



# THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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

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**Scenes from AFGE's 2019 Legislative Conference**



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

Brothers and sisters,

Coming out of our legislative conference in February, I am more fired up than ever about what we can accomplish in Congress this year. In just the first two months of 2019, our union has stacked up a series of impressive political victories. We pressured Congress and the White House to end the longest government shutdown in history. We secured back pay for all federal workers affected by this or any future shutdown. And we won a 1.9 percent pay raise for federal employees retroactive to the start of 2019 – overturning President Trump's pay freeze.

These victories would not have been possible without you. Your phone calls, letters, shared stories, and rallying cries shut down the 35-day lockout and prevented another shutdown from occurring just three weeks later. Just as important, we demonstrated to the public how destructive government shutdowns are to workers, our government, and our country. Your collective efforts helped raise the public's consciousness about the people who work for the federal government and all the programs and services that depend on the government being open.

Now we need to build on this momentum to achieve other important legislative priorities this year. By working together as one union, we can:

- **Secure a 3.6 percent pay raise for federal employees in 2020;**
- **Defeat efforts to cut our retirement benefits and shift more costs onto workers;**
- **Support federal families by providing workers with 12 weeks of `paid family leave;**
- **Block efforts to contract out federal jobs;**
- **Protect and expand your rights at work; and**
- **Increase funding for agencies that have been starved for resources.**

We can achieve these goals by working together as one union – reaching out to members of Congress, building coalitions with community groups and civic

organizations, and demonstrating to the public how the work we do adds value to all our lives.

To help locals build these critical alliances, AFGE this year declared the third week of March as Worker Appreciation Week. More than 50 locals held events where they invited their local members of Congress to tour their federal facilities and learn more about the work our members do on behalf of the public.

I encourage locals to continue holding these events in the weeks and months to come. By forging these alliances and continuing to build on the goodwill we generated during the shutdown, we can drive home a series of victories that will put us in a better position to carry out our work on behalf of the nation.

In Solidarity,

### AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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# Worker Activism Turns Pay Freeze into Pay Raise



AFGE members rally in front of the U.S. Capitol building

While federal workers were amid a 35-day government shutdown, President Trump callously issued an executive order freezing federal employee wages at 2018 levels and denying workers any pay raise in 2019.

But thanks to the activism of you and our allies, and the support we built among pro-worker elected officials in both the Senate and House, Congress overturned Trump's pay freeze as part of the post-shutdown budget bill that funds federal agencies through September.

## Feds to Receive 1.9% Pay Raise

Instead of a pay freeze, federal employees are now receiving a 1.9 percent pay raise, retroactive to the first pay period of January. Blue-collar employees in the Wage Grade System also will receive the pay raise.

AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. extended a special thank you to Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland and Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma for fighting to get federal workers the well-deserved increase. Congress divided the raise into two parts: a 1.4 percent across-the-board increase to your base pay, and a 0.5 percent locality increase that varies based on where you work.

Nearly 72,000 employees are benefiting from larger locality raises this year, thanks to an expansion of the locality pay system that was led by AFGE representatives on the Federal Salary Council. Six new regions were added to the federal locality pay system in January: Birmingham-Hoover-Talladega,

Ala.; Burlington-South Burlington, Vt.; Corpus Christi-Kingsville-Alice, Texas; Omaha-Council Bluffs-Fremont, Neb.-Iowa; San Antonio-New Braunfels-Pearsall, Texas; and Virginia Beach-Norfolk, Va.-N.C. About 70,000 federal employees under the General Schedule pay system work in those six areas.

In addition, two areas were added to existing pay localities: McKinley County, New Mexico, was added to Albuquerque-Santa Fe-Las Vegas, N.M., affecting about 1,600 GS employees; and San Luis Obispo County, Calif., was added to Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif., affecting about 100 employees.

Now, the focus shifts to securing passage of an even larger pay raise for federal workers next year. AFGE is supporting legislation introduced in February by Sen. Brian Schatz of Hawaii and Rep. Gerry Connolly of Virginia that would provide salaried and hourly workers with a 3.6 percent pay adjustment in 2020.

