



STANDARD

a publication for government workers and their families

www.AFGE.org



PHOTO: MARK ARLINGHAUS

Larry Steele, an AFGE member for 30+ years, has become close friends with many of the regular patients at the Cincinnati Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center.

A Partnership Platoon KEEPING THE PROMISE

Large, revolving doors serve as the entrance to this outpatient clinic where doctors, nurses and support staff—working together—have created one of the finest health care facilities in the country. You have just entered the downtown Cincinnati Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center—a research and training hospital where caring and dedicated federal employees are living the promise this nation has made to provide quality health care to its veterans.

AFGE Local 2031 proudly represents these workers as well as employees at the VA facility in

Fort Thomas, Ky.; the **Chalmers P. Wylie** Outpatient Clinic in Columbus, Ohio; and the newly-opened VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Bellevue, Ky.

“We know what makes these VA facilities so special,” notes Local 2031 Secretary-Treasurer **Michaelene “Myke” Vandine**, whose parents were both active union members. “It’s the employees,” Vandine emphasizes. “We’re striving to improve the quality of life for our patients.”

Continued on page 4

CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS

Government Workers Make It Happen

The first uniform, cross agency measure of customer satisfaction with federal services was released through the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) in December and the results confirmed what AFGE members have been saying all along—the American customer is generally satisfied with services provided by government workers.

ACSI’s results, which covered over 30 services in 29 high-impact agencies, show the satisfaction scores are as broad (51-87) in the public sector as in the private sector.

From services at the U.S. Mint of the Department of Treasury (86) to the Social Security

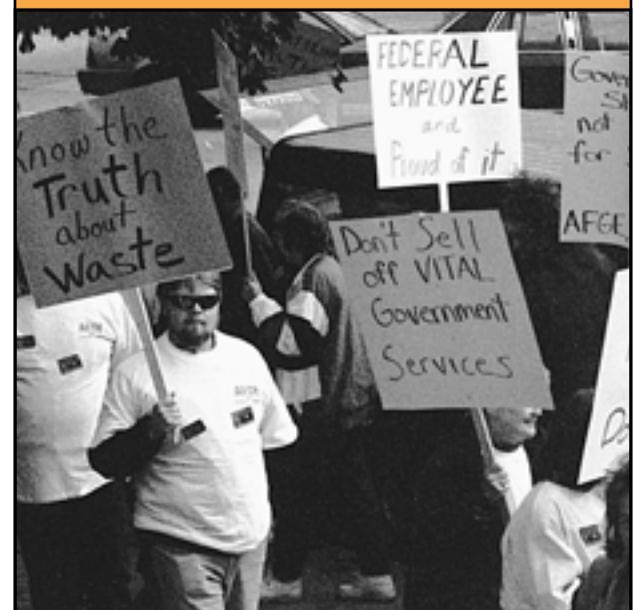
Administration (82), government workers are proud of the work they do for America and the results show their efforts are recognized.

“These results demonstrate the high-quality, cost-effectiveness of government workers. The mad-dash by Congress to privatize more government services must be questioned anew,” said AFGE National President **Bobby Harnage**.

“It should be clear now that privatization is about moving money and playing a shell game with the numbers. It’s not about saving money or customer satisfaction,” added Harnage.

The survey results can be obtained from AFGE’s Web site at www.afge.org under the *What’s New* section or from the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR) Web site at www.npr.gov.

AFGE NEWS FLASH...AFGE NEWS



▲ **Members of AFGE Local 1882 (Fort McCoy, Wisc.) speak out against privatization.**

Contracting Out Victories by AFGE Members Produce Laws—turn to page 6.

INSIDE

A Message From President Bobby L. Harnage.....	2
AFGE 2000 Convention.....	4
AFGE-PAC Supplement	Insert
What Kind of Labor President Do You Want?.....	P1
SWAMP Updates	7
Local 1441 Impacts River Flow	8

GET THE GOOD WORD OUT!

Along the way I've heard that it's not polite to say, "I told you so!" I'm willing to take that risk and shout out, "We told you so!"

A Message From President Bobby L. Harnage



When it comes to government workers and customer satisfaction, the two go hand-in-hand. For the first time in 1999, federal government agencies measured the satisfaction of their customers with 30 different federal services. The first results are in. Overall, customer satisfaction with these federal services was higher than expected.

Using a scale of zero to 100 to measure customer satisfaction, agency scores ranged from 51 to 87 based upon the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The President's Management Council commissioned the surveys with the National Quality Research Center of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Federal agencies are now using these recent results to target customer service improvements. In almost all cases, government customers are more satisfied with the service they received in 1999 than they were with the service they received two years ago.

