

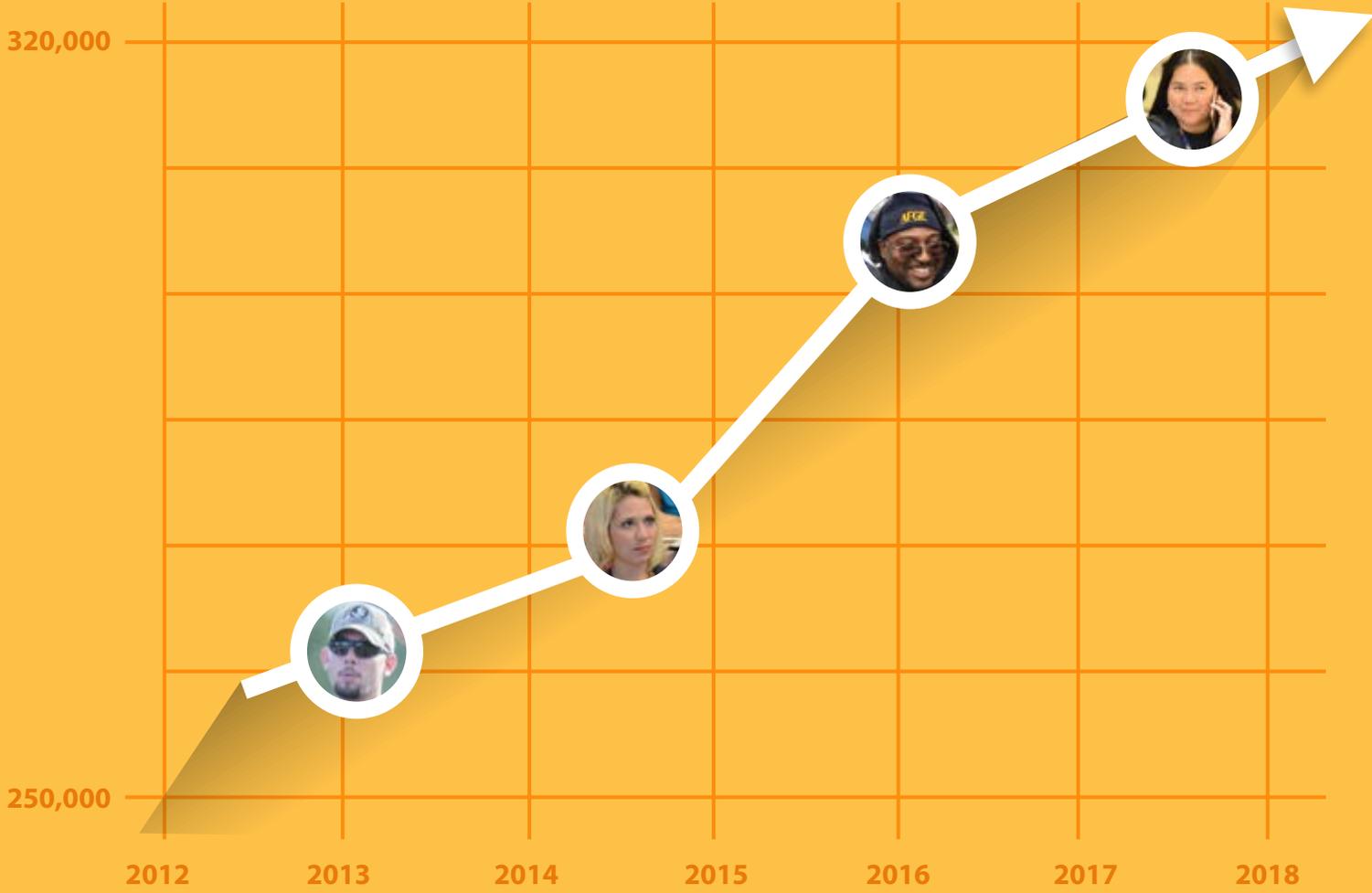


# THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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

January/February 2018

Vol. LXXXVII, No 1



## Big Enough to Win: Where Are We Now?

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

**H**appy New Year Brothers and Sisters,  
As we head into 2018, it is important to remember what we have accomplished in 2017.