***“Even with this year’s miniscule pay increase, federal employee pay is still not in step with inflation,” Cox said. “Our leaders must do better. We must create a new trend toward narrowing the income gap between us and our counterparts in the private sector. The first step was electing pro-worker candidates to Congress. Now we must carry that momentum forward and keep fighting until hard-working federal employees are paid fairly.”***

# 11 Best Moments at AFGE's 2019 Legislative Conference

**O**ur union's 2019 legislative conference was a huge success. All of us should be proud that our collective actions, before and during the conference, helped avoid another government shutdown on Feb. 16 and created a flurry of legislation supporting federal employees.

If you missed our conference, here are 11 of the best moments from this year's gathering:

## 1 Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle vowed they would not let the government shut down again.



In a tremendous show of support for federal employees, several members of Congress attended the conference plenary sessions, panels, breakfast meetings, and other AFGE events to let AFGE members know they support federal employees' work.

## 2 Sen. Lisa Murkowski announced cosponsorship of a 2.6% pay raise bill



Sen. Lisa Murkowski

Senator Murkowski announced she would co-sponsor a bill that would give federal employees a 2.6 percent pay raise, becoming the first Republican to do so. The senator thanked AFGE members for the work they do on behalf of the American people. She condemned the so-called "partial" shutdown, which she said inflicted enormous harm on Alaska, as 63 percent of the state's land is managed by the federal government.

## 3 Rep. Donna Shalala became an AFGE member



Rep. Donna Shalala

Rep. Shalala of Florida told our members that she not only supports our union but has just joined AFGE, prompting a thunderous applause from the crowd.

## 4 We occupied the Senate to keep the government open



AFGE President J. David Cox Sr.

Only two days before the Trump administration and Congress could shut down the government again, AFGE members, labor leaders, and allies gathered at the Hart Senate Office Building to stage a silent protest to pressure Congress to keep our government open. We stood in silence with our fists in the air for 35 minutes, one minute for each day that 800,000 federal employees were forced to work without pay or were locked out of their jobs.

## 5 Leaders from other unions showed tremendous solidarity with government employees



AFA-CWA President Sara Nelson

They spoke at our conference. They showed up at our Hart protest. They vowed to fight with federal employees. In the labor movement, we always support one another, but the widespread turmoil caused by the shutdown

along with the financial chaos inflicted upon 800,000 federal employees brought all of us even closer. Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson announced from the stage she would call for a general strike in the labor movement in the private sector if the Trump administration and Congress shut down the government again.



NEA President Lily Garcia

Several other union leaders spoke at the conference: National Education Association President Lily Garcia, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) President Paul Shearon, IFPTE National Secretary-Treasurer



*AFL-CIO President  
Richard Trumka*

Matthew Biggs, National Federation of Federal Employees President Randy Erwin, and Israel Union of Government Employee President Ariel Yacobi.

Joining us at the silent protest at the Hart Senate Office Building were AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler, Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, NFFE President Randy Erwin, and AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Elissa McBride.

## 6 NVP Jeremy Lannan was named AFGE's Firefighter of the Year



*WFP's NVP  
Jeremy Lannan*

For the first time, our union's Firefighting Steering Committee gave out an AFGE-wide AFGE Firefighter of the Year award. This year's honorary award went to National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices

Jeremy Lannan whose years of work organizing and training firefighters contributed tremendously to our union's efforts to recruit and represent federal firefighters and make sure they have the resources they need to do their job and receive fair benefits.

## 7 Lt. Charley Lyke was named AFGE's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year



*Lt. Charley Lyke*

Lt. Charley Lyke, a police officer at the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio, has been named AFGE's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Lt. Lyke, an Army veteran, was instrumental in AFGE Local 31's efforts to

have the presence of VA police officers at our 13 community-based outpatient clinics.

## 8 AFGE launched our #MeToo campaign

Our union kicked off our #MeToo campaign to prevent and raise awareness about sexual harassment in the federal government and labor movement. AFGE's Women



and Fair Practices Departments' "Me3" event on Feb. 12 was standing room only as members poured in to listen and share their experiences being a victim or witnessing sexual harassment in the workplace. WFP

attorneys were there to discuss cases they won for our members.

## 9 AFGE members flooded Capitol Hill to tell their stories



*AFGE members  
visiting Congress*

AFGE members paid a visit to their members of Congress to explain how underfunding and attacks on their voice at work have hurt the work they do for the American people. They also urged lawmakers to do everything in their power to prevent another government shutdown.