You've probably heard about this by now, since some 30 agencies participated in the initiative. And although those 30 agencies serve a majority of gov-

ernment customers, I'll bet you won't hear the good news from Congress. When will they start telling the public the truth about government workers?

We can't wait for them to see the light—we need to take the lead in promoting the good work of government performed by government workers. As we always say, "NOBODY DOES IT BETTER!"

These ACSI numbers can be effectively used in our ongoing SWAMP (Stop Wasting American's Money on Privatization) campaign to fight contract-ing out.

Our efforts to spread the word should involve building AFGE's media outreach capability. Local activists should work with local media representatives to get this story out—check out the details at the National Partnership for Reinventing Government's Web site www.npr.gov.

Sounds like a job both agency management and the union Local could work in partnership on together. Let's get the good word out.

Bobby L. Harnage

Union Insights... Union Insights... Union Insights... How does your job impact the life of every American?



Billie Holloway
Shop Steward, Local 2041
General Services
Administration (GSA)
Burlington, N.J.

A: The workers at GSA are family people who take their jobs very seriously. We proudly provide services and supplies to our military and agencies—agencies such as FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency). Day or night and in any corner of the world we supply shovels, sandbags, generators, blankets, cups, plates, spoons, linens, lanterns, engine parts, etc. We are very important to the American people and we proudly do our job better and cheaper than anyone else.



Mark Phillips
Chief Steward, Local 2054
Department of
Veterans Affairs (VA)
Sherwood, Ark.

A: My job keeps our veterans healthy. I work in a laboratory preparing reports for doctors and surgeons—our office processes 7,000 pathological results a year. These reports help in curing our veterans from countless illnesses.



Kelley Dull
1st Vice President, Local 2904
Defense Finance and
Accounting Services (DFAS)
Kansas City, Mo.

A: I support Marines worldwide. My job is to make sure that the families of our fighting men and women are taken care of—that they receive their pay and benefits. It is satisfying to know that I make a difference in helping our Marines.

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Correction

The picture of **Kenneth Keillor** that appeared in the Nov./Dec. '99 *Union Insights* column was not Keillor. We apologize for the error.



Ken Keillor

Metros Make It Happen

When delegates to the 1997 AFGE National Convention approved a \$1 per capita tax increase, 27 cents were earmarked to go directly to District organizing efforts. This opened the floodgates for tremendous growth and activism in Locals nationwide.

With the size of the civilian federal work force getting smaller, many in the labor community are asking "how on earth is AFGE growing when bargaining units are shrinking?" The answer can be found in a combination of organizing programs that are funded each year by the National Executive Council (NEC) through the **John N. Sturdivant** special organizing fund. One of the most successful organizing programs has been the Metro Initiative.

A Metro, short for Metropolitan Empowerment Initiative, is designed to bring together Locals in a specific geographic area for a two- to three-week period. During this time, Locals receive help from the District and National Office staff in sponsoring a series of union-building events designed to boost membership participation, enhance recruitment and promote worker empowerment. The following concepts were identified as being essential to the success of the Metro: teamwork, coordinated use of staff and Local resources, effective communications, and planning, planning and more planning.

Elements of the Metro include a series of town hall meetings, Lunch and Learns, union fairs and congressional office visits. The idea is to create an atmosphere of excitement and energy in as many work sites as possible. Rebates, free

lunches and presentations are conducted to bring potential members out of their offices to learn what AFGE has to offer.

If you would like your Local to participate in one of these organizing extravaganzas, contact your Local President today and get on the Metro schedule for 2000.

AFGE National Organizer Eugene Martin motivates prospective members at a recent Metro.

MEMBERS KEEPING THE PROMISE

Continued from page 1

Larry Steele is the type of employee Vandine refers to. Steele is responsible for cleaning the dialysis equipment used in treating patients with kidney disease. "We wash the patients' blood," Steele explains. During his 40 years at the Center (30+ years as an AFGE member), Steele has become close friends with many of the regular patients, helping them personally as well as professionally.

Clare Hubbell, a Registered Nurse in the Hemodialysis Unit, talks of their holistic approach to health care. "Each month we review the patient's meds, lab work, and dietary needs to ensure the best care possible," Hubbell explains. "It's kind of like one-stop shopping."

Dialysis patients face 15 hours each week hooked to a machine while lying in a bed, with not much to do except chew slivers of ice. **Judy Konerman**, Secretary of Nephrology (a branch of medicine concerned with the kidneys), sought donations from the community to purchase a TV, VCR, cordless phone and flavored ice. "It has made a big difference to our patients," Konerman notes.

