



What's Next for Your Paycheck?

Unlike almost all other workers in the country, the fate of our paychecks lay squarely in the hands of elected leaders in Washington. The same is true of our pensions, retirement benefits, even our very job security. Unfortunately, like most of what comes out of Washington these days, the results for federal employee compensation have been disastrous.

Three years of frozen pay followed by two years of pitifully small adjustments have meant a total increase in our wages of just 2% over the last five years. When accounting for inflation, most federal employees actually saw their pay cut.

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

People ask me, "Why do I see you standing with Wal-Mart workers or postal workers or teachers or other unions, in addition to fighting for AFGE members?" My answer is simple: I am focused on winning for AFGE members and our interests.

We know what pay freezes feel like. It is in our interest to promote good wages for all workers. Our wages reflect market wages in the country as a whole. Since the 1970s, wages have been stagnant or falling for more and more Americans. This makes it easier for "corporate-minded" politicians to embrace the race to the bottom and attack our wages. I stand with other workers and their unions who are willing to stand together for better pay because it directly affects our pay.

Our pensions are under attack. Pensions have disappeared for more and more Americans working in the private sector, and many state and local public pensions have faced major cuts and even bankruptcy. Newer members in our own agencies now must contribute more to their pension. When the same politicians see private industry gutting workers' pensions, they want the same for the government. So I stand with other workers when their pensions are under attack to prevent the same thing from happening to AFGE members.

Unions are under attack everywhere in America. Workers' rights are being undermined in state houses and local governments across the country. Many corporate CEOs, wealthy investors, and their "corporate-minded" politicians know that if they can eliminate unions, they eliminate the power of American workers to block their all-out grab for greed. They could transform our country into one where all workers receive low wages and have no pension or health care.

Our own rights have been directly attacked. Congress held a vote to take away your right to have union dues – which you designated – deducted from your paycheck. It's a direct attack that seeks to cripple our union. Congress also held a vote to force union members to pay for what is the government's responsibility, official time. Instead of the agency paying for representational meetings with management, union members would have to foot the bill. The same "corporate-minded" politicians attack dues deduction and official time because they want to make it impossible for our union to stand up for its members. So when I attend rallies or speak up to protect the rights of other workers in other unions, I am standing up for the rights of AFGE members.

We cannot win this fight alone. No union members exist on an island unto themselves. Our forefathers learned that

lesson and formed the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Unions (AFL-CIO) because they understood we needed each other to survive and succeed. Our adversaries are stronger than ever, and AFGE members must build our union and engage more people in our ranks. At the same time, we must strengthen our bonds with all labor and act in solidarity with other workers.

I invite all AFGE leaders and members to get involved and join AFGE rallies and actions to advance our interests this year. I also call on you to stand for the same causes with other workers in other unions. It's not just the right thing to do; it is also in your self-interest.

In time we believe other workers will return the favor in our own fights, benefitting everyone. Building the strength of the labor movement was among the **Big Enough to Win** strategies developed by AFGE leaders in 2013. Your future – our future – depends on your choices. In unity, we can be Big Enough to Win!

In Solidarity,

AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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(from cover)

With a new, more conservative Congress taking over this year, we can expect even more attacks on federal pay, benefits, and jobs. Though it's hard to predict which of these will come into Congress' crosshairs first, a look at one key lawmaker's record is a strong indicator of his vision for federal services and jobs.

Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin recently took the gavel as Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, the committee charged with overseeing much of the federal government. Before assuming his role as chairman, Johnson spoke with the Washington Post about his plans for the committee. He outlined an agenda to fundamentally change employees' rights and compensation.

"I think it's unrealistic for public-service employees to believe they are immune from modifications to their pay and benefit packages," said Johnson, who was elected to the Senate in 2010, continuing, "those things in the private sector have been modified dramatically."

Our pension, something Johnson sees as a perk that needs modifying, is in fact delayed payment for work we've already done, a benefit that many of us made career decisions based on. Our pension is our compensation withheld and invested by our employer to be paid at our retirement. If an employer cuts an employee pension, that means the employer has misspent or mismanaged employee money. The employer is engaging in a sort of theft – if not legally, certainly morally. The same is true of our health care. The idea of breaking promises to hardworking public employees, however, doesn't seem to faze Johnson.

He also takes aim at federal employees' on-the-job protections and freedom of association. Johnson told the Post, ***"I really don't think that the public-sector employees should be unionized."***

In other words, he wants federal employees to take whatever compensation our employer offers and strip us of our ability to fight back by working together with our union. He would leave federal employees no avenues to improve our health care, pensions, wages or working conditions.

