

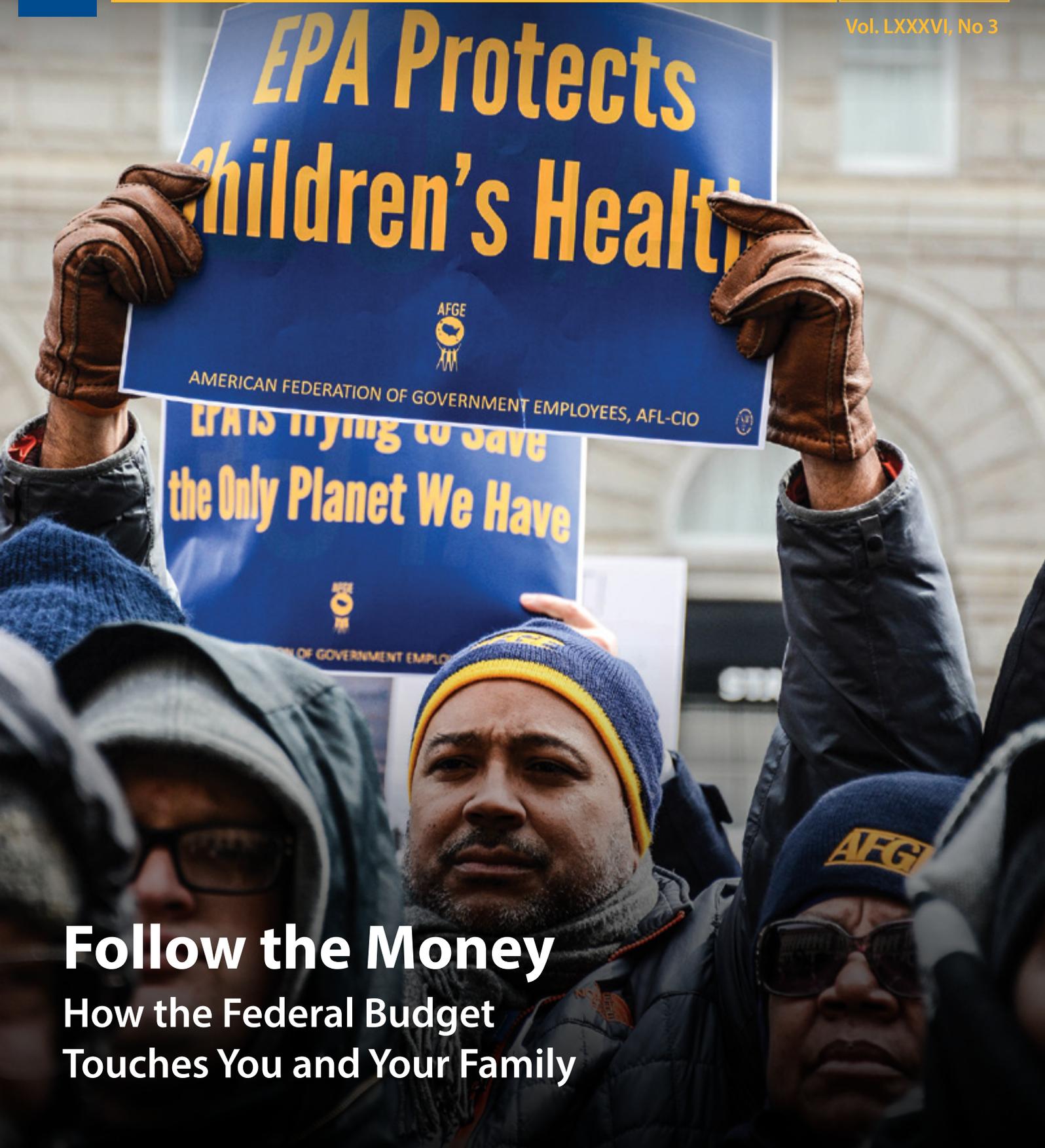


THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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

May/June 2017

Vol. LXXXVI, No 3



Follow the Money

How the Federal Budget
Touches You and Your Family

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

Brothers and Sisters, those who know me well know that I'm not one to sugarcoat things. Maybe it's the Southerner in me.

But looking at what we're facing with the new administration and Congress, I'm not about to pretend like everything is going to be okay. The truth is that if we don't change what we – the leadership, activists, members of the union – are doing each day, we may not have a union left in two years.

In just the first few months of 2017 we've seen attempts to eliminate whole agencies and cut others to the point where their missions are meaningless. We've seen attempts to rob union leaders of their pensions just for stepping up to defend their coworkers. Already Congress is fast-tracking a measure to gut basic job protections that protect you from being fired for political or discriminatory reasons.