During a year of unprecedented attacks on federal employees, we didn't win every battle, but we won many. A huge portion of our success was your voice.

In 2017, we staved off attempts to cut your pay, retirement, and benefits. There were also threats of large budget cuts to specific agencies like EPA, HUD, and FEMA. Most of these budgetary cuts were an attempt to pit the funding for one agency against the funding of another. The attempt to divide us is just one of many strategies that the Administration and Congress employed in 2017. In 2018, the attempt to divide us by agency, politics, or special exceptions for one agency over another must not succeed.

To win in 2018 and beat back these threats on a permanent basis, we must unite now more than ever before. We need to act as one union, one membership, one movement more than ever. It's the only way we can be successful in preserving our jobs and our government.

With everything that is to come this year, I am more energized than ever. AFGE membership has hit another all-time high, over 316,000 members.

As I travel the country talking to members, I hear lots of stories of new tactics management has adopted to damage employee morale and threaten jobs. But there are also many stories of how our members have had it, and instead of giving up they're fighting back.

We held 60 rallies at Veterans Affairs facilities this year. We made 56,740 calls to Congressional offices on legislative issues. I thank every one of you who attended a rally or made a phone call.

This year we will strive for 100 percent participation – every member making calls, every member joining their Brothers and Sisters at local rallies.

Our members are seeing the connection between participation and success. In 2013, we launched the Big Enough to Win initiative, challenging members

and leaders within AFGE to focus on building a growing culture of activism and engagement.

Now, as we head into this convention year, we will continue that progress to become a high participation union.

In 2018, we will be taking back the story and the reputation of the federal workforce. We will remind Americans that we are veterans, food safety inspectors, scientists, law enforcement, and more. We took an oath to serve our country and we are not going to let Congress or the Administration get in our way.

Happy New Year,

### AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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## Lawmakers Push for Pay Raise Parity Between Civilian, Military Workers



*Rally during AFGE's Legislative Conference.*

**A**s 2017 drew to a close, AFGE worked feverishly with our allies in Congress to build support for providing you with a higher pay raise this year.

A Congressional letter to President Trump being spearheaded by Rep. Gerry Connolly of Virginia argues for providing civilian federal employees with the same 2.4 percent pay raise that lawmakers have approved for members of the military.

“We feel strongly that federal employees are an asset to the federal government and deserve parity with respect to pay increases for the military and for civilian employees,” the letter states.

In August, Trump issued an alternative pay plan that would provide civilian employees with a 1.9 percent average increase in 2018. The raise would be divided between a 1.4 percent across-the-board increase and a 0.5 percent locality increase that would vary by region.

But Congress subsequently approved a 2.4 percent raise for service members, renewing calls to provide the same increase to civilian workers.

“The federal workforce is a dedicated group of individuals who are critical to the day-to-day functions of the federal government,” lawmakers

wrote. “We should not take them for granted. Without them, Social Security benefits would not be delivered, tainted foods would make it to grocery store shelves, and our national parks would not be open for visitors to enjoy. Unfortunately, federal workers are often vilified, and their pay and benefits are constantly under attack.”

Providing equal raises to both military and civilian workers had been done for about 20 years until 2011, which kicked off a three-year freeze on annual pay raises for federal employees. Members of the military continued to receive annual raises during this time.

A similar 11th-hour appeal in 2016 resulted in President Obama boosting the federal employee pay raise from 1.6 percent to 2.1 percent in 2017, matching the military pay raise.

During the past six years, federal employees like you have given up nearly \$200 billion in pay and benefits to deficit reduction. Providing you with a higher pay raise in 2018 would help recoup at least some of those lost earnings. AFGE lobbying, member advocacy, and pro-federal employee elected officials will be necessary to ensure we win pay parity, and better pay raises in the future.

