

# AFGE 2006 Convention Highlights Inside



Vol. LXXIII, No. V

## THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

October/November 2006

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

### Why Your Vote Matters

**T**he 2006 elections are a critical opportunity for change. Every U.S. representative and one third of the senators are up for election. AFGE is working to elect candidates who—regardless of party affiliation—commit to provide federal employees with the dignity, pay and benefits they deserve. This opportunity won't come again for another two years, so AFGE wants to make the most of this election.

The agenda developed or rubber-stamped by congressional leaders in the last five years has created a perfect storm for government employees:

**Your Pay and Benefits:** The power to secure fair pay raises comes from federal employees using their collective voice through their memberships in AFGE, which won an average across-the-board pay increase of 3.1 percent for General Sched-

ule, Wage Grade, DoD and DHS workers for this year. But the irresponsible tax cuts passed by Congress to pay for tax cuts for the rich have created record deficits. That will make it increasingly difficult to win pay increases or benefit improvements in the future. If the current Congress succeeds, your future standard of living will be lower than it is today.

#### Unfair Personnel Policies:

The National Security Personnel System (NSPS) proposed for Department of Defense and the Max<sup>HR</sup> system proposed for the Department of Homeland Security would slash employee pay and eliminate appeal and collective bargaining rights for 800,000 federal employees. The Working for America Act would

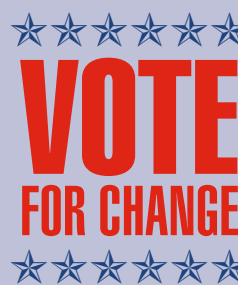
spread these personnel policies government wide. Fortunately, AFGE's court action has blocked implementation of NSPS and Max<sup>HR</sup>. AFGE worked with some lawmakers to stop NSPS; unfortunately a majority of lawmakers either supported these personnel policies or lacked the courage to oppose them.

#### Agency Budget and Staff

**Cuts:** Feds are working harder and doing more with less because of lawmakers with misguided priorities who vote for unwise budget cuts and

budget tightening. That's not right for you or the public AFGE is committed to serve. America can have a strong defense and meet human needs without a rising tide of red ink,

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### What YOU Can Do

**Register to Vote:** You can't vote if you're not registered, and you can't change Congress if you don't vote. Visit: [govote.org](http://govote.org), [rockthevote.org](http://rockthevote.org) and [register-vote.com](http://register-vote.com).

**Join AFGE's Volunteer Action Corps:** AFGE needs your help to build an army of volunteers nationwide to talk with and mobilize other AFGE members. With enough volunteers, we can turn the tide. Sign up for the Corps online at [www.itsourturn2006.com](http://www.itsourturn2006.com) or call 202-639-6457.

Among the many volunteer opportunities, you can:

- Help man phone banks;
- Take part in neighborhood walks in union-concentrated areas;
- Work the polls on election day;
- Participate in other activities.

**Sign up for AFGE Action News:** Get up-to-date information on the latest issues. You can sign up online at [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

**Contribute to AFGE PAC:** Congress has a lot of control over the lives of federal employees. Your representatives and senators set your wages, benefits and rights at work.

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Do Not Distribute on Government Property



## A Message from National President John Gage

# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Working families have had enough over the last five years: The war in Iraq; the Katrina mess; the greedy oil and drug companies; the rampant outsourcing of American jobs overseas; the tax cuts that primarily benefit the few wealthy elite. Under the Bush administration's and this Congress' watch, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

Since taking office in 2001, President Bush has filled his administration with political appointees who are there to protect not the interests of the public but those of their filthy rich friends. That's why millionaires get \$136,000 dollars in tax cuts while the poor lose their health care, college grants and loans. That's why Halliburton gets more than \$7 billion to rebuild Iraq while tens of thousands of people have been killed and our veterans come home to fewer benefits. That's why oil companies get a \$7 billion giveaway on top of the highest profits in history while the American public pays

more at the pump. That's why drug companies get a \$139 billion windfall from the Medicare prescription drug giveaway while seniors have to pay more for less.