Johnson already showed his disdain for public service and unions in 2011 when he issued a detailed report to Senate colleagues, recommending a plan to gut federal jobs and services, along with our compensation and rights.

Johnson's Plan to Slash Our Benefits

- Eliminate the FERS pension benefit
- Reduce federal pensions immediately by moving from a 'high-3' to a 'high-5' annuity formula
- Eliminate tens of thousands of TSA jobs by privatizing the top 35 airports in the U.S.
- Eliminate locality pay for many federal employees
- End the FERS early-retirement supplement
- End COLAs for early Civil Service Retirement System benefits

AFGE members know that as public servants we deserve a government that values our hard work and compensates us accordingly. We believe that all workers deserve dignity and a voice in the workplace. Johnson's vision is not the future we chose. His vision is one we must push back against if we are to protect our rights and the quality of our jobs.

To win a better future for our families and our country, we need to build the strength of our union. We can do this by growing our local unions, engaging our union brothers and sisters to get involved, and holding elected leaders in Washington accountable.



Senator Ron Johnson chairs the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.



Johnson wants to slash federal retirement benefits



"Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" March



Fayetteville VA Rally



Postal Workers Solidarity Action

2014: A Look Back at Major Accomplishments and Victories

Thanks to the hard work of AFGE activists, leaders and coalition groups, our union experienced important successes in organizing, representation, legislative action, and legal representation.

Here are some of 2014's highlights:

RAISING STANDARDS

- Early in 2014, AFGE and the Defense Contract Audit Agency signed the first-ever contract covering all bargaining unit employees at the agency. For the first time in 48 years, nearly 3,200 employees across the agency's five regions joined together in the new national bargaining council, AFGE Council 162. Previously, just 1,300 employees in two regions had union representation.
- Thanks to AFGE activists and whistleblowers, President Obama signed a new Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funding bill that addresses issues of chronic

understaffing and agency mismanagement. The legislation came in response to a wait-list crisis plaguing the agency that AFGE members helped bring to light.

- In December, AFGE's Border Patrol Council and National Office won passage of a bill to reform the border patrol pay system. The milestone came after years of concerted effort by union members. The bill brings stability and predictability to Border Patrol pay and will allow agents to provide the best possible border security.
- After seven years, AFGE Local 1923 in Baltimore along with the National Federation of the Blind won a \$10 million class-action settlement for 570 current and former Social Security Administration employees with disabilities. The employees had applied for and made a Best Qualified List, but management failed to select them for promotion.

**Congratulations
to our 289,924
AFGE Members**

*Building Our
Voice & Power*



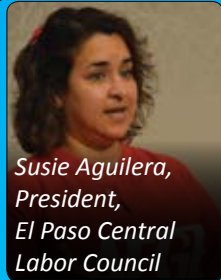
AFGE Members Win DCAA Contract



AFGE Activists Get Out the Vote



First-Ever Federal Nurses Week



Susie Aguilera,
President,
El Paso Central
Labor Council



TSA Action in Washington



Rally for Shared Prosperity

SOLIDARITY

- In August, more than 500 AFGE activists from across the country gathered in Minneapolis, Minn., for AFGE's 2nd Annual Diversity Week. This year's Diversity Week included AFGE's 3rd Annual Young Organizing Unionists for the Next Generation (YOUNG) Training Summit, the 2nd Annual AFGE Pride Training Summit and the Human Rights Training Conference. Participants of the YOUNG Training Summit raised community awareness about sexual and gender violence, while activists at the Human Rights Training Conference rallied against Social Security office closures.
- AFGE activists joined rallies across the country where workers and activists came together for a National Day of Action to fight against devastating cuts in service to the U.S. Postal Service. AFGE is proud to stand with our union family at the National Association of Letter Carriers, American Postal Workers Union, National Postal Mail Handlers, and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association. Dismantling the Postal Service and privatizing mail service threatens communities and the American way of life, putting corporations and profits above the public good.
- AFGE launched the first-ever Federal Nurses Week September 22-28. With leadership from the AFGE Nurse Steering Committee and the AFGE National Veterans Affairs Council, this designated week will become an annual celebration of the service and contributions of all federal employees in the nursing profession. In December, Rep. Jan Schakowsky introduced H. Res. 778 supporting the designation of National Federal Nurse Recognition Week.

