



## Building a Union that's Big Enough to Win

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

I need your help. We need to strengthen our collective voice to win.

Coming off the heels of another successful Legislative Conference, there are many reasons to be proud of what we accomplished: attendance reached a record high of 1,000; members met with a majority of Congressional offices; we had a great rally with the support of other unions; agency leaders and congressional powerbrokers attended in record numbers; we raised hundreds of thousands for our legislative/political program and launched our first conference app to great fanfare.

These are great accomplishments, but they are merely beginning of what needs to be our most proactive year to date. We are all facing the most toxic political and media environment we have ever encountered, and the fact of the matter is that one week of action in February will not be enough to get the job done.

***Since the new Congress took office in January, we have already seen bills introduced to cut our pay, eliminate our pensions, increase our health care costs, and cut hundreds of thousands of federal jobs.***

Not satisfied with merely bankrupting you, legislators are planning to introduce bills that undermine your fundamental right to join a union by eliminating official time and preventing you from paying union dues. These individuals are determined to diminish your families' livelihoods AND weaken your right to stand up and do something about it.

***What your union needs to succeed in this environment more than anything is YOUR participation. No one can be a bystander in this struggle.***

1) Less experienced members need to send letters to members of Congress on key issues by reading and

responding to AFGE action alerts in your email or by phone using an AFGE patch-through line.

2) More experienced activists can schedule meetings with your local members of Congress at their district offices.

3) Sign up a new member and ask them to contact their member of Congress.

***Being Big Enough to Win is not about hoping for the best. It is about growing our union's power to prevail in any fight; to be the ones on the offensive, rather than playing defense. And we need YOU to get it done.***

Help AFGE win the future of OUR choice.

### AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

Vol. LXXXII, No. 2 March/April 2015. AFGE—The Government Standard (USPS 003-219, ISSN 1041- 5335) is the official membership publication of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20001. Phone: 202.737.8700, [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

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(from cover)

## When AFGE leaders and activists come together, there's nothing we can't accomplish.

Thirty years ago, AFGE faced declining membership and a diminished voice on the Hill. But we confronted the crisis, invested in our union, and built a new solid foundation. Since then, every time AFGE members made the choice to invest in the growth and strength of our union, it's paid off big-time.

### Today we are stronger than ever.

We beat back the National Security Personnel System, MAX HR, and A-76 contracting out, saving hundreds of thousands of good jobs and protecting the rights of federal workers. We welcomed 45,000 TSA officers into the AFGE family. We surpassed 290,000 members for the first time in our history, fought and ended the government shutdown, and each year our voice has grown on Capitol Hill.

### But anti-government, anti-worker threats are also stronger than ever.

A hostile Congress seeks to outsource our jobs, gut our retirement security, and slash our paychecks. Corporate-funded politicians have stripped workers' rights and public worker benefits in state houses across the country. Now they are coming after our rights and livelihoods.

### AFGE members won't stand by as our jobs, communities and the American Dream are under attack.

More than 700 leaders from across AFGE came together in Orlando in 2013. They brought their vision for a strong shared future and their best ideas. They challenged themselves to step up and act boldly and with urgency. Out of this shared commitment to action, Big Enough to Win was born.

### Big Enough to Win unites AFGE leaders at all levels to:

- 1 Organize more members.** With the goal of reaching 500,000 members by 2020, we'll invest in growing our ranks and bringing new units of workers into AFGE.
- 2 Build our legislative and political power.** Congress is our bargaining table. We'll build a robust legislative program, empower members to take collective action, and stand with elected leaders that believe in our work.



**3 Strengthen every local.** Our local unions are the lifeblood of AFGE. By raising standards and helping every local thrive, we'll help ensure that AFGE members get the representation they deserve.

**4 Increase the quality and quantity of training and communication.** We'll continue to advance AFGE's education and communications programs so local leaders have the knowledge and tools to move AFGE forward and win for members.





# BIG ENOUGH TO WIN



A vision without a plan is a daydream, and a plan without action is just a piece of paper. If we want to win real pay increases and stop the cuts to our retirement, we need to step up and implement the Big Enough to Win plan. Every AFGE member has a role to play in winning the future of our choice. As you'll see below, many members, locals, and councils are already investing in organization, legislative mobilization, training and communication, and strategic planning. We need you to become a part of the solution. Learn more on what you can do to help at [www.afge.org/win](http://www.afge.org/win).

## GOAL: Build Our Strength in Numbers



If you don't have the numbers, you don't have the strength.