We've talked about this moment for years; the moment when we'll need to be big enough to win, no matter the odds. Well sisters and brothers, that day has come early. We're bigger and stronger than ever before, no doubt about it. But now we need to use the power that comes from all our voices together.

Every member of our union has a stake in this fight, and everyone needs to do their part if we're to come out okay on the other side.

We need our leaders to walk the floor at their worksites and get people to come to lunch and learns. Our national representatives, membership organizers, and political organizers need to educate and engage our activists.

Yes, we all have busy lives to live, but just one hour invested from every AFGE member adds up to 36 years of time; time spent calling Congress, building

coalitions, visiting lawmakers, and energizing our peers. We have the strength to do it – now we just need to demonstrate the will.

Now, more than ever before, we need to recommit ourselves to what it means to be a union member. We joined this union because we didn't want to be pushed around. We joined this union because we know the whole is always stronger than the one. We joined this union because we wanted a better future for our families.

This is the moment where the rubber meets the road. We can prevail in this fight if everyone does their part and we stand together for what we deserve. I know you can do it. I know this union can do it.

In Solidarity,

AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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Crisis Averted – Shutdown Threat Passes as Funding Clears Congress



Congress April 30 reached a \$1 trillion agreement to fund the government through the end of September, removing the threat of another harmful shutdown.

Funding Bill Highlights

- **\$12.5 billion** in new military spending
- **\$1.5 billion** more for border security to be used for technology investments and maintenance of existing infrastructure
- **\$2 billion** in new funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- **\$100 million** to combat opioid addiction
- **\$407 million** in wildfire relief for western states
- Health care coverage for retired coal miners in danger of losing their coverage
- Increases in funding for energy, science, infrastructure, and medical research

AFGE President J. David Cox Sr. applauded Congress for coming together on a bipartisan bill that will keep the people's government open for business.

"In reaching this agreement, lawmakers wisely rejected billions of dollars in harmful cuts to medical research, education programs, housing grants, and other vital programs proposed by the Trump administration," he said. "Those who need our help the most would have been hit hardest by these cuts,

and Congress was right to reject them."

"I also thank Congress for retaining the longstanding ban on contracting out federal jobs using the flawed A-76 outsourcing process," Cox added. "Taxpayers benefit when federal jobs are performed by civil service employees, who are less costly and more accountable than private contractors."

The majority of Americans repeatedly told pollsters they want to invest in America. According to a recent Quinnipiac University national poll, they are against the administration's proposed cuts.

Public Strongly Opposes Budget Cuts

- **87%** against cutting funding for medical research
- **84%** against cuts to funding for new road and transit projects
- **67%** against cuts to scientific research on the environment and climate change
- **83%** against cutting funding for after school and summer school programs
- **66%** against eliminating the National Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities
- **79%** against eliminating the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

"The American people want us to invest in America, not dismantle it," Cox said. "Federal employees are ready to serve."

The Federal Budget Explained



With deep budget cuts and anti-worker bills on the table, the next couple of months will be crucial for federal employees, their agencies, and the public they serve.

Lawmakers want to dismantle government, starve agencies so they can't function and become ripe for privatization, gut our job protections, and bust our unions. And they plan to do it in the budget.



Here's how the budget process works, and how we can make it work for us:

The Budget Process

The White House's budget proposal is just the first step of a months-long process to fund the government and decide the upcoming year's priorities. Here's an explainer on how Congress passes a budget and a special procedure to speed up the process and bypass the minority.

Step 1: The White House's Budget Request



The President submits a budget request to Congress detailing his policy priorities and spending levels for agencies and programs for the next fiscal year. Usually this is done the first Monday of February, but when there's a new administration, the date often slips. The President's budget is simply a request.

Congress may or may not share his/her view on priorities.

Step 2: The Congressional Budget Resolution

Congress responds to the President's budget request. The House and Senate Budget Committees separately draft their budget blueprints called budget resolutions. Once the resolutions pass the committees, the budget resolutions go to the full House and Senate. After the House and Senate pass their versions, they iron out differences between the two bills. The final version of the bill then goes to the House and Senate floor for a vote.



Step 3: Congressional Appropriations



Once the budget resolution is adopted, the funding process moves to the House and Senate appropriations committees to determine funding levels program-by-program. Separately, the House and Senate appropriations committees divide the allocation into 12 subcommittees that oversee various programs and agencies. The subcommittees usually hold public hearings and invite stakeholders to testify on funding levels they'd like to see. Lawmakers outside of the subcommittees can also chime in.