## 10 We pressured Congressman Ferguson to remove a racist book from his office



*Rep. Drew Ferguson*

Our members paid a visit to Rep. Drew Ferguson (R-Georgia) and were stunned to see a pro-slavery book open and on display in his office in the Longworth House Office Building. We questioned his staffers about

the book and took the issue to CNN, prompting Ferguson to remove the racist item.

## 11 Would-be retirees were fired up



*Rep. Steve Horsford*

AFGE members who are about to retire heard from in-house and outside experts about preparing for retirement, how Congress and the President's proposals could help or harm their retirement, and what they can do about it. Our special guest was Congressman Steven Horsford (D-Nevada), who told AFGE members that protecting Social Security was one of the reasons he ran for Congress.

# 11 Legislative Wins Our Union Secured This Year



AFGE members get fired up during the 2019 Legislative Conference

**W**e have already seen so much happen in the first quarter of 2019. Our members stood together through the longest shutdown in history and faced down another. In both instances your phone calls, letters, shared stories, and rallying cries shut down the shutdowns.

But we didn't stop there. Thanks to the hard work of your union, AFGE, we also secured 9 major legislative wins that will help protect the paychecks and rights on the job. **Here's what we've won:**

**1 Our collective actions averted another government shutdown in February 2019.**

**2 We won a 1.9 percent raise** for federal employees in 2019 as part of the government funding package averting the shutdown that was signed into law Feb. 15.

**3 We worked with Reps. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Nita Lowey of New York to reintroduce a bill, the Rights for Transportation Security Officers Act of 2019,** that would give TSA officers full collective bargaining rights to negotiate for better working conditions and put them on the General Schedule pay scale, which most federal employees are under.

**4 We successfully pressured Congress and the administration to end the 35-day shutdown** on Jan. 25, 2019.

**5 We worked with members of Congress to pass a bill providing back pay for federal employees** who were forced to work without pay or locked out of their jobs without pay during the shutdown. The bill was signed into law Jan. 17, 2019.

**6 We worked with members of Congress to win passage of the First Step Act,** the criminal justice reform bill that will reduce the federal prison population, resulting in improved safety for correctional workers as well as inmates and those outside the prison walls.

**7 We fought to include in the First Step Act** a provision that allows correctional workers to carry their personal firearms to and from work by providing a secure storage area for those firearms while they're at work.

**8 Higher locality pay for 72,000 feds.** We won higher locality pay for 72,000 federal employees starting in January 2019. The Federal Salary Council, on which AFGE President J. David Cox Sr. and Public Policy Director Jacque Simon serve, added six new regions to the federal government's locality pay system and expanded two others.

**9 On Nov. 6, 2018, we helped a large number of pro-union candidates win their elections and re-elections,** shifting the majority in the U.S. House of Representatives in the next Congress.

**10 We worked to have legislation enacted into law that provided retroactive pay for federal workers** when the shutdown ended and ensures federal workers will be paid retroactively in the event of future shutdowns.

**11 Representative Salud Carbajal (D-CA) reintroduced the Federal Firefighter Fairness Act and Representative Peter King (R-NY) reintroduced the Law Enforcement Officers Equity Act.**

## Looking Ahead: AFGE's Legislative Priorities for 2019



*AFGE members and allies rally outside the White House to protest the shutdown*

- Work to maintain the current government-wide moratorium on A-76 and oppose efforts to contract out inherently governmental services.
- Oppose any attempt to expand hiring authorities for term and temporary positions as a way to create a disposable workforce – easy to hire, easy to fire.
- Take action against any reorganization plans that would politicize the workforce and involve massive contracting out under the banner of “shared services” or “centers of excellence.”

The new year provides a renewed opportunity to advance the issues that matter to working families. And as we look toward a new Congress full of pro-worker candidates, we know that our work is far from over.