Eric Young, BOP

*When we grow our union, we build our bargaining and political power, send*

*a strong message of unity, and ensure we have the resources to win.*

In June 2014, an internal VA investigation revealed waitlist manipulation and mismanagement that left veterans without care. Chronic underfunding and staffing shortages put veterans at risk, and countless AFGE whistleblowers who tried to expose problems faced retaliation.

Members of AFGE's National Veterans Affairs Council (NVAC) stood together and refused to be silenced. Lobbying and media efforts brought frontline VA caregivers to Washington to speak out, while a huge organizing effort enlisted 8,000 new members in less than six months.

By August, the NVAC welcomed its 100,000th member, and President Obama signed an emergency funding bill injecting billions of needed funds to support veterans' care. Now the Council has reached over 106,000 members bringing them closer to their new 150,000 member goal.

## GOAL: Build Our Power to Win on Capitol Hill

*Mobilizing members means we have the strength to win real improvements for government employees.*

Workplace assaults are an all-too-common fact of life for AFGE Council of Prison Locals members. When three of our union brothers were murdered

# IN ACTION

in the line of duty, AFGE BOP members knew it was time to unite and act.

They launched the Safe Prisons Project directing thousands of letters and phone calls at lawmakers. It is challenging understaffing and overcrowding in the prison system and fighting for correctional officer access to pepper spray for self-defense.

Thanks to the Council's efforts, the Bureau of Prisons announced in March that all correctional staff at high and medium security facilities may carry pepper spray.

## GOAL: More Training & Communication Tools



We are the people that make **America work**. We have to make sure the **union is strong** so services can be **strong**.

Gabrielle Martin, EEOC

*When local leaders are empowered with the latest training and tools to engage members and the public, there's nothing we can't accomplish.*

Things looked dire for AFGE members at the Social Security Administration (SSA) in early 2014. Its Vision 2025 plan called for massive cuts to the SSA's Field Office Structure.

With millions of Baby Boomers approaching retirement, the plan would harm seniors, open the door to online fraud, increase lost benefits, and cost thousands of jobs. After a lifetime of hard work, Americans would lose face-to-face customer service for the benefits they earned.

But AFGE and AFGE Council 220 were ready to fight back. Council 220 engaged allies and developed a campaign to educate the public about the Vision 2025 plan. They won funding to restore hours at SSA field offices, and preserved vital benefit verification services.

## GOAL: Work to Strengthen Every Local

*Strong locals are the lifeblood of our union. Knowing where you are and where you want to go makes all of us more effective.*

In September 2013, Local 1410 was not what you'd call a powerhouse. It had formed from three Defense Health Agency locals out of the shuttered Walter Reed Army Medical Center. They had just 327 members (just 10 percent of the bargaining unit).

So when Local 1410 activists set the goal of 1,000 members by the end of 2014 (a jump to 30 percent density), they weren't without their skeptics.

Local 1410, District 14 and national organizers came up with a plan to win. It included community outreach, member education and organizing events scheduled a year out. They used employee rosters to identify concentrations of non-members and target those areas. Email and vocal members helped spread the word.

Local 1410 hit 1,000 members before the end of 2014. This year, they plan to reach 1,920 members.

## It's Time to Act!

*Together we can build a future where fairness and dignity for all working families are protected by a thriving labor movement with AFGE members leading the way.*

## What You Can Do to Join Big Enough to Win

- 1) Visit [www.afge.org/win](http://www.afge.org/win) to learn more.
- 2) Text **BIG** to **225568** to get involved.

*(Using your personal, not work phone)*

# The Best Moments from AFGE's 2015 Legislative Conference



Senator Ben Cardin

## AFGE Members Rally on Capitol Hill for a Government that Works for America

All unionists know there is strength in numbers. During Legislative Conference over 500 AFGE activists flexed their muscle rallying on Capitol Hill for a Government that Works for America. Correctional officers, nurses, airport security screeners, border patrol agents, and other AFGE members from all walks of life, sent our lawmakers one simple message: we deliver vital services to the American people, and we demand respect from Congress in return. Union brothers and sisters from AFSCME, APWU, and Public Service International and several key lawmakers stood in solidarity in our call for a better-funded, worker-friendly government. It was a proud day to be AFGE!



### President Emeritus Harnage surprised the crowd

AFGE President Emeritus Bobby Harnage addressed the AFGE Legislative Conference for the first time since leaving office in 2003.



### You don't have to be AFGE to be a proud public servant

Sen. Dick Durbin from Illinois wowed AFGE activists with this opening line: "My name is Dick Durbin. I'm a senator from Illinois. I get my paychecks from the government. I'm a public employee and damn proud of it."



