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THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

July/August 2010

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

We **WON'T** Go Back

AFGE has had an impressive record of achievement the past two years. And as can be expected, our success has motivated our enemies to regroup and stage an all out attack on federal government workers.

It is because of this rising tide of anti-worker zealotry that we need to do everything we can to keep our gains and add to our successes. Our members must be mobilized—and our army of volunteers must be on the offensive to ward off the attacks from those who would bring us down.

The time has come for the gloves to come off.

It is time to fight.

The battle is on our doorstep.

If we don't fight now, we go backwards. And AFGE cannot allow this country to go backward. Not to the



days when government employees were made the scapegoats for partisan gain or to deflect attention from management incompetence. We've come too far for that.

We cannot go back to the days when there were constant assaults on government employees' rights and all our oppositions' efforts were made to politicize the civil service. We fought hard to end that dark era.

We must always remember that collective bargaining and other union rights are considered just that, a right to be protected—not something to be attacked and abolished. This November, it will be critical for all AFGE members to do their part to strengthen their security, improve their lives, and build a government that works for the American people, by helping to elect candidates who are on the side of working families and good governance.

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**AFGE Endorses CANDIDATES
for D.C. ELECTIONS**



Trust In Federal Workers to Get The Job Done

The American people want good government. They want government to perform effectively and efficiently, to provide taxpayers with good value for their investment, and to deliver the services they need with proficiency.

That's what AFGE members want, too. It's what we're working for. And it's what we will achieve.

Unfortunately, new obstacles have been placed in the way of our goal by a toxic combination of cynical, partisan government employee-bashing by right-wing extremists, along with the misguided view of some "moderates" that it's better to cut the deficit in the midst of the worst economy in 75 years than to help the American people survive the recession.

First, there was House Minority Whip Eric Cantor's "You Cut" gimmick, his Web site designed to agitate the extremist base and spin the media by getting Internet users to pick their favorite federal program to slash each week. The top vote-getter in the contest's second week?

"Eliminating the federal employee pay raise."

Not surprisingly, the "You Cut" language supporting this option was rife with out-and-out lies like "federal employees make more than their private sector counterparts."

More significantly, this stunt was followed by votes in the House and the

Senate on amendments to prohibit any raise or bonus for government employees. Those paying the price for this partisan grandstanding would have included scientists at NIH conducting groundbreaking research, CIA employees serving bravely in war zones like Iraq and Afghanistan, Customs and Border Patrol Officers engaged in an increasingly dangerous mission, doctors and nurses at VA hospitals caring for wounded and ill veterans, and correctional officers guarding terrorists and gang leaders in federal prisons. It also would have hurt employees involved in important research on food safety at FDA, claims representatives for the elderly and disabled at the Social Security Administration, and EPA scientists protecting our environment.

ing efforts led to both amendments being defeated, by a 53-45 vote in the Senate on May 27 and a 227-183 vote in the House on May 28. After these assaults from the far right came attacks from a new direction—the centrist "pain caucus" advocating austerity at a time when only the public sector can compensate for the retrenchment in

The Obama administration has done much to address the debilitating understaffing that plagued AFGE members throughout the Bush years.

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It's not coincidental that the pay freeze amendments were offered by two ultra-right-wing demagogues, Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) and Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.). Indeed, Bachmann has rewritten the definition of "crazy" by urging Americans not to fill out their census forms and not to pay their taxes after passage of health care reform—both violations of the law—and by making the outlandishly ignorant statement that "100 percent of our economy was private prior to September of 2008."

Fortunately, AFGE's successful lobby-

private sector spending that has led to record unemployment levels.

The latest salvo was a directive from the Office of Management and Budget ordering federal agencies to produce plans to cut their budgets by at least 5 percent next year. It remains to be seen how this process will play out, and it is not inevitable that spending will actually be cut by 5 percent across the board. But rest assured, AFGE is working relentlessly both through direct action and through the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations to ensure that any budget cuts do not cost hard-working members their jobs, cripple our agencies' missions, or further handicap the executive branch's ability to recruit and retain the quality professionals America needs.

