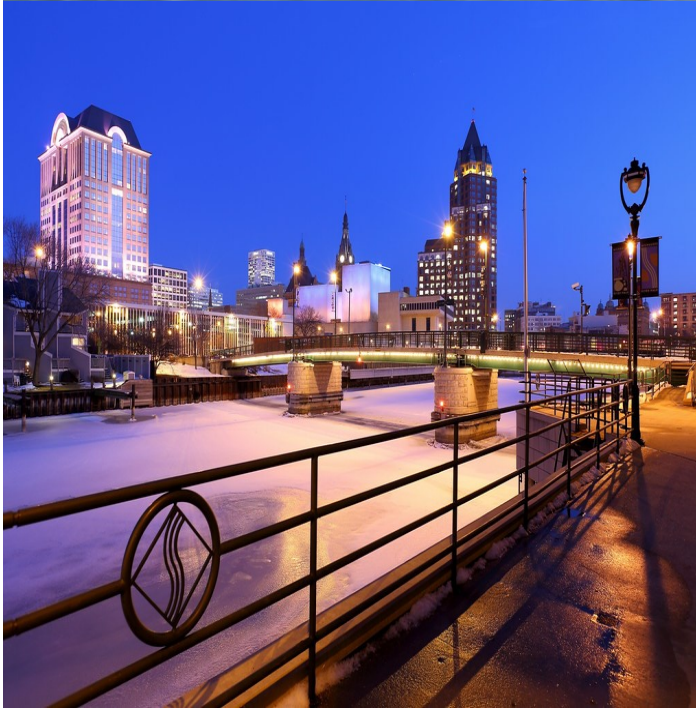


# DISTRICT 7 NEWSLETTER

2023 Winter Issue

*Do Not Distribute on Federal Property*



## THE SOLID SEVENTH DISTRICT

*Representing federal employees in Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin*



Jason Anderson  
AFGE District 7 National Vice President

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

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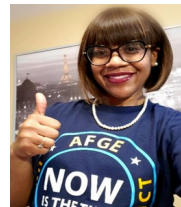
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\*Retiree Coordinator **VACANT**

## AFGE District 7



### **THE NATIONAL REP'S CORNER**

#### **Weingarten Meetings**

**By NR Dylan Kosson**

I conducted training on this subject during the October 19-22 Districts 7 & 8 Training in Iowa, and believe it is helpful to offer some insight for union officers who represent employees at Weingarten meetings. Many representatives are under the mistaken assumption that their role at such meetings can only be passive and that they need to be relegated to note-taking at most.

If you are contacted by an employee who is summoned to an investigatory meeting, the first thing you should do is to contact the investigator to confirm the type of investigation being conducted. For example, whether the investigation is criminal (in which case an employee may invoke their right to remain silent and not answer questions), or administrative (in which case the employee must comply because the Constitution only protects against self-incrimination in criminal cases). Moreover, the representative should ask if the meeting is compelled or voluntary (in which case they should decline to participate).

At the Weingarten meeting itself, a union representative is allowed to:

- Offer advice on how to answer questions
- Help the employee avoid making fatal admissions or insubordinate outbursts
- Object to intimidating conduct
- Ensure the interviewer does not distort the employee's answers

The Weingarten rule gives an employee representative the right to play an active role, including objecting to improper

questions and requesting clarification of questions, eliciting favorable facts and otherwise actively participating.

Here are some other tips to remember for both the representative and the employee:

1. The investigator is NOT your friend
2. There are NEVER any off-the-record discussions with the investigators
3. NEVER, EVER talk to an investigator without Union representation and/or legal counsel
4. ALWAYS get a Union representative or legal counsel to be with you during an investigation
5. NEVER volunteer information
6. NEVER volunteer information about other employees, unless you have FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE about the incident and are willing to testify against the employee
7. ALWAYS be careful to tell the truth
8. ALWAYS maintain your demeanor
9. NEVER waive your Miranda, Garrity or other constitutional rights
10. NEVER give a voluntary statement

Local leaders representing an employee in a Weingarten meeting and need further assistance from the district, should submit a completed Request for Assistance Form to the district via [District7Intake@afge.org](mailto:District7Intake@afge.org).





## AFGE District 7



### Legislative & Political Update

By LPO Matt Muchowski

AFGE had an incredible night of stunning victories on Election Day, November 8th.

We do not yet know the balance of power in Congress – as we are still waiting for some results to come in – including many House races and the run-off election for Senate in Georgia. However, we know that pro-union candidates across the country out-performed all of the polls, and the expectations of election experts.

Here in District 7 – nearly all of the AFGE endorsed candidates in Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin won their races. Especially exciting was one-time AFGE member Hillary Scholten, who won the MI-03 Congressional race!

There were big wins for Governor's in all three states – J.B. Pritzker, Gretchen Whitmer, and Tony Evers.

In Michigan, AFL-CIO endorsed pro-union candidates will now have a majority in the statehouse! Michigan also passed the AFL-CIO endorsed Proposition 3 – which protects abortion rights.

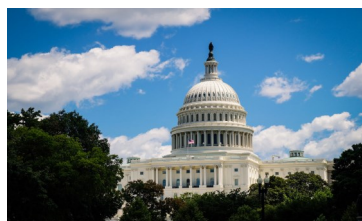
In Wisconsin, gerrymandered districts ensured that Republicans who supported Scott Walker's attacks on unions will have a majority in the statehouse despite collectively receiving less votes than Democrats running. However, the Democrats in Wisconsin captured enough seats to preserve Gov. Evers veto power.

In Illinois, we expanded the pro-worker super-majority in the statehouse, and won every toss-up Congressional seat, including those for AFGE endorsed Lauren Underwood, Bill Foster, and Sean Casten. Sen. Tammy Duckworth easily won reelection, while Eric Sorenson won the seat left vacant by Cheri Bustos' retirement. Both were endorsed by

AFGE. Pro-worker candidates also won both State Supreme Court seats, preserving their majority on the state court. The Workers' Rights Amendment passed in Illinois. The amendment protects union rights in the Illinois constitution; many unions say that it shows a large majority of Illinois voters support workers' rights.

Unfortunately union-backed candidates like Brad Pfaff in WI-03 and Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes' races for Senate in Wisconsin fell short. However, AFGE members were on the front lines, helping to Get-Out-The-Vote for pro-union candidates up and down the ballot. A dozen AFGE members canvassed in Madison, WI for union candidates during our Legislative & Political Training in September, and members stepped up all across District 7 to volunteer on mobilizing union voters to the polls. Now we will be continuing our work with new and incumbent elected members of Congress to educate them about the issues Federal employees face and the steps that Congress can take to support federal workers and unions!

With midterm elections over, it is now time to begin planning for the 2023 Legislative Conference! If you have questions or need LPO assistance, please submit an intake request via [District7intake@afge.org](mailto:District7intake@afge.org).



### DISTRICT 7 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

The conference will take place February 12-15, 2023

at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill—400 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. The District 7 Legislative Breakfast will be on the morning of February 15th. Registration has not yet opened but please **SAVE THE DATES**.

## AFGE District 7

**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.**



### 2023 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE (LEGCON) AWARDS

The district requested volunteers to participate as 2023 LegCon award committee members. The first five leaders who responded were chosen, and the first meeting was held via Zoom on December 7th to review the criteria. The committee is expecting nominations for the following award categories:

- Education and Training
- Member Mobilization
- Legislative Political Action
- Representation Through Litigation

Awards will be presented at the District 7 Meeting at the Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. In addition, PAC awards will be presented during that time, and all will be showcased in the Spring/Summer 2023 issue of the District 7 newsletter.

### DISTRICT 7 CAUCUS UPDATE

The District 7 Caucus will be held at the Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield Hotel, 375 S. Moorland Road, Brookfield, Wis. 53005, Tel: 262-364-1100.

#### **Key Dates and Times are as follows:**

Delegate Check-In: 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. CT Saturday, May 6  
Delegate Late Check-In: 7 a.m. – 9 a.m. CT Sunday, May 7  
Caucus: 10 a.m. CT Sunday, May 7

**Hotel registration:** Room rate: \$103 nightly  
Registration Deadline: April 22

**\*Training will be offered following the caucus on May 8-10<sup>th</sup>.**

### Organizing In District 7

As of October, District 7 boasts 17,811 active members and 1,278 non-active members, with growth of 581 new active members across the district. Between April and October, the district has added 581 new members. Congratulations to Locals 781, 1732, 1963, 2326, 3247, 3907, and 4070 for successful organizing drives!

