



Vol. LXXV, No. 4

THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

Special Edition

October/November 2008

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

It Takes **COURAGE** to **CHANGE**

A Special Message from President Gage

The conversation was frank and to the point at the week long August meeting of AFL-CIO presidents in Chicago. For union members the stakes in this election have never been higher. The wreckage of the past eight years for working families in lower wages, job losses, the crises in health care, disappearing educational opportunities, the impact of Iraq and Afghanistan, the unprecedented shift of wealth from the middle to the top should have all Americans hopping mad.

The real issues in this election should have every union member; every working family pumped and determined to throw

(continued on page 2)



"There are one hundred good reasons to vote for Barack Obama and one really bad reason to vote against him."

AFGE NP Gage toughens up Sen. Obama for his presidential campaign.

Table of Contents

- 3** Obama v. McCain: The Record Speaks for Itself
- 5** AFGE at Forefront to Secure Bargaining Rights, Improve Workplace Conditions for TSA Employees
- 5** Bargaining for the Future
- 6** Local 1456 Signs First Contract
- 6** AFGE on YouTube
- 6** Women's and Fair Practices HRT Conference
- 7** New Benefits for Federal Retirees



For more information on the election and how it impacts you, go to
www.itsourturn2008.com

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE ON GOVERNMENT PROPERTY

It Takes COURAGE to CHANGE (continued from page 1)



Obama talks politics with AFGE NVP Andrea Brooks.

AFGE—The Government Standard

Vol. LXXV, No. 4

October/November 2008

AFGE—The Government Standard (USPS 003-219, ISSN 1041-5335) is the official membership publication of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20001 Phone: (202) 737-8700, www.afge.org. John Gage, **National President**, J. David Cox, **National Secretary-Treasurer**, Andrea E. Brooks, **National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices**. National Vice Presidents: District 2—Derrick F. Thomas, (732) 828-9449; NY, NJ, CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT. District 3—Jeffrey R. Williams, (610) 660-0316; DE, PA. District 4—Joseph Flynn, (410) 480-1820; MD, NC, VA, WV. District 5—Charlotte Flowers, (770) 907-2055; AL, FL, GA, SC, TN, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico. District 6—Arnold Scott, (317) 542-0428; IN, KY, OH. District 7—Dorothy James, (312) 421-6245; IL, MI, WI. District 8—Jane Nygaard, (952) 854-3216; IA, MN, NE, ND, SD. District 9—Michael Kelly, (405) 670-2656; AR, KS, MO, OK. District 10—Roy Flores, (210) 735-8900; LA, MS, TX, NM, Panama. District 11—Gerald D. Swanke, (360) 253-2616; AK, CO, ID, MT, OR, UT, WA, WY, Guam, Okinawa. District 12—Eugene Hudson, Jr., (760) 233-7600; AZ, CA, HI, NV. District 14—Dwight Bowman, (202) 639-6447; District of Columbia, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; Arlington and Fairfax Counties and the City of Alexandria in Virginia.

Produced by the AFGE Communications Dept.: Director Enid Doggett; Web Site Developers Rodrigo Munera, Paul Heayn; Communications Specialists Emily Ryan, Christina Erling, Jason Fornicola, Michael Victorian; Union layout by GO! Creative, LLC and union printing by Mount Vernon Printing Co. **Postmaster:** send change of addresses to AFGE—The Government Standard, ATTN: AFGE Data Processing Dept., 80 F St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001.



14

under the bus everyone who profited in money or power from this disaster of an administration.

But polling shows that only 55 percent of union members right now, support Obama. In August 2004, 65 percent of union members supported Senator Kerry rising to 70 percent by November. The union vote is fully 25 percent of all votes cast and even higher in the key states

If Senator Obama receives the same percentage of union votes as Senator Kerry did in 2004, this election is over.

of Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. If Senator Obama receives the same percentage of union votes as Senator Kerry did in 2004, this election is over.

Why then is it close? Many, including me, think race. Union leaders have felt the sting of anonymous e-mails and coded language at union meetings.

Studies have shown that some Americans while seeing themselves as fair-minded

will subconsciously transfer unsolved issues about race into more comfortable zones like patriotism, experience or values. Yet if confronted with the obvious or subtle racial undertones of arguments against Obama many move on to consider other issues.