Everywhere you look, new and innovative procedures are being implemented to provide the best possible care for veterans. In the Orthotics Unit (which deals with the support/bracing of weak or ineffective joints/muscles), **Anthony Flanagan** uses sophisticated computer software and state-of-the-art equipment to develop prostheses at significantly reduced costs and in record time. For example, a below-the-knee prosthesis can be developed and fitted to a patient in as little as one day at a cost of \$500 or less. The same prosthesis may likely



PHOTO: Mark Ainfinghaus

Anthony Flanagan uses sophisticated computer software and state-of-the-art equipment to develop prostheses at significantly reduced costs and in record time.

take as long as three months to create in the private sector at a cost as high as \$7,000.

The Fort Thomas facility houses both the VA Nursing Home Care Unit and the Homeless and Substance Abuse Domiciliary Programs. One of 123 VA nursing homes across the country, the Fort Thomas Nursing Home provides long-term care to some 60 seriously ill veterans. The Nursing Home also gives temporary care and housing to indigent veterans for up to 15 days, twice a year, to provide caregivers and their families relief from the day-to-day stress of caring for loved ones.

The Homeless and Substance Abuse Domiciliary Programs teach veterans how to manage their leisure time, money and stress. Veterans battling substance abuse must have successfully completed a rehabilitation program before enrolling in either

of the domiciliary programs. Both programs provide opportunities for further education, counseling for the children of veterans and medical care—again as a way to treat the total patient. The goal is to ensure that each veteran has a job, home, money in the bank and a long-term support system when the program is completed—usually within three to six months.

The VA medical facilities in and around Cincinnati have become involved in the community as well, forming the "Partners in Education Committee." Money is raised from bake sales, picnics, raffles and other fundraisers to help underprivileged kids at the Vine Street Elementary School—just blocks from the VA Medical Center. Food, clothing and toys as well as field trips are provided thanks to the generosity of VA employees. The Medical Center also provides volunteer work opportunities for the children of its staff during the summer months. Those interested must fill out an application and be interviewed just like in the real world. Over 100 young students participated in 1999.

Medical Center Director **Gary Nugent** often applauds his staff. "We have some of the hardest-working, dedicated employees at this Center," Nugent boasts. "It's a wonderful place to work because of the employees." For the past three years, Nugent, Assistant Medical Center Director **Thomas Pishioneri** and Chief of Staff **Henry Grinvalsky**, M.D., have set aside a morning each December to make breakfast for the staff as a way to show their appreciation.

Local 2031 President **Emanuel Graham** is proud of the role AFGE and its members have played in providing quality health care for our nation's veterans. "Local 2031 has moved into the 21st century with professionalism, pride and a newly-established partnership with management," says Graham. "We look forward to expanding the role our members play in caring for the future needs of our veterans."

Recently, the Local filed a petition to represent both registered nurses and professionals at the VAMC, with an election expected soon. Special recognition goes to AFGE-VA Council Rep **Mary Jane Patterson** for her help with the petitions.

AFGE's 2000 National Convention—A Perfect Family Vacation



Plan ahead for the special family opportunities at AFGE's 2000 Convention. Join us the week of August 21-25, 2000, at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort at Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

Don't leave your family home for the convention.

This Disney Hotel, located on the Disney World property, means easy access to the different Disney attractions—perfect for your family while you attend convention meetings. Look for future details through your Local, District and National offices.

NEWS NOTES



Affordable Technology in the Near Future

The AFL-CIO recently launched *workingfamilies.com*, a new Internet community that will bring more union members and working families online in the 21st century. *Workingfamilies.com* will connect union members to cyberspace through the purchase of affordable computers and reasonable Internet access fees. Stay tuned for more details from AFGE.

Proposed Ergonomics Standard



On November 22, 1999, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) proposed a rule requiring employers to implement ergonomics programs for hazardous jobs, a major step forward in the fight to end crippling workplace injuries. According to the AFL-CIO, if the regulation is approved, it would be the most significant worker safety and health law of the past 10 years. For more information on the proposal, visit the AFL-CIO Web site at www.aflcio.org. For ergonomics information in the federal workplace, visit the *Health & Safety Section* of AFGE's Web site, www.afge.org.

Important Information from Your Union

Where the 2000 presidential frontrunners stand on certain issues means a great deal more to federal employees than to most Americans—the 2000 Election will decide who the next boss will be for federal employees.

Listed below are the *labor* records of Al Gore (D), Bill Bradley (D), George W. Bush, Jr. (R) and John McCain (R). The information was collected from congressional votes, questionnaires, newspaper/magazine articles, television and wire reports, and candidate speeches.

This is the first in a series of issues of importance to federal employees. Be sure to look to *The Government Standard* for more 2000 Election information.

What Kind of LABOR President Do You Want?

