, dedication, and pluck of AFGE leaders across America, our union is growing rapidly in size and influence, and winning bigger fights than before.

In just the past few months, we broke our all-time membership record by surpassing 296,000 members for the first time in our history.

We reached the highest number of local Legislative and Political Coordinators (LPC) with 633 LPCs recruited. We have our first Big Enough to Win Local that's committed to growing and strengthening the union. We are more active legislatively and politically than ever, winning pay increases for 110,000 federal employees and a new retirement benefit for law enforcement officers in the month of June alone.

Clearly, we have a lot to be proud of. And just in case you haven't heard, AFSCME folks were so impressed with our Big Enough to Win strategy that they drafted their own plan of attack called AFSCME Strong after attending our Orlando conference two years ago. Now AFGE, AFSCME,

and AFT are locking arms and marching toward a visionary future where we don't have to apologize for being public employees, and instead stand up for the rights and compensation we deserve.

Building a Movement that is BIG Enough to Win.

Congress decides your pay, health care, and retirement. They decide whether your job should be cut or privatized. They set rules and regulations that govern your working conditions and due process. In other words, your livelihood can be affected by a single act of Congress.

That's why AFGE is so proud of our Legislative and Political Coordinators program, which has played a major role in our recent wins on Capitol Hill.

This program is extremely important for a very simple reason: If your members of Congress don't constantly hear from you, they assume you don't care what they do to your pay, health care, retirement, job, and basically your life and your family's finances.

The AFGE National Office always makes sure lawmakers are aware of our positions on different issues, but they

need to hear from you back home.

LPCs' role is to stay in touch with their members of Congress at home and reach out to them whenever we need help passing or defeating a bill.

Our goal is to recruit a total of 1,100 LPCs from locals across the country. Right now we have 633 LPCs, who have already made a huge difference in our legislative fights. For example, we wouldn't have been able to kill the anti-official time measure – the Hice amendment, designed to weaken the union – without LPCs. They were instrumental in beating back some harmful amendments in the House Defense Authorization Act as well as getting some good amendments adopted.

In addition to growing the LPC program, we have also deployed more full time Legislative and Political staff to connect locals with their lawmakers, assist locals in building their own legislative structure, and organize rallies and issue-campaign activities.

AFGE has been leveraging technology to increase letter writing and call-in campaigns. This allows more people to reach out to their members of Congress faster and easier.

We've also developed a PAC app to make it easy for union leaders to ask members to contribute to our political action committee and raise funds to support politicians



President of the AFSCME, Lee Saunders delivers a speech at a BEW rally.

who stand up for government employees.

We Have Our Very First Official Big Enough to Win Local!

On May 12, Local 918's executive board voted to adopt a resolution to become a Big Enough to Win local. The local represents nearly 1,000 Federal Protective Service (FPS) employees and chemical security inspectors nationwide.

AFGE is encouraging every local to pass a Big Enough to Win resolution and join the AFGE movement to pursue strategies that will increase our pay, protect our pensions, preserve worker and union rights, and secure proper funding for government investments in America.

You can find a copy of the resolution at www.afge.org/win. Look for the Become a Big Enough to Win Local tab on the right hand side.

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Big Enough to Win commitment card.

Big Enough to Win Commitment

To My fellow AFGE Leaders,

I am committed as a union leader to pursuing strategies that will increase pay, protect pension benefits, preserve worker rights and union rights and enhance job security by securing proper funding for the government programs we deliver.

I agree that our strategy must be to become "much Bigger and much Stronger" as quickly as possible to counter the growing legislative and political muscle of the wealthy corporate elite to enable us to survive and succeed. We must win. We cannot afford to lose. The time left to become Big Enough to Win gets shorter with each passing day.

For these reasons, I am 100% committed to making AFGE, as well as the labor movement, Big Enough to Win.

