



Vol. LXXIV, No. 3

# THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

SPECIAL EDITION

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

## TSA: Now is the Time for Every AFGE Member to Act

For almost six years, the Bush administration has taken every opportunity available to advocate for a profound erosion of civil service protections and collective bargaining rights for federal employees. First, the administration grudgingly agreed that the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks necessitated federalizing airport security functions, but insisted that the legislation not allow security screeners the rights and protections normally provided to federal employees. This attack on



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rights affects every single federal employee as the administration has time and time again expressed its desire to gut collective bargaining at agencies across the board. During this

onslaught, AFGE's support of collective bargaining rights and civil service protections for federal employees has never wavered. AFGE has stood behind Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) from the beginning, representing them before TSA's Disciplinary Review Board, before the EEOC and before Congress.

After five years of arduous lobbying, AFGE insisted that TSA collective bargaining language be included in the House and Senate bills. AFGE influenced Congress to vote to allow TSO workplace rights. AFGE believes TSOs deserve to work in an environment in which they are treated fairly. AFGE believes TSOs deserve the basic worker rights they have been deprived of. AFGE has been there since the beginning.

### AFGE Extends a Special Thank You

On behalf of all its members, leadership and staff, AFGE thanks Transportation Security Officers across the nation for their heroic efforts in protecting our skies. TSOs are among the most under recognized but most valuable federal employees. You are an inspiration to the rest of us. AFGE thanks you for all you do.



Congressman Nita Lowey, AFGE President Gage and Congressman Bennie Thompson at a post-House vote media briefing on TSO bargaining rights.

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# Taking a Stand Against Union-Busting

So here we are. On a bipartisan basis, both the House and Senate have passed hugely important 9/11 bills that have a whole lot to do with the national security of our cities and towns, our ports, our rails and industries. It is comprehensive and long overdue.

collective bargaining. This right already is afforded to the Capitol Police who provide security for the Senate and House, the Border Patrol, Customs and Border Protection officers, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, all who carry weapons and have arrest authority.

deliberately misleading and false. A letter was even circulated among senators saying the TSOs would strike if allowed to have a union!

Senator Kennedy's speech on the Senate floor in favor of TSO rights hit the nail on the head. He kept asking why; what is this blind hatred of worker rights?

I am amazed at the stunning hypocrisy of it all: the so-called "national security president," threatening to veto a major bill on national security just because of an irrational, mean-spirited ideology against unions. All of it just to prevent willing employees from forming a union.

I am proud of AFGE for many things, but none more so than our union's fight on behalf of TSOs. We have stood resolutely against this ugly, un-American attack on employee, civil and union rights. We were not cowed by the might of the administration. We will not accept this abuse of power.

Now it is show time. Every AFL-CIO union is with us. They know that when one of us loses basic rights, we all lose. I am not being overly dramatic by asking who will be next.

Every AFGE member must take this personally, and must take action now.

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President Bush is threatening to veto the whole bill because of one single amendment that gives TSOs modest employee rights, including the right to

Police officers, firefighters and first responders who rushed into the burning towers on 9/11 were union members, as are the airline pilots, machinists and flight attendants.

Senator Lieberman put it best when he said to me that every senator and representative knows that rights for TSOs have nothing to do with national security.

The arguments made by the administration were pitiful in substance and

## AFGE—The Government Standard

Vol. LXXIV, No. 3

Special Edition

AFGE—The Government Standard (USPS 003-219, ISSN 1041-5335) is the official membership publication of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20001 Phone: (202) 737-8700, [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org). John Gage, **National President**, J. David Cox, **National Secretary-Treasurer**, Andrea E. Brooks, **National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices**. National Vice Presidents: District 2—Derrick F. Thomas, (732) 828-9449; NY, NJ, CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT. District 3—Jeffrey R. Williams, (610) 660-0316; DE, PA. District 4—Joseph Flynn, (410) 480-1820; MD, NC, VA, WV. District 5—Charlotte Flowers, (770) 907-2055; AL, FL, GA, SC, TN, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico. District 6—Arnold Scott, (317) 542-0428; IN, KY, OH. District 7—Dorothy James, (312) 421-6245; IL, MI, WI. District 8—Jane Nygaard, (952) 854-3216; IA, MN, NE, ND, SD. District 9—Michael Kelly, (405) 670-2656; AR, KS, MO, OK. District 10—Roy Flores, (210) 735-8900; LA, MS, TX, NM, Panama. District 11—Gerald D. Swanke, (360) 607-3735; AK, CO, ID, MT, OR, UT, WA, WY, Guam, Okinawa. District 12—Eugene Hudson, Jr., (760) 233-7600; AZ, CA, HI, NV. District 14—Dwight Bowman, (202) 639-6447; District of Columbia, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; Arlington and Fairfax Counties and the City of Alexandria in Virginia.