On balance, the Obama administration has done much to address the debilitating understaffing that plagued AFGE members throughout the Bush years. The president's most recent budget proposed vital increases in staffing at agencies ranging from the VA to the SSA, from the BoP to the EPA, from the FDA to OSHA.

Equally important, the administration is changing its contracting out policies, creating new opportunities to insource work that is "inherently governmental." This will greatly increase accountability,

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efficiency and productivity in government operations, but as always, the devil is in the details. Among other things, that means defining “inherently governmental” in broad, clear terms, and blocking attempts to gut the requirement that non-Defense agencies establish contractor inventories.

In the wake of advances like these, our job is to extend them further while preventing painful reverses that could potentially come from the 5 percent directive or from efforts by congressional right-wingers and deficit hawks to mandate even harsher spending cuts.

We cannot let the federal government go back to the days when hard-working government employees were made the scapegoat for anything that went wrong, when our members were forced to do too much with too little, and when their jobs were jeopardized so that crony contractors could pad their profits and create a shadow, unaccountable

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federal workforce. We cannot let this happen overtly, as the anti-worker minority in Congress would certainly try to do if we permit it to win this fall’s elections. Just as important, we cannot let this happen covertly by letting the pain caucus and their allies in the administration steadily undo all the good that has taken place over the past 18 months.

This is not a time for austerity nor is it a time for retrenchment. It is a time to move full speed ahead as we make the case for why America needs a vibrant public sector now more than ever, why we need to further empower federal employees to serve the people to the best of their ability, and why we need good government once and for all. ●

We **WON'T** Go Back

continued from page 1

Our successes provide a solid platform from which AFGE members can win new advances in the years to come—if pro-worker majorities are maintained in the upcoming election. As AFGE members, we must make our voices heard on November 2, 2010. We must keep our enemies from returning to power so soon after they were tossed out

for mismanaging the government and economy. We must build on the many victories our Congress has already provided.

Together we can take America forward. Together we can stop the assault on federal and D.C. government workers. Go to www.afge.org for more information on what you can do to help America stay the course.



YOUR support helped accomplish:

- ▶ **Repeal the National Security Personnel System (NSPS)**, preserving the bargaining rights of AFGE members and the independent, professional civil service.
- ▶ **Increase funding for agencies** ranging from the Department of Veterans Affairs to the Bureau of Prisons, easing understaffing and improving services.
- ▶ **Reject contracting out** in favor of contracting in federal employee jobs, greatly reducing the threat to AFGE members’ employment security.
- ▶ **Passed legislation** that allows federal employees to count sick leave towards their retirement.

President Obama signed all of these bills into law. Equally important, under his leadership there has been a sea change in the executive branch’s attitude toward government employees:

- ▶ AFGE members and the federal government itself are critical to solving our nation’s problems, not the cause of them.
- ▶ AFGE has direct access to the White House, members of the Cabinet, and key agency staff to discuss federal employee issues. A working relationship has been reestablished so members can voice their concerns, and have them heard and addressed.
- ▶ Key positions such as the head of the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) have been filled with pro-federal employee, pro-labor appointees.



AFGE Illustrates Conditions at SSA with **Unprecedented Arbitration Win**

Citing “reckless indifference,” an independent arbitrator decried SSA’s multiple contract violations in a recent case regarding the wrongful suspension of an exemplary Social Security Administration employee and AFGE member. The grievant was placed on a 90-day suspension after she approved a claim that later turned out to be fraudulent. According to the arbitrator, “there is no substantial evidence that the grievant was negligent or otherwise inattentive to her duties as charged.”

“The strong language used by the arbitrator admonishing the agency illustrates the unabashed ferocity in which Commissioner Astrue sees fit to treat his employees,” stated AFGE National President John Gage.

In the ruling, the arbitrator rescinded the grievant’s 90-day suspension; awarded full back pay plus interest, \$50,000 in compensatory damages due to SSA’s unlawful discrimination, \$50,000 in punitive damages due to the agency’s “gross and repugnant rendition of the matter at hand, and in an effort to deter such reckless, blameworthy misbehavior in the future”; and expunged the employee’s record of any and all information and records pertaining to these events.