National Organizer Jessica Doble has been instrumental in helping the district's organizing efforts. Currently, she is on a dedicated assignment, working a national campaign for the EPA, so the district is urging locals to continue to organize while she is away.

We must continue to think outside the box to create opportunities for new member outreach, share the benefits of union membership with workers who are thinking about becoming a member, or who just don't know anything about unions. District 7's outreach has included conducting new employee orientations to reach potential members to join our movement, as well as provide training opportunities for new and existing stewards, treasurers, and local presidents. The goal of the district is always to message the importance of organizing and to continue to increase membership throughout the district.

**Please share upcoming events or organizing drives, via [District7Intake@afge.org](mailto:District7Intake@afge.org) and your local could be featured in an upcoming issue of the District 7 Newsletter!**

## AFGE District 7



### An Update from Robin Nichols

**National Women's Advisory Coordinator  
& National Human Rights Committee  
Chair**

The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) continues to do great things within AFGE. After working to formulate the Fredna S. White Scholarship Fund, the NHRC awarded 20 students with scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 to further their education. Congratulations to Ms. Kennedy Kreger, daughter of member Angela Kreger, Local 1626 and Cortnei Cooks, daughter of member Linda Parker-Cooks both from District 7, as recipients of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fredna S White scholarship. We encourage you in your studies and for a successful future. The Sister's Keepers Summit and 2022 Diversity and Human Rights training conference was held in New Orleans, LA and once again was a big success. There were hundreds of activists attending a variety of classes to further educate themselves to further represent their members. NFPAAC Yvonne Evans was instrumental in leading the Coordinator's boot camp class. The NHRC hosted a community service project, providing toiletries and other items to the Covenant House which serves homeless and trafficked youth ages 16-22.

In October, the NHRC held multiple virtual sessions which included: mental health, PTSD, and domestic vio-

lence. I participated as a panelists for the mental health session and NFPAAC Yvonne Renee Evans was a panelists for the PTSD session. The information was well received and members are still making contact with panelists on various issues.

On December 6, 2022, I accompanied NVP Anderson and NFPAAC Evans to the 2023 Strategic Planning session to work together on 2023 initiatives. There were a lot of great ideas that came out of this session and the plan will be shared with local leaders in the near future.

**ATTENTION:** There is a need for Women's and Fair Practice Coordinators in our district. This work is important to the members and the federation, and is more successful when we do it together. We are asking each local president to provide a name of their local coordinator for 2023. If you do not have a coordinator, please consider appointing one to work with the local and district. This information should be emailed to [Robin.Nichols@afge.org](mailto:Robin.Nichols@afge.org) and [Yvonne.Evans@afge.org](mailto:Yvonne.Evans@afge.org)

Lastly, please mark your calendars with the following upcoming dates:

- ◆ **2023 MLK Conference – January 13-16 Washington, DC**
- ◆ **2023 Legislative Conference and Civil Rights Luncheon – February 12-16 (luncheon will be held on Monday January 13 (more information forthcoming)**
- ◆ **Augusta Y Thomas Civil Rights Awards - February 13**
- ◆ **2023 Sisters Keepers Summit and Diversity and Human Rights Training conference – July 28, 2023 – Au-**

## AFGE District 7



**A Note from Yvonne Renee Evans**  
**National Fair Practices Affirmative Action  
Coordinator (NFPAAC)**

I have led various disability workshops for members experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the workplace; this was an opportunity for those members to share personal experiences with PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) in the workplace, while exchanging various helpful resources.

Additionally, one particular issue I am actively involved with is ensuring there are adequate lactating stations within my agency. These stations must be safe, private, and easily accessible for bargaining unit employees.

In 2023, I want to have various locals work with their Legislative Political Officers and Congressional Legislative representatives on improvements related to PTSD/TBI issues in and outside of the workplace, and provide additional resources that are readily accessible on the AFGE/WFP websites. I want to help provide EEO training in various AFGE districts via webinar, which allows more members to participate and learn.

For more information on PTSD and TBI, please see the following link, or reach out to Yvonne Renee Evans via email at [Yvonne.Evans@afge.org](mailto:Yvonne.Evans@afge.org).