After the subcommittee passes the appropriations bill, the full committee takes it up. They usually offer amendments and so-called "policy riders" that change the proposed levels of funding. The bill then goes to the full House and Senate.

All 12 appropriations bills are supposed to be passed and signed into law by Oct. 1 when the next fiscal year begins.



If they can't pass the 12 appropriations bills in time, they have an option of lumping them into an "omnibus bill." An omnibus bill could be a good tool or a bad tool depending on whom you ask. It speeds things up and allows members to vote yes on the bill with parts they may have a hard time justifying if they were part of a smaller bill. It also makes it harder for the President to veto such a large bill even though he disagrees with some parts of it.



If time is running out and Congress doesn't want to pass an omnibus bill, it can pass a continuing resolution instead and finish their 12 appropriations bills even though that means several months' delay.



Whatever form the spending measure takes, it then goes to the President for his or her signature or veto. The veto can be overturned by a two-thirds majority in both houses.

AFGE Members March to Save the EPA



AFGE members marched with environmental activists across the country in opposition to EPA cuts.

Nobody likes drinking filthy water, especially when we can do something about it. That's why EPA employees joined hundreds of thousands of people in the People's Climate Marches held across the country to protest the new administration's pro-polluter policies and proposed budget cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that would jeopardize clean air and water for everyone in the country.

AFGE members at the EPA joined the rallies in Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, and Denver as part of the 370 events held April 29. The 90-degree heat in D.C. and pouring rain in Chicago did nothing to stop the protesters, who showed up with inspiring homemade signs like "Climate change is not fake science" and "There is no Planet B."

AFGE members brought family and friends to help inform the public about the life-saving work they do, and the importance it holds for future generations of Americans.

EPA employees, for example, are tasked with implementing the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, which are projected to prevent 120,000 ER visits, 13 million lost work days, and more than 230,000 early deaths in America by 2020.

AFGE EPA Council President John O'Grady addressed thousands of protesters gathered in downtown Chicago:

"This administration claims that it can reduce the US EPA's budget by over 31 percent, cut staffing by 3,000 to 4,000 people, and totally eliminate 56 programs – including all climate change programs – and still ensure clean air and water. BALONEY! This administration claims it can close two of U.S. EPA's regional offices, including this one in Chicago and still protect our health and environment. BALONEY!"

According to the American Lung Association's 2017 State of the Air report, more than 125 million Americans live in counties with unhealthy levels of either ozone or particle pollution, placing them at risk for asthma attacks, cardiovascular damage, developmental and reproductive harm, premature death, and the ever-present cancer threat. The EPA is a major player in preventing air pollution.

"The Environmental Protection Agency is our best – and often only – way of fighting polluters and protecting community health," said AFGE President J. David Cox Sr. "We are proud to have been a part of the People's Climate March, and to raise awareness about the important work the EPA does."

Civilian Worker Shortfalls Hampering Military Readiness

Military leaders from across the services are warning House and Senate lawmakers that mission readiness is being eroded as a result of civilian employee furloughs, hiring freezes, and budget uncertainty.

In recent testimony, vice chiefs of staff from the military departments also detailed how the loss of experienced civilian employees increased shipyard backlogs and contributed to reduced pilot flying hours from pilots having to take on administrative duties previously performed by civilians.

The military leaders documented how service members were being pulled off training and other military duties to backfill for civilian vacancies resulting from the recent hiring freeze – a practice called “borrowed military manpower.”

“The size and readiness of the war fighting capability of the Department of Defense is directly impacted by the size of the civilian workforce,” AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. wrote in an April 13 letter to the leaders of the House Armed Services Committee. “Reducing or constraining the size of the civilian workforce will further hollow the warfighting capabilities and readiness of the all-volunteer military.”

Although it’s well-documented that this practice results in a deficient military – what’s called the “hollow force” – some Defense reform advocates foolishly argue that further cutting the size of the civilian workforce will somehow increase military efficiency.

The real driver of military inefficiency is billions spent on contractors, which more than doubled in 10 years and now accounts for nearly half of total force spending at the Department of Defense.

“I have personally been contacted by government officials who described situations where hiring contractors resulted in higher costs than would have been incurred if civilian employees had performed the work,” Amey wrote in Government Executive.

One reason why spending on contractor services is out of control is because it’s hidden to lawmakers and decision makers at the department level. While there are extensive budget details on the cost of civilian workers, there are no comparable figures on service contractors because those spending decisions are made after the funding level has been set by Congress – instead of being strategically considered as part of DoD’s budget planning process.