PROTECTING SERVICES

- Thanks to the efforts of members and leaders of AFGE District 14 and Local 2978, the federal government restored funding to a program that helps reduce the District of Columbia's infant mortality rate. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has appropriated up to \$7.95 million over the next four and a half years for the Healthy Start program, which helps pregnant women and new mothers and fathers in low-income areas. The restoration of funding was also welcome news to 38 AFGE members whose jobs were saved.
- The Social Security Administration delayed plans to retire Benefit Verification Letter services from field offices due to pressure from AFGE members who have joined together under the Save our Social Security campaign.
- In October, AFGE joined Social Security Works and the Alliance for Retired Americans in cities across the country to unveil a petition with more than 500,000 signatures demanding that Social Security offices remain open in American communities.

PROTECTING WORKERS

- Thanks to the tireless efforts of AFGE Council of Prisons Locals members, 2014 saw the expansion of the Bureau of Prisons pilot program to provide pepper spray to workers at medium, high, and maximum security prisons. AFGE members will continue to press Congress to pass the Eric Williams Correctional Officer Protection Act and extend the program to all federal workers at medium or higher security prisons.



WFP Coordinators Robin Nichols
& Celestine Hood



BOP Council President Eric Young
at Legislative Conference



Eric Jenkins testifies on VBA funding

AFGE Members Win Wage Increase; Fiscal Cliff Looms



employees) and a ban on certain outsourcing of federal jobs.

“It’s a victory that prevents an awful shutdown. But, after years of pay freezes and negligible increases, federal employees deserve better,” said AFGE National President J. David Cox, Sr.

Federal workers have seen total adjustments to their pay of just 2% over the last five years, an increase that amounts to a pay cut in real terms when accounting for inflation.

“Another catastrophe is looming,” President Cox continued. “Hundreds of billions of dollars in sequester cuts are scheduled to restart this year. AFGE members need to be ready to engage and stop these reckless cuts that would

late last year, Congress passed a short-term funding bill – known as the Cromnibus, a mash-up of the CR (or continuing resolution) and the omnibus appropriations bill. The measure keeps most federal agencies running until September and includes a 1% pay raise for federal employees (including Wage Grade

cripple services, kill hundreds of thousands of jobs, and devastate our economy.”

The new Congress will soon take up funding for the Department of Homeland Security, which is funded through February.

AFGE Members at Minot Air Force Base Celebrate Significant Pay Win



After years of falling behind the local standard of living, AFGE members at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota won higher wages in December.

About 100 employees will see their pay increase between 33 to 37 percent.

The region’s shale gas boom has led to an extreme rise in the local cost of living, and workers have struggled to make ends meet. Private-sector employers responded by raising wages, but the federal government lagged behind. AFGE members continue to fight for pay raises for other workers at the base and all government employees.

Building a Movement

Growing Our Union in 2014

A FGE activists and leaders worked hard in 2014 to grow our union to its highest-ever membership total of 289,924 hardworking government employees. By talking to their coworkers about the importance of joining and being active in their union, AFGE members helped move us closer to our goal of 300,000 total members.

“There is a tremendous amount of unity and bonding and power in numbers, and if we have that then we can be completely unstoppable... We look out for each other.

We help each other out in tough times. We’re there for each other in good times.”

- Ramona Hawkins, President, Local 1401

Members of the National Veterans Affairs Council (NVAC) saw the power of solidarity as AFGE whistleblowers across the country shed light on a massive wait-time scandal that put veterans at risk and cast a shadow on the entire VA health system. When Congress appropriated emergency funds for the agency to address the staffing shortage, AFGE was ready to help

rebuild the reputation of the VA.

“VA employees know that there is strength in numbers, and they see that AFGE fights on their behalf every single day to improve working conditions and give them a voice in the workplace,” National VA Council President Alma L. Lee said.

During its organizing campaign, NVAC activists recruited 8,073 new members. On August 25, an employee in Phoenix turned in her membership form, joining Local 2382 and becoming the 100,000th dues paying member at the VA.

Organizing has been a high priority for AFGE members at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), because TSA employees are not denied the worker rights and protections that nearly every other class of worker enjoys because of a loophole in the law creating the agency. Since 2003 when just 13 dues-paying members joined together, AFGE leaders have worked to unite this large and scattered workforce. Their efforts have yielded huge numbers, growing the membership to 15,814 – with one in three TSA employees joining.