So, the union leaders in Chicago did something very right, maybe even courageous. In most organizations where leadership positions are determined by democratic elections, there is a built in, self preservation instinct to duck or equivocate on tough issues. It was inspirational, at least to me, to see and hear honest, principled testaments about the union movement and race. Where we came from; how instrumental we have been in the march for civil rights. How important it was for each of us to speak out individually within our unions and collectively to the public, like never before against racism in all its forms.

All unions, speaking together, as one labor movement to convince our members that this election is too important to be decided by biases left over from the past. One local president, a woman, from a building trades union, said to one of her members: "No health care reform, no trade policy reform, just the same anti-worker administration we have now, but you can be proud and tell your kids you kept a Black man out of the White House."

For us, as federal workers and AFGE members where diversity has perhaps a stronger foothold and acceptance, it is incumbent upon us to help crack through racial blocks within our families, friends and neighborhoods. President Obama will

be an advocate for good government. He will appoint people who believe in the mission of our agencies. He will restore employee rights. He will support adequate funding for federal agencies. We will have a President we can talk to, who appreciates our work and stands beside us.

There are one hundred good reasons to vote for Barack Obama and one really bad reason to vote against him. ●

The Record Speaks for Itself

In evaluating its choice for United States president, AFGE sent an exhaustive questionnaire to all of the candidates, including Senators Obama and McCain. Here's what they told us and what their voting records show. For more information, visit www.itsourturn2008.com.

THE ISSUE	HOW THEY VOTED	
	OBAMA	MCCAIN
YOUR JOB	<p>Obama is against privatization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Told AFGE he will not “contract out vital government services without first considering whether the private sector can actually provide a better service and whether so-called hidden costs of privatization are fully accounted for in the cost estimate.” <p>(AFGE questionnaire) [not yet in office for Senate Vote 408, 10/23/2003, or Senate Vote 168, 9/8/2004]</p>	<p>McCain is for contracting out your job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said that he would welcome private sector ideas into the folds of government, describing the civil service as a no-accountability zone. (Govexec.com, 5/21/07) Voted for Bush’s plan to privatize and outsource hundreds of thousands of federal jobs. Supported favoring contractors over government workers. (Senate Vote 408, 10/23/2003; Senate Vote 168, 9/8/2004)
YOUR MONEY	<p>Obama is for helping lower and middle class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposed Bush’s tax cuts for the wealthy in 2005. (Associated Press, 2/28/08) Would provide tax relief to the middle class by cutting income taxes by \$1,000 for working families to offset the payroll tax they pay. (ThinkProgress.org, 6/12/08; Tax Policy Center Report, 6/11/08) 	<p>McCain is for helping the wealthy get wealthier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voted for an additional \$58 billion in tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans after voting against tax cuts for the wealthy in 2001. (Senate Vote 170, 5/26/01; Senate Vote 347, 11/18/05) Proposal to help the middle class provided a repeal of the alternative minimum tax, most benefiting people who earn between \$200,000 and \$1 million. (<i>Wall Street Journal</i>, 3/03/08; <i>Washington Post</i>, 4/16/2008)
YOUR HEALTH CARE	<p>Obama is for providing affordable health care for every American</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would make available to working families health coverage comparable to what he receives as a member of Congress. Would not turn anyone away because of illness or pre-existing conditions. Would require employers who do not contribute toward employees’ health care to give a percentage of its payroll to fund a national plan. Would expand eligibility for, and offer subsidies to individuals or families who do not qualify for Medicaid or SCHIP. Would allow for prescription medication to be purchased from other developed countries if the cost is lower than that in the U.S. (Candidate Web site) 	<p>McCain would increase health care costs and reduce benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would encourage employers to stop offering health care, pushing workers into the unregulated private insurance market to fend for themselves. Would not cover pre-existing conditions, unlike his coverage as a senator, jeopardizing health care for millions of working families. Would create a new tax on working families by making employer-provided health benefits part of taxable income. Would provide only a modest tax credit for health premiums, which would cover less than half the average health premium, meaning more out of pocket costs and a higher taxable income. <p>(The Commonwealth Fund, <i>Envisioning the Future</i>, 1/08; <i>Los Angeles Times</i>, 11/20/07; Kaiser Family Foundation and HRET, <i>Employer Health Benefits 2007 Annual Survey</i>)</p>

(continued on page 4)

The RECORD SPEAKS for ITSELF

(continued from page 3)