**Learn more at [afge.org](http://afge.org)**

# Billionaires' Next Move: Finish Government Unions Off for Good



*In the Supreme Court case Janus vs AFSCME, conservative groups look to do away with unions for good.*

In October, the Freedom Foundation – a conservative group funded by billionaires – sent a letter to its members anticipating a favorable ruling in a Supreme Court case that could cripple the labor movement. The case, *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)*, would decide the fate of so-called fair share, a fee that nonmembers pay because they benefit from union negotiations for better pay, healthcare, and retirement.

*In the letter, Freedom Foundation CEO Tom McCabe said the court “should take government unions out of the game for good – yet we know the unions won’t go away without a fight. They won’t go away even with a fight. They won’t go away until we drive the proverbial stake through their hearts and finish them off for good.”*

The plaintiff in the Janus case is a lone employee, who is bankrolled by a network of billionaires bent on stripping rights from working people who’ve come together to form a union. A ruling is expected in early to mid-2018 and this Supreme Court is likely to outlaw fair share. That means the non-federal public-sector labor movement could shrink by 20-25 percent overnight. AFGE members will be their next target as the decision will create a new incentive

among those who seek total union elimination. But AFGE is prepared for this battle.

## Big Enough to Win In Effect

Before the 2013 government shutdown/lockout, more than 700 AFGE members, officers, and staff met in Orlando to devise a strategy to strengthen and grow union membership. It's been four years since we started our Big Enough to Win campaign, and we are bigger and better today than ever before. Here's what we have accomplished:

## Organizing

# 316,336

Current AFGE membership

- Since 2013, AFGE added 61 new units and thousands of potential members. AFGE along with councils, locals, and steering committees explore ways to recruit members and identify locals with growth potential.
- The National VA Council set a goal of 120,000 members by the end of 2017, but it accomplished it in October. It now aims to reach 125,000

members by the AFGE Legislative Conference in February 2018.

## Legislative and Political Power

- Our Legislative Political Coordinators (LPC) program has exploded from 28 LPCs in 2013 to 718 today. Because of the LPC program, grassroots activism, and our legislative team, we fought pay freezes and salary cuts, and we stopped an attempt to cut federal employees' health care and retirement in the 2018 budget blueprint.
- Starting in 2016, the AFGE Activist App made it easier to reach members of Congress, track bills, follow the congressional calendar, and receive immediate notifications on pending legislation.
- We have strengthened alliances with like-minded organizations. AFGE participated in the 2017 AFL-CIO convention where several AFGE resolutions were adopted. The AFGE Retiree Program is in motion. With this year's budget proposal going after retirees' annuities, we will mobilize retirees in our fight against budget cuts.
- AFGE continues to push for pay increases that restore the \$182 billion eliminated from employees' pay and retirement since 2011.

## Thriving Locals

- Locals have also intensified their lobbying efforts. The Firefighter Committee brought firefighters from across the country to visit legislators on Capitol Hill in October to garner support for retirement and health care legislation. They plan to host another event in 2018.
- Locals are building allies in their Central Labor Councils and State Feds. Some are serving in leadership positions, too. The president of AFGE Local 1367 was elected trustee of the San Antonio Central Labor Council, where she tells the story of federal employees to form alliances with local unions.
- Local retirees are getting involved. Nearly all the District Retiree Coordinators have been selected and are building a program that engages retirees in AFGE's work directly in their locals.

# 80%

Local 495 has 1,519 members out of 1,900 employees-- an 80% membership rate.

## Quality and Quantity of Training and Communication

- The Learning Management System (LMS) for Online Training is live and members can now explore resources. In the summer, we held our first LEAD training for local leaders and activists. The Mentorship Institute's inaugural graduates will be introduced at the Legislative Conference in February.
- On AFGE.org, campaign action web pages such as Staff the VA and Big Enough to Win encourage AFGE members to act against new threats from the administration and Congress. Members have already made more than 45,000 calls to Congress about the budget alone.
- We have also helped about 20 locals build microsites that are linked to AFGE.org and hosted by AFGE.
- In 2017, the International Labor Communications Association presented AFGE with nine awards.