“This is a first for an SSA local in arbitration,” concluded Gage. “The unprecedented sums of damages awarded to our member should serve as a wake-up call to Commissioner Astrue. We will fight back against these gross injustices and we will win.” ●

\$22 Million Recovered in FLSA Settlement Agreement!

In a recent settlement of two related grievances, AFGE attorneys and AFGE Council 45 recovered \$22 million, plus substantial attorney fees and other benefits for the bargaining unit employees who claimed compensation for donning and doffing. Under the agreement, which was hammered out at arbitration in March, the federal agency also is obligated to establish a joint labor-management monitoring committee that will survey and resolve any continuing overtime issues that may exist at the hundreds of affected worksites. The committee will time each facility and make sure the inspectors are getting paid for any pre- and post-shift duties. The Union reserved a hearing date in the near future to resolve any disputes in the implementation of the agreement.

This is just the latest example of a series of multi-million dollar FLSA cases won by AFGE attorneys. As in the prior

overtime cases, in-house union attorneys have served the membership well by maximizing their relief. “One of the benefits of AFGE attorney representation is that almost all law firms would have taken \$7 million from this settlement as their attorney fees,” said AFGE Associate General Counsel Joseph Henderson. “We didn’t take 30 percent, or anything from the back wages owed to our members. Instead, AFGE’s Legal Representation Fund recovered all the attorney fees due from the agency itself, based upon an hourly rate. Our fee recovery was on top of, not part of, the \$22 million wages paid back to the workers.”

The settlement resulted from a number of grievances brought by AFGE Council 45. AFGE Legal Rights Attorney Matt Milledge successfully arbitrated the right to bring these claims to an arbitrator and Henderson concluded the litigation

by bringing two dozen witnesses to the second arbitration.

For Henderson, this was the third win in as many weeks. On March 2, AFGE Local 3614 went to arbitration to enforce a Memorandum of Understanding with the EEOC. Henderson was assisted by Local President Regina Andrew in the hearing, and the union’s grievance was upheld in its entirety.

Henderson presented another FLSA arbitration with AFGE Local 987 at Robins Air Force Base. During the hearing, the agency conceded that the employee wasn’t properly compensated at the full time-and-a-half rate. The lost overtime equates to approximately \$220.

“Whether \$220, or \$22 million, these wages are equally important when denied and the workers deserve a union attorney at no cost to either the member or the local,” said AFGE National President John Gage.

Following Meeting with AFGE Leadership, VA Rescinds Clerical Staff Downgrades

AFGE announced that after quick action on behalf of its members in the VA, it has been successful in working with the VA to rescind a policy resulting in the downgrades of several employee groups within the VA. Working in collaboration with AFGE leaders, the VA issued a blanket rescission of the policy until further investigations could take place.

A number of VA hospitals were moving to downgrade support and clerical positions until, after hearing from members in the field, AFGE requested the VA rescind the action. AFGE leaders met with high-level VA officials, including Undersecretary of Health Robert Petzel and Deputy Undersecretary Scott Gould, bringing to their attention the disparate impact this policy was having on employees.

The policy in question began under the former administration in August 2006, when the Veterans Health Administration

restructured its fee basis program and created a new unit responsible for reviewing medical consults. The VA then reclassified employees working in the new unit in May 2008. Subsequently employees in the unit had their positions downgraded by as many as two grades, creating undue hardship for employees throughout the new unit.



“This policy by the VA negatively impacted thousands of VA professionals. Our ability to resolve this issue speaks to the power of our strong labor-management relationship.”

In a recent meeting, AFGE National President John Gage informed Gould that as a result of the personnel policy, medical clerks throughout the VA were having their grade scales systematically reduced. The move by the VA to correct the situation is illustrative of the positive impact of a positive labor management relationship.

“This policy by the VA negatively impacted thousands of VA professionals,” said Gage. “Our ability to resolve this issue speaks to the power of our strong labor-management relationship. I think Mr. Gould realized the disparate impact this policy was having on employees and moved to correct it.” ●

UPDATE ON Labor Management Partnership Forums

Ever since the creation of Executive Order 13522, AFGE, alongside the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations (of which AFGE National President John Gage is a member) has been working diligently to help implement the new Labor Management Partnership Forums. The forums are meant to be a way of officially involving union representation in negotiations between workers and management to reach a fair compromise that works for all, more efficiently delivering government services. While most agency management on the higher level has been cooperative with the implementation process, some involved have been dragging their feet.