<p>CARE FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS</p>	<p>Obama supports fully funding and staffing the VA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voted in favor of increased funding for veterans' health care in 2005, 2006, 2007. (Senate Vote 89, 4/12/2005; Senate Vote 55, 3/16/2006; Senate Vote 41, 3/14/2006; Senate Vote 126, 3/29/2007) • Voted for increased funding for mental health services for veterans. (Senate Vote 343, 11/17/05) • Voted in favor of spending \$19 billion for military and veterans' hospitals. (Senate Vote 7, 2/6/2006). • Said that as president, he would "fully fund the VA so it has all the resources it needs to serve the veterans who need it, when they need it." (AFGE questionnaire) 	<p>McCain is against fully funding and staffing the VA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voted against funding for veterans' health care in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007. (Senate Vote 40, 3/10/2004; Senate Vote 55, 3/16/2005; Senate Vote 41, 3/14/2006; Senate Vote 126, 3/29/2007) • Voted against increased funding for mental health services for veterans. (Senate Vote 343, 11/17/05) • Voted against spending \$19 billion for military and veterans' hospitals. (Senate Vote 7, 2/6/2006). • Did not respond to the AFGE questionnaire.
<p>AMERICA'S SOCIAL SECURITY</p>	<p>Obama is against privatizing Social Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to protecting Social Security, he opposes raising the retirement age and pledged not to cut benefits. • Strongly opposed to the privatization of Social Security. • Supports increasing the maximum amount of earnings covered by Social Security in the payroll tax system to strengthen Social Security. (Senate Vote 49, 3/15/05; Senate Vote 68, 3/16/06; Candidate Web site) 	<p>McCain is for privatizing Social Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Called Social Security a national disgrace, and although a millionaire, receives an average monthly check of \$1,929.75. (Denver town hall meeting, 7/7/08; AP, 7/17/08) • Has consistently supported President Bush's discredited scheme to privatize Social Security. • Backs a plan to divert Social Security payroll taxes to fund private accounts. • Supports reducing the growth in Social Security benefits and would consider raising the retirement age to 68. (Senate Vote 49, 3/15/05; Senate Vote 68, 3/16/06; <i>Wall Street Journal</i>, March 3, 2008)
<p>OUTSOURCING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE</p>	<p>Obama is opposed to contracting out at DoD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported an amendment to the FY 2007 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill that would have prevented the privatization of 350 federal employee jobs at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. (Senate Vote 234, 9/6/2006) 	<p>McCain is for contracting out at DoD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposed an amendment to the FY 2007 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill that would have prevented the privatization of 350 federal employee jobs at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, which contributed to the scandalous treatment of veterans at Walter Reed. (Senate Vote 234, 9/6/2006)
<p>FUNDING FOR BUREAU OF PRISONS</p>	<p>Obama is for fully funding and staffing at BoP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said he is "committed to addressing the overcrowding of our nation's prison—which starts by properly funding the BOP's budget." (AFGE questionnaire) 	<p>McCain is against fully funding and staffing at BoP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said he would cut \$160 billion a year from the federal discretionary budget, which funds federal prisons among other programs.



AFGE Remains at Forefront of Movement to Secure Bargaining Rights, Improve Workplace Conditions for TSA Employees

In an effort to ensure passage of a bill that would grant Transportation Security Officers collective bargaining rights, AFGE recently kicked off a campaign to get more cosponsors for that bill. H.R. 3212 was introduced last year by Rep. Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., and at press time has 42 co-sponsors. AFGE's campaign is part of the union's years-long effort to win collective bargaining rights for TSOs, which would allow them to negotiate for better pay and workplace rules. TSA, however, has repeatedly denied TSOs workplace protections—despite extreme-

ly low morale and exceptionally high attrition rates.

While ramping up collective bargaining efforts, AFGE continues to push for workplace rights for TSOs in other ways. As a direct result of AFGE's effort to get real whistleblower protections at TSA, the agency in July announced the implementation of an agreement with the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board that should provide for enhanced whistleblower protections.

The TSA/MSPB agreement allows TSOs to appeal whistleblower retaliation

complaints to the independent Board. Previously, TSOs who were disciplined or fired for blowing the whistle could only file their complaints with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, whose decisions TSA could ignore. Now TSOs can appeal OSC decisions to MSPB. Although these protections are an improvement to the current system, they fall short of affording TSOs full whistleblower protections. TSA still is not allowing the workers to appeal a negative decision to the federal courts, which current whistleblower protection law allows other federal employees to do.