### A New Legislative Conference Attendance Record

For the very first time, 1,000 AFGE leaders and activists came to our legislative conference this year – a show of solidarity and commitment!

## Historic Visits during AFGE's Legislative Conference



VA Secretary Bob McDonald and AFGE National VA Council President Alma Lee.



AFMC Council President Troy Tingey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Maintenance Policy and Plans, John Johns, AFMC Council Treasurer Ty Norton, and Local 916 President Carl Dahms.



SSA Acting Commissioner Carolyn Colvin and AFGE Local 3272 President Rosendo Rocha.

### VA Sec. McDonald Cites Importance of Union, Federal Employees

Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald received a rock star welcome as he addressed a packed house at the AFGE National VA Council's meeting – the first time any VA Secretary has spoken to the Council at a Legislative Conference.

"You have no hope to delight veterans if you don't delight your employees," said McDonald. "We simply cannot be the kind of VA we want to be without your help. That's why I'm here."

McDonald called mandatory overtime "a prescription for disaster" and plans to get rid of it. The VA, he said, needs to hire more people – something that has already begun, as the VA is set to add 11,600 more full-time employees in its 2016 budget. He also told the crowd he was on the same page as AFGE when it came to downgrades at the VA. He said he had directed managers now to downgrade employees, and that if any downgrades occurred that the union should notify him.

### AFGE Members Visit the Pentagon

Two dozen of Department of Defense depot and arsenal activists met with senior civilian and military leaders at the Pentagon in an historic summit. John Johns, deputy assistant secretary of Defense for maintenance policy and programs, hosted the meeting, which was the first time so many depot and arsenal local presidents and leaders were

invited to a single meeting at the Pentagon. It was also the first time that many of those who work to maintain and manufacture our weapons systems were invited to walk the long corridors of the U.S. military's world headquarters, taking in the halls honoring the valor of our Armed Forces. Discussions focused on topics specific to the depots and arsenals, as well as to DoD employees overall, including civilian personnel caps and freezes, furloughs, sequestration and the DoD budget, core workload, PBL contracts, Acquisition Reform, and the 50/50 law. DoD agreed to check into a number of specific issues raised during the vigorous discussion.

### Social Security's Acting Commissioner Drops In

Council 220 had just assembled to discuss their efforts to stop "Vision 2025," a plan developed for the Social Security Administration that would virtually eliminate the majority of community field offices across the country, when Social Security Administration Acting Commissioner Carolyn Colvin joined the meeting.

Without any of her staff present, she had a frank discussion with AFGE members at the Social Security Administration. Many members of Council 220 had the opportunity to directly ask her questions about Vision 2025 and the future of customer service at the Social Security Administration. But when it came to areas of agreement between the Acting Commissioner and Council 220, it was the need for Congress to fully fund the agency.

## AFGE Joins 50th Anniversary of Civil Rights March from Selma to Montgomery



Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

**A** FGE was honored to be the only union invited to join a group of civil right leaders and activists led by President Barack Obama to walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge last weekend to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday and the civil rights march. Joining President Obama were the First Family, former President George W. Bush, Rep. John Lewis, Rev. Al Sharpton, and other original “foot soldiers” who were there on the bridge 50 years ago. “AFGE always stands for civil rights and workers’ rights. To be a part of this is an amazing moment,” President Cox said.

### “Boss man, it’s time for a raise.”

Before the march, President Obama shook hands with everyone in the group. President Cox thanked the

president for funding Homeland Security and told him that federal employees deserved a raise after five years of no or low increases. “I told him, Boss man, it’s time for a raise.”

AFGE thanked him for commuting the sentences of two former Border Patrol agents imprisoned for shooting a drug smuggler, who admitted to smuggling several hundred pounds of marijuana and later pleaded guilty to two other smuggling attempts. President Bush pardoned the two agents on his last full day in office. “It was the right thing to do,” he said, adding, “I believe this is the first time AFGE has ever thanked me for anything.” Then he turned to President Obama and said “Give these guys a raise.” Obama responded, “This is the second time they asked me for a raise today.”

## Scream NO! NO! NO! Fast Track for TPP

**N** AFTA and China WTO turned millions of hard working Americans and their good paying jobs into unemployed poor families so global corporations could pay cheap or almost slave wages overseas and pocket the savings. Millions more Americans have seen stagnant wages as a result. Now the administration, Wall Street investors and global corporations have teamed up with many in Congress to force Americans to swallow a new NAFTA AND WTO on steroids called TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), and they intend to rush it through Congress in an undemocratic process called Fast Track.