### Check out AFGE's legislative priorities for 2019:

- Work to repeal the increased employee contributions for those hired after 2013. It's important for us to prevent further cuts to federal employees' compensation and benefits.
- Oppose any pay system that allows political favoritism. We will stand firm against any system that allows pay raises to vary by occupation and “performance.” Such a system will politicize the civil service and invite discrimination.
- Fight against any proposed FY 2020 federal employee pay freeze.
- Defend payroll dues deduction. Although dues deduction is protected by statute, the administration may try to undermine this process through an Executive Order or collective bargaining.
- Strongly oppose the MERIT Act and all other legislation that will result in the elimination or weakening of federal employee due process rights and the politicization of the workforce.
- Support legislation that protects government workers. Examples include fighting for Rep. Bennie Thompson's (D-MS) legislation that will give Title 5 rights to Transportation Security Officers (TSOs), supporting Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick's (R-PA) changes to the VA Accountability Act, and advocating for Rep. John Larson's (D-CT) legislation for increased funding for Social Security and a moratorium on Social Security Administration field office closures.
- Fight for increased funding for agencies that have been starved of resources, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Census Bureau, and the Bureau of Prisons.

There is so much we can achieve together. And while this is not an exhaustive list, there is no doubt we can win if we join together in these legislative fights. When we mobilize and organize, we create the future we deserve.



## VA's Reported Vacancies Balloon to Nearly 49,000

In mid-February, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) confirmed what AFGE has been saying for years: vacancies at the agency continue to climb while private, for-profit medical providers circle the VA like vultures looking to profit off the backs of our nation's veterans.

As the VA touts the many successes of its unparalleled health care delivery system, Secretary Robert Wilkie is in the process of rolling out new access standards for VA health care that would further starve the already underfunded and short-staffed agency.

These new arbitrary standards would harm veterans through inferior and delayed treatments as the integrated and specialized care offered by the VA is dismantled and replaced by private care that is demonstrably unable to deal with veterans' unique needs.

The new access standards are expected to take effect in June and follow the troubling growth in vacancies at the VA, which have now ballooned to nearly 49,000. More than 62 percent of the growth is in the Veterans Health Administration, and 49 percent of vacancies are in the medical and dental field.

"The VA is the single-best health care system in this

country and is overwhelmingly preferred by the veterans who use it," said AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. "But instead of investing in, and improving the VA, we're now seeing a massive shift from the department that will dismantle the VA as we know it."

With the U.S. House of Representatives now controlled by a pro-worker majority, and allies of the VA in the U.S. Senate, there is hope on the horizon.

In early February, Rep. Mark Takano of California, who is now the Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, introduced H.R. 1133 – The VA Employee Fairness Act – to restore equal workplace rights to VA Title 38 health care professionals. H.R. 1133 has 27 co-sponsors. In mid-February, companion legislation was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio.

"Veterans are provided the best quality and timely care when the VA workforce can thrive," said Rep. Takano. "With more than 40,000 employee vacancies in the VHA alone, it is crucial to ensure that doctors, nurses, and other medical professional are equipped with the best tools to retain and recruit the best talent to serve veterans — this bill will help make that possible."

## Registration for AFGE's Women's and Fair Practices Diversity Week 2019 Now Open

**A** FGE's Women's and Fair Practices Departments (WFP) kicked off its year of trainings with powerful sessions at the 2019 Legislative and Grassroots Mobilization Conference. During the federation's lobbying week, WFP held critical workshops tackling community activism, sexual harassment and LGBTQIA inclusion. Each event was well attended, especially the "AFGE Me 3: Sexual Harassment Affects Us All" workshop. This event was standing room only as members poured in to listen and share their experiences being a victim of or witnessing sexual harassment in the workplace.

They also opened registration for this year's Diversity Week Training to build on the momentum. This training speaks to the diversity of AFGE's membership and the intensifying movements in America for civil, human, women's and workers' rights. The conference will be held at the exciting Hilton New Orleans Riverside in Louisiana August 9-17, 2019.

Featured workshops will inspire activists to move AFGE and the labor movement toward positive

change and equal treatment for all. With the attacks on public sector workers, women, people of color, low wage workers, our communities, our children's futures, and the labor movement, AFGE must "STAY READY" for whatever comes our way.

### Diversity Week Training classes include:

- ▶ Coordinator Bootcamp
- ▶ EEO (Basic, Intermediate and Advanced)
- ▶ Conflict Resolution
- ▶ Racial Justice is Real
- ▶ Collective Bargaining
- ▶ Diversity
- ▶ AFGE Pride LGBT Leadership
- ▶ Organizing Institute
- ▶ Community Activism
- ▶ Workers Compensation/Disability Rights
- ▶ YOUNG Training Summit
- ▶ Workplace Bullying

AFGE activists are encouraged to start planning for one of our union's most diverse, progressive and engaging training events! Registration is now open at [www.afge.org/diversityweek](http://www.afge.org/diversityweek).