The Big Enough to Win strategies and recommended actions developed by the 2013 Leadership Meeting are:

- Get bigger and stronger by increasing our membership. To do that, we need to organize more members into our union.
- Get more effective legislatively and politically by being able to mobilize our members in every congressional district in the country and raise money for political action.
- Ensure our local leaders are better educated on the issues so that they can do a better job of protecting and representing workers in Congress and at the worksite.
- All AFGE locals need to be strong, effective locals.

I fully support the Big Enough to Win Strategies and Actions developed at the 2013 Leadership Meeting in Orlando, FL. I commit to asking our Executive Board and our membership to adopt these Big Enough to Win strategies and actions and put them into action as soon as possible.

Date: _____ Print Name: _____ Title: _____
 Agency: _____ Local: _____ District: _____ Council (if appropriate): _____
 Signature: _____

Go to afge.org/commitment to fill out your card.

Contributions to AFGE-PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Your voluntary decision to contribute more, less or not to contribute at all will not result in any favor or disadvantage in your relationship with AFGE.



AFGE Praises Passage of Bill to Reform Retirement Benefits for Federal Law Enforcement Officers

For years, correctional workers and other law enforcement officers were forced to retire early – if they chose not to retire at 50, they had to sacrifice 10% of their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) savings for no reason.

But with the Senate’s passage of the Defending Public Safety Employees’ Retirement Act that could change for good, finally giving our men and women in the Bureau of Prisons the fair retirement benefits they have earned. “This is a huge victory for correctional workers and for our brothers and sisters in law enforcement,” said Eric Young, President of AFGE’s Council of Prison Locals (CPL).

“AFGE and the CPL have worked tirelessly for almost 20 years to ensure that our working men and women are able to retire with the money that they have earned with their blood and sacrifice.”

The bill exempts federal law enforcement officers, firefighters and air traffic controllers from paying an arbitrary 10 percent penalty on withdrawals from their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) retirement accounts if they retire after age 50 with 20 years of service. After years of dangerous and life-threatening work, these men and women have earned it.

AFGE Leads the Fight for \$15 in the Federal and D.C. Government

The fight for \$15 is raging on around the country, and AFGE is taking the issue to the federal government. The union is urging the federal government to lead by example by raising the minimum wage for tens of thousands of federal and D.C. government employees who make less than \$15 an hour.

The workers performing these low-paid jobs are just as vital to the mission of their agencies as everyone else. They are nursing assistants at our veterans’ hospitals, food service workers at our commissaries, and maintenance workers at our military bases. They are supporting our country, yet they are unable to support themselves and their families on the paltry wages they earn from the government.

The federal and D.C. government should follow the lead of city leaders in Los Angeles who this week voted to increase the minimum wage for municipal employees to \$15 an hour over the next five years, joining three other cities that have enacted a \$15 minimum wage in the past year.

The current federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour. Last year, President Barack Obama issued an executive

At Least **35,000**
Government employees
make less than \$15 an hour
**Does not include NAF*

order raising the minimum wage for federal contract workers to \$10.10 an hour, yet the administration has resisted calls to support even that modest increase for the government’s own workers.

AFGE and other labor unions on the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee made a proposal that the White House support increasing the minimum wage for hourly federal employees to \$10.10 an hour. But the proposal died due to opposition from management representatives on the committee.



AFGE files Class Action Lawsuit against OPM Officials over Data Breach

In the wake of the massive data breach affecting millions of current and former federal employees, AFGE has filed a **class action complaint** with a demand for jury trial against the Office of Personnel Management, Director Katherine Archuleta and Chief Information Officer Donna Seymour.

OPM initially announced that about 4.2 million current and former employees were affected by a breach of the government's personnel records system. This attack targeted personnel records of federal employees and retirees maintained on computers by OPM. These personnel records contain Social Security numbers, military records, veterans status, pay, position, educational records, name, address, date of birth, marital status, information on dependents, and health insurance and life insurance.

Only later did OPM acknowledge a second, much larger breach of the government's background check records. The full scope of that breach still is not clear, although it could reach into the tens of millions because OPM maintains security clearance records on employees from the executive, judicial and legislative branches, as well as people who applied for clearances but may never have been hired.

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. AFGE and two individuals, Robert Crawford and Adam Dale, are represented by a legal team led by Girard Gibbs LLP, a national litigation firm representing plaintiffs in class and collective actions in state and federal courts, and in arbitration matters worldwide. Girard Gibbs LLP has vast experience with cases involving cybersecurity attacks and data breaches.

Girard Gibbs is conducting a continuing investigation into the data breach. If you were impacted by the breach and have additional information regarding the breach or would like to learn more about the lawsuit, please visit <http://www.girardgibbs.com/opm-data-breach-litigation/> or send an email to opm@girardgibbs.com.

"AFGE will not sit idly by while OPM fails to comply with the most basic requests for information or provide an adequate response," said AFGE. "Even after this historic security breach, OPM has continued to use poor data security practices and inferior private-sector strategies to solve its security woes."

"Since the agency is unwilling to provide adequate assistance, AFGE is taking unprecedented steps to gather more information for our members and hold the agency accountable."



For up-to-the-minute information and questions
on the data breach visit www.afge.org/databreach



AFGE Members and Staff March in Solidarity at 40th Annual Pride Parade



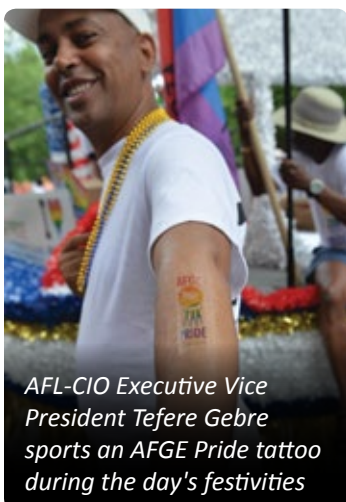
AFGE Local 1410 member Felicia Sharp waves AFGE Pride flag at D.C.'s Capital Pride parade



AFGE Local 1456 member Francis 'Nicki' Nichols greets spectators during the pride parade



Members from AFGE VA Local 2157 traveled from Portland, Ore. to join AFGE in its first appearance in the LGBT pride parade in the nation's capital



AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre sports an AFGE Pride tattoo during the day's festivities



AFGE Local 2157 member Eric Enns shows his pride at the D.C. Capital Pride Parade



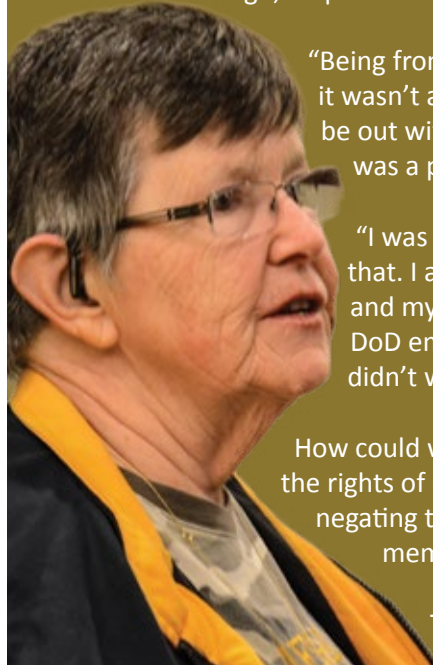
AFGE Local 32 member John Cherry hands out beads to parade spectators

Member Story: Virginia Hemingway

Legislative Conference, Virginia spoke up during the AFGE Pride meeting to

Virginia Hemingway is a loving partner, mother, and fierce LGBTQ advocate serving as the Executive Vice President of AFGE Local 2433.

In the last decade, Virginia has seen LGBTQ rights move forward by leaps and bounds in her workplace and union. “Back then the homophobia in the union was high,” explains Virginia.



“Being from Southern California it wasn’t a problem for me to be out within my agency, but it was a problem in my union.”

“I was uncomfortable with that. I am a DoD employee and my union people are DoD employees and they didn’t want to talk about it.

How could we in a union fight for the rights of our employees while negating the rights of union members themselves?”

Then at this year’s

thank the union for participating in the DC Capital Pride Parade.

“By participating in the parade, AFGE is publicly acknowledging that they’re in the game. They are saying they will do what they say they are going to do. It stops being rhetoric when you do that.”

In her years as an AFGE member, Virginia is proud of many things. Proud that she was able to add orientation language in her bargaining agreement. And honored she was able to say the opening prayer at the last convention. “I like to think that the greatest thing I do for LGBTQ labor is show up.”

“What I’ve always wanted is to not be something unique and special and just be part of life. And that is what’s going on today. Today, I am just another example of coupling. Of people living life. And that’s what we’re all looking for isn’t it? For years I was living with tolerance. I never wanted to be tolerated I wanted to be accepted. And today I feel accepted.”

“AFGE has come a long long way and is doing a fabulous job. Thank you for your work and for all that’s yet to come.”

AFGE Activists Stop Commissary Privatization – For Now

Thanks to the incredible work of AFGE activists across the country, the Senate in June voted in favor of an AFGE-backed measure blocking privatization of military commissaries.

This is a huge win for AFGE, our local activists, and military families. Commissaries, which employ many military spouses, provide key savings for military families on tight budget.

The measure, an amendment to the 2016 Defense Authorization Act, would instead require DoD to conduct a study to gauge the impact of privatization. The amendment, sponsored by Sens. James Inhofe of Oklahoma and Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, has at least for now killed the privatization plan proposed by Senate Armed Forces Committee Chairman Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

Even though there’s no privatization threat in the near future, the commissaries are still not in the clear. The

Pentagon has proposed slashing the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA)’s annual budget from \$1.4 billion to \$400 million over the next three years, forcing the agency to markup groceries and household goods. This will make commissaries less attractive to customers, which will further reduce DeCA’s revenues and force the agency to cut hours and days of operations. Visit www.afge.org/DefendOurJobs to do your part to protect commissaries.



House Votes to Defeat Amendment that Would Have Silenced VA Whistleblowers

And Undermine Unions' Ability to Ensure Employees are Treated Fairly



Lin Ellinghuysen

Through the collective grassroots action of AFGE members across the country, 232 members of Congress stood by taxpayers, veterans and government employees by striking down a dangerous amendment that would have decimated federal employees' rights to union protection and silenced whistle-blowers in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The amendment, introduced by Rep. Jody Hice (GA), was one of eight amendments that were offered to the Military Construction - Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2016 (H.R. 2029). This amendment would have eliminated union representatives' ability to protect their coworkers from discrimination, retaliation, and other working conditions on duty time.

Official time gives workers the ability to resolve disputes efficiently so employees can get back to work. It promotes an accountable and healthy working environment where employees concerns are heard. It protects whistle-blowers from retaliation, and facilitates smooth implementation of new technology and policies in the workplace.

There have been numerous whistle-blowers in the VA

who have been protected because of official time to the benefit of taxpayers and veterans.

Dr. Michelle Washington testified before Congress to protect her veteran patients at the VA hospital in Wilmington, DE. Dr. Washington was met with retaliation – but in the end, her efforts while on official time led to more than 1,600 new specialists being hired to care for the nation's veterans and the retaliatory actions against her were rolled back.

Without official time, AFGE Local President Kathleen Dahl wouldn't have been able to blow the whistle on a faulty water system that led to a Legionnaires disease outbreak that killed six veterans. Her courageous actions saved lives and protected patients at the Pittsburgh VA hospital.

Lin Ellinghuysen, a registered nurse and AFGE local officer at the Tomah, Wisconsin VA Medical Center has provided enormous support, guidance and representation to brave whistle-blowers who, on behalf of veterans, voiced serious concerns about dangerous drug prescribing practices by the so-called "Dr. Candyman." Management tried to fire, discipline and intimidate these employees, but using official time, Ellinghuysen and her members helped expose the truth to Congress, the VA Inspector General and the public.

Had the union not been available to assist these whistle-blowers onsite, it is highly unlikely most of the issues at these facilities would ever have come to light. Employees would have remained intimidated, and more veterans' lives would have been at risk.

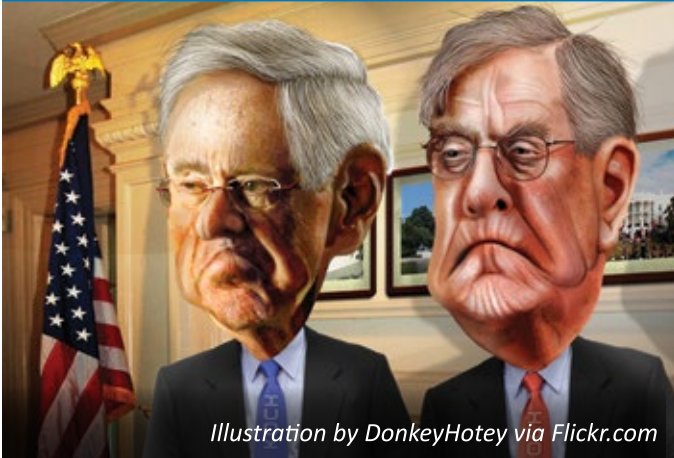


Dr. Michelle Washington

Official time is a critical element of an effective government, and one that is worth fighting for. AFGE applauds all of our activists who called and wrote their members of Congress to protect this vital right.

Koch-Funded “Concerned Veterans for America” Wants to Dismantle VA, Cut Veterans Benefits

AFGE Working to Protect Veteran Access to VA Care



When our troops come home, the VA health system keeps our nation’s promise to care for those who have borne the battle. These brave men and women served their country, and providing quality, veteran-focused VA health care and benefits is the least our nation can do to serve them in return. According to a shocking new report issued this week, however, not everyone sees it that way.

A Koch Brothers-funded front group called the Concerned Veterans for America (CVA) has been making waves on Capitol Hill lately, promoting a long list of anti-VA, anti-worker proposals that would break this sacred

promise and leave veterans out to dry. Led by former Wall Street bank employee and failed Senate candidate Paul Hegseth, CVA has

been the driving force behind efforts to dismantle the VA health care system and trim service members’ hard-earned disability and other benefits.

Though it comes as no surprise that the Koch Brothers would support these radical attacks on veterans’ health care, doing so in the guise of a veterans’ advocacy group is a new low. CVA’s agenda is a betrayal to the millions of veterans who rely on VA health care. It is critical that the veterans’ community and those that support our nation’s heroes understand the true nature of this group and stop its radical agenda in its tracks.

Despite CVA’s harsh anti-VA rhetoric, the truth is that veterans consistently rate VA health care higher than private sector health care.

Through 819 community-based outpatient clinics, 300 vet centers, 150 hospitals, 131 national cemeteries, and 59 offices processing veterans’ claims, the VA is purpose-built to care for the needs of our veterans now and in the future. When given the choice, veterans choose the VA. Hear what veterans have to say about their VA care at www.afge.org/askavet.

AFGE National Convention Notices



CONSTITUTIONAL RESOLUTIONS to be considered at the convention will soon be available at afge.org/convention2015.

We are nearing the July 18th registration deadline for the 40th AFGE National Convention. Please encourage your delegates to register as soon as possible.

When: Monday, August 17, 2015 8:00 AM to Friday, August 21, 2015 5:00 PM, ET

Where: Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin
1500 Epcot Resorts Boulevard, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

Hotel registration: Book by July 24th for the Group Rate

Early Check-In is from:

Saturday, August 15th from 4-7 p.m. & 8 p.m.-12 a.m.

Sunday, August 16th from 2-6 p.m. & 7-10 p.m

Women and Fair Practices Events

Diversity Open Exchange, Sunday, August 16

Young Workers at Convention, Monday, August 17

Women Empowered: Women’s Breakfast, Thursday, August 20



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