## Looking Ahead

There is still a lot more to do if we want to survive and thrive. When members actively participate, our actions have a greater impact on the media, the community, our allies, and Congress.

It's the difference between 1,000 calls and 1 million calls to Congress in one week. It's the difference between 10 people holding signs outside a facility and 1,000 people holding signs.

As we look ahead to 2018, we are on our way to making AFGE not just BEW but a High Participation Union.

**Get Involved at [afge.org/win](http://afge.org/win)**

# Going After Our Pay and Benefits? Think Again!



#HandsOff Budget Rally.

**W**hen lawmakers tried to push through severe cuts to federal employees' pay and benefits this fall, they forgot about one thing: YOU.

Through the power of grassroots action AFGE members singlehandedly defeated an effort to slash our pay and benefits by \$32 billion. Killing this proposal was critically important, since it was just a down payment on President Trump's stated goal to cut \$149 billion from federal employee pay and benefits over the next 10 years.

You made 44,334 calls to Congressional offices to fight

for your pay, retirement, and health care benefits. And the results speak for themselves: Congress retreated and removed the House-passed cuts from the budget resolution that passed in late October.

Your calls, emails, and letters made the difference in keeping cuts to federal employees out of the final budget plan. Thank you to all the local leaders and members who mobilized against these harmful proposals, joined multiple conference calls, participated in telephone town halls, and took time to meet with Members of Congress.

That said, we can't afford to become complacent. The budget plan that Congress passed would raise taxes on middle-class workers, cut services largely benefiting lower-income Americans, and deliver huge tax cuts to the top 1 percent – all while increasing the nation's deficit.

The easiest way to stay informed and engaged is by signing up for emails and text messages at [www.afge.org/getconnected](http://www.afge.org/getconnected).

## In 2018, I Pledge to:

- Make 5 phone calls a month
- Recruit 2 new members
- Contribute \$10 a month to PAC



Since adopting the Big Enough to Win Strategies and Actions developed at the 2013 Leadership Meeting in Orlando we have grown well past 316,000 members. The plan is working, but we have to keep working the plan.

**Sign your name, date, and join the movement.**

Signature

Date





DC Government employees enjoy a worker's reception.

## Better Pay and Benefits on the Table for DC Government Employees

**A** FGE District 14 continues to work with the District of Columbia Mayor's Office on the city-wide collective bargaining agreement (CBA), which impacts more than 11,000 District of Columbia employees and can mean better pay and benefits for workers.

District 14 National Vice President Eric Bunn and Co-Chief Negotiator for the city-wide negotiations team said, "Residents and tourists alike depend so much on the work of DC's public service employees. It's only fair that we make sure that they are paid enough to maintain the same standard of living as those they so proudly service."

The city-wide CBA impacts not only AFGE members but also workers who are covered under the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), among others.

Four years ago, the city-wide team, led by Bunn, was victorious in securing an incremental pay raise for all DC employees during a time when the federal government was entering sequestration. "It is unfortunate that we have to fight so hard over the same 12 percent pay raise during the next four years that we not only deserve but have customarily received in the past," Bunn said.



# 2018

## LEGISLATIVE & GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION CONFERENCE

***"Our Rights, Our Fight: Your Voice is Power"***

Sunday, February 11 to Wednesday, February 14, 2018  
Register by February 2, 2018 • [www.afge.org/legcon2018](http://www.afge.org/legcon2018)