[but] some just fear a loss of power.”

If this is the case, it most certainly hinders the immense benefits the Labor Management Partnership Forums could have.

“[The forums] give us a chance to be more involved. It allows us to do more than just file grievances,” said Rosen.

AFGE Labor Relations Specialist Terry Rosen, who has been an active part of this project, explains that it is management along the front lines that has been somewhat reluctant when it comes to playing their part in the process.

“They say they’re waiting on instruction,” said Rosen, but in reality, this may not be the case. “Others see it as a creative new way of getting things done...

When asked how long it would be before the forums were fully functional, Rosen said that it not only depends on the agencies and their cooperation, but the various unions involved as well. “The more members a union has, the more clout they have throughout the process,” she said.

For more information go to <http://www.lmrcouncil.gov/> or www.afge.org. ●

AFGE Endorses **VINCENT GRAY**

in Run for D.C. Mayor

A FGE has announced its support for Vincent Gray, current chair of the D.C. City Council, in his run for mayor of the city.

"During his tenure as chair of the D.C. City Council, Vincent Gray has shown an openness to labor and an attitude of inclusiveness towards the citizens of the District," said AFGE National President John Gage. "We believe that Gray has a clear understanding of the problems facing D.C. He has also shown a willingness to work with citizens, employees, and labor to make D.C. work for all its residents."

"Our nation's capital faces some serious challenges," said Gage. "These challenges cannot be overcome by the



go-it-alone attitude of the current administration. D.C. needs a leader who has the ability to bring people together, and we believe Vincent Gray is that leader."

As the voice of public employees in D.C., AFGE has been deeply disappointed in the direction of the city under the current mayor, Adrian Fenty. "We are supporting Gray for mayor because we believe that the District of Columbia

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deserves better than what it is currently getting," said AFGE 14th District National Vice President Dwight Bowman. "Since taking office, Fenty has waged a campaign to systematically dismantle city services. He has attacked public services at every level, whether the Department of Parks and Recreation child care program, social services provided by the Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration, or managing troubled youth in the Department of Youth and Rehabilitation Services."

AFGE joins other labor unions, including the Washington D.C. Central Labor Council, which voted unanimously to endorse Gray.

"We understand that this election is a fight for the soul of the District of Columbia," Bowman said. "Will this be a city that supports working people or will it be a city that only supports the wealthy and well-connected? That is what we're fighting for and that is why we're supporting Vincent Gray." ●



D.C. City Council Chair Vincent Gray and AFGE D.C. Council 211 President Eric Bunn

Frustration with Federal Protective Service Contract Guard Program

In response to recent Government Accountability Office reports that Federal Protective Service contract guards are not performing well, AFGE FPS Local 918 President David Wright said those reports are in line with what AFGE has been saying for years—that FPS needs to be a fully-federalized agency.

Testifying on April 14, 2010, before the House Committee on Homeland Security, Wright explained that while FPS law enforcement officers are charged with the monitoring and oversight of Contract Guards, the ratio of CGs to FPS officers has steadily increased from 6.3 percent in 2001 to 18.3 percent in 2010.

“There are approximately 750 street level law enforcement officers responsible for all CG training, monitoring and oversight; law enforcement patrol; response to law enforcement/security calls for service; and physical security administration duties,” Wright said. “A schedule has been released to mandate regular inspections of CG’s different

security level facilities. These efforts are ineffective in that the schedule pertains to the facility guard post and is based only on the security level not the number of individual CG or even the number of posts at a certain facility. Thus some posts and guards will be inspected every week, while others may only be inspected two or three times a year. It also is conceivable that some CGs can evade inspection for years.

“It is evident that the federal government can no longer rely on private companies to provide security guards—whose training and authority is determined by individual states and municipalities—to continue to protect high profile, high security federal properties. The massive effort needed to modify private security contracts for each new training requirement is not feasible and costs the taxpayer money they can ill afford,” Wright added.