AFGE members also recruited 258 new members from the Census Bureau and had other organizing wins in various agencies. They all contributed to AFGE’s record of sustained growth, a record that spans decades.

Congratulations for Membership Growth in 2014!

District	Members as of 12/2014	Growth in 2014
District 2	22,652	432
District 4	29,358	964
District 5	45,446	1,211
District 6	14,428	349
District 7	19,147	144
District 8	9,974	487
District 9	18,275	600
District 12	37,083	796
District 14	18,325	726

Council	Members as of 12/2014	Growth in 2014
Council 33 BOP	22,715	462
Council 53 VA	102,419	7,223
Council 100 TSA	16,025	615
Council 120 USCG	444	19
Council 162 DCAA	351	4
Council 172 DECA	2,214	90
Council 216 EEOC	835	10
Council 220 SSAFO	14,166	816
Council 224 SSAFA	227	27
Council 241 CENS	1,200	191
Council 252 EDU	610	15

AFGE Mourns Loss of Union Brother Timothy Fjordbak

The AFGE family is deeply saddened by the death of Dr. Timothy Fjordbak, a psychologist at the El Paso VA Clinic.

A member of AFGE Local 3922, Dr. Fjordbak was shot and killed on Jan. 6. The alleged shooter later took his own life. Dr. Fjordbak is remembered by VA colleagues as well

regarded at the facility and sincerely dedicated to his work.

“Our hearts and prayers are with Dr. Fjordbak’s family, friends and colleagues during this difficult time. As we mourn the tragedy of his death we will remember his commitment to public service and the veterans’ community,” said AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr.



DEFCON Seeking Boot Camp Applicants

DEFCON will host a boot camp this April for AFGE members interested in growing their locals or getting more involved in our union. AFGE’s Membership and Organizing Department will conduct

the training, which takes place April 5-10 at Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, Ga. Application deadline is Feb. 27. An application can be found at <http://bit.ly/DODbootcampapp>

AFGE Wins Restored Funding to Reduce Infant Mortality in DC

AFGE District 14 and Local 2978 members and leaders successfully lobbied the federal government to restore funding to a program that helps reduce the infant mortality rate in the nation’s capital. Thirty-eight AFGE members were at risk of losing their jobs as the city looked for ways to replace employees with contractors.



Local 2978 President
Robert Mayfield

“This program is enormously important to the District and its most vulnerable residents – our babies,” said AFGE Local 2978 President Robert Mayfield. “The funding will allow our employees to carry out this important task for the

greater good of our beloved city.”

Over the next four and a half years, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will provide the Healthy Start program with \$7.95 million to help pregnant women and new mothers and fathers in Wards 5, 6, 7 and 8.

AFGE Local 2978 members mobilized to save the office by rallying with the Healthy Start Community on the steps of the DC Council. The effort gained support from the Director of the DC Department of Health (DOH), outgoing Mayor Vincent Gray and DC Councilmembers.

Some of the duties of AFGE members who work in this important program include canvassing neighborhoods and educating expectant and new mothers about HHS’s home visitation and prenatal services.

AFGE Members Win Border Patrol Pay Reform



The efforts of AFGE members – including thousands of letter to and dozens of meetings with lawmakers and department officials – paid off in December, when we won passage of the Border Patrol Agent Pay Reform Act.

For years, border patrol agents have faced issues with their pay and overtime. The politicized budget process and inconsistencies in how the previous pay scheme were applied meant an unstable and unpredictable system. The new law will stabilize agent pay and represents the best possible plan for ensuring agents have the consistent hours necessary to protect our borders (alternatives

included doing away with overtime all together).

The milestone legislation came after years of concerted effort by AFGE members and supporters on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers of Congress.

“We are proud of the tremendous effort our members exerted to get this legislation through the Senate and House in a time when there is little consensus on much else,” “Agents put their safety on the line to keep our country safe, and this reform ensures the black cloud of AUO will finally be lifted and replaced with a stable and predictable pay system.”

BOP Expands Pepper Spray Pilot Program

Thanks to the tireless efforts of AFGE Council of Prison Locals (CPL) members, correctional officers won an important battle in the fight to improve safety in federal prisons last December. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) expanded its pilot program to provide pepper spray to more workers at medium, high, and maximum security facilities.

“Our staff, day to day, work with some of the worst offenders our society has ever produced,” said CPL President Eric Young. “Prior to this, correctional officers had no means of self-defense as they discharge their duties on behalf of the American people supervising these inmates... Ultimately, we hope that this program

will be extended with the passage of the Eric Williams Correctional Officer Protection Act. Our colleagues deserve to feel safe in their workplace.”