AL GORE (D)

<p>Opposes striker replacement.</p> <p><small>[United Press International (UPI), 6/14/94; Roll Call #121, 6/16/92]</small></p>	<p>88% lifetime rating from the AFL-CIO.</p>	<p>Supports workers' right to organize.</p> <p><small>(KIRO-TV, 9/8/98; White House web page)</small></p>	<p>Opposed company unions.</p> <p><small>[Journal of Commerce, 2/27/95; Denver Rocky Mountain News, 2/28/95; Congressional Record, 7/30/96]</small></p>	<p>Opposed labor's position on fast track legislation—a move that risked American jobs.</p> <p><small>('91 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed anti-union paycheck protection.</p> <p><small>[Senate Roll Call 189, 7/31/90; Associated Press (AP), 8/26/98; Fresno Bee, 3/22/98]</small></p>	<p>Fought for workplace safety.</p> <p><small>(States News Service, 2/9/94; Occupational Hazards, 1/94; U.S. Department of Labor press release, 2/1/99)</small></p>
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BILL BRADLEY (D)

<p>Bradley is a union member and receives a union pension.</p> <p><small>[Service Employees International Union (SEIU) questionnaire]</small></p>	<p>Voted against federal pay raise.</p> <p><small>('94 AFGE Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Supported labor's position on OSHA and Mine Safety and Health Administration standards.</p> <p><small>('95 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Supported labor's position on the right to work.</p> <p><small>('96, '79 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed AFGE's position on federal employee retirement cuts.</p> <p><small>('96 AFGE Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Supported labor's position on striker replacement.</p> <p><small>('95, '94, and '92 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Supported labor's position on advance notification of permanent plant closings.</p> <p><small>('88, '87 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed labor's position on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).</p> <p><small>('93 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>
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GEORGE W. BUSH, Jr. (R)

<p>Proposed raiding worker's fund to pay for tax cuts.</p> <p><small>(AP, 3/25/99)</small></p>	<p>Consistently vetoed pro-labor legislation.</p> <p><small>(AP, 7/2/97)</small></p>	<p>Bush appointee authored radical anti-labor decision in 1998 that eliminated all job protections for workers who take employment-related complaints to their lawyers.</p> <p><small>(Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 10/4/95; The Nation, 4/26/99; Dallas Morning News, 2/26/98)</small></p>	<p>Bush's Texas Workforce Commission wages war on organized labor.</p> <p><small>(Editorial, Austin American-Statesman, 9/11/97)</small></p>	<p>Bush supports anti-labor paycheck protection.</p> <p><small>(The Washington Post, 7/2/99)</small></p>	<p>Bush supports Texas' right-to-work status.</p> <p><small>(Tulsa World, 2/17/99)</small></p>	<p>Salaries of CEO's in Texas range from 143 to 812 times the median income of workers.</p> <p><small>(Austin American-Statesman, 12/9/98)</small></p>	<p>Supports NAFTA.</p> <p><small>(State of the State Address, 1/27/99)</small></p>
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JOHN MCCAIN (R)

<p>Supports a worker's right to choose either to join a union or not to join a union.</p> <p><small>(SEIU questionnaire)</small></p>	<p>Supported firing federal employees.</p> <p><small>('95 AFGE Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed labor's position on comp time and 40-hour week.</p> <p><small>('97 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed labor's position on a National Right to Work Law.</p> <p><small>('96 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed labor's position on striker replacement.</p> <p><small>('95, '94, '92 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed labor's position on advance notification of permanent plant closings.</p> <p><small>('87 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed the rehiring of 1,000 Professional Air Traffic Controllers Association (PATCO) strikers in '86-'87.</p> <p><small>('86 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>	<p>Opposed labor's position on OSHA and Mine Safety and Health Administration standards.</p> <p><small>('95 AFL-CIO Voting Record)</small></p>
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LEADING TO 2000



2000 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY & CAUCUS DATES

BE SURE TO VOTE!!

Listed below are the 2000 presidential primary and caucus dates. Find your state and check the primary and/or caucus date. Visit the Federal Election

Commission's (FEC) Web site for more information at www.fec.gov/pages/2kdates.htm.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: If you are planning to attend the 2000 Legislative & Grassroots Mobilization Conference from February 27-March 1, be sure to make arrangements to vote by absentee ballot. Contact your local Board of Elections for more information. *Editors note: all primary and caucus information accurate at press time.*

