



THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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March/April 2006

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

Election Details Set!

NP Gage Says AFGE Ready to Step Up as Sole Homeland Security Union

Ballots to decide whether AFGE will be the single union representing federal workers of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection will be mailed out by the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) on May 9.

AFGE has been aggressively representing federal workers in the Department of Homeland Security, winning millions of dollars on behalf of current and former employees of CBP, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS).

AFGE is the "best choice for representing CBP workers," National President **John Gage** said. "We are the sole union for DHS' Bor-

der Patrol, Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. AFGE additionally represents Federal Law Enforcement Training Center officers, FEMA workers, TSA screeners, and employees of the United States Coast Guard.

"AFGE is the full package when it comes to DHS representation," Gage added. "We are who DHS management and Congress listen to when it comes to American security. We are the voice of CBP workers, the voice of DHS employees, and the voice of government employees throughout America."

Ballots will be mailed out on May 9 and will be due back to the FLRA by June 22. They will be counted starting at 9:30 a.m. on June 27.

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Why CBP Employees Should Vote Yes! for AFGE

- ✓ AFGE is the largest union within the Department of Homeland Security. Our Border Patrol Union is a prime example of a powerful force within DHS.
- ✓ AFGE is the largest federal union in the United States, representing more than 600,000 workers.
- ✓ AFGE is the only union on the ballot affiliated with the powerful AFL-CIO, which means added clout on Capitol Hill.
- ✓ AFGE values the autonomy of its local unions and bargaining councils.

For more information on AFGE, go to www.afge.org.

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Hundreds Convene for AFGE 2006 Legislative and Grassroots Mobilization Conference

More than 800 union members and officials attended AFGE's 2006 Legislative and Grassroots Mobilization Conference from March 5-8 in Washington.

At the opening plenary session March 5, National President **John Gage** said AFGE will continue its issue and voter mobilization efforts. "We will not let the federal government be run like Wal-mart," Gage told the conference. "Sisters and brothers, no

mission is more noble or more important. And no group of people is more capable of fulfilling it than you. It's our turn."

Also at the opening plenary, **Andrea E. Brooks**, national vice-president and director of the Women's and Fair Practices Department, challenged AFGE members to continue their fight for working families. "If we don't help working families no one will be left to fight."

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2006 AFGE National Convention

AFGE's 37th National Convention will be held
Monday, August 7 through Friday, August 11, 2006, at:

HYATT REGENCY ATLANTA

265 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-1294 • (404) 577-1234

Important information for the 2006 AFGE National Convention:

NO ON-SITE REGISTRATION! ADVANCE REGISTRATION ONLY and must be postmarked by July 8, 2006;

All delegates must be elected by July 8, 2006; and those who merely show up will not be seated.

Check your mail for complete 2006 Convention details and information.



John Gage

A Message from National President John Gage

It's Our Turn!

The following is an excerpt from President Gage's message to the 2006 Annual Legislative Conference.

For the last five years, they had their turn—the forces of greed and extremism, avarice and injustice, cronyism and corruption.

They got their turn by subverting the democratic process—getting crowned by a stacked Supreme Court after losing by half-a-million votes nationally and after disenfranchising tens of thousands of Florida voters. And ever since, they have used their turn to subvert the democratic process even more—by trying to undermine the civil service system and by trying to replace the best public servants in the world with unqualified hacks and the overpriced, unaccountable contractors who fill their campaign coffers.

This crowd has a grand plan to loot the public purse for private gain. And they've gotten away with a lot. But there is just one

hitch—one group of people standing in their way: Us!

They knew that honest civil servants would not tolerate corruption or cronyism and would blow the whistle on wrongdoing. So when they had their turn, they set out to destroy us.

They went after our civil rights, our civil service rights, our collective bargaining rights, our whistleblower rights, our due process rights, and our veterans preference rights at DoD, DHS and anywhere else they could. They went after our jobs through a grand privatization scheme.

They're still going after us. But guess what? We're still standing—stronger than ever!

Thanks to your hard work, today we're more respected on Capitol Hill than ever before. We're more respected in the courts than ever before. We're more respected in the labor movement than ever before. We're more respected by everyone who wants to restore our democracy to health and return our government to the people!

We're winning in the courts in blocking implementation of Max^{HR} and NSPS, and we won on contracting out.

And now, it's our turn. We're going to start this week by moving our legislative agenda. One of the first items on our agenda is to stop the Bush 2007 budget—a document that is both fiscally and morally bankrupt.