Defense civilians are the back-bone of America's military force, and they are speaking out to keep our national defense strong.

The Doctor is Not In: Health and Research are on the Chopping Block

Keeping people safe. Fighting deadly diseases. Promoting public health and well-being. These are the most basic jobs of any government.

But among the administration's proposed 2018 cuts, there are several deep cuts to core public health programs that would affect every American.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), whose mission is to help us live longer and healthier, would see a cut of 18 percent, or \$5.8 billion.

Most of the NIH's budget goes to funding research in health care in universities across the country. The 18 percent cut would affect the billions of dollars NIH invests in research around the globe, as well as studies at its Bethesda, Md., campus.

The administration also has proposed to eliminate the Fogarty International Center – its global health research arm that funds about 400 research and

training projects across the country and abroad. Its scientists help control infectious disease outbreaks, like the Ebola epidemic that killed

more than 10,000 people in Africa. It also studies the effects of climate change on disease outbreaks.

NIH Fast Facts

NIH's \$30.3 billion budget would be cut by 18%, about \$5.8 billion, in 2018.

400 research and training projects at the Fogarty International Center would disappear as the center would be eliminated.

NIH needs a budget increase, not decrease. Because of NIH, Americans today are living longer and healthier. Life expectancy in the U.S. has gone up from 47 years in 1900 to 78 years in 2009. Deaths from all cancers have also dropped significantly.

When we fail to invest in ourselves, we fail to build a better future for our families. Join the fight to oppose these cuts and other at www.afge.org/win.

Proposed Budget Cuts Threaten Vital TSA Program

When Carolyn Bauer first joined the Transportation Security Administration as a TSA Officer at San Jose International Airport nearly 10 years ago, she wanted to make a difference and protect passengers. And, today, she's doing just that. For the last 4 years, she's worked as a TSA Behavior Detection Officer (BDO) tasked with observing passenger behavior and detecting threats.

"I decided to transfer from being a Transportation Security Officer to becoming a Behavior Detection Officer because I believe in the program and I wanted to gain the unique set of skills," said Bauer.

Despite years of vigilant service, BDOs like Carolyn are facing what could be the end of this key program. The fiscal year 2018 budget proposes ending the Behavior Detection Officer program – a

move that Carolyn says could be devastating for the program and her colleagues.

"The BDO program is extremely important and effective in ensuring the flying public remains safe at the airport and on airplanes," said Bauer.

What is TSA doing to counter these proposed cuts? They're training more checkpoint screeners to have the skills needed to detect passenger behavior, but without fairly compensating them for those duties.

"Those officers who are getting the additional training aren't getting paid any more than the officers without the training. It's increased responsibility with no compensation. As you can imagine, this is sinking morale," said Bauer. "Once again, we're doing more with less." (Continues on page 9)

Register Now for AFGE's Annual Diversity Week Training



Katelyn Starr and Mignon Footman attend the AFGE Human Rights Training

Early bird registration for the Women's and Fair Practices Departments' 2017 Diversity Week Training opened May 1 and will run through July 1.

It is fitting that the kickoff of Diversity Training coincided with International Worker's Day, also known as May Day. On this day workers and union members across the world celebrate establishing the standard 8-hour workday and many other benefits that unions have fought for to make working

Carolyn and her fellow TSA workers screen over a million passengers a year at the San Jose airport. "The officers need to be able to concentrate on identifying threats instead of being worried about their pay, their job, and the federal budget," said Bauer. "It's hard to focus on your job when your livelihood weighs in the balance."

Other proposed budget cuts to TSA include eliminating grants to state and local law enforcement agencies to fund police patrols in and around airports, reducing funding to states and localities for visible sweeps of transit locations also known as the Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response teams (VIPR), and ticket fee increases for airline passengers.

AFGE members believe in standing up for one another's jobs. We believe in people being fairly compensated for the work we do. An injury to one is an injury to all. Call your member of Congress at 202-224-3121.

conditions better for everyone. We encourage you, in the spirit of these principles, to register and get trained on being a better union activist and fighting for those who can't fight for themselves.

As this year's theme is "No Room for Hate," we will continue to offer our core human rights classes such as Coordinator Boot Camp and all levels of Equal Employment Opportunity. We will also introduce new favorites like Racial Justice, Workplace Bullying, Y.O.U.N.G. Worker Training, LGBT Leadership, New Beginnings, and Effective Locals.