This Congress and the Bush administration have no shame in looting working families even when disaster strikes. When President Bush and lawmakers promised relief for those uprooted by Katrina, the most generous relief went to contractors hired to

looking for care were turned away because of severe staffing shortages. At SSA, the administration cut nearly 4,000 positions in fiscal 2006 while the workload was skyrocketing and customers couldn't even make it into their local SSA offices because of long lines. At BOP, the administration refused to hire enough correctional officers, resulting in increased assaults on inmates and officials and increasing the risk of escapes and riots.

AFGE has been sounding the alarm on these troubling issues. But instead of fixing the problems, the White House declared war on us. Thousands of federal jobs have been given away to overpriced contractor cronies. Labor union officials are facing disciplinary actions in retaliation for their union activities. Federal employees' pay and basic civil service rights and protection are undermined. The administration proposed Max<sup>HR</sup> and NSPS as personnel "reforms," but they could make that claim only to the birds. When we took the cases to court, federal judges sided with us and declared illegal several parts of those "reform" plans. It's clear that this administration is on the path to "deform" the civil service system and cannot be trusted to tell the truth.

America is known as the "Land of Opportunity" where all are free to pursue the American dream. But the Bush White House has turned this country into the "Land of Opportunists" where the greediest survive, leaving the less privileged to fend for themselves.

These shameful attacks on working families have happened only because too many lawmakers either are actively working against us or "feel our pain" but do nothing to reduce it. But the good news is, we have the chance to do something about it. Nov. 7, 2006, is the day that all 435 House seats and one third of the Senate seats will be up for election. It's our turn to vote out lawmakers who have been working against us and replace them with those who care about working families.

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clean up and rebuild the Gulf region through a series of no-bid contracts and sweetheart deals, the value of which could reach up to \$200 billion. A Florida lawmaker even held a "Katrina Reconstruction Summit" for contractors. The meeting was co-sponsored by Halliburton.

The war against working families doesn't stop there. Every year, the Bush White House proposes brutal cuts that make life even more difficult for working families, including our country's veterans. In fiscal 2006, for example, the administration again tried to charge veterans larger drug co-pays and proposed to cut funding for medical prosthesis research and construction. It also refused to provide enough funding for the VA while more and more veterans

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# AFGE I want to get active

I'll volunteer ☐ Send me Action News\* ☐

[www.AFGE.org](http://www.AFGE.org)

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\*Sign up to receive email updates on AFGE news and information as it happens. Be the first to learn about government employee issues that impact you and your family.

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO

Fax to 202-639-6492 or mail to AFGE



## The Hatch Act And Federal Employees

## Permitted and Prohibited Activities for Employees Who May Engage in Partisan Activity

- **May** be candidates for public office in non-partisan elections
  - **May** register and vote as they choose
  - **May** assist in voter registration drives
  - **May** express opinions about candidates and issues
  - **May** contribute money to political organizations
  - **May** attend political fundraising functions
  - **May** attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
  - **May** join and be an active member of a political party or club
  - **May** sign nominating petitions
  - **May** campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, municipal ordinances
  - **May** campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
  - **May** make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
  - **May** distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
  - **May** hold office in political clubs or parties including serving as a delegate to a convention
  - **May not** use their official authority or influence to interfere with an election
  - **May not** solicit, accept or receive political contributions unless both individuals are members of the same federal labor organization or employee organization and the one solicited is not a subordinate employee
  - **May not** knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who has business before the agency
  - **May not** engage in political activity while on duty
  - **May not** engage in political activity in any government office
  - **May not** engage in political activity while wearing an official uniform
  - **May not** engage in political activity while using a government vehicle
  - **May not** be candidates for public office in partisan elections
  - **May not** wear political buttons on duty

For additional questions, contact:  
U.S. Office of Special Counsel  
1730 M St. N.W. Suite 201  
Washington DC 20036-4505  
Phone: 1-800-85-HATCH  
Web Site: [www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov)