Here's the message you need to take to Congress. Stop making America's heroes, our veterans, pay for millionaires' tax cuts. The administration's plan to double drug co-pays and make more than 1 million veterans pay a \$250 enrollment fee will force many of our bravest and finest to delay health care or not get treatment at all. Instead, start guaranteeing all veterans the world-class care they need and deserve.

Tell them not to cut the budget for the Environmental Protection Agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Labor and the Department of Education as the White House wants to

do. Tell them to fund the Bureau of Prisons at a level that guarantees safety for corrections officers and ends short-staffing. Tell them to give FEMA, Customs and Border Protection, and Customs and Immigration Enforcement budgets that enable these critical agencies to do their jobs.

In addition to the budget, we've got a huge battle on our hands to preserve the professional civil service. We're continuing our legal effort to stop implementation of Max^{HR} at DHS and NSPS at DoD. But we need action on Capitol Hill, too.

So tell your members of Congress to pass Rep. **Sheila Jackson-Lee's** Rapid Response and Border Protection Act. It would dramatically improve the ability of CBP officers and border patrol agents to protect our country by repealing all of DHS's Max^{HR} regulations and provide law enforcement retirement coverage for CBP officers. Second, tell members of Congress to reject the so-called Working for America Act or any other bill that would spread flawed personnel changes throughout the federal government.

And it's our turn to move our political agenda forward over the next eight months.

We must make the case that this White House, more than any other in history, needs a Congress to hold it accountable. We must make the case that the American people deserve a Congress that acts on their behalf, not the special interests; that puts the public good before private gain; and that responds to voters rather than money.

We can win back Congress for the American people. And we've got a plan to do just that. We must increase the number of AFGE members, increase the number of active and informed AFGE members, and increase the number of AFGE members who vote.

We're fighters. And we're fighters on a mission: to save our democracy and ensure that the will of the American people prevails over the greed of the wealthy and well-connected.

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AFGE Takes Vote of 'No Confidence' Against DoD's Rumsfeld Over Appeal of NSPS Ruling

AFGE's Defense Conference Says Rumsfeld Broke 'Bonds of Trust' with Employees

The American Federation of Government Employees has taken a vote of "no confidence" against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld following his decision to appeal a judge's ruling that blocked DoD's implementation of major parts of its new personnel system.

AFGE had won a decisive ruling in U.S. District Court against DoD's personnel rule, known as the National Security Personnel System. Judge Emmet G. Sullivan's decision gutted NSPS provisions pertaining to labor relations, collective bargaining, independent third party review, adverse actions, and DoD's proposed internal labor relations panel, the National Security Labor Relations Board (NSLRB).

Rumsfeld, however, decided to appeal the ruling, prompting AFGE's "no confidence" resolution.

AFGE's Defense Conference (DEFCON), a coalition of AFGE local union offices representing DoD employees, sponsored the resolution.

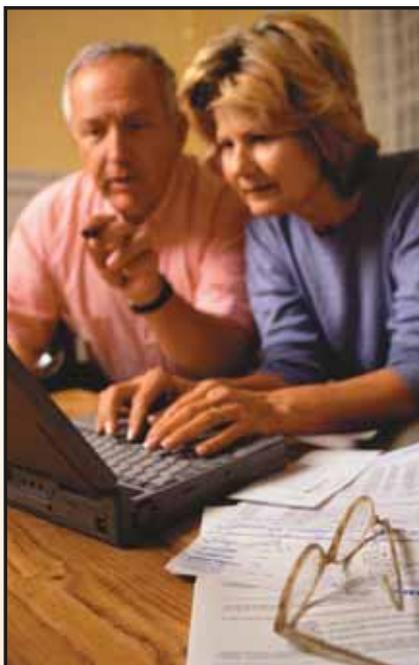
The resolution, which also won support from the AFL-CIO and the United DoD Workers Coalition, said that Rumsfeld promised Congress and DoD employees that the department, in creating a new personnel



AFGE Attorney Joe Goldberg reviews the court's decision on NSPS.

system, would respect collective bargaining requirements and put in safeguards to assure due process and to prevent favoritism in the workplace.

"Secretary Rumsfeld has proven that what he says and what he does are very different," the resolution said. "In misleading Congress and his employees, pushing an agenda that attacks fairness in the workplace, takes away the employees' voice over important workplace conditions and puts forth a pay system that will undermine the future of living for most DoD employees, Secretary Rumsfeld has broken the bonds of trust with the employees."



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www.afge.org



AFGE Ready to Step Up at Homeland Security

(continued from page 1)

For AFGE to win the election, more than 50 percent of Customs and Border Protection workers who vote have to cast their votes for the union.