AFGE Local 918 recommends that the FPS use the model developed by the U.S. Capitol Police and the U.S. Secret Service Uniformed Division. The officers that provide security at the Capitol and congressional office buildings are federal employees. They are trained at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and possess the authority of arrest on federal property.

“I have seen FPS go from a proud, committed, mission-focused agency to one that seems more focused on saving money than protecting the employees and citizens who work in federal buildings,” Wright said. “While federalization of FPS security guards will cost more at the outset, we believe that the time, effort and money saved in the oversight process will increase security at federal properties.” ●



AFGE Reaching Out to TSOs Online

With some 12,000 active dues-paying members in 38 Locals across the country, Transportation Security Officers have made AFGE the union of choice at TSA. AFGE organizers are using the Internet as a way of keeping in touch with TSA members in more ways than ever before.

By visiting AFGE’s dedicated TSA Web site, TSOs easily can find their Local, read AFGE press releases and publications, access relevant news articles, view TSA policies, and catch up on what AFGE is doing in the courts and on Capitol Hill. Via the Web site, visitors also can find links to TSA videos on YouTube, photos on Flickr, and a Facebook page.

Like the Web site, AFGE’s TSA Facebook page features recent news and press releases. But the Facebook page also allows anyone interested to “like” the group, and subsequently have the ability to post comments and news items. There currently are more than 1,500 supporters on the TSA Facebook page!

Anyone wanting to see what AFGE is doing at TSA can visit AFGE’s TSA Flickr page. Flickr is a photo-sharing Web

site, where visitors can download photos for free. The photos are grouped first by year, then by month, and then by event or activity.

Viewers looking for more visuals also can check out TSA videos on AFGE’s YouTube page. There is a video series that AFGE produced on the union’s efforts at the agency, as well as videos of our TSOs in action.

In this digital age, AFGE is doing all it can to engage its current and potential members on the Internet. Visit us online today!

Find us online!

On the Web	www.tsaunion.net
On Facebook	www.facebook.com , search for “AFGE TSA Union”
On Flickr	www.flickr.com/photos/afgetsa/
On YouTube	www.youtube.com/user/afgeonline#g/ c/512A390846D48346



VA Council Organizing Drive Makes History

A recent joint organizing drive by the National Veterans Affairs Council and AFGE yielded big membership numbers for AFGE. In fact NVAC—one of AFGE's largest bargaining councils—encouraged the drive for membership and sought to protect current membership as a result of re-organization, resulting in a 4,000 member net gain in the month of May—the largest membership increase in one month in the history of AFGE.

than re-organizing. “In an effort to solidify the VA, the drive also was able to educate the workers about various services including benefits that AFGE offers to the members,” she said.

Solving the VA's issues was the key to having a successful drive. “The VA Council's goal was to have a strong push on

organizing to make the push on the bargaining unit greater, and we believe this drive did just that,” said Cathie McQuiston, AFGE Membership and Organization deputy director. “Now we will evaluate the overall performance of the drive and see what we can do better to promote drives for other councils.” ●



AFGE represent thousands of employees and veterans throughout the VA, including nurses, physicians, pharmacists, LPNs, social workers, benefit administrators, food services workers, and VA police officers. Employees at the VA provide meaningful and personal contributions to the lives of the deserving veterans.

“The VA drive was a trial run for us, and we hope it will encourage more membership blitzes for our other Councils and Locals,” said AFGE National Secretary-Treasurer J. David Cox.

The organizing campaign centered around several issues within the VA including bargaining decertification, downgrading of employees, and dissatisfaction with the current performance evaluation system. NVAC President Alma Lee believed that the VA drive did more

What You Get from Your AFGE Credit Card

The hard work of union, consumer, community and civil rights groups led to last year's passage of the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility and Disclosure (CARD) Act. When the law took effect this February, terms became more transparent, and many fees and arbitrary rate hikes were eliminated.