**For additional questions, contact:**

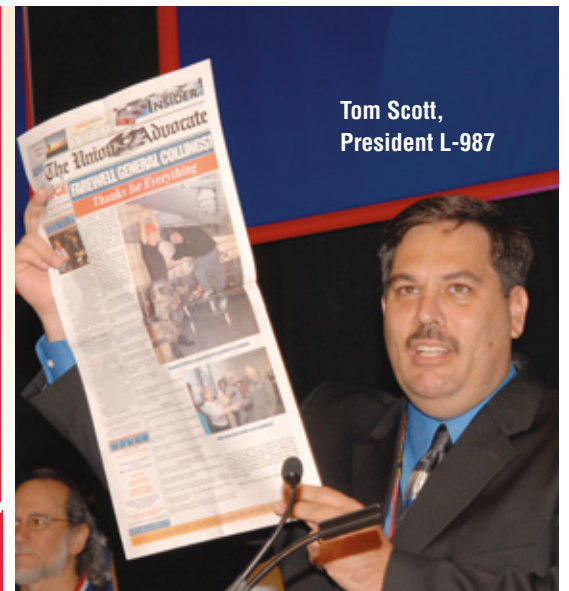
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Washington DC 20036-4505  
Phone: 1-800-85-HATCH  
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This list does not apply to federal employees in the following agencies, divisions or positions: Federal Election Commission; Federal Bureau of Investigations; Secret Service; Central Intelligence Agency; National Security Agency; National Security Council; Defense Intelligence Agency; National Imagery and Mapping Agency; Merit Systems Protection Board; Office of Special Counsel; Office of Criminal Investigations of the IRS; Office of Investigative Programs of the U.S. Customs Service; Office of Law Enforcement of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; Criminal Division of the Department of Justice; Career members of the Senior Executive Staff; Administrative Law Judges; Contract appeals board members.



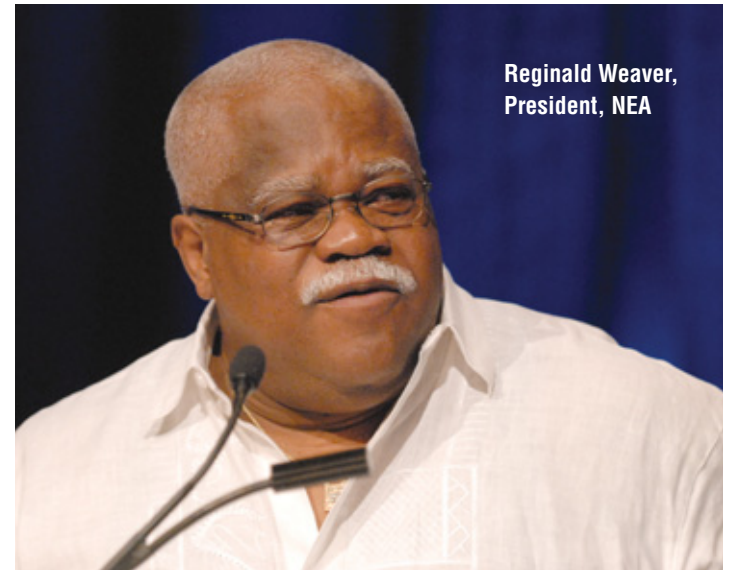


Rep. Jim  
Marshall  
(D-GA)



Tom Scott,  
President L-987

## AFGE 2006 Convention



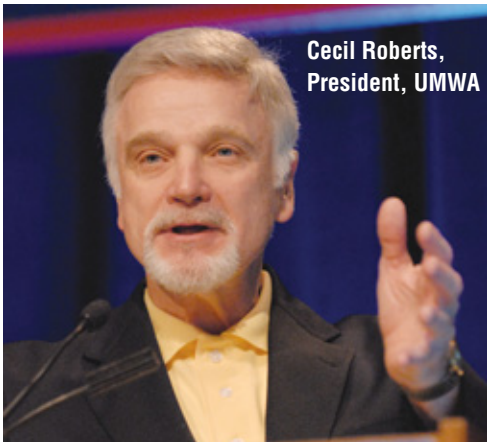
Reginald Weaver,  
President, NEA







Linda Chavez-Thompson,  
Executive Vice President,  
AFL-CIO



Cecil Roberts,  
President, UMWA



Rep. John  
Barrow (D-GA)