Any CBP employee on the payroll for the period ending on Feb. 3, 2006, will be eligible to vote. Eligible voters include legacy employees of the Customs Service, Immigration, and Agriculture.

Michael Randall, the president of the National Association of Agriculture Employees, has urged all agricultural specialists and technicians to support AFGE in the upcoming election.

Nonprofessional employees in CBP will be polled as to whether they wish to be represented by AFGE, another union, or no union at all.

Professional employees in CBP will be asked two questions on their ballots:

- Whether they wish to be included with the nonprofessional employees for the purpose of exclusive recognition, and
- Whether they wish to be represented for the purpose of exclusive recognition by AFGE, another union, or neither labor organization.

In mailing out the ballot package, the FLRA will use mailing labels provided by CBP. The labels will be sent to employees' last known address.

Employees who believe they are eligible to vote but do not receive the secret ballot package by May 30 should contact H. Quinn Anderson at (202) 218-7763 or Trese A. Rice at (202) 357-6029, ext. 6017.

The ballot package mailed to employees will include:

- the official secret ballot,
- instructions to eligible employees voting by U.S. mail,
- a copy of the "Notice of Mail Ballot Election," and
- a secret ballot envelope.

Ballots are to be returned to the Washington Regional Office of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

Field Services Department Launches NSPS Training Program

A FGE's Field Services Department is conducting training for AFGE members on the National Security Personnel System (NSPS)—the new, comprehensive personnel management plan for Department of Defense civilians.

To prepare AFGE members for changes that the new system will bring, the Field Services Department has developed a three-day NSPS training program that explains what NSPS is, how it became law, and what it means to AFGE members, as well as training on how to represent members and bargain new and existing contracts under the new rules.

"Members are very eager for more information because the Department of Defense isn't giving them much information," said **Sarah J. Starrett**, Field Services attorney. The Field Services Department has conducted training in the following cities: Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; Columbus, Ohio; Springfield,

Mo.; San Diego, Calif.; Minneapolis; Sioux Falls, S.D.; and Atlanta. It has also planned training in April for Atlantic City, N.J.; Virginia Beach, Va.; and Vancouver, Wash.; and for June in Las Vegas.

"Our members are very interested in the new pay system," Starrett said. "They have been very enthusiastic and receptive to this NSPS training."

AFGE also has been working directly with DoD to critique the design of the new NSPS Performance Management System. Once it is fully implemented, NSPS will eliminate the old general schedule (GS) classifications, position descriptions, rating systems and pay systems.

Although AFGE is training members on the new NSPS, it also has sued to block portions of the new system. AFGE recently won that suit, but DoD is appealing the decision.

For additional information go to www.afge.org/index/cfm?page=training1.



Jerome Simon, one of the Valor Awards recipients, proudly displays his award.

VA Police Officers Receive Valor Award

A FGE members **Jerome Simon**, **Alfred Pratt** and **Alphonse Bourgeois** were recently honored with the Veterans Affairs (VA) Valor Award for their heroic efforts during Hurricane Katrina.

The Valor Award recognizes employees and citizens for heroic efforts displayed during major catastrophes. Simon, Pratt and Bourgeois, members of AFGE Local 3553 in New Orleans, received the awards during a special ceremony at the VA Central Office in Washington.

The Valor Award is the highest level of recognition in the VA and is awarded to employees who put their lives in jeopardy to save others and who exhibit great courage by voluntarily risking their personal safety to prevent the loss of human life or government property.

Simon and Pratt are both police officers for the VA, while Bourgeois serves as a police sergeant. During the post-Hurricane Katrina rescue efforts, Simon, Pratt and Bourgeois were credited with evacuating patients and staff from the New Orleans VA Medical Center amidst flooding, sniper fire and other chaos.

AFGE 2006 Legislative and Grassroots Mobilization Conference

(continued from page 1)

Workshops held during the conference on privatization, healthcare, the law enforcement status of Customs and Border Protection officers and the Department of Defense's proposed National Security Personnel System (NSPS) taught AFGE members how to develop organizing strategies and prepared them to lobby congressional leaders.

The opening plenary session was followed by the Workers' Rights Caucus. The caucus, with a theme of "Restoring Democracy for Federal and D.C. Employees," included two panels.