Several changes created by the new law were already in place for AFGE members. The AFGE card doesn't allow unfair practices like double-cycle billing or price hikes when a payment arrives a day late. These practices will be prohibited through the Credit CARD Act, giving all consumers the same protections AFGE members have had for years.

All major credit card issuers have responded to the new law by raising interest rates from three to 18 percentage points. Rates that were fixed became variable. But the average rate increase for union cardholders is two percentage points, with some increasing by five—much less than the industry average.

Union cardholders have a lower rate because Union Privilege, the organization that developed most AFGE benefits, is backed by the strength of millions of union members. That power helped us negotiate with the bank that issues the credit card and keep rate increases lower. When it comes to protecting members, the AFGE Credit Card leads the way. And Union SAFE benefits make the card even better. Grants are available to help during unemployment; when disaster relief is needed; to help save for college or cover large, unreimbursed hospital expenses. AFGE card holders also have access to free credit and budget counseling, skip payments, a layoff helpline, and a scholarship program.

If you have concerns about a change in the terms of your AFGE card, call 800-622-2580. The bank will attempt to accommodate adjustment requests, but a decrease is not guaranteed.

To apply for the AFGE Credit Card, call 1-800-522-4000. For more information on all the other AFGE benefits, visit the Member Benefits section at www.afge.org or call the Benefits Line at 888-844-2343.

For more information visit www.ourfinancialsecurity.org.



Are you “Inside Government”?

Listen to AFGE’s radio show at www.insidegovernmentradio.org to hear:



AFGE Leaders

National President John Gage – The work of AFGE’s National VA Council and its impressive May organizing drive, which resulted in an increase of more than 4,000 members (May 28)

National Secretary-Treasurer J. David Cox and 8th District NVP Jane Nygaard – The fight to obtain equal bargaining rights for all Department of Veterans Affairs employees (April 23)

11th District NVP Gerald Swanke – The importance of good government (March 26)

7th District NVP Dorothy James – The end of the National Security Personnel System (March 12)

14th District NVP Dwight Bowman – The union’s support of D.C. Council Chairman Vincent Gray in his bid for D.C. mayor (May 28)

Congressional Members

Former U.S. Rep. Bob Edgar (D-Pa.) – Health care reform legislation and what changes Americans can expect in the immediate future and long-term (June 4)

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) – The valuable work of federal employees (April 30)

Other Notables

OPM Director John Berry – The need for strong labor/management relations in the federal government (April 30)

“Avatar” Director James Cameron – U.S. environmental policy and his role in the climate change debate (April 30)

D.C. Council Chairman Vincent Gray – Juvenile violence, educational improvements, and labor/management relations (April 23)

Labor Author Philip Dine – The future of labor and ways unions can increase membership levels (April 16)

To hear these shows and many more, go to www.afge.org/insidegovernment

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Come share your ideas and take part in our new Yahoo Group, AFGE Media Circle.
afgemediacircle@yahoo.com



Save the date!



AFGE’s Hispanic Coalition (HISCO) Conference & Adelante Awards 2010

Sun., Sept. 5 – Wed., Sept. 8, 2010

Embassy Suites
1000 Woodward Place NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

For more information contact:
Joe Gonzales (361) 961-2142
Josie Marrujo (505) 250-4041

AFGE Exceeds 250,000 Members

A FGE National President John Gage congratulated AFGE members and activists in for their role in helping the union to exceed the quarter of million mark in dues paying members nationally. AFGE represents some 600,000 federal workers nationwide.

AFGE, the nation's largest federal and D.C. employee union, now declares a landmark membership of a quarter of

in the United States. We're growing stronger every day. In the last four years alone, we've added a net increase of some 50,000 new members. This year we have achieved a long-pursued goal of 250,000 active members," said John Gage, AFGE national president.

According to AFGE Membership and Organization Director Sharon Pinnock, AFGE's growth is the result of a shift that

members and staff at every level of the union. Shifting the culture of our organization from 'business model unionism' to 'activist unionism' was not a small feat. It took years of constant gardening and only now is AFGE beginning to reap the fruits of that labor."

Organizing workers remains an ongoing priority of the union's Locals and Councils. AFGE's Membership Department has led multiple campaigns to stimulate this kind of growth including Bonus Bucks, Metros, and Union Fairs that have all played a part in the success.

"Organizing is now as much a part of how we practice our unionism as is bargaining a contract or filing a grievance. AFGE is a success story if ever there was

"AFGE is the leading and most influential federal and D.C. employees union in the United States. We're growing stronger every day."

one—and we are as proud as we can be about what we have accomplished," said National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices Augusta Thomas.

Members and employees alike feel the same energy these numbers are demonstrating and they know the kind of strength these numbers will bring to the organization at the bargaining table. Despite a great rise in numbers, the closeness of the AFGE family and its focus on individual attention will stay strong.

"I joined AFGE to be the leader I was born to be," said AFGE Local 2425 President Sharon Williams, who has been a member for more than 20 years. "We are family at AFGE Local 2425 at VA New Jersey Healthcare System. Someone was once there for me and what makes my day is to know that I have paid it forward helping others. I am and will always be AFGE! Nobody Does It Better," Williams said. ●



Old and new AFGE members at National Airport in Washington, D.C.

a million dues paying members. AFGE represents federal employees in 75 agencies including the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Social Security Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Homeland Security—including the Transportation Security Administration. AFGE also represents workers in 16 D.C. government agencies.

"AFGE is the leading and most influential federal and D.C. employees union

occurred in the early 1990s in way the union thought about organizing and recruitment.

"At that time, our union was struggling to survive. With just 169,000 active members, we had no real organizing program and our finances were not in a good place," she said. "Throughout the past two decades, though, AFGE has engaged in several vision and strategic planning initiatives that have involved leaders,

National Executive Council Members Weigh in On **AFGE's Historic Membership Growth**

"Reaching this point really validates and recognizes all the hard work our District 2 employees have been putting in for so long. It shows great promise for the future of AFGE."

District 2: NVP Derrick Thomas

"These numbers show that our members and employees understand that AFGE is not about individuals, it is a movement about working together to build something more powerful than yourself."

District 3: NVP Keith J. Hill

"This kind of growth demonstrates workers' need for AFGE now more than ever and how much our employees want to help."

District 4: NVP Joseph P. Flynn

"The locals have really stepped up to the plate and made organizing a priority because they know the kind of power that these numbers can give AFGE in negotiations."

District 5: NVP Charlotte Flowers

"This is a landmark victory for AFGE! Reaching 250,000 members says great things about the future of this organization and the work that our employees and members do every day. 250,000 people want to be a part of what's going on here and that is really a testament to our staff and activists."

District 6: NVP Arnold Scott

"Great accomplishment. This expansion means that AFGE will have the influence to make an even bigger difference in the lives of our members."

District 7: NVP Dorothy James

"Congratulations to the members and employees on this success. It's really not about the numbers; it's all about the strength that these numbers give us and about all the work that was done to get here."

District 8: NVP Jane Nygaard

"There has been a tremendous amount of work put into this organization by our members and employees in the district to reach this goal and it is a great credit to them."

District 9: NVP Michael Kelly

"Motivational... The work that has been done to reach this landmark. Organizing... Our future in organizing is everyone's business. We need to educate and stimulate new members to keep up the fight for employees' rights."

District 10: NVP Roy Flores

"Inspiring... I'm proud of our members recognizing that their call to leadership is not just one to build the union, rather a larger calling to protect veterans themselves in the VA, and not just the VA workers; to protect our country's air and water, not just protect workers within EPA; to protect our grandparents' SSA entitlements, not just to protect workers of the SSA. I'm proud of our leaders in the union because they serve to remind all of us that America itself is a union—one where our nation is only as strong as the men and women defending it every day."

District 11: NVP Gerald Swanke

"It's each union member asking his or her co-workers to join the union that has made the difference. The 12th District's employees have contributed greatly through their innovative ideas and keen ability to excite, energize, motivate and inspire. Once motivated, it's our locals and their members that have made it happen."

District 12: NVP Eugene Hudson

"My staff has shown amazing solidarity and talent with our organizational efforts, and because of that, our national organization will have even greater power at the bargaining table."

District 14: NVP Dwight Bowman