MONTH & STATE	PRIMARY DATE	CAUCUS DATE	MONTH & STATE	PRIMARY DATE	CAUCUS DATE
JANUARY Iowa		Jan. 24	Michigan		March 11 (D)
FEBRUARY New Hampshire	Feb. 1		Florida	March 14	
Delaware	Feb. 5, Feb. 8 (R)		Louisiana	March 14	
South Carolina	Feb. 19 (R)		Oklahoma	March 14	
Arizona	Feb. 22		Mississippi	March 14	
Michigan	Feb. 22		Tennessee	March 14	
American Samoa		Feb. 26 (R)	Texas	March 14	
Guam		Feb. 26 (R)	Illinois	March 21	
Virgin Islands		Feb. 26 (R)	APRIL Virgin Islands		April 1 (D)
North Dakota		Feb. 29 (R)	Kansas	April 4	
Virginia	Feb. 29		Wisconsin	April 4	
Washington	Feb. 29		Pennsylvania	April 4	
MARCH Puerto Rico	March 5 (R), March 12 (D)		MAY D.C.	May 2	
American Samoa		March 7 (D)	Indiana	May 2	
California	March 7		North Carolina	May 2	
Connecticut	March 7		Guam		May 6 (D)
Georgia	March 7		Nebraska	May 9	
Hawaii		March 7 (D)	West Virginia	May 9	
Maine	March 7		Oregon	May 16	
Maryland	March 7		Hawaii		May 19 (R)
Massachusetts	March 7		Nevada		May 19-21 (D), May 25 (R) Conventions
Minnesota		March 7	Alaska		May 19 (R), May 20 (D) Conventions
Missouri	March 7		Hawaii		May 19 (R)
New York	March 7		Arkansas	May 23	
North Dakota		March 7 (D)	Idaho	May 23	
Ohio	March 7		Kentucky	May 23	
Rhode Island	March 7		JUNE Virginia		June 3 (D)
Vermont	March 7		Alabama	June 6	
South Carolina	March 9 (D)		Montana	June 6	
Colorado	March 10		New Jersey	June 6	
Utah	March 10		New Mexico	June 6	
Wyoming	March 10		South Dakota	June 6	
Arizona	March 11 (D)				

Democratic Presidential Candidates

BILL BRADLEY

(www.billbradley.com)

395 Pleasant Valley Way

West Orange, NJ 07052

(973) 731-2100 or (888) 643-9799

AL GORE

(www.algore2000.com)

P.O. Box 23250

Nashville, TN 37202

(615) 340-2000

Republican Presidential Candidates

GARY BAUER

(www.bauer2k.com)

2800 Shirlington Road, Suite 900

Arlington, VA 22206

(703) 933-2000

GEORGE W. BUSH, JR.

(www.georgewbush.com)

P.O. Box 1902

Austin, TX 78767-1902

(512) 637-2000

STEVE FORBES

(www.forbes2000.com)

209 Madison Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

(800) 706-0004

ORRIN HATCH

(www.orrinhatch.org)

P.O. Box 3636

Salt Lake City, UT 84101-3636

(801) 994-2000 or (877) HATCH2000

ALAN KEYES

(www.keyes2000.org)

5025 N. Central, Suite 408

Phoenix, AZ 85012

(888) 307-2526

JOHN MCCAIN

(www.mccain2000.com)

735 N. St. Asaph Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

(703) 837-2000 or (877) 905-7700

Reform Presidential Candidates

PAT BUCHANAN

(www.gopatgo2000.com)

P.O. Box 1919

Merrifield, VA 22116-1919

(703) 734-2700

World Wide Web Plays Role in Presidential Prospects



As expected the 2000 presidential race has changed since the candidates' Web sites were first posted in *The Government Standard* (July/August 1999). **Pat Buchanan** joined the Reform Party and Senator **Orrin Hatch** (R-Utah) threw his hat into the ring of Republican candidates. **Lamar Alexander**,

Elizabeth Dole, Congressman **John Kasich** (R-Ohio), former Vice President **Dan Quayle** and Senator **Bob Smith** (R-N.H.) dropped out.

Review the information listed to the right and contact the campaigns via the Internet, by telephone or mail. If you have information about any of the campaigns that you would like to share with other AFGE members, forward the information to the address below. Editors note: All candidate information accurate at press time.

Leading To 2000 will be a regular feature in *The Government Standard through the 2000 elections. How are you getting ready for the elections? Send in your stories or photos to: The Government Standard—Leading To 2000, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. All photos and stories become property of AFGE.*

RETIREE NEWS

Retiree News will return in the March/April issue of *The Government Standard*.

FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



Financial officers learned the latest in filing procedures.

A FGE National Secretary-Treasurer (NST) **Rita Mason** held the first *Financial Officers Leadership Conference* October 25-27, 1999, at the Resorts Hotel in Atlantic City, N.J. Over 230 Local officers representing all 12 AFGE Districts attended, including **Local 1689's Marie A. Atoigue** of Agana, Guam (pictured below with NST Mason).

The Department of Labor (DoL) provided training on Labor-Management reporting requirements and workmen's compensation issues. Representatives from *CyberFeds* (an online Federal Employment Data System) demonstrated their online research services.