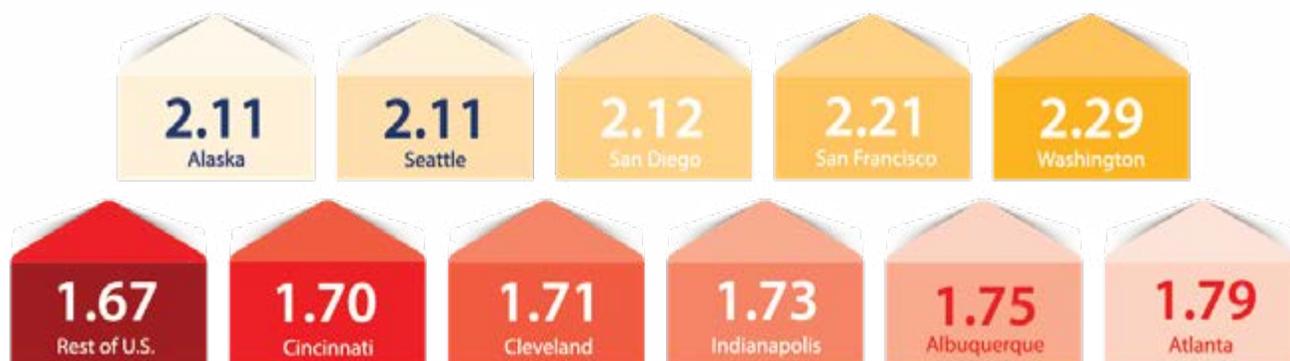
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# Top AFGЕ Member Photos of 2017

It has been has been one heck of a year. As we look forward to big wins in 2018, we took a trip down memory lane and selected the best photos of 2017.



# Addition of 4 New Locality Areas Delayed As New Rates Take Effect



*Pay raises for GS employees will vary from 1.67 percent to 2.29 percent in 2018, depending on where employees work. Above is a graphic of pay localities and the corresponding increase.*

**A**FGE's efforts to expand higher locality pay to more federal workers in 2018 stalled as the Trump administration failed to issue the required regulations before the start of the year.

The Federal Salary Council, on which AFGE serves, has recommended creating separate locality pay areas in four parts of the country with larger than average pay gaps with non-federal employers. Those metropolitan areas are San Antonio, Texas; Birmingham, Ala.; Virginia Beach, Va.; and Burlington, Vt.

All four areas have pay gaps that are more than 10 percentage points above the pay gap for the "Rest of U.S." locality area, which is the criteria for establishing new pay localities.

While the council made its recommendation back in 2016, the necessary regulations have not been issued by the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management to allow these new locality rates to take effect.

The President's Pay Agent – comprised of the heads of OPM, OMB, and the Labor Department – issued a report on Dec. 20 in which it agreed with the council's recommendation on all four areas. However, no timing was given on when the new rates will take effect.

As a result of this unwarranted delay, General Schedule employees in those four areas will begin the new year receiving the same pay raise as employees in the Rest of the U.S. locality area, which is reserved for employees who work in locations without a specific locality area.

Federal employees received an average 1.9 percent pay raise in 2018, divided between a 1.4 percent across-the-board increase and a 0.5 percent increase that varies by locality. For a full list of salary tables, visit [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov).

Employees who work in locations with their own locality area have greater earning potential than employees in the catch-all pay locality. A GS-7, Step 1 in the greater Washington locality area will earn \$45,972 this year, compared to \$41,365 in the Rest of the U.S. locality.

Prevailing rate employees under the wage grade pay system also will receive pay raises that are equal to the pay raises that General Schedule employees receive in their location this year, thanks to AFGE's successful negotiations with Congress. These increases will take effect as wage schedules are updated throughout the year.

## Depot Workers Focus of AFGE Meetings with DoD Leaders

A dozen AFGE members representing Defense Department depot and arsenal workers highlighted the importance of the organic industrial base in a series of meetings with senior Pentagon officials during the 2017 DoD Maintenance Symposium, held Dec. 4-7 in Salt Lake City.

AFGE was invited by DoD leadership to attend the annual symposium, where uniformed military, senior civilians, and industry representatives meet to discuss the future of DoD's maintenance industrial base.