(Left to right) President John Gage, NVP/Women's Fair Practices Andrea Brooks, National Secretary-Treasurer J. David Cox





# AFGE Delegates Converge on Atlanta

**T**housands of AFGE members, leaders, friends and family gathered in Atlanta this August for AFGE's 37th Triennial Convention.

Much of the convention excitement was garnered around the election of national officers. **John Gage** was reelected as National President, stating that "there is much to do on behalf of federal workers in this anti-worker administration. Our focus is now on the Nov. 7th congressional elections. We plan to help elect men and women who are actually responsive to the needs of the American people."

National Vice President, Women's/Fair Practices **Andrea Brooks** also was reelected. She told the convention delegates that "the best is yet to come" and asked that AFGE members focus on "hope, positive thinking and action."

Following the retirement of **Jim Davis**, **J. David Cox** was elected AFGE National Secretary-Treasurer. (More on Cox at right.)

In addition to business meetings and the election of national officers, delegates heard from a number of guest speakers, including U.S. Reps. **Jim Marshall** (D-Ga.) and **John Barrow** (D-Ga.), National Education Association President **Reg Weaver**, United Mine Workers of America President **Cecil E. Roberts**, and AFL-CIO Executive Vice President **Linda Chavez-Thompson**.

Also during the convention, attendees were able to meet with representatives from AFGE headquarters, including Communications, Education, Field Services, General Counsel, Legislative and Political Action, Membership and Organization, Political Action Committee, Public Policy and Women's/Fair Practices departments.

## Mr. Cox Goes to Washington

**A**FGE members who visit the national headquarters in Washington, D.C. will be seeing a new face, that of J. David Cox, the new AFGE National Secretary-Treasurer. Cox was elected to the position at the 2006 Convention in August.

Cox stressed unity in his acceptance speech, stating that "We are a great union. And brothers and sisters I am certain we will become even greater."

Until recently, Cox served as first executive vice president of AFGE's National Veterans Affairs Council (NVAC) for more than a decade. He

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*"We are a great union.  
...I am certain we will  
become even greater."*

---

previously served as chairperson of the NVAC Organizing Committee, and was a member of the Budget Committee and the Title 38 Subcommittee. He served as co-chair of the VA National Partnership Council and was vice president of the North Carolina State AFL-CIO.

Additionally, Cox served for 18 years as president of Local 1738, which encompasses the Salisbury Medical Center, National Cemetery, Winston Salem Out-Patient Clinic, VA Regional Office, Charlotte Out-Patient Clinic, Fayetteville VA Medical Center and the Durham VA Medical Center.

With AFGE representing some 180,000 employees in the VA, Cox has testified numerous times on Capitol Hill about issues pertaining to the agency and worked with AFGE to mount successful campaigns to push for more funding for veterans care.

A registered nurse, Cox also for worked several years at the VA Medical Center in Salisbury, North Carolina.

## Listen to AFGE's New Radio Show



**Each Friday at 10:00 am on  
[www.federalnewsradio.com](http://www.federalnewsradio.com)  
or ON DEMAND anytime.**

Questions? Email [insidegovernment@afge.org](mailto:insidegovernment@afge.org)

# AFGE Has “BIG” Presence at National Conference

Government employees looking for career enhancement resources and information on how new policies will impact their workplaces gained additional insight into these topics during a series of innovative workshops presented by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) during the annual Blacks In Government (BIG) National Training Conference.

The AFGE workshops covered a variety of topics including leadership coaching, the reorganization of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the dismantlement of the civil service system through programs such as the Department of Defense's National Security Per-

sonnel System (NSPS) and the Department of Homeland Security's Max<sup>HR</sup> initiative. AFGE workshop presenters included National Vice President **Derrick Thomas**, Membership and Organization Department Director **Sharon Pinnock**, and representatives from the Women's and Fair Practices Department.

