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# Fed Workers Are Saying NO to Privatization

## AFGE Rallies in Seattle



John Irvine

**A** FGE Locals held a rally in Seattle on Feb. 26, in protest of the Bush Administration's plan to privatize up to 850,000 federal jobs nationwide. In Washington State, the plan would affect one-out-of-three non-postal jobs. Greater Seattle unions joined hundreds of AFGE members in opposition of the plan and to promote legislation to track the \$125 billion dollars given annually to contractors.

AFGE members working in the Social Security Administration, the Departments of Defense, Education and Veterans Affairs, the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, and at the Naval Shipyard gathered at the federal building before marching, to a police escort, down the center of city streets. **Local 3197** hosted the event.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Important changes for the 2003 AFGE National Convention:

- 1) **NO ON-SITE REGISTRATION! PRE-REGISTRATION ONLY and must be post-marked by July 21, 2003; and**
- 2) **All delegates must be elected by July 18, 2003.**

**Turn to page 10 for more information.**

## \$31.8 Million Contracting Scandal Uncovered

### Work Must Come Back In-house

**"F**ederal workers were robbed of their jobs and taxpayers were scammed of their dollars when that work was wrongly awarded to contractors whose bid exceeded the real in-house cost by approximately \$30 million," stated AFGE National President **Bobby L. Harnage**. Harnage's comments followed release of an inves-

tigative report in late-March by the Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General (IG) on the public/private competition for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's (DFAS) military retired and annuitant pay functions.

*(Continued on page 5)*

## A Matter of Motives

### The Difference between Government Workers and Corporate Contractors

At this time of peril and national anxiety, no one knows better than government workers the urgency of public service performed with a single purpose in mind—the public good. You provide crucial support to our troops at home and abroad. You protect our borders



Bobby L. Harnage

and the nation's food supply. When disaster strikes, you're the folks on the frontlines. You care for our veterans and keep our social contract with the elderly. To lift the burden of our dependence on foreign energy sources, you find new ways of conserving energy while your brothers and sisters in public service protect the environment.

Your motive is simple—a good day's work in the service of the common good. You surely won't get rich doing this work, but it's a great feeling to know that you're driven by a motive long accepted by

*"The noblest motive is the public good."*

—Virgil  
Roman poet (70–19 B.C.)

civilization's greatest thinkers as the most noble of all.

Sadly, current trends in government have pitted you against others who seek to engage in the work of public service, driven by a vastly different motive—the profit motive. Backed by a President whose best friends are government contractors, corporations stand poised to have run of the government, replacing you and your colleagues with private sector workers who are often poorly paid, scantily trained and almost always deprived of union representation and collective bargaining rights.

Though the means by which your jobs are imperiled vary, they all lead to the same end—the lining of corporate pockets with taxpayer dollars. Your position may be deemed not to be "inherently governmental" in nature and therefore slated for contracting out. Or, you may be forced into a so-called "public/private competition," a process that is increasingly rigged to favor the corporate bidder. It's no longer enough to outbid the contractor on cost, an arbitrary measure called "best value"—which can mean virtually anything a manager wants it to mