



# Best Practices

## An AFGGE Handbook

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***A special thanks  
to the AFGE members  
who contributed to this  
publication. Your best  
practices will help countless  
members, Locals, Councils  
and Districts to grow  
in influence and numbers.***



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## **Strategic Initiative: Workplace Representation**

AFGE's Office of Labor-Management Relations specializes in collective bargaining, labor-management partnerships, personnel system changes and other areas of direct relationship between AFGE affiliates and agency management. AFGE works with agencies to ensure that both agency- and government-wide policies reflect union values and safeguard our members' rights. Here are some best practices.



***“We’ve achieved the best of both worlds: the convenience of using a travel credit card without the employee being hassled by the credit card company or having his or her own credit rating placed at risk.”***

***Dale Schaffer,  
Marine Corps  
Council 240 President***

## **Profile: Government Travel Credit Cards**

***Dale Schaffer, Marine Corps Council 240 President***

New ways of operating, like mandated use of a government travel card, can improve efficiency but can also threaten the interests of the workers. Aggressive and creative bargaining can provide the necessary employee protections.

Marine Corps Council 240 President Dale Schaffer reports that, with the assistance of the AFGE Office of Labor-Management Relations, the Council successfully negotiated groundbreaking protections for users of Government Travel Credit Cards. The Council’s new 2002 contract with the Marine Corps provides, among other things:

- ATM credit limits must be high enough to cover cash needs during extended travel
- Credit checks related to travel credit cards will be highly confidential and will never be used in connection with performance evaluations
- The travel credit card is an employer tool to be used in carrying out official travel, rather than a personal debt instrument of the employee
- Employees shall not be contacted at home by the credit card company, nor are they required to maintain business records at home
- Employees are not bound by agreements between the agency and the credit card company
- Employees have the right to union representation in any discussions regarding travel credit card use, whether with management or with the credit card company
- Disputes over issuance and use of travel credit cards are to be resolved through the contract grievance procedure.



## **Profile: Meeting With Employees**

*Steve Hollis, Local 3544 President*

People join the union in order to participate in setting their own working conditions. That objective can be more easily met if the union and affected employees can meet on official time to analyze problems and craft solutions.

Local 3544, representing several units of United States Department of Agriculture employees in Missouri, has figured out the best way to craft appropriate arrangements for employees affected by reorganizations and the like. Under recent contracts negotiated by the Local, the union representatives meet with the affected employees, on official time, to identify the problems and develop solutions.

Local President Steve Hollis highlights that the whole point of the union is to serve as a vehicle for employees to participate in setting their own working conditions—that is what these meetings allow to happen. As a result, the union can then successfully bargain with management over the express, concrete needs of each particular employee, rather than waste time arguing over general principles.

***“This process of meeting with the employees to begin preparing the union position has made bargaining both easier and more effective.”***

*Steve Hollis,  
Local 3544 President*



***“I don’t see why we have to play management’s game of not bargaining for improvement except in an environment (overall master contract bargaining) that is unfavorable to us. Why not bargain when we can do so most effectively?”***

*Russ Binion,  
former Local 12 President*

## **Profile: Bargaining One New Benefit Every Other Year**

***Russ Binion, former Local 12 President***

For many Locals and Councils, mid-term bargaining is purely reactive and defensive: an effort to minimize adverse effects of negative management decisions. A few years ago, Local 12, representing over 3,600 Department of Labor (DoL) employees in the Washington, D.C., area, decided otherwise. Beginning in 1996, the Local successfully initiated bargaining on targeted benefits every other year. Thus, in 1997, the Local got transit subsidies. In 1998, the Local got flexiplace. In 2000, the Local got significant improvements in career ladders.

Russ Binion, who was President of Local 12 at the time, explained that there were at least two benefits to this strategy. First, it gave visible proof that the union is on the job getting benefits for employees at all times, not just during master contract negotiations. Second, it allowed these really significant improvements in working conditions to be negotiated outside the quagmire that often seems to overwhelm master contract negotiations.

## **Profile: An Agency Pays Employees' Student Loans**

*Eddie Eitches, HUD Council 222*

One of the difficulties younger employees have is the need to pay off college loans just as they begin their careers, when they're making the least amount of money. AFGE's Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Council 222 negotiated relief for these employees.

When HUD gave the union routine notification that it intended to offer college loan repayments as a recruitment tool for new employees, the union said, "Wait a minute. Let's give current employees the same benefit as a retention tool." After substantial bargaining, the agency and the union actually reached an agreement that provides up to \$6,000 per year in school loan payments per employee. The actual amounts vary depending on the employee's total debt and the employee's annual income. Participating employees agree to work for the agency for three more years.



***"The HUD Council figured it was better to do something effective for our younger members rather than complain that we can't find anything that interests them."***

*Eddie Eitches,  
HUD Council 222*





## **Strategic Initiative: Organizing and Recruitment**

A union, any union, is only as strong as its membership base. Building membership through the organization of new bargaining units and the on-going recruitment of potential members is a crucial function of any healthy labor organization. Whether it's one-on-one contact with members or group recruitment techniques—such as Lunch & Learns or Union Fairs—AFGE is stronger today because of our understanding of the importance of attending to this critical leadership task.



***“It is important  
members know  
we don’t take  
them for granted.”***

***Troy Tingey,  
Local 1592 President***

## **Profile: Membership Retention**

***Troy Tingey, Local 1592 President***

The question of how to keep the Local membership base stable is one that continues to challenge AFGE leaders. Troy Tingey, Local 1592 President at Hill Air Force Base in Utah, has implemented a ‘membership retention’ program. This program is an on-going experiment to motivate, communicate with, and reward members for remaining members of AFGE. The Local started contacting members directly, based on length of membership, and presented them with a gift or a thank you for their continued support. Members with 25 years or more received a jacket, 20-25 year members got a shirt, etc.

The most difficult group is the 1-5 years. This is where turnover and drops are most common. Our office is assigned the overall responsibility of implementation. The Local sponsors a discounted summer picnic at the local amusement park, offers free turkeys to members at Thanksgiving as a reward and hosts a party for members and their kids in December.

This focus on keeping new members by making them feel valued has helped Local 1592 maintain its current stability while continuing to recruit new members via Lunch & Learns and new employee orientations.



## **Profile: New Member Orientation**

*Lucy Lewis, Local 1992 Executive Vice President*

After many years of slow hiring within the federal government, a number of agencies and activities are beginning to replace retiring workers. Most AFGE collective bargaining agreements have a provision that allows for the union to address new hires during the New Employee Orientation. Local 1992, Defense Supply Center, Richmond, Va., has developed smart follow-up approaches designed to make the most of these opportunities.

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) contract requires that the Local be notified of any new employee orientation sessions. Upon notification, the Local asks to be placed on the agenda for the 30 minute time block just prior to the lunch break. During that time, the new employees are given a good overview of what the Local is doing at the Supply Center by discussing perceptions of unions and how Local 1992 has changed those perceptions through effective participation in the Labor-Management Partnership effort. Additionally, AFGE’s legislative efforts—as well as the many economic benefits associated with union membership—are highlighted. Once they have ‘wowed’ the group with stories of all the good work the union performs, they inform them that they will be invited to a special new employee Lunch & Learn within the coming weeks.

Because of the positive relationship that the Local has developed with management, the notification of the union luncheon is announced over the Center’s Administrative Broadcast System and by flyer invitation. During these luncheons, which are always standing room only affairs, the new employees are asked to join AFGE. The Local estimates that it recruits anywhere from 50-75 percent of new employees through this innovative method.

***“We want every new employee to feel the connection with our union and the value of being part of our team by becoming a union member.”***

*Lucy Lewis,  
Local 1992 Executive  
Vice President*



***“The \$50-\$50 rebates have helped us grow the Local from around 300 members to well over 400. It may not work everywhere, but it sure works for us.”***

***Michelle Tolson,  
Local 32 President***

## **Profile: Recruitment Incentives**

***Michelle Tolson, Local 32 President***

At a Lunch & Learn or Union Fair, many employees are close to joining. However, they need a little incentive. At the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) headquarters, Local 32’s incentive is a crisp \$50 bill. Organizers are strategically positioned with a handful of \$50 bills in the room where the union event is being held. The minute a new member joins, a loud noise is sounded and a very public display ensues as the new member receives the rebate. Organizers shout, “New member! New member!”

For this to work, someone must get the potential member to the union event. Here’s where Local 32’s recruiters come in. Members who persuade a friend to join also get \$50. When they see the \$50 bills being passed out, members track down friends. Sometimes a prospective member joins, collects \$50 and becomes an instant recruiter to collect more.

The \$50-\$50 program more than pays for itself. District 14 and the AFGE’s Membership and Organizing Department help with some of the cost. After just a few months of dues, the Local recovers its investment.



## **Profile: Target Local Campaign**

*Mark Dickinson, Local 916 President*

Local 916, located at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, was one of the first Locals to agree to become part of AFGE’s experiment to develop model Locals throughout AFGE. A few years back, the AFGE National Executive Council reviewed AFGE’s organizing programs and reaffirmed the widely-held belief that to grow union membership and strength, Locals need to improve how they communicate with members, advocate with management and promote legislative change. This is the motivating idea behind the Target Locals Campaign (TLC). By investing in a strong, effective Local, it is believed the Local will have an easier time recruiting and keeping members.

Mike Kelly, AFGE District 9 National Vice President, identified Local 916 as a prime candidate for TLC. The Local already had a large membership, approximately 1,900, but its potential remained in the thousands. There was a strong and active leadership and a strong base of Stewards, approximately 95. The first step in the process was to obtain a buy in from the Executive Board. The goal was to get agreement on TLC’s overall objectives, to discuss the extra time the Local would need to dedicate to the success of the project and to obtain a commitment to stay the course through difficult periods. This was the most important part of the process—the planning stages required everyone to attend meetings and to hold each other accountable for the strategic plan once developed.

Over a two-year period, the Local regularly met with a National Organizer, a National Representative and an Organization Development Consultant, a.k.a. the TLC Team, to clarify issues and to begin work on a strategic plan. During that time, interviews with Stewards identified the Local’s internal strengths and outside threats. After analyzing the data, the TLC Team developed a two-year plan to strengthen the Local. Legislative and political action was always an area where the Local excelled, but through the TLC, more members began to participate in those efforts. Because of TLC, the Local’s membership has grown to 2,475 and its Steward roster to 130.

***“At first, finding the time, stewards and members to work on the project was our biggest hurdle. But once people began to see how much more we could accomplish by involving more of the membership, the project took off.”***

*Mark Dickinson,  
Local 916 President*



***“I started this because I believe there’s strength in numbers. Strength is the only way to protect workers’ rights and benefits.”***

***Barbara Milton,  
Local 631 President***

## **Profile: Growing a D.C. Local**

***Barbara Milton, Local 631 President***

District of Columbia Government Employees Local 631, representing the D.C. Departments of Energy, Public Works, D.C. General Hospital, the Water and Sewer Authority, and the Office of Property Management, has taken the bull by the horns when it comes to building membership. Local President Barbara Milton reports that the membership has doubled through the acquisition of new bargaining units.

The Local has added five new units, totaling some 300 employees, the majority of which pays dues to the Local and are active in its affairs. One might ask why this is considered a ‘best practice’ since many Locals grow through organizing new units. The reason is that the D.C. government has an ‘agency fee’ agreement with unions representing its workforce. This agreement requires everyone in an AFGE bargaining unit that is better than 60 percent organized to pay the union a fee equal in cost to union dues. Since all workers in these units have to pay, whether or not they join the union, the incentive to organize unrepresented units as a way to increase revenue is not always present. Not content to remain a 200-member Local, Milton set her sights beyond the Local’s core base and has grown Local 631 to over 550 members.



## **Strategic Initiative: Grassroots, Legislative and Political Action**

There is no escaping the impact that Congress has on the day-to-day life of every AFGE member. Congress makes the laws that set our wages and benefits. Congress sets the laws governing contracting out and privatization. Congress approves the budgets for federal agencies. Congress can change or reinforce unilateral decisions by agency Directors and even the President. In the case of AFGE members who work for the city of Washington, D.C., elected government officials wield the same political power over their day-to-day lives.

In order to win wage and benefit improvements, increase job security and address a host of other agency-specific issues, AFGE must focus on building grassroots bipartisan political power across the nation.



***“We have to increase the number of grassroots political activists within AFGE. Our very future depends on our ability to inform and mobilize members to influence who is in Congress and how they vote.”***

*Anthony Young,  
Local 2206 President*

## **Profile: Grassroots Legislative Action**

*Anthony Young, Local 2206 President*

Two thousand of Alabama’s 55,000 government employees work at the Birmingham Social Security Administration (SSA), the largest employer in the city. Anthony Young realized that AFGE members could be a political force in the area if they were kept informed of AFGE issues and mobilized to take action. To achieve that goal, the Local developed an active Legislative Committee consisting of its Executive Board and other volunteer activists.

The Committee stays on top of key legislative issues and determines what form of action is needed, from meeting with members of Congress to mobilizing activists to call or write their elected officials. The Local hosts legislative breakfasts where members of Congress have an opportunity to tour the SSA office and meet with government employees. The Executive Board and Stewards are also encouraged to improve their political action skills by attending various AFGE functions, such as Leadership Conferences, Multi-District trainings, the National Legislative Conference, and District, State and National Council Meetings. The Local has scheduled a town hall meeting in the near future to recruit new activists to participate in grassroots political activity.



## **Profile: Building AFGE-PAC**

*Walter Greely, Local 1920 Chief Steward*

Walter Greely believed that the solution to building AFGE-PAC was no different than building AFGE membership—you have to ask potential members to sign up. Greely began developing a plan earlier this year to create ‘asking’ opportunities with the approval of the Executive Board (all are contributors to AFGE-PAC). He first met with Stewards. At off-site Steward meetings, Greely pitched the importance of AFGE-PAC by addressing issues such as pay, benefits and job security. He particularly emphasized the ‘Give-A-Buck’ program—a contribution of \$1 a pay period that anyone can afford. After meeting with the Stewards, Greely then went to all the members in the Local. He organized an AFGE-PAC dinner during the Local’s METRO organizing drive, inviting longstanding members and newly signed-up members. The final step in Greely’s plan is to provide information on AFGE-PAC and grassroots political action in an information kit for every new AFGE member.

***“The union and AFGE-PAC are like insurance. It’s best to have it and not need it, than to need it and not have it.”***

*Walter Greely,  
Local 1920 Chief Steward*



***“The key to building AFGE-PAC and an effective grassroots political action program is making it a priority. After that, a good organizer can put the pieces of the puzzle together.”***

***Brenda Philpot,  
Local 3984 Executive  
Vice President***

## **Profile: Grassroots Action & AFGE-PAC**

***Brenda Philpot, Local 3984 Executive Vice President***

The solution to building AFGE-PAC and a legislative grassroots network came naturally to Brenda Philpot. Building on the success that brought 65 percent membership to the Local, Philpot scheduled after work meetings with members during her organizing tours of Kentucky SSA Field Offices. At these meetings, AFGE members—who in some cases joined the same day—were asked to sign up for the Local’s statewide grassroots political action e-mail alert system and to contribute to PAC. These efforts have resulted in an effective grassroots mobilization structure capable of generating dozens of phone calls or Action Faxes when needed. Twenty percent of the membership has signed up for AFGE-PAC, which equates to over 60 AFGE-PAC contributors.



## **Profile: Motivating Members to Political Action**

*Lynn Tyree, Local 1992 President*

Lynn Tyree is President of Local 1992 at the Defense Supply Center in Richmond, Va. Local 1992 is a relatively large Local with a number of union activists, many of whom have traditionally not been overly excited by politics or legislation. But Tyree is a human dynamo, proving that one person can make a difference. In addition to being President, she is active on AFGE's Defense Conference (DEFCON), serves as Executive Vice President on AFGE's Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Council 169, and is a Vice President of the Virginia State Federation of the AFL-CIO. A delegate to the last two Democratic National Conventions, Tyree is known throughout Virginia. Through the power of persuasion and the work of a small Executive Board, Tyree has convinced once reluctant people to donate money, ring doorbells, make phone calls, write letters and e-mails, and visit House and Senate leaders.

Because of her enthusiasm and hard work, Tyree has an extremely strong working partnership with the Facilities Commander and up the line to DLA, which makes decisions about the facility. She's routinely called upon to do trainings and regularly sits in on high-level meetings. With the support of the Executive Board, she ensures that AFGE's voice is heard by decision-makers in the labor movement and in government. You may not have the most politically motivated membership in the world, but rest assured, if Tyree and Local 1992 can do it, so can you.

***“One of the biggest priorities we have in AFGE is to reach out to our membership and convince them that they need to become politically active because most of the major decisions concerning government employees are made in the Congress, not by the first-line supervisors.”***

*Lynn Tyree,  
Local 1992 President*



***“I’m an ordinary lowan who cares a great deal about the improvement of our lives. But I’m an extraordinary union activist in my commitment to the interests of working men and women and their families.”***

***Susan Pamperin,  
Local 2134***

## **Profile: Working With a Large, Diverse Membership**

***Susan Pamperin, Local 2134***

The installation at Rock Island, Ill., straddles the Illinois/Iowa border. AFGE has five Locals on this Department of Defense base. Members at the installation live in three different Congressional Districts in both states—they have a total of four Senators and three Representatives. Because of the unusual setup, AFGE runs multi-state political and legislative programs, keeping a sizeable and varied membership informed about issues of importance. Since leaving the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and joining AFGE in 1995, the five Locals have been some of the most active Locals in politics and legislation. Right from the start, members were concerned about the potential for privatization, contracting out and the closing of their facility. They knew that in order to keep their jobs, they had to fight every step of the way—particularly since work was slated to be abolished.

To have a fighting chance, the members had to actively engage the labor and political communities and build coalitions that would increase their voice and political power. They formed a committee for the purpose of engaging in campaigns and elections, as well as working with elected officials to save the Island—local mayors, U.S. Senators and Representatives from both parties. The leader of that effort was Susan Pamperin. Initially a rank-and-file member, Pamperin serves as a top political activist for AFGE in the state of Iowa, has been a delegate to the Illinois and Iowa State Federation Conventions, and was a delegate to the last two Democratic National Conventions. In addition, Pamperin is the Democratic County Chair of Scott County, Iowa, one of the most influential County Committees in the nation due to the Iowa Presidential Caucus. Pamperin, along with her brother and sister trade unionists on Rock Island, routinely meet all the local leaders to put AFGE issues before them. Without a doubt, it is the work of Pamperin’s committee that has kept the base open, proving that politics, lobbying, political contributions, and working with the labor does have an impact.



## **Strategic Initiative: Communications**

AFGE news conferences, publications and advertisements are just a few ways AFGE information is being disseminated throughout Locals, Councils, work sites and communities. Through the Internet, television interviews and newspaper features, AFGE members are taking the initiative and making good things happen for their union—the largest federal employees union in the United States.



**“Forming a Communications Committee/Editorial Board is one way to resolve the obstacles that can arise when only one person bears the sole responsibility for the Local’s newsletter.”**

**Agatha Joseph,  
Local 1395 President**

## **Profile: Resolving the ‘Lone Editor’ Syndrome**

**Agatha Joseph, Local 1395 President**

A Local’s newsletter is one of the primary tools for communicating with members and bargaining unit employees. A newsletter complements and reinforces other means of communications. Unfortunately, it is frequently a one-person operation, with one member or officer taking responsibility for writing, publishing and distributing the newsletter. Problems can arise when that member or officer is not available. One solution is to form a committee that will share responsibility for the newsletter’s production.

Local 1395 President Agatha Joseph decided several years ago that the best way to facilitate production of the Local’s newsletter, the *Challenger*, was to organize a Communications Committee guided by an Editorial Board. In the past, the task of editing and laying out the publication had fallen on a few officers or Stewards. The Local’s Vice President of Communications and four of the most active newsletter committee members joined together to form the Editorial Board.

The Communications Committee usually meets once a month on a fixed day. At this meeting, articles for the next *Challenger* are reviewed. Any Local member can submit articles, photos, cartoons or other items of interest for possible inclusion. The Communications Committee critiques the articles and decides which ones to accept, reject or hold for a future issue. They also determine the placement of each article in the newsletter and which Editorial Board member(s) will handle the layout for that issue. Once the sample layout is produced, it is again critiqued by the Editorial Board before it is sent to the printer. The Editorial Board also organizes members of the Communications Committee to distribute and mail the paper.

The advantages of a Communications Committee/Editorial Board include: (1) helping reduce publication roadblocks—all five members of the Editorial Board can assemble articles for publication, handle the layout and deal with the printer; (2) allowing the Local to make use of individual members’ interests and strengths; and, (3) introducing a wider variety of perspectives to the newsletter, thereby improving the overall quality of the publication.



## **Profile: Communicating by Committee**

*Dan Doyle, Local 1995 Vice President*

Communications is more than a one-person effort. Officers and Stewards have busy schedules and one person cannot possibly do all that is necessary to meet the communications needs of the Local. A strong Communications Committee with enthusiastic members will allow communications tasks to be done easily and efficiently.

Simply put, the goal of Local 1995's Communications Committee is to ensure that the Local communicates effectively with its members and potential members. The Communications Committee has a charter and is responsible for several tasks, including: the design and maintenance of the Local's Web site; a monthly column in the employee newsletter; bulletin board materials; white papers; and news releases. The committee meets monthly and reports regularly to the Local's Executive Board and the general membership.

The committee is made up of five standing members, including the Local Secretary. Other people help on an as-needed basis. For example, Stewards help maintain bulletin boards in their locations and officers contribute to newsletter articles and white papers. Some committee members have a specific task as their primary duty. For instance, one member handles the column in the monthly employee newsletter while another is responsible for the development and coordination of bulletin board materials. A third person is responsible for the development of the Local's Web site.

Many of the committee members have specific skills in the communications area that make them extremely well suited for this activity. However, whether or not their formal education or job experience is in the area of communications, all members are on the committee for one basic reason: they recognize the need to communicate and are enthusiastic in getting the job done.

Contract language was also negotiated, allowing Local 1995 to take full advantage of all on-site resources, including the use of the facility's internal e-mail and mail systems, fax machines, the right to author a monthly column (uncensored) in the employee newsletter, as well as other communications resources. The Local has also put together a collection of communications reference books and guidelines that have proven invaluable in assisting the Communications Committee.

***“A Communications Committee is the key to effective and continued communications at the Local level.”***

*Dan Doyle,  
Local 1995  
Vice President*



***“In our struggle to protect and expand our rights and benefits, getting good media coverage is an important way to level the playing field with management.”***

*Larry Drake,  
Local 12 President*

## **Profile: Bring on the Heat**

*Larry Drake, Local 12 President*

Getting good coverage from media events can add pressure, when needed, to push management officials to move in a positive direction when they refuse to budge. Remember, “The pen is mightier than the sword.”

In response to Secretary of Labor Chao’s refusal to raise the transit subsidy for employees working at the Department of Labor (DoL) Headquarters in Washington, D.C., Local 12 took to the streets. Some 200 Local 12 members braved 96-degree temperatures to draw media attention to the Secretary’s defiance of E.O. 13150, which required federal agencies in the national capital region to increase the transit subsidy to \$100 effective January 1, 2002.

Sporting red AFGE baseball caps and carrying green-and-white signs reading “Invest in Clean Air: It’s Only Fair,” AFGE members provided an excellent visual for television cameras. Several speakers echoed the Local’s call for an increase in the transit subsidy, including: representatives of the Metro workers’ unions; the President of AFSCME Local 3976, whose members already receive the \$100 subsidy; Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, representing the environmental movement; and District 14 National Vice President and former Local 12 President Russ Binion.

The highlight of the rally was a letter read aloud by Local President Larry Drake. The letter, from Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), urged Secretary Chao “... to take steps to increase the transit subsidy for Department of Labor employees to the allowed \$100 monthly.”

Media coverage was good. However, the Secretary still refuses to budge. But that hasn’t stopped Local 12. The Local Executive Board has already drawn up a plan of action to secure the \$100 transit subsidy, including weekly informational picketing, outreach to environmental organizations and legislative action calling for members to contact their lawmakers to request assistance in securing the \$100 transit subsidy.



## **Profile: Cyberspace to the Rescue**

*Eddie Burnett, Local 1739 President*

The Local newsletter is a vital part of any active and growing Local. But when your members are screaming for news and no one steps up to the plate to volunteer their time and talents to help with a newsletter, what does the overworked and harried Local President do? In Local 1739's case, you develop an e-mail list and start e-mailing your members on a regular basis. News in any form is better than no news at all. Keeping your membership informed of Local activities and explaining how outside events may impact them is critical. A membership e-mail system can be part of the solution in meeting the communications needs of your Local.

During his campaign for President of Local 1739, Eddie Burnett kept hearing one message over and over again from the membership—more communications.

Following his election, he turned to Cyberspace for the answer to the Local's communications needs. He got approval to use the agency's internal e-mail system and then enlisted the aid of a steward to help set up the e-mail group. Within a couple months, the new President was sending e-mails three or four times each month, providing members with information about local, state and national issues as well as notices of upcoming events and updates of happenings at the Local's monthly meetings. As a result of Burnett's efforts, communications with the membership of Local 1739 has greatly improved.

***“The membership e-mail system at Local 1739 has worked well—it’s fast, easy and cost-effective.”***

***Eddie Burnett,  
Local 1739 President***



***“It’s important to take advantage of media opportunities that can advance our union’s agenda.”***

***Mark Gibson,  
Local 1882 President***

## **Profile: Congressman Swamped by Pink Slips**

***Mark Gibson, Local 1882 President***

The media provide AFGE activists with the opportunity to convey their message to a mass audience, e.g., its members and potential members, management, lawmakers, community leaders and the public-at-large. Successful media coverage, in turn, can lead to support and the successful conclusion of union efforts to protect and improve the rights and benefits of government employees.

Local 1882 seized the opportunity recently when it learned that its U.S. Representative was planning to visit the Fort McCoy, Wis., area. The Local staged a media event to secure coverage of its efforts to stop the wasteful contracting out of federal services and the loss of 400 federal jobs at the facility to contractors.

With their Representative claiming that only two constituents had contacted him regarding the loss of federal jobs at the Fort, the Local was determined to demonstrate that many more were concerned. With less than two days to prepare, a desk-drop flyer was prepared asking members to join in the effort to fight for their jobs. ‘Pink slips’ were developed for employees to hand to the Congressman, identifying the many years of service lost to America’s taxpayers as a result of both Congress’ and the Administration’s refusal to stop the waste, fraud and abuse of federal service contracting.

Previously used picket signs were taken out of storage and dusted off. A media advisory was faxed to local television and radio stations as well as newspapers. A call was also made to the local police to notify them of the event.

Response to the desk-drop was overwhelming. Some 250 employees attended the Representative’s scheduled town hall meeting, shaking hands with the Congressman and handing him a fist full of ‘pink slips.’ News coverage was good and AFGE’s voice was heard. As a result, the Local obtained the support of the Representative and the local communities where its members live.



## **Profile: Team Work Gets the Job Done**

*Tom Webb, Local 3615 President*

The primary purpose of a Local newsletter is to share information with members and potential members. It can be used as an organizing tool and also serve as an information piece for the media, key community leaders and members of Congress. Information is power—keeping the membership informed of your Local’s activities and explaining how outside events will impact them is crucial. The Local newsletter serves as an effective medium for disseminating information and creating brand recognition for your Local. It is a vital part of any active and growing Local.

Local 3615 is fortunate to have talented individuals working together to write and design its newsletter, *Local Voice*. Ken Wright, the Local’s Corresponding Secretary, spends many hours preparing the newsletter and ensuring that the final product is the best it can be. Local President Tom Webb writes a monthly message. Barbara Jackson and Gene Gomez, the First and Second Vice Presidents, submit articles on a regular basis. Kenya Hutchinson and Lashon Harrison, the Local’s Women’s and Fair Practices Coordinators, provide a quarterly update. Recently, Local Stewards Sheila Epps and Cyresa Perkins have taken on the assignment of reviewing publications such as the *Federal Times*, the *Federal Employees News Digest*, Govexec.com and AFGE’s Web site for additional articles of interest to the membership. Jack Hinman, Assistant Chief Steward and former Corresponding Secretary, contributes articles with a focus on contracting out and other legislative issues. Other officers and Stewards provide occasional articles and help with the labeling and postage for the newsletter. The Local tries to involve as many individuals as possible in the production of its newsletter to share the responsibilities and to ensure that the diverse interests of its members are adequately covered.

**“Our Local believes that everyone has a valuable contribution to make and that we gain strength and unity when many voices work together to create the Local Voice.”**

**Tom Webb,  
Local 3615 President**





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