**What is the PACT Act?**

**By Linda Parker-Cooks, District 7  
Veterans Coordinator**

The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors— with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

The PACT Act expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post 9/11 era. It also expands eligibility for benefits for Veterans exposed to toxic substances. PACT Act Key Components are:

- The Act expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post 9/11 era. VA will improve the decision-making process for determining what medical conditions will be considered for presumptive status.
- Every enrolled Veteran will receive an initial toxic exposure screening and a follow-up screening every five years. Veterans who are not enrolled, but who are eligible to enroll, will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening.
- VA healthcare staff and claims processors will receive toxic exposure-related education and training.





## AFGE District 7

- The Act requires research studies on the mortality of Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War; Post-9/11 Veteran health trends; and Veteran cancer rates.
- The Act will help VA build a stronger, more skilled workforce to meet the growing demand for benefits and services.
- The Act authorizes 31 new facilities across the country, providing greater access to VA health care.

The PACT Act establishes presumptions of service connection for more than 20 conditions related to toxic exposures. Those conditions are:

- Asthma (diagnosed after service)
- Brain cancer
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Glioblastoma
- Granulomatous disease
- Head cancer of any type
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Kidney cancer
- Lymphomatic cancer of any type
- Lymphoma of any type
- Melanoma
- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)
- Neck cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type
- Sarcoidosis

Survivors may be eligible for VA benefits, including Dependency and Indemnity Compensation and Burial benefits. **For more information, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MyVA411.**



### TRAINING UPDATES

Free online training is being held February 15-16, 9am—3pm EST. To sign up, go to <https://afgelearn.org/group/115>

District 7 will host online training on grievances, grievance writing, arbitration, Weingarten interviews, and investigations. A link to register will be provided via email to local leaders in the coming days.

Districts 7 & 8 hosted a Legislative Political Training Institute (LPTI) on September 16-18 in Madison, WI. The training highlighted the high-stakes importance of many of the political races in the state, especially the Senate race. LPTI is for AFGE members who are committed to advancing or building a legislative and political action program at the local level.

NR TJ Hatt facilitated Basic Stewards Training in Michigan on October 18-19. There were 15 attendees.

District 7 & District 8 held EEO training in Bettendorf, IA on October 25-27. The courses offered were:

- EEO Training
- Advanced Steward Training
- Investigatory Interviews and Formal Meetings

**If your local would like to request training specific to your needs, please submit a Request for Assistance Form to**

**[District7intake@afge.org](mailto:District7intake@afge.org).**



## AFGE District 7



### Retiree Security Symposium Seminar

The Alliance for Retired Americans hosted a Retirement Security Symposium Seminar earlier this month. Participants included AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, Representative John Larson (D-CT), pension advocate Rita Lewis, and others. AFGE's Jeff Cruz spoke about federal employee retirement issues in the afternoon session.

### AFGE Benefit Alert

As you begin your holiday shopping, remember to use your AFGE member benefits. These include:

- Cash Back Shopping: Get up to 40% cash back at 5,000+ stores.
- Home Electronics, Appliances and More: AFGE members can get a computer, TVs, cameras, furniture and more with no credit check and by payroll deduction.
- Apple Computer Discount: Offers the highest level of discounts to AFGE members.
- Fine Jewelry Discount: AFGE members save 20%. All products made in the U.S.A.

\*You may send basic retiree questions via [District7intake@afge.org](mailto:District7intake@afge.org).

### IN MEMORIAM

#### Mr. Albert Thomas



We bid farewell to our District 7 Retiree Coordinator, Mr. Albert Thomas, who earned his heavenly wings on August 21, 2022. Mr. Thomas had a long career as an Investigator for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in Chicago, Illinois. Throughout his career, he was politically active, advocating on issues such as discrimination and unfair labor practices. He held a membership and was an organizer with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as well as with the Idlewild Social Club, a historical club for professional middle-class African –Americans. Mr. Thomas always made his way into the district office from Indiana, always eager to assist in any way he could to push AFGE's agenda forward, whether assisting with organizing and political action efforts, rallies, congressional activities, or advocating for retiree memberships. The AFGE National Office submitted a resolution to the family of Mr. Thomas, a tribute to his 47 years of dedication as an AFGE member. Mr. Thomas will be sorely missed.



# AFGE District 7







# THE SOLID SEVENTH



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