AFGE met with senior leaders from the Army, Air Force, and Pentagon to discuss issues including



*DoD local leaders.*

data rights, depot core and 50/50, and provisions in the fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act expanding the definition and scope of commercial items and the impact on depot maintenance and the overall industrial base.

DoD officials across the board shared a renewed commitment to the role that the organic base has in ensuring the readiness of the military force – a positive sign that our message is resonating with the right people.

## Building Our Movement Through Advocacy, Training, and Collective Action



*AFGE Diversity Training.*

Diverse backgrounds, voices, and experiences contribute to the growth, strength, and future of our union. As AFGE continues to expand, so does our capacity to learn more about issues impacting our diverse membership.

Through the AFGE Women's and Fair Practices Departments our members have a dedicated resource and advocate to fight discrimination on the job and connection to movements for social and economic justice.

Through the departments' training program, AFGE

activists can learn how to represent members in the equal employment opportunity (EEO) process, negotiate contracts that are inclusive of all workers, and train coordinators to bring issues impacting young workers and LGBTQ+ communities to the forefront.

In remembrance of the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., AFGE took part in the AFL-CIO's annual MLK conference. This conference was established to commemorate the life and legacy of Dr. King and the accomplishments of the greater civil rights movement.

The conference addressed the most critical issues impacting working people all over the nation and in the U.S. territories. To continue supporting the AFL-CIO's work around civil, human, and women's rights, the program staff of the Women's and Fair Practices Departments served on the planning committee for the event helping with logistics, planning and building programming, and facilitating workshops.

Training opportunities will continue to be available in 2018. Direct requests can be sent to [wfptraining@afge.org](mailto:wfptraining@afge.org).

## How One Local is Helping AFGE Become Big Enough to Win



*In 2017, AFGE members recruited new members and rallied across the country.*

**T**hirty years ago, AFGE faced a declining membership and a diminished voice on Capitol Hill. In November, AFGE surpassed 316,000 members—our highest membership to-date.

But our all-time high membership levels are met with anti-government and anti-worker threats that are stronger than ever. Government employees are faced with a hostile Congress that wants to gut our pay and retirement benefits, outsource our jobs, and slash our workplace rights.

When AFGE leaders and activists created the Big Enough to Win (BEW) campaign, we challenged ourselves to step up boldly and create a union that is strong enough to combat the attacks on our livelihood at every level.

AFGE Local 2302 President Rocky Gannon works at Fort Knox in Kentucky and says he joined AFGE to help his coworkers. “I joined AFGE to ensure employees at my workplace were treated fairly,” he said. And, that is exactly what Rocky has been doing.

With the help of AFGE national organizers, Rocky and his local worked with DEFCON and the AFGE Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter Steering

Committees to grow his local by nearly 500 new members since 2016.

Local 2302 is one of the few locals well on their way to accomplishing all of the pillars of the Big Enough to Win campaign. They hold regular Lunch and Learns, host employee picnics, pass out leaflets before and after work, and create newsletters and flyers for the facilities electronic bulletin boards. The local has also raised legislative awareness through after-work PAC events and encouraging members to take action on legislative issues that matter to federal employees.

Last year, the local collected over 100 signatures from the Cadet Command employees at Fort Knox. As a result, Local 2302 was elected to represent the new unit of employees.

Now, Local 2302 is designing an organizing and mobilization plan to continue the momentum in 2018. Their motto is “Together we will win.”

“It means there’s power in numbers,” said Gannon. “One voice is not very strong, but 900 voices is.”

## 2018 AFGE National Convention

In accordance with the AFGE National Constitution, you are hereby notified that the 41st Triennial Convention will be held on Monday, August 13 through Friday, August 17, 2018 at:

**Paris-Bally's Las Vegas Hotel & Casino**  
3645 S Las Vegas Boulevard  
Las Vegas, NV 89109

There will be NO on-site registration (advance registration only), and all registration must be postmarked by July 14, 2018.

All delegates must be elected by July 14, 2018. Check your mail for complete 2018 Convention details and information. We will follow up with more information.

**AFGE**



**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF  
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO**

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