“The workshops were designed to help BIG members move up the career ladder at their agencies and provide information on how government policies will impact their workplaces,” said Thomas. “We hope that attendees left the workshops feeling empowered

and more informed about their options and rights when working for local, state and federal governments.”

In addition to workshop presentations, AFGE representatives also were on hand during the exhibitor's showcase to offer information about AFGE membership and how the union works on behalf of government employees.

“By operating a booth at this year's BIG conference, we were able to talk directly to its members about what the union has accomplished on behalf of government employees and why now is a critical time to have union representation in light of the changes the administration is trying to make to the civil service system and the EEOC,” said Thomas.

“We hope attendees [are] more informed about their options and rights when working for local, state and federal governments.”



## AFGE Members Save On Phone Calls

New internet broadband phone service



The new Union Plus Voice broadband phone service can help AFGE families save big on phone calls from home – you'll pay less than half what most phone companies charge. All you need to save is a cable or DSL broadband Internet connection. Sign up for Union Plus Voice broadband phone service and watch your phone bill shrink.

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Home calling through your broadband Internet connection with your existing phone.



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# Why Your Vote Matters

(continued from page 1)

but that won't happen under the current Congress. It's time to elect lawmakers who won't waste billions of dollars on unfair personnel policies, who oppose bloated government contracts for corporate cronies, and who oppose tax cuts for the rich. This country needs lawmakers who believe that government plays a positive role in the lives of its citizens, and that government should be adequately funded to provide the services that Americans need.

For example, understaffing has been a major issue at federal prisons across the country for many years. Since 1990, the number of prisoners has gone up 300 percent but the number of correctional officers has not kept up with the skyrocketing inmate population. In fact, the number of inmates has increased by 80,000 since 2000, while the number of correctional officers has gone up by only 1,900. To get the

ratio of officers to inmates back to the 2000 level requires an increase of 8,000 additional correctional officers. However, this fiscal year, not only did lawmakers not provide enough funding to hire more correctional officers; they suggested a \$62 million cut in BOP funding.

Things aren't any better at the VA, where budget shortfalls result in fewer VA health-care workers to care for veterans, longer working hours for employees, longer waiting time for veterans to receive services, delayed facility construction and repairs, and closing of facilities.



## \$150,000 in Scholarships Available

Applications for the 2007 Union Plus Scholarship Program are now available.

The program provides \$150,000 annually to deserving students who want to begin or continue their secondary education at a U.S. college, community college, trade or technical school. A panel of education experts chooses the winners. Open only to AFGE members and their families.

The deadline to apply is Jan. 31, 2007. To download an application visit the [afge.org](http://afge.org) web site.

Go to **[www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org)**  
Or call **1-888-844-AFGE**



## What YOU Can Do

(continued from page 1)

They determine the rules for contracting out. They determine whether or not your agency is under-funded and/or under-staffed. Who gets elected and how they vote is a very big deal. AFGE PAC's (Political Action Committee) sole purpose is to help elect lawmakers—Democrat or Republican—who value the work of federal employees and the services we provide.

AFGE cannot use union dues to contribute to political candidates. We have to raise voluntary contributions from AFGE members to put our political power to work. That's why we have AFGE-PAC.

Contribute via secure network at [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

**Spread the Word:** The best way for news to travel is word of mouth. Tell your friends and family to vote, and ask them to become involved in AFGE's efforts.

AFGE leaders and members have worked extremely hard to get lawmakers to do the right thing. As a result, we've won some impressive victories, particularly on pay and contracting out, and there are representatives and senators who are working hard on behalf of federal employees. But the simple fact remains that there aren't enough members of Congress who are willing to stand up for the rights of federal employees. Until the numbers change, until we elect more members of Congress who value our work and the services we provide, federal employees will continue to push a very heavy rock up a very steep hill.