The first was "Coalition Building: A Strategy for Restoring Democracy on the National, State and Local Level." It included **Gerald Swanke**, AFGE's national vice president for the 11th District; **Donna Edwards**, secretary treasurer, Maryland State and D.C. AFL-CIO; **Josh Williams**, president of the D.C. Metro Council, AFL-CIO; and **Doris Crouse-Mays**, secretary treasurer of the Virginia AFL-CIO.

The second panel, "Labor in the Community: Lessons from the Gulf Coast," included **Jonell Cherry**, a Gulf Coast hurricane survivor and member of VA Local 1045; **Arlene Holt-Baker**, AFL-CIO Gulf Coast task force advisor; and **Foster Stringer**, of the American Federation of Teachers, who is also chair of the Labor Roundtable, National Black Caucus of State Legislators.

On March 7, AFGE's Defense Conference (DEFCON) made history by issuing a vote of "no confidence" against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The resolution containing the no confidence vote followed a decision by Rumsfeld and the department to appeal a federal judge's ruling against the NSPS.

(Pictures from AFGE's 2006 Legislative and Mobilization Conference are featured on pages 6-7.)

AFGE Collects Thousands of Phones During 'Cell Phones for Soldiers' Campaign

AFGE Locals around the country collected more than 8,000 used cell phones, cell phone accessories, pagers and personal digital assistants to help troops stationed overseas stay in touch with their families and loved ones during the Cell Phones for Soldiers campaign.

Through AFGE's Cell Phones for Soldiers program, which the union launched in August 2005 and recently concluded, participants donated used cell phones and other items at designated drop-off sites. The phones then were recycled for cash and used to purchase prepaid calling cards for soldiers who could not afford to make costly long-distance phone calls home to the United States.

"Cell Phones for Soldiers is a great program, and it gave AFGE a wonderful opportunity to show its support for the troops," said AFGE 14th District National Vice President **Dwight Bowman**. "AFGE represents nearly 185,000 Department of Veterans Affairs employees, many of whom are veterans. Today's soldier is tomorrow's veteran. This was our way of showing future veterans that we care about them and want to help them through a difficult time."



Soldiers at Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyo., show their support for the Cell Phones for Soldiers program.

The AFGE cell phone program was an offshoot of the national Massachusetts-based initiative. Started by two teenagers, Brittany and Robbie Bergquist, the program began in 2004 and has raised more than \$250,000 and sent more than 50,000 prepaid calling cards to U.S. troops.

AFGE's Cell Phones for Soldiers effort started off with participation by Locals at VA Medical Centers in a handful of cities and blossomed into a nation-wide effort that included participation in Anchorage, Alaska; Tucson, Ariz.; Washington; Minneapolis;

Kansas City, Mo.; Portland and Roseburg, Ore.; Philadelphia; Ft. Meade, Hot Springs, Rapid City and Sioux Falls, S.D.; Nashville, Tenn.; Austin, Texas; Vancouver, Wash.; Cheyenne, Wyo.; Arlington and Salem, Va.; Omaha and Lincoln, Neb.; and Waco, Texas.

Although originally intended as a project for VA medical centers, other government agencies jumped on the Cell Phones for Soldiers bandwagon. For instance, AFGE Local 375, which represents employees at the Chicago-based U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, collected more than 200 cell phones and raised over \$300 for the cell phones program.

Even though AFGE has ended its formal Cell Phones for Soldiers campaign, VA medical centers in the Washington, D.C., metro area, Anchorage, and Cheyenne are still accepting donations.

Additionally, the Pentagon, which established cell phone collection boxes for staff donations, implemented a mail label option for those interested in sending their donations directly to Cell Phones for Soldiers. By visiting <http://www.wireless-fundraiser.com/cpfs/>, individuals can submit information and print prepaid mailing labels for Cell Phones for Soldiers shipments.

For more information, visit www.afge.org or www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com.



Got Legal Questions?

Talk to a lawyer free. The Union Plus Legal Service makes it easy for union members and their families to find the legal help they need with a free 30-minute initial consultation. To find a lawyer near you visit us on the web at www.afge.org under member benefits and legal services.



1-888-993-8886
www.afge.org



Employees at D.C. Pretrial Services Agency Vote For AFGE as Union Representative

AFGE recently won a representation election for 245 employees at the D.C. Pretrial Services Agency (PSA), an independent unit under the umbrella of the Court Services & Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA).

By a vote of 117 to 3, these employees voted "Union Yes!" for the purpose of exclusive recognition by AFGE. The D.C. Pretrial Services Agency, located in AFGE's 14th District, performs two important tasks that contribute significantly to the effective administration of justice in the District.

PSA employees gather and present information about newly arrested defendants and their available release options for use by judicial officers in deciding what conditions are to be set for released defendants.