Also at AFGE's urging, TSA in June made changes to its Image Mastery Assessment Policy; however, AFGE cautions that those changes are not nearly adequate and TSA must continue to modify this policy.

In a strongly-worded letter to TSA Administrator Kip Hawley, AFGE National President John Gage took issue with the practice of IMA testing procedures that are not aligned with actual TSA screening policy. Failing an IMA test three times may be grounds for termination. Hawley himself admitted earlier this year that the IMA test was flawed, stating in a March 25 e-mail to TSOs that "the image tests will be reformed. We recognize that you are trained and tested on different standards and that those standards do not reflect how you do your job."

Key among AFGE's concerns about the policy changes are that it:

- Doesn't address that TSOs are trained and tested on different images;
- Doesn't adequately address training issues;
- Still counts failures under the old inadequate training and testing protocol;
- Gives discretion to Federal Security Directors to retain and retrain; and,
- Still facilitates different standards at airports and allows FSDs to pick and choose which TSOs will be allowed to keep their jobs.

For more information on AFGE's efforts at TSA, visit www.tsunion.net, call 1-866-392-6832 or email tsahotline@afge.org. ●

Bargaining for the Future

Winning for You

B*argaining for the Future*, a comprehensive training tool to help AFGE contract negotiators develop better contract proposals and provide needed support at the bargaining table, is now available on Case Track at www.afge-casetrack.org (login is required). This comprehensive document aids in improving the quality of AFGE contracts, eliminating the erroneous waiver of our union's rights and increasing the benefits and protections we provide for our bargaining units.

"AFGE is comprised of locals that have different needs and different priorities. It wouldn't make sense to have one standard contract," said Charlie Bernhardt, labor relations specialist and a key lead on the creation of *Bargaining for the Future*. "What's best for one local may not be the best for another."

It is with the various priorities of AFGE's diverse locals that *Bargaining for the Future* was created. "It's a living document," continued Bernhardt. "Our goal is to keep the document as current as possible. We want to ensure that we have good language that achieves the needs of each of our locals."

Bargaining for the Future offers:

- background information on case law and court decisions that provide the legal framework for understanding the issues around which you are bargaining;
- strategies to craft arguments in order to win certain demands; and
- advice on key articles commonly found in contracts with recommendations for both minimum language and objective language.

While *Bargaining for the Future* is offered to many of our representatives, organizers, bargaining councils, Local presidents, National Vice Presidents and members, it remains an internal document, secured on Case Track. "If your Local is not enrolled with Case Track, contact the Field Services and Labor Relations Department. We will work with you on getting access," explained Bernhardt. "This document is not something that we want in the hands of those sitting across from us at the bargaining table."

Bargaining for the Future not only guides negotiators with what to ask for, but also where the boundaries are in relation to contract points. "Ultimately, our goal is to help AFGE negotiators win critical contract negotiations that will affect our members for years to come. *Bargaining for the Future* will get us there."

For more information email bargainingafge@afge.org.

SAVE THE DATE AFGE'S WOMEN'S AND FAIR PRACTICES DEPARTMENT

Would Like You to Join Them for
**AFGE's Annual Human Rights
Training Conference**

March 23-26 in
Las Vegas, Nevada



REGISTER ON LINE
<http://wfp.afge.org> or www.afge.org

Lights, Camera, YouTube

AFGE Videos Available
Online

A FGE now makes use of one of the nation's most popular video sharing Web sites, YouTube. The Web site enables visitors to search for and view videos, as well as to contribute products of their own.

AFGE's videos, "From One Vet to Another" and "Senator McCain as a Vet, I Have Concerns," disclose the dismal voting record of Senator John McCain, regarding Veterans Affairs funding. These videos, which have been viewed thousands of times, have received widespread media attention. "Protect Your Vote," featuring National Vice

Local 1456 Signs First Contract



Bottom Row from left to right: Rashida Mims, PSA; Donald Brady, PSA; Tarya Lewis, president Local 1456 and pretrial services officer for the Specialized Supervision Unit; Sunghee Parks, PSA; Ana Caro-Dominguez, Local 1456. Top Row from left to right: Antoinette Williams, PSA; Romeyn Rowlson, PSA; Maria Douglas, Local 1456 secretary and pretrial services officer for General Supervision; Cliff Keenan, deputy director.