The Eric Williams Correctional Officer Protection Act, championed by AFGE members, was introduced in 2014 by Senators Pat Toomey (R-PA), Bob Casey (D-PA), and Joe Manchin (D-WV). The bill was named for an AFGE member murdered in the line of duty and would allow employees who work in high or medium security prisons to routinely carry pepper spray to defend themselves and others if attacked by an inmate. The bill would require training of BOP correctional workers prior to being issued pepper spray.

TSO Raises his “Voice” on TV

Reality show contestants have all sorts of day jobs – waiting tables, working in cubicles, and dreaming about their big break. For “The Voice” finalist and AFGE member Damien Lawson, that day job is as a Transportation Security Officer (TSO) at Los Angeles International Airport.



“I started working as a TSO about four or five years ago,” Lawson said. “It’s a really interesting job with good people protecting travelers.”

Lawson was on duty on the morning of November 1, 2013, when an armed shooter opened fire in the airport. “It was an experience I never wanted to happen,” Lawson

said. “I never want it to happen again, and I would never wish it on anyone.”

Lawson’s friend and colleague, Gerardo Hernandez, was tragically killed in the shooting, an event that he says took him months to be able to talk about. When Lawson was asked to sing at Hernandez’s funeral, he says he almost turned down the chance. He credits his colleagues for encouraging him to sing “I Believe I Can Fly” at the memorial service, and he feels that the performance helped not only Hernandez’s family heal, but helped him heal.

“It was a hard experience,” he said. “But I feel that music can bring joy, bring peace, and bring comfort to anything you’re going through.”

Lawson found healing in music through his involvement with the TSA chorus, which performs at TSA funerals and other events. Lawson says that he has always loved music and found happiness in singing, and was thrilled with his fourth place finish on “The Voice” this fall – something his coworkers were excited for as well.

Lawson says that in addition to sharing his love of music and advancing his singing career, he hopes his time on “The Voice” paints a different picture of TSOs than most Americans usually see.

“I know that the TSA doesn’t always get the best media attention, so I hope that my time on The Voice will show people a different side of our agency,” Lawson says. “The TSA has a lot of good people that protect travelers every day and make our country safer. And you don’t always see that.”

AFGE Members Fight Back Against New TSA Pay Scale

TSA changed its pay structure under the TOPS pay system late last year, resulting in half of the workforce not receiving a pay raise. The new pay scale, which creates seven levels of evaluations rather than four, hurts morale within this essential workforce.

AFGE has filed a grievance with the TSA’s National Resolution Center, contending TSA violated our bargaining

agreement and the 2011 Pistole Determination, which sets forth a framework for a relationship between TSA and our union.

“Our relationship is supposed to be built on honesty, integrity, transparency, and collaboration. None of that occurred with this TOPS payout this year,” said AFGE TSA Council 100 President Hydrick Thomas.

AFGE Members Win Free TSO Parking

For years, the high cost of parking for TSO has been a problem at many large and urban airports. Officers trying to make ends meet on TSA wages shelled out hundreds of dollars a month for airport parking – just to get to their jobs.

TSA management refused to budge, but AFGE members never gave up. In December, that battle finally came to an end, when TSA management agreed to free parking. Free parking takes effect this fall.

AFL-CIO: Raising Wages Will Be Labor's Top Priority



still in deep trouble. The struggles of average Americans are a result of the choices politicians make, she explained. Instead of building an economy for all, they're building an economy that benefits the super-rich at the expense of everyone.

"We know that democracy does not work when congressmen and regulators bow down to Wall Street's political power," she said, adding we must "remind politicians they don't work for the big banks, they work for us."

Labor Secretary Thomas Perez told attendees that prosperity has not been shared as productivity has soared. He pointed to the rampant problem of wage theft that costs workers \$1 billion a year in California and New York alone.

Setting the tone for 2015, the AFL-CIO announced a call to action this month, challenging elected leaders to use their power to raise wages or face consequences.

At the union's first-ever **Summit on Raising Wages**, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka announced campaigns to raise wages in Atlanta, Washington, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, San Diego, and Columbus, Ohio. The seven cities will serve as a starting point of long-term improvements. State federations of labor will also hold Raising Wages summits in the first four presidential primary states: Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, and South Carolina.