The conference welcomed many guests including, **Lary Yud**, DoL's Chief of the Division of Enforcement in the Office of Labor-Management Standards, who was the keynote speaker at the October 26 luncheon. Attendees of the luncheon included AFGE National President **Bobby L. Harnage** and National Vice Presidents (NVP's) **Derrick Thomas (District 2)** and **Jeffery Williams (District 3)**. **Linda Mason**, District 2 Political and Legislative Coordinator, held a presentation on the importance of participating in the AFGE Political Action Committee (AFGE-PAC). Her efforts, including a raffle, helped in signing up 48 new members and in raising over \$4,100.00. **Local 3615's Pierre Tavoularis** won a digital phone and **Local 644's Harry Foose** won a portable CD/tape player and radio. **Deborah Dodd**

of **Local 3229** won a floral arrangement.

Financial Officer Training was conducted by AFGE staff **Cathy Butz**, **Tony Davenport**, **Kendal Gray**, **Kevin LaDana**, **Mary Shymansky** and **Sandra Williams**. **Sharon Ewald** and **Rosa Reid** handled registration and AFGE Web Site Administrator **Mike Creech** instructed a class on the Internet.

The first *Financial Officers Leadership Conference* was such a success that future conferences are already being planned.



NEWS YOU CAN USE

Statement of Revenue & Expenses For the Nine Months Ending 09/30/99

REVENUE

Per Capita tax	\$18,155,803
Death Benefit Income	740,497
Building & Garage Income	1,573,182
Interest Income	240,151
Sale of AFGE Supplies	30,205
Carryover Funds for Expenditure	575,379
Miscellaneous Income	282,543
TOTAL REVENUE	\$21,597,760

EXPENSES

Salary & Employee Benefits	\$12,056,131
Discretionary Expense	415,905
Affiliation Fees	1,833,974
Building Expense	2,689,100
Administrative Expense	1,248,953
District Organizing Programs	523,465
Death Benefit Premiums	680,000
Travel Expense	771,650
Special Organizing Programs	383,969
Other Expenses	738,531
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$21,341,678

NET REVENUE OVER EXPENSE **\$256,082**

February Is Black History Month



Auto Buying Club

Only AFGE members can take advantage of the newly improved auto-buying program from Info4Cars, a personal auto advisory program. Members can choose from these services:

- No-cost new and used vehicle buying service
- Premium purchase service for only \$47
- Vehicle history reports
- Special leasing programs
- Discounted extended warranties including roadside assistance programs
- Competitive financing
- Non-prime and sub-prime financing to members who do not qualify for a loan through their bank or credit union



Many members have used this program and saved more than the cost of their annual dues. When you are ready to buy, call (800) 633-7834. Be sure to have your AFGE Local and identification number to verify your AFGE membership.

For more information regarding other money-saving member-only benefit programs, call the AFGE Benefit Line at (888) 844-2343.

Federal Blue Collar Pay Conference

Reclassifying the System

The Federal Wage System (FWS)—which governs blue collar pay—has serious flaws and AFGE took the first steps toward solving them with its 1999 Federal Blue Collar Pay Conference, held in Washington, D.C., December 9-11. The conference focused on AFGE members paid under the FWS and examined the factors and forces effecting wage grade pay.

FWS is based on "prevailing rates" in the private sector. But unlike the Davis-Bacon prevailing rate law that uses union wages as the standard for paying for construction on federally-funded projects, the FWS surveys union and non-union wages alike. The FWS is dangerous to federal workers if wages and standards go down in the predominately non-union private sector. With the current economy booming as the FWS rates spiral down, a revised system that improves living standards for federal blue collar workers is a must.

Conference attendees heard from AFGE and federal agency staff, as well as National President **Bobby Harnage**. At the closing of the conference, attendees put their heads together and came up with a list of actions and ideas to improve the system. For example, as long as Congress imposes pay caps on the FWS (a maximum amount of pay increase), there should also be a minimum pay raise that all blue collar workers receive. The elimination of pay caps and reconsideration of the blue collar classification system was proposed. Additionally, AFGE must begin plans to mobilize for what promises to be a difficult political fight over the FWS.

Over 120 members from more than 40 Locals representing wage grade employees made the trip to the nation's capitol for the two-and-a-half-day conference. These new plans mark only the beginning of AFGE's efforts to win decent pay raises and living standards for federal blue collar workers in the 21st century. Stay tuned as AFGE organizes this important effort.

Members Fight Contracting Out

**NOW
LAW**

"We won't have reliable and fair government programs as long as we turn them over to contractors for profit," said AFGE National President **Bobby L. Harnage**. "AFGE members and legislative representatives are succeeding in educating members of Congress that sensible alternatives exist to contracting out," added Harnage.

On The Hill

Listed below are victories AFGE members achieved on the contracting out front in 1999—victories that are now law.

LAW

Costs must be reported: The FY 2000 (Fiscal Year 2000) defense appropriations bill now requires the Department of Defense (DoD) to report on the costs and savings from the use of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-76 since 1995.

LAW

Work contracted in must be documented: The FY 2000 defense appropriations bill requires DoD to document how infrequently work has been contracted in and come up with recommendations for maximizing the possibility of effective public-private competition for work that has already been contracted out. To encourage managers to begin contracting in work, **contract renewal dates must be reported:** The FY 2000 defense appropriations bill includes a provision that requires DoD to report "the dates for renewal of contracts of more than \$2,000,000 that were awarded pursuant to A-76."

LAW

Protecting inherently governmental work from being contracted out: The FY 2000 defense appropriations bill includes a provision that prevents "contracting out (of) functions directly related to the award of DoD contracts, oversight of contractors with DoD, or the payment of such contractors, including, but not limited to, contracting technical officers, contract administration officers, accounting and finance officers, and budget officers."

LAW

The size of DoD's contractor work force must be reported: The FY 2000 defense authorization and appropriations bills require DoD to report the size of its contractor work force. This information will show that the government hasn't been getting smaller. Instead, government work has simply been given to contractors.

LAW

The amount awarded to private contractors without public-private competition must be reported: The FY 2000 defense appropriations bill includes a provision in report language that requires DoD to provide "an analysis of the amount and value of contracts that were awarded to private contractors through OMB Circular A-76 versus other mechanisms."

Elsewhere On The Contracting Out Front



CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS AND AGENCY REPORTS ON CONTRACTING OUT:

The House Government Management Subcommittee will hold several hearings early this year on issues ranging from defense contracting out to contract management.

The Senate Governmental Affairs Committee may hold hearings this year on implementation of the Federal Activities Inventory Reform Act (FAIR Act).

In March, the General Accounting Office (GAO) will release preliminary results from its in-depth look at the costs and savings from the use of OMB Circular A-76 by DoD.

OVERPAYMENTS TO CONTRACTORS:

The Government Waste Corrections Act (HR 1827) would require agencies to use recovery auditing (systematically comparing receipts to payments) to reduce the amount of overpayments to contractors. Some agencies use recovery auditing now while the vast majority do not. It is believed that only two agencies currently use

federal employees to perform this work—the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) and the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). Other agencies are already using contractors.

AFGE worked with Representatives **Henry Waxman** (D-Md.), **Tom Davis** (R-Va.) and **Connie Morella** (R-Md.) to include a provision requiring public-private competition before recovery audit work is contracted (new work) or contracted out (existing work). New work is customarily handed over to the private sector without any thought given to federal employee performance. Because of the public-private cost comparison requirement, the work could be performed by employees of the agency or by employees of another agency (under an interagency service agreement). Report language directs agencies to hire the necessary federal employees if in-house performance of recovery audits would be more efficient. The legislation faces an uncertain future in the Senate.

BUREAU OF PRISONS:

The Public Safety Act (HR 979), introduced on behalf of AFGE by Representatives **Ted Strickland** (D-Ohio), **Peter King** (R-N.Y.) and **John Sweeney** (R-N.Y.), prohibits the incarceration of federal



SWAMP

UPDATES

Meet With Your Members of Congress

SWAMP (Stop Wasting America's Money on Privatization) activists across the country have been holding meetings with their members of Congress since the SWAMP campaign began last fall. Thanks to their hard work, AFGE is beginning to build congressional opposition to contracting out.

AFGE is making progress but the SWAMP campaign won't be won until members hold more grass-roots meetings with members of Congress outside of Washington, D.C. Call your Representative and Senators today and schedule a time to talk about "Cleaning Up The SWAMP." Talking points, fact sheets and report forms are available from your District SWAMP Coordinator by calling the AFGE Legislative Department at (202) 639-6413. Be sure to visit the AFGE Web site at www.afge.org for SWAMP details. Once you have completed your meeting, fax your report to the AFGE Legislative Department at (202) 639-6492.

Send Congress a SWAMP-Gram

Members of Congress need to hear from AFGE members about contracting out. That's why all AFGE Locals are encouraged to launch a SWAMP-Gram mail-a-thon. SWAMP-Grams are blank postcards which AFGE members use to send a personalized message to their Representatives and Senators. Our goal is to send a minimum of 300-500 SWAMP-Grams to every member of Congress.

Some AFGE Locals are using their stewards to get this job done. Stewards hand out the SWAMP-Grams to AFGE members at union meetings for completion and mailing to the Hill. The Local needs several hundred completed SWAMP-Grams before mailing them directly to Congress. With this system, there's no guesswork about the number of SWAMP-grams mailed. You can order your SWAMP-Grams, as well as sample messages, through your District SWAMP Coordinator.

AFL-CIO State Federations and CLC's Endorse SWAMP

The AFL-CIO State Federations in Delaware, Georgia, Virginia and West Virginia, and the Central Labor Council's (CLC's) in Cincinnati and San Diego, have officially endorsed AFGE's SWAMP campaign (Stop Wasting America's Money on Privatization).

On The Record With ...

On The Record With ... will return in the March/April issue of *The Government Standard*.

inmates in privately operated facilities. The bill also addresses the privatization of state correctional facilities. HR 979 has 108 co-sponsors. AFGE has advocated for hearings on this legislation.

DEBT COLLECTION: The Government Waste, Fraud, and Error Reduction Act of 1999 (HR 436) passed the House and is pending before the Senate Governmental Affairs



Committee. The bill amends the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 in several respects. The bill specifically requires a federal agency to attempt one of a number of debt-collection activities, including referring the debt to a private collection agency or debt collection center—currently only Treasury and the Department of Education are debt collection centers. Other alternatives include referring the debt to the Attorney General for litigation, selling the debt or administratively garnishing the debtor. Under current law, an agency may enter into a contract with a private collection service "under conditions the head of an executive, judicial or legislative agency considers appropriate."

This bill also promotes the sale of non-tax debts owed the federal government. Proponents of the bill believe that the sale of loans is necessary because federal agencies have performed poorly in their credit management and loan administration.

AFGE activists representing USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) workers who service loans were concerned that the sale of loans would lead to Reductions in Force (RIFs). AFGE succeeded in persuading House and Senate staff that the bill should be modified to exempt USDA loans and require a public-private cost comparison before agencies contract for debt collection service.

FLRA Confirmation

Carol Waller Pope was nominated as a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) on November 12, 1999. AFGE is pleased that the Clinton Administration sought out a qualified career employee with a record of accomplishments. AFGE also applauds the Administration for improving the diversity of the FLRA with the nomination of Pope.



AFGE NEWS

We're Here To Report What Your Local Is Doing

It may not be news to you, but it's news to us! What role does your Local play in the federal government? Send in the story and a non-digital/non-Polaroid picture to: *The Government Standard*, ATTN: Local Story & Photo Album, 80 F St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. Please clearly list the roles and responsibilities of your Local, as well as its history. Please identify all the subjects in the photos. All photos and stories become property of the AFGE Communications Department.

Local 1570 Receives Award



(L-R) Local Pres. Irene Compton, Chief Shop Steward Maurice Britt, Treasurer Brenda Sylvester, Steward Vernon (Jack) Gilbert and Secretary Taronica White. Congratulations to Local 1570, representing federal workers at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tallahassee, Fla., for receiving the 1999 Most Improved Local Award-Southeast Region at the recent Council of Prisons Locals-33 Convention.



Proud To Be AFGE

Local 1658 President Joe Dolan and Trustee Ed Klein carried the AFGE colors in the 1999 Detroit Labor Day Parade.

Local 1441 Impacts Flow of Mississippi River



In May of 1999, members of NFFE Local 1441 voted unanimously to affiliate with AFGE. Today they are AFGE Local 1441-Corps of Engineers-St. Paul (Minn.) District. Members of Local 1441 guide barges and 20,000 pleasure crafts per year through the Mississippi River locks in Red Wing, Minn. The lock displaces 4½ million gallons of water in eight minutes and can accommodate nine barges that are each 600' long and 110' wide. Barges carry grain, steel and other commodities.

AFGE member **Tim Fuller** advises that **Leonardo da Vinci**, Renaissance artist, engineer, musician and scientist who lived from 1452-1519, designed the basic operation for all locks and dams in existence today. Da Vinci's design was applied on this lock when construction began in 1934. AFGE members maintain and operate the lock 24-hours a day, 365-days a year.

Thanks to the work by members of Local 1441, billions of dollars in commerce are transported around the world through this facility.



(L-R) Local 1441 President Bill Neeley and District 8 National Vice President Terry Rogers on the side of the lock.

Bonus Bucks Winner Receives Hero's Welcome



(L-R) District 3 National Vice President Jeffery Williams presented a National Executive Council (NEC) certificate to Local 1647's John Lynady at November's NEC meeting. National President Bobby L. Harnage congratulates Lynady on signing up 221 new members and winning a trip to Orlando, Fla., for AFGE's 2000 Convention.

Mucho Gracias, Local 3511



AFGE workers at the McAllen (Texas) Veteran's Affairs Outpatient Clinic take a break to pose for *The Government Standard's* photo album. Thank you for sending in the photo. (L-R) Back row: Dino Martinez and Julio Palacios. Front row: Richard Molina, Adrian Natera, Violeta Garcia, Delia Rosas, Joe Gutierrez and Javier Ortegon.