

From The Desk of NVP Mollett:

A Year In Review

Greetings District 5!

As we bring this decade to a close and prepare for a new year, I want to take a moment to reflect upon all that has transpired in 2019.

This year has brought numerous challenges to AFGE and to the Labor Movement as whole. Those struggles in turn, have tested our tenacity and our will to bond together in unity to fight the ongoing attacks on workers' rights.

We witnessed the longest government shutdown in history from December 22, 2018 until January 25th, 2019. During this tumultuous 35 days, 40% of the federal workforce—roughly 800,000 federal employees, were left without pay. As a result, AFGE rallied together for a silent protest in Washington, D.C., held phone banks, held food drives and collaborated with our union brothers and sisters for donations.

As a result of the collective actions of union members, labor allies, sympathetic lawmakers, and concerned citizens across the country, Congress passed bipartisan legislation in February that provided all federal departments and agencies with approved budgets through the end of the fiscal year, also providing federal employees with a 1.9 percent average pay adjustment retroactive to the start of the year.

In March, more than 50 AFGE Locals planned events for Federal and DC Worker Appreciation Week. Local members of Congress were invited to tour federal facilities and learn more about the work our members do on behalf of the public.

In April, AFGE stood with 31,000 members of the United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) union who work at Stop & Shop grocery stores in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island to protest the drastic cuts to the wages and benefits that employees and their families depended on to live.

We stood with the 260,000 VA union members as the VA pushed veterans to private-sector care instead of filling 50K vacancies. And in June, in conjunction with NVAC, we launched a national campaign to fight the Administration's Anti-Veteran Contract, holding over 60 rallies, employee town halls and congressional visits in a National Day of Action.

In May we urged all lawmakers to fully fund the EPA and to pass a law that would grant TSOs rights under Title 5 of the U.S. Code, ensuring them the same fair pay, union rights, and respectful treatment as other federal workers.

We witnessed the ruling of the Federal Services Impasses Panel discard 1,400 agreements in the 12 remaining articles of the SSA contract, thereby stripping those employees of their workplace rights.

In June, we fought tirelessly against SB 131, proposing the privatization of the Atlanta Hartsfield Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, GA.

In July, all our hard work successfully fighting against the union busting Executive Orders, came to a halt when the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia did not have jurisdiction to rule on the matter.

August 30, AFGE asked the U.S. Court of Appeals to reconsider its July ruling and September 25, the U.S. Court of Appeals denied our request, leaving our federal employees vulnerable to the effects of the Executive Orders. In November, the VA notified AFGE that it would begin charging the union for office space inside VA facilities and those locals that did not agree to pay would be evicted.

In September we stood in solidarity with nearly 49,000 UAW members at General Motors who went on strike to fight for a fair contract, and on September 23 we held the Fed up? Rise Up! Rally to put pressure on the Administration to stop the attacks on federal workers, their contracts, and their voice at work.

We have held numerous trainings within the District (Leadership Meeting, Convention, State Councils), as well as supported trainings abroad (NVAC, HRT, PORT, AFL-CIO and BOP).

In October, in anticipation and preparation for the 2020 election campaign, District 5 began a series of conference calls to discuss the endorsement process, state races, the Presidential election and brainstorm the most effective strategies for ensuring our voices are heard.

In December we celebrated the introduction of the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act which provides all federal employees with 12 weeks of paid leave for reasons covered by the Family Medical Leave Act – including the birth, adoption, or fostering of a new child, care for close family members, serious employee health conditions, and for circumstances that arise when the employee or a family member is detailed for covered duty in the armed forces.

Although we have seen some victories, we have taken huge losses as a Federation this year. However, we are a resilient family of brothers and sisters who can face the challenges ahead if we regroup and strategize.

It is my hope, that for the upcoming year, we develop a new approach for representation-- independent of reliance on federal agencies. Therefore, we must look at joint ventures amongst locals and councils so that we can fully function on our own.

The lines of communication within the District must also improve as well. Quarterly District calls, updating the members on the state of the District and the Federation as a whole would be beneficial to our attempt at fully arming ourselves with the tools we need to combat the attacks on federal workers. However, the communication must be two way. I need to hear from you so that I am fully knowledgeable of the needs of the District. We are only strong together.

In closing, thank you for all you do. You are the workers that keep our Federal Government running smoothly, and our members fully protected. You are invaluable to me and the entire Federation. Have a relaxing and joyous Holiday Season, and in 2020, let's get back in the fight!