They also supervise defendants released from custody during the pretrial period by monitoring their compliance with the conditions of release. Supervision consists of contact, drug testing, curfew, electronic monitoring and sanction-based drug treatment.

CSOSA, the umbrella for the D.C. Pretrial Services Agency, is also represented by AFGE.

2006 AFGE Legislative and Mobilization



▲ AFL-CIO President John Sweeney speaks at AFGE's news conference on the no confidence vote.

U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) ▼



◀ NVP and Women's and Fair Practices Department Director Andrea Brooks speaks to AFGE activists at the opening session.



▲ AFGE activists attend the opening session.



▲ U.S. Rep. Chris van Hollen (D-Md.)



▶ U.S. Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D.-Md.)

Conference



▲ National Secretary-Treasurer Jim Davis also addresses the opening session.

AFGE National President John Gage addresses the opening plenary session of the 2006 Legislative and Mobilization Conference. ▼



▲ Fred Mason, president of the Maryland State and D.C. AFL-CIO, addresses the Women's and Fair Practices Department's annual civil rights luncheon.



▲ Don Hale, AFGE's Defense Conference chairman, discusses the "no confidence" resolution taken by DEFCON against Department of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.



▲ AFGE activists attend a plenary session



◀ U.S. Rep. Al Wynn (D-Md.)

▶ U.S. Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.)



Education and Leadership Development Department

Looking for leadership training or training on organizing? Then you need to talk to the dynamic team of **Virginia duRivage** and **Toni Douglas** in AFGE's Education and Leadership Development Department.

Virginia and Toni spearhead the effort to inform and educate members, staff, and stewards and provide educational resources for members so that they may reach their potential as union leaders and stewards of good government.

Virginia duRivage joined the AFGE family in June 2002 when the Education and Leadership Department was reinstated, but she has worked in the labor movement professionally for over 20 years and has been a supporter of the labor movement all of her life. Virginia holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree from the University of Michigan, as well as a master's of social work from Johns Hopkins.

"It's our goal to give members the skills and tools they need to develop their strengths and weaknesses and become leaders in the labor movement," says duRivage.

Toni Douglas, the department assistant, has been a member of the AFGE family since 1997 when she joined the Membership and Organization Department as a member benefits specialist. As the Education and Leadership Development department assistant, she assists in all aspects of the education department, including developing curriculum and facilitating training. Toni is also a 2000 graduate of the National Labor College, the nationally accredited center founded by the AFL-CIO for labor education and training.

"I enjoy helping members achieve their educational goals," Douglas says.

In order to best serve members, the

department collaborates with other AFGE departments to conduct national leadership trainings in core areas such as basic representation, collective bargaining, organizing and mobilization, and legislative and political action. These training classes are offered at district and national conferences and include financial officers training, the AFGE Organizing Institute,



Toni Douglas and Virginia duRivage of the Education and Leadership Development Department.

and the Basic Leadership course. The department also consults with AFGE staff and elected officers to customize curriculum for district, council, and local training programs.

"I love being involved in the process of helping people actualize their goals in life and labor," duRivage says. "When I am in the field helping a leader do something that they thought they could not do, I love it."

The department, however, is far more than a lecture series. The department works with districts, locals, and council governing bodies to improve organizational functioning through strategic planning and team building programs. The Education and Leadership Development Department uses syn-

ergistic alliances to harness the collective expertise of union leaders, staff, and stewards.

"The learning process here is not top-down," duRivage says. "In our meetings we facilitate the exchange of core experiences so that we can all learn from each other."

Through its partnership with the National Labor College (NLC), the department works with AFGE members to develop education plans to complete undergraduate degrees in labor studies or administration at the NLC. The department grants financial assistance to AFGE members and staff to support their studies at the National Labor College. It also coordinates service internships for members to earn college credit and a paid stipend while assisting in mobilization efforts.

"The National Labor College is an opportunity that allows you to gain a greater understanding of the intricacies of the labor movement and how best to continue the fight," says Douglas.

In addition to her job as director of the Education and Leadership Development Department, duRivage is also an artist who creates collages through paper mosaics. She contributes to her community by volunteering with single mothers in substance abuse programs.

As a graduate of the NLC, Douglas continues to mentor those members in the program and offer advice to staff on how best to design curriculum. Outside of work she participates in the Maryland Waiver program which offers assistance to people with disabilities.

If you would like to learn more information about the AFGE Education and Leadership Development Department, call (202) 639-4013 or visit the Web site at <http://education.afge.org/>.