"Families don't need to hear more about income inequality. They need more income," said President Trumka. "I'm eager to turn on the heat and begin judging candidates based on this issue of raising wages." Sen. Elizabeth Warren told the crowd that in spite of economic improvements at the top, the middle class is

Despite obstacles, workers have won when they stick together. A good example took place in New York when Shantel Walker, a Papa John's Pizza worker, joined with her co-workers to fight wage theft at their workplace. They engaged their community, brought thousands of people together to confront the problem, and eventually won back their stolen wages.

"Nobody that works a full time job should live in poverty. That's not who we are as a nation," said Secretary Perez.

Clearly, unions are a huge part of solving these entrenched problems and reviving the middle class. When workers join together in a union, they can negotiate better wages and demand action from elected officials. The public needs to hear the truth: raising wages boosts the economy. When people have money to spend, businesses grow and in turn create more jobs.

Government has more revenue to invest in education and infrastructure. Raising wages allows people to take care of their families and move people off public assistance.

2015 AFGE National Convention

In accordance with the AFGE National Constitution, you are hereby notified that the 40th Triennial Convention will be held on Monday, August 17 through Friday, August 21, 2015 at:

Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel
1500 Epcot Resorts Blvd
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

Important information for the 2015 AFGE National Convention:

NO ON-SITE REGISTRATION! ADVANCE REGISTRATION ONLY and must be postmarked by July 18, 2015. All delegates must be elected by July 18, 2015.

Check your mail for complete 2015 Convention details and information.

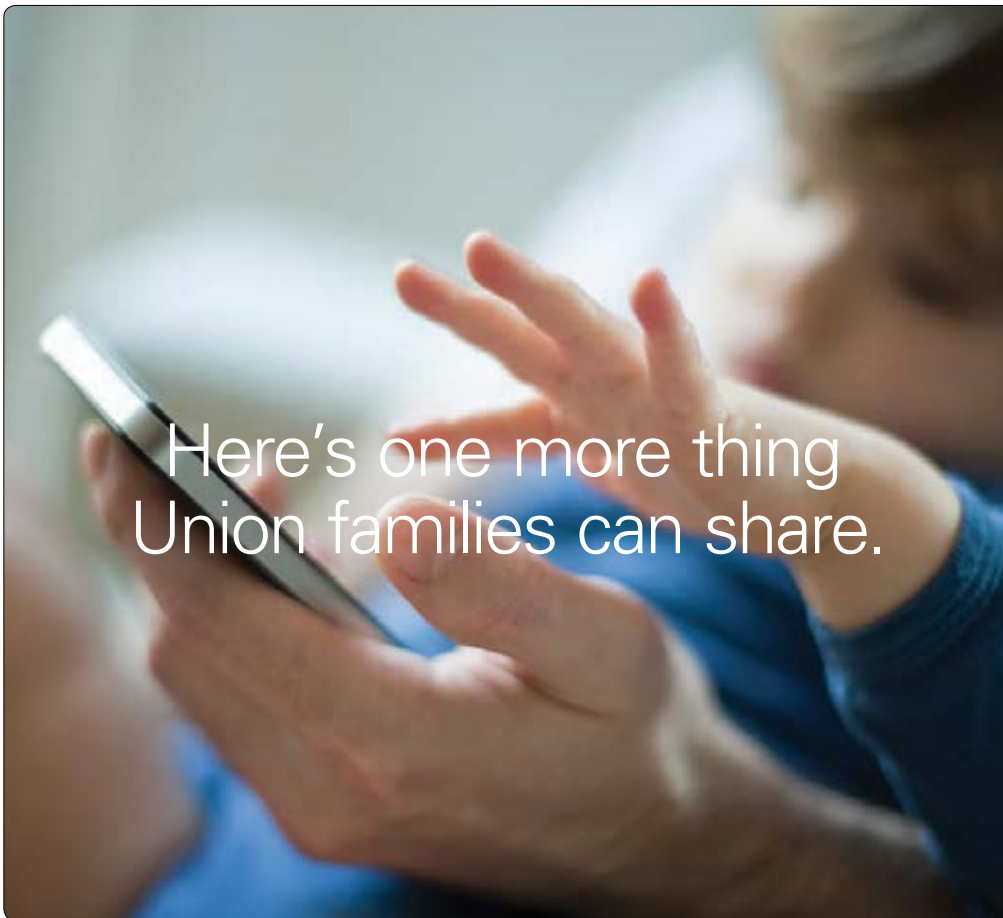


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