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



Senator John Edwards (center) heard from President Gage and TSOs from San Diego at AFGEs Legislative Conference in February.

# AFGE: There from the Beginning

- **11/07/01:** AFGE calls for the airport screener function to be federalized.
- **11/19/01:** TSA was created. The screener workforce at all but five airports would be federalized. Not long after, AFGE offers to assist in the “standing up” of the new agency. The offer was declined.
- **11/2002:** AFGE files its first representation petition for TSA screeners at BWI airport.
- **1/9/03:** TSA Chief Loy announces that “mandatory collective bargaining is not compatible with the flexibility required to wage war against terrorism.” The next day, AFGE files suit in the U.S. District Court challenging Loy’s right to deny bargaining rights to TSA baggage handlers and screeners.
- **3/3/03:** AFGE charts TSA Local 1 with 13 dues-paying TSOs.
- **6/20/04:** TSA Local 1 members elect their own leadership and begin functioning as a real union.
- **8/20/04:** AFGE issues an influential White Paper on changes needed to be made at TSA. White Paper circulates among Congress.
- **10/01/05:** AFGE watchdog effort ensures fair language when TSA implements regulations to allow additional airports to opt out of federal screening. To date, only two minor airports have done so.
- **6/22/06:** TSA states in legal proceedings that it is “neutral” and does not object to non-federal screeners at KCI airport voting for union representation.
- **10/20/06:** International Labor Organization upholds AFGE’s complaints against President Bush over collective bargaining rights for TSOs. The ILO decision amplifies the growing voices heard around the country and the world calling on the Bush administration to recognize internationally accepted workers’ rights standards.
- **11/11/06:** TSA membership in AFGE breaks the 1,000 mark!
- **1/09/07:** The House of Representatives passes H.R.1, its version of the 9/11 commission bill, which includes bargaining and other rights for TSOs.
- **2/13/07:** After AFGE General Counsel Mark Roth argues that whistleblower protection is both a labor right and a national security issue, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee includes in its whistleblower protection reform bill a provision granting TSOs such protections.
- **3/13/07:** At AFGE’s urging, the Senate passes S.4, its 9/11 commission bill, also giving TSOs bargaining rights.
- **Today:** Only months after reaching the 1,000 TSA member mark, AFGE has more than tripled its numbers with nearly 3,500 TSO members. The union has three full-time attorneys, two legal interns, 12 National Representatives, a full-time lobbyist, a full-time health and safety specialist, and dozens of full-time organizers dedicated to representing TSOs nationwide.



## Congressional Update

**A**FGE National President John Gage earlier this year testified before the Senate on the lack of rights for TSA personnel. Although TSA Administrator Kip Hawley attempted to shoot down AFGE’s arguments, the Senate saw TSA for what it really is: a bully trying to exploit its employees. Thanks in part to AFGE’s efforts, language affording TSOs bargaining rights was included in both the House and Senate Homeland Security bills.

Congress now will go to Conference to create one bill, which it will present to President Bush. While there has been talk of a veto, AFGE remains dedicated to the fight for the workplace rights. AFGE has, and will continue to urge all elected officials to support collective bargaining and oppose any laws that would facilitate the removal of these rights and protections.



Senator Lieberman and National President John Gage met about TSO rights.



# [www.unionvoice.org/campaign/TSOsNeedAVoiceAtWork](http://www.unionvoice.org/campaign/TSOsNeedAVoiceAtWork)

## Call to Arms

### Lawmakers need to hear from YOU!

The time for getting involved is right now. Now more than ever, it is imperative that AFGE members come together to fight for workplace rights. Bush's low and mean-spirited attempt to deny collective bargaining rights to TSOs is only the tip of the iceberg. If Bush and his anti-union ideologue cronies can block TSOs in their legitimate right to bargain collectively, then working people have every reason to expect that they will try to block union rights for broad groups of public safety, aviation and national security workers in both the public and private sectors. The Bush administration is moving full-speed ahead with its union busting and it's only a matter of time before it reaches your agency.

AFGE is asking its members and any other supporters to stress to their representatives the importance of collective bargaining for TSOs and for *all* federal employees. To send a letter to your senator or representative asking for his or her support for this effort, please go to [www.unionvoice.org/campaign/TSOsNeedAVoiceAtWork](http://www.unionvoice.org/campaign/TSOsNeedAVoiceAtWork), where AFGE already has drafted letters asking for support. At this web site, members also may write a personal message.

Without collective bargaining rights and civil service protections, it will be impossible for the government to attract and retain high quality employees, and our democracy—as well as our national security—will suffer.

AFGE is the largest federal employee union for a reason. We care about our members, we support our members, and we work for our members. Every federal employee has the right to work in an environment free of discrimination and abuse. Together with our members, AFGE is dedicated to ensuring that all federal employees are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

If you are unable to access the letter online, please call your District Office, which can provide you with a hard copy. Districts are organized by state:

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