Here are the details on registering for Diversity Week:

When: August 14-18

Where: Caribe Hilton – San Juan, Puerto Rico

Registration: Sunday, August 13
from 10 am - 2 pm and 6 pm - 9 pm

Early Bird Registration: \$375 (May 1 - July 1)

Late Registration: \$400 (July 2 - July 17)

Evening Banquet: \$85 (Early Bird Registration)
\$90 (Late Registration)

***Please note: There will be no onsite registration.**

The room rate at the hotel is \$140 per night plus tax. Rooms will go fast, so book now!

Call the hotel directly at **787-721-0303** and use the group code: **AFGE**.

You may also reserve rooms online at <http://bit.ly/2q3wkrb>

All union leaders and activists are encouraged to attend this training, especially Local Women's, Local Fair Practices and Local Y.O.U.N.G. Coordinators. If you have any questions or concerns, contact us at wfptraining@afge.org or 202-639-6417. For more information on registering for Diversity Week visit www.afge.org/diversityweek.

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What Does the Administration Have in Store for VA and Social Security?



Members listen intently at the AFGE National VA Council's 22nd Triennial Training Convention

Department of Veterans Affairs

In the budget proposal released by the administration in March, the Department of Veterans Affairs would be one of the few agencies to see an increase. It would add \$4.4 billion dollars – a six percent raise – bumping the VA budget from \$74.5 billion in fiscal year 2017 to \$78.9 billion in fiscal year 2018.

But that increase won't necessarily go to strengthening the core of VA operations.

It requests \$3.5 billion in mandatory funding to extend to the Veterans Choice program. The program sends veterans to receive care outside of the VA. It was created with the best of intentions, but has encountered serious issues since implementation a few years ago. Continuing funding for the Choice program doesn't do anything to improve the VA where veterans really want to get their care. It's a band-aid at best. Further expansion of the Choice program could be wholesale privatization of the most important medical system in our country, and drastically reduce the quality care of our veterans count on.

Rather, the funding should be used to fill the 45,000 vacant positions at VA hospital and clinics across the country. VA employees – often veterans themselves

– know the needs of our nations' heroes better than any for-profit health care provider could. Veterans' health care is a mission, not an opportunity to profit off veterans' wounds of war.

Social Security Administration

The administration's proposed budget flatlines funding for the Social Security Administration. While Social Security Administration employees work every day to ensure our seniors and their families receive the benefits they have earned, the proposed budget would make their jobs even more difficult with no funding to meet growing demands.

Static funding means there is not enough staff to provide face-to-face service to seniors looking to claim their benefits. And it'll be more difficult to solve complex cases – like if a member of the Armed Forces is killed, and the family needs help in making sure the benefits are properly transferred to their children.

We need to fund the Social Security Administration so that some of most vulnerable populations can get the benefits they need to make ends meet. Our country made a promise to care for our seniors and the disabled – Congress and the president need to hold up their end of the bargain.



SSA employees and other AFGE activists rally in Minneapolis



Low Morale at Border Patrol, ICE Impacting Public Safety

The administration's plans to hire more law enforcement officers to patrol the borders and enforce immigration laws will face huge challenges unless action is taken to address pay inequities, low morale, and other challenges, AFGE council leaders say.

The White House has proposed hiring 5,000 additional Border Patrol agents and 10,000 additional Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. The Administration's fiscal 2018 budget would fund 10 percent of those hires next year, or 500 Border Patrol agents and 1,000 ICE officers.

While the additional staff is sorely needed, AFGE council leaders say there are several fundamental workforce issues that must be addressed first.

Both the Border Patrol and ICE suffer from chronically poor employee morale. It's a systemic

problem throughout the Department of Homeland Security. ICE ranked dead last in morale among 314 federal agencies surveyed in 2014 and last year was sixth from the bottom. The Border Patrol also ranks near the bottom, with just 39 percent of employees saying their agency is successful in completing its mission (compared to 74 percent of all federal workers) and just 32 percent saying their leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity (compared to 52 percent governmentwide).

"Congress, the American public, incoming DHS leadership, and indeed the White House, should all be alarmed by the state of morale within DHS and its law enforcement agencies that are all so critical to America's public safety and national security," said Chris Crane, president of AFGE's National ICE Council, in testimony before Congress on March 22.

The low morale results in poor employee attrition, which will undermine efforts to hire additional agents, said Brandon Judd, president of AFGE's National Border Patrol Council. Last year, the Border Patrol trained, hired, and deployed 485 agents but lost 1,000 agents through retirements, resignations, and other means of separation.

We need Congress to stand by the people who keep drugs off our streets and stop human trafficking through our borders. Call your member of Congress at 202-224-3121 and tell them to give these brave public servants the tools they need to keep us safe.

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