## AFGE's 2019 Diversity Week & Human Rights Training Conference

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**



### "Stay Ready"

Conference Dates: August 10-17, 2019  
Hilton Riverside | New Orleans, Louisiana

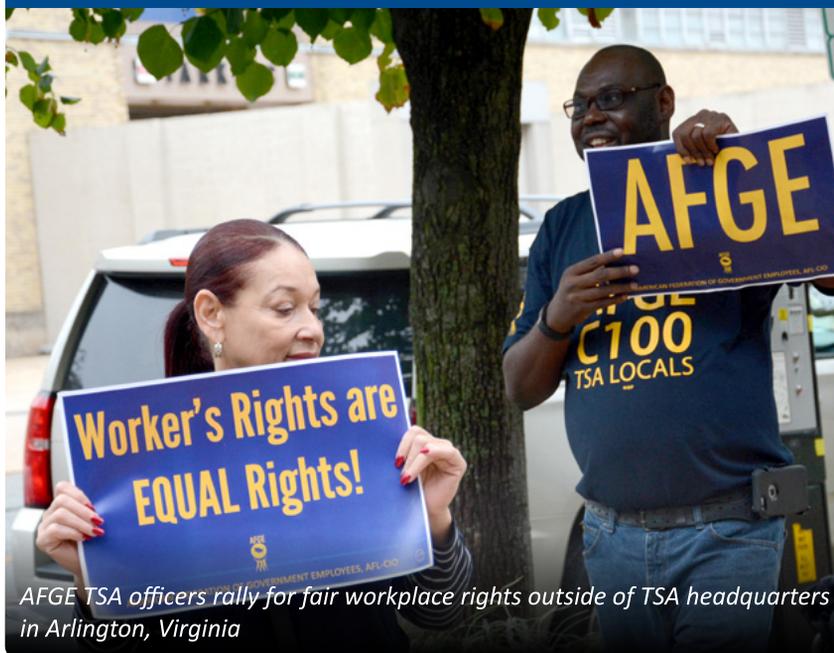
AFGE's 2019 Diversity Week will inspire the passion to move AFGE and the labor movement toward positive change and equal treatment for all. With the attacks on public sector workers, on women, on people of color, on low wage workers, on our communities, on our children's futures, on the labor movement...AFGE has to "stay ready" for whatever attacks come our way!

The Human Rights Training will offer favorites such as all levels of EEO, Coordinator Bootcamp, Collective Bargaining, LGBT training, Diversity training, Conflict Resolution and Workplace Bullying. We will also be adding some exciting new classes to encourage community and union activism. We're also looking forward to bringing back the very popular Y.O.U.N.G. AFGE Training Summit!

Hosted by AFGE's Women's and Fair Practice Departments



# TSA Officers Protect Us. It's Time for Us to Protect Them.



AFGE TSA officers rally for fair workplace rights outside of TSA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia

**T**SA officers are the first line of defense for aviation security. They protect passengers, pilots, flight attendants, and our country. They are an integral part of our national security framework and deserve fair workplace rights. That's why AFGE and our congressional allies are leading the charge to finally grant these officers the protections they deserve.

For years, AFGE has stood up for union rights for TSA officers. We've fought against unfair removals and suspensions and have helped TSOs get their jobs reinstated. Most recently, our union won \$100,000 in backpay and damages for an officer who was unjustly terminated for medical reasons.

Despite this, TSA officers still lack some of the same basic workplace protections other federal employees have, such as fair pay and benefits, and worker protections against unfair labor practices. TSA does not follow the GS pay scale and TSOs are denied the same overtime pay as other federal workers.

In February, we worked with Representatives Bennie Thompson and Nita Lowey to introduce the Rights for Transportation Security Officers Act (H.R. 1140). If passed, this bill would put TSOs on the general

schedule pay scale and grant them the same workplace rights as other federal workers.

Under H.R. 1140, TSA would be required to include our union, AFGE, on all agency decisions. Our union would have increased input in personnel policies, the TSO promotion and awards process, and conditions of employment for officers.