A FGE Local 1456 in Washington, D.C., signed its first contract with management July 11, 2008. Local 1456 represents employees at the Pretrial Services Agency (PSA), an independent entity in the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency in the federal executive branch of the United States government. PSA is responsible for the investigation and supervision of persons arrested and released into the community pending disposition of their cases in the D.C. Superior Court and U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.



President for Women and Fair Practices Andrea E. Brooks, received wide praise at the last AFL-CIO political meeting.

Prospective members can view AFGE events and activities including AFGE National Secretary-Treasurer J. David Cox's speech at the union's 75th Anniversary Celebration and a recent Council of Prisons news conference on the death of federal correctional officer Jose Rivera.

"YouTube allows AFGE to reach millions and to educate the public about issues that relate to them as well as federal government employees," said John Gage, AFGE president.

To access these videos and more, go to www.youtube.com and search for "afgeonline." ●

House Passes Bill to Provide New Retirement Benefits for Federal Retirees

The House of Representatives passed legislation that would provide several new benefits for employees in the Federal Employees Retirement System. The bill would equalize the treatment of unused sick leave between the Civil Service Retirement System and FERS, automatically enroll new employees in the Thrift Savings Plan to guarantee that they get the benefits of the government's contributions, and create a new "Roth" option for TSP accounts.

Sick Leave Credit toward Retirement for FERS Employees

Right now, FERS employees receive no credit for unused sick leave at the end of their federal careers. Obtaining parity between CSRS and FERS in the treatment of unused sick leave has been long-advocated by AFGE, and championed by Representative Jim Moran, D-Va. This bill phases in the benefit over three years. After that, FERS employees would join their CSRS coworkers in having all of their unused sick leave credited to the length of service that is used for calculating their retirement annuity. This change would apply to both regular and survivor annuities under FERS. During the first three years, FERS employees would receive credit for 75 percent of their sick leave.

Automatic Enrollment

Under current law, new federal employees have to choose to participate in the TSP. If they do so, they receive significant government agency matches to their own contributions. However, many new federal employees find the explanations about the TSP during their orientations to be confusing and decide not to enroll, inadvertently losing out on the agency matches to their contributions. Enrollees would obtain both the automatic one percent plus dollar-for-dollar employer matches for employee contributions up to three percent. Employees would still have the option to decline enrollment.

Roth Plan in TSP

Finally, the bill requires the creation of a Roth-style option in the TSP for employees. Roth accounts differ from the traditional TSP accounts in that Roth accounts are funded with taxable income and a traditional TSP account is funded with "pre tax" income. Funds withdrawn from a Roth account during retirement are tax free. When the funds from a traditional

TSP account are taken out in retirement, they are taxable. The difference is when taxes are paid: it is prior to deposit for Roth accounts, but for traditional TSP accounts, it is when the funds are withdrawn. ●



AFGE: Then & Now

Get a Piece of History Today!

Written by celebrated author Suzan Erem, *AFGE: Then & Now* covers 75 years of rich AFGE history, intricately weaving the storied events that have profoundly affected our country with the vivid and dynamic history of our union. From the founding years through wars and global strife, from economic downturns and national tragedies, AFGE has been a stalwart of strength for its members, fighting every day for your rights and a decent wage. This sleek, masterfully written book captures the essence of the years behind this great union and is perfect as a keepsake or to give as a gift.

To preorder your copy of *AFGE: Then & Now*, please fill out the information below and send to: **AFGE Communications**
80 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Hard Cover edition: \$30

Soft Cover edition: \$20

All copies will be printed and ready for delivery in December 2009. **Please make checks payable to: AFGE and send to address above.**

75 Years: Proud to Make America Work



SAVE THE DATE!

Go to www.afge.org for more information about the **2009 AFGE Legislative Conference**, **February 8-11**, at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill in **Washington, DC.**

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
80 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
www.afge.org

Change Service Requested

Presort Standard
US Postage
PAID
Washington DC
3070



I want to volunteer to get involved!

www.AFGE.org

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	AFGE Member?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local #	First Name	Last Name	Last 4 Digits of Social Security #	Yes	No	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Home Address	City	State	Zip	New Address		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Home Phone	Work Phone	Ext.	Agency			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>					
Home E-Mail	Work E-Mail					

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
Fax to 202-639-6492 or Mail to AFGE, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001