### Answer the following questions:

Are you in favor of secretly negotiated treaties that layoff Americans so global companies can pay workers almost nothing and then pocket the difference in shareholder profits?

Do you think government services and government

jobs – those performed by AFGE members – should be contracted out to foreign corporations who can force the government to contract out any government service by going to an international court?

Do you think foreign global corporations should be able to file a lawsuit for damages against the government because the government requires an increase in the minimum wage, requires a 401k plan or sick leave?

Do you think that all these very bad treaties should be “fast tracked” which prevents Congress from having any real debate or from making any amendments?

If you answered No to any of these questions – join with the entire labor movement in taking action to stop Fast Track before the vote in March or April. Look for our Action Alerts.

**Your action today may save your job tomorrow!**

Visit [www.afge.org/stopTPP](http://www.afge.org/stopTPP).

## Important Notice About Your Right to Join a Lawsuit to Recover Damages from the October 2013 Shutdown and Chance to Send a Message that Government Employees Should Not Be Required to Work for Free During Shutdowns

Beginning on approximately March 9, the Government will be sending emails entitled “Notice of Your Rights in a Collective Action Lawsuit Arising Out of the Government Shutdown” to employees covered by an important lawsuit. We are proud that the original plaintiffs who started this case are all AFGE Local Union leaders. In this lawsuit, plaintiffs argue that the Government violated the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”) by failing to pay “excepted” or “essential” employees who had to work during the October 2013 shutdown on their regularly scheduled payday. This violation occurred even though the Government eventually paid the employees. Plaintiffs, who are represented by Heidi Burakiewicz of the law firm Mehri & Skalet, argue that the Government owes these employees liquidated damages in the amount of the minimum wage and overtime compensation that was not paid on time because of the shutdown. For example, plaintiffs argue that if an employee earned \$350 worth of overtime compensation that was not paid on time during the shutdown, then the Government owes that employee \$350 as liquidated damages.

The Court already has ruled that the Government has violated the FLSA by not paying minimum wage on employees’ regularly scheduled paydays.

You will only be eligible to recover money damages if you join the case. The deadline for joining will be set out in the Notice, but we believe that it will be approximately June 22, 2015.

It is easy to join. Simply go to [www.shutdownlawsuit.com](http://www.shutdownlawsuit.com), and click on the “Join the Case” page.

We urge you to join the lawsuit. There is no risk to joining: the attorneys are paying all of the expenses of the case and will be paid for their time and expenses only if the employees win the case.

But the more important reason to join is to send a message to the Government that government employees are tired of being used as political footballs whenever the politicians reach an impasse. As evidenced by the recent DHS situation, there is always the possibility of another shutdown. The larger the percentage of employees who join the case, the stronger the message to the politicians.

Indeed, there is no need to wait until you receive the Notice. You can join the case now. Over 5,000 workers already have joined. Just go to [www.shutdownlawsuit.com](http://www.shutdownlawsuit.com).

If you have any questions, you may contact the lawyers at [shutdownlawsuit@findjustice.com](mailto:shutdownlawsuit@findjustice.com).

## A Note about Government Shutdown Litigation

This issue of The Government Standard contains a copy of a court-approved notice from a lawsuit that arose out of the 2013 government shutdown: *Martin, et al., v. United States*, Case No. 13-834C, U.S. Court of Federal Claims. AFGE has received numerous questions about this case and the legitimacy of the court-approved notice, which you may recently have received. The lawsuit is real and the notice is legitimate, although it is not an AFGE case. The Court of Federal Claims has conditionally certified the case to proceed as a collective action under the Fair Labor Standards Act, similar to a class action in other contexts.

The case seeks liquidated damages based on the delayed payment of minimum wages, notwithstanding that payment was likely prohibited during the shutdown by the Anti-deficiency Act and OPM guidance, and that most employees likely received more than minimum wage after the shutdown ended.

The opt-in notices are consequently going out now to potential plaintiffs who may have worked during the shutdown and whose pay was delayed as a result. Eligible employees who do not opt-in will not be part of the lawsuit and may lose any rights or claims they may have. You may therefore opt-in at no cost if you are eligible, in accordance with the notice. You should, however, use your own judgment when determining whether to opt-in, as no particular outcome is promised or guaranteed.

## Mayor Muriel Bowser Pledges Her Support to Union Workers



by Mayor Bowser as she welcomed AFGE members to the nation's capital at our National Legislative Conference last month.

"We walked, we knocked, we called and did everything we could to make sure that we put into office those candidates who have consistently advocated for working American families," said District 14 National Vice President Eric Bunn, Sr. of AFGE's role in the mid-term elections. While in many states the results were disappointing, in Washington, DC, AFGE members were victorious, helping to elect Muriel Bowser as Mayor of the District.

"We look forward to continuing our long-standing labor management relationship with the new mayoral administration and DC council," says Bunn. Bowser's reaffirmation of her commitment to the workers of DC and her taking time out to spend Sunday afternoon with members of AFGE helped solidify that strong relationship.

**T**alk to your lawmakers about not cutting your retirement... not contracting out your jobs... and increasing your pay!" These were the words shouted

## These Members of Congress Want to Destroy 320,000 Jobs

**T**he Department of Defense has three workforces: military, civilian, and contractor. The civilian workforce is the cheapest, often two to three times cheaper than contractors doing the same work.

If a member of Congress wanted to reduce the number of



workers, citing fiscal constraints, he would start with the most expensive workforce, right? Not Rep. Ken Calvert of California. He has re-introduced a bill that would cut nearly 120,000 civilian jobs without reducing the workload. The workload of these 120,000 employees would likely

go to contractors as Calvert's bill doesn't require any cuts in service contract spending, which has doubled over the last 10 years. The bill would also give managers sweeping discretion over which civilian employees would be let go.

### Plan Would Kill 200,000 Jobs, Undermine Economy, Safety

Reps. Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming and Mick Mulvaney of South Carolina have introduced a bill that would kill

200,000 federal jobs by replacing only one worker for every three that leave. Their workforce dismantling plan would effectively starve federal agencies of the employees needed to carry out important tasks for the growing population.

# 320,000 Lost Jobs

These tasks include keeping the borders safe and secure, protecting air travelers from terrorist attacks, making sure the food we eat is safe, finding cures to deadly diseases,

educating our children, keeping criminals off the streets, caring for our veterans, protecting consumers, rescuing victims of natural disasters, cutting retirement checks, and the list goes on.

Bills like Lummis and Mulvaney's are harmful to the economy. Federal employees are job creators. They shop. They eat out. They vacation. They pay taxes. The money federal employees spend sustain local economies, as evident during the 2013 furloughs where stores and restaurants lost business and had to cut workers' hours.

## 2015 AFGE National Convention

**A** FGE will hold nominations and elections for the offices of National President, National Secretary-Treasurer, and National Vice-President for Women and Fair Practices at its 40th National Convention, which will be held Monday, August 17, through Friday, August 21, 2015, at the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel, 1500 Epcot Resorts Boulevard, Lake Buena Vista, Florida 32830.

Nominations and elections will be conducted, and protests filed, in accordance with the "AFGE Rules of Conduct for an Election" as provided in Appendix A of the AFGE National Constitution, and with the Convention Rules, the current version of which is set forth in Appendix C of the AFGE National Constitution. All offices are for a three-year term.

### Nominations:

The convention will convene on Monday, August 17, at 10 a.m. Nominations shall be made by delegates in writing, stating the name of the candidate and signed by

the delegate making the nomination. Under current Convention Rules, nominations shall be received by the chair of the Election Committee before 4 p.m. on Monday, August 17. No person may be a candidate for more than one office.

### Qualifications:

No person shall be a candidate for, or be elected to, national office unless he or she: has been a government employee for three consecutive years; has been a member in good standing of the Federation for the three consecutive years prior to the date of nomination; and is not a member in any labor organization not affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

### Election:

Under the current Convention Rules, the polls will open to delegates for the election of officers from 7:30 a.m. through 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 19. Any required run-off election will be held immediately following the tally of votes.

## Women's & Fair Practices Convention Awards

**T**his August at the 2015 AFGE National Convention, the Bernice B. Heffner Outstanding Women's Achievement award and the A. Philip Randolph-Hubert H. Humphrey award will be presented. It is a valued tradition of the Human Rights Committee and the Women's and Fair Practices Departments to recognize those who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to promote civil, human, women's, and workers' rights.

The Bernice B. Heffner award is an opportunity to honor an individual who has exhibited outstanding leadership and action by advancing AFGE's goals on women and family issues.

The A. Philip Randolph-Hubert H. Humphrey award is an opportunity to esteem someone who exemplifies outstanding community activism. This member would have demonstrated such ability by participating in community service activities or developing community or workplace service-driven programs.

This is a great opportunity for a Local to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of those members who understand the importance of equality and fair treatment, the goals of AFGE and the work of the Women's and Fair Practices Departments.

You can find nomination forms on AFGE's website. Nominations for both awards must be postmarked on or before May 8, 2015. For more information, call (202) 639-6417.



2012 A. Philip Randolph-Hubert H. Humphrey award winner, Sally Phelps, Local 916



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