The new law would expand union rights for TSA officers and AFGE. The TSA administrator would no longer have the right to issue determinations and agency mandates, as they have in the past, without first consulting with our union. The agency would be required to inform

AFGE of any intended workplace and officer policy changes. If TSA wants to change or implement a new policy, AFGE would have the right to bargain over the changes. Our union would also have the right to be involved in position classification matters.

"TSA officers are critical to the safety of air travelers and the public, but are treated like second-class citizens at the workplace," said AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. "It's past time they receive fair and equitable workplace rights."

"Every year we stop a record-number of guns from getting on airplanes," said Hydrick Thomas, AFGE TSA Council 100 president. "We risk our lives every day to protect our country. We're not asking for special treatment at work— just equal treatment."

Protecting TSOs in the workplace is one of our union's top 2019 priorities, and we need your help. Call (833) 710-2924 today and ask your representative to cosponsor H.R. 1140.

For more information, printable workplace flyers, and other resources to help us win the workplace rights TSOs deserve, visit [afge.org/Title5](https://afge.org/Title5).

**IMPORTANT:** This information should not be downloaded using government equipment, read during duty time or sent to others using government equipment, because it suggests action to be taken in support or against legislation. Do not use your government email address or government phone in contacting your lawmakers.

## In Bargaining, Agencies Follow Trump, Not the Law

**A**fter President Trump announced his May 25, 2018 Executive Orders (EOs) that sought to deny workers their legal right to representation at the worksite, AFGE fought back and launched a lawsuit just 5 days later.

Our union won, and the EOs were struck down by a U.S. District Court, but the administration is appealing the decision and many agencies are trying to implement the orders through bargaining.

Across the federal government, we are seeing agencies like Veterans Affairs (VA), the Social Security Administration (SSA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and more follow marching orders that have been overturned by the courts.

Agencies like the VA are also attempting to use the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP) to take away our union's statutory rights and impose their will on workers through sham bargaining. Despite the administration's efforts, our union is continuing to fight and make use of every option available to us.

### A Blatant Attack on Workers' Rights

The largest affront to workers' rights we are seeing is an attack on official time. Agencies are working through the bargaining process to cut the statutory time union leaders have to represent employees in the workplace. They are also eliminating telework

without plans for how employees will integrate into the workplace.

When it comes to due process rights specifically, the administration is on the attack, trying to make it easier for them to fire federal workers without adequate cause. Agencies across the government are seeking to eliminate federal employees' ability to grieve removals, which would mean employees' only recourse would be to appeal to the Merit Service Protection Board (MSPB).

However, the current administration has not placed any board members on the MSPB – effectively shutting it down and making this remedy unavailable for workers who want to fight their unfair removal. The goals of the administration, it appears, are to make it easier for employees to be removed for performance or conduct while having no due process for workers to appeal the agency's decision.

### How You Can Fight Back

- Join AFGE NOW at [www.afge.org/JOIN](http://www.afge.org/JOIN).
- Recruit a potential member to AFGE.
- Wear red every Wednesday for #RedforFeds.
- Call your Representatives on your personal phone and tell them to protect federal employee rights in the workplace.
- Join your union brothers and sisters at rallies and events on your lunch break or after work hours.

## Join the AFGE Shutdown Lawsuit

**O**n December 31, 2018, AFGE and the law offices of Kalijarvi, Chuzi, Newman & Fitch ([www.KCNFDC.com](http://www.KCNFDC.com)) sued the federal government on behalf of AFGE members and ALL federal employees covered by the FLSA who were forced to work without pay from 12/22/19 -

1/25/19. Our union is the only organization fighting on behalf of employees throughout the entire government who were forced to work without pay.

Visit [www.2018governmentshutdown.com](http://www.2018governmentshutdown.com) for questions or to join the suit.

**IMPORTANT:** This information should not be downloaded using government equipment, read during duty time or sent to others using government equipment, because it suggests action to be taken in support or against legislation. Do not use your government email address or government phone in contacting your lawmakers.



# Credit Counseling

**Debt and credit problems can happen to anyone at anytime.**

Luckily, The Union Plus Credit Counseling program can help you regain your financial footing by helping you better manage your finances. Get free credit counseling from certified counselors.

To speak to a counselor call 1-877-833-1745 or visit [afge.org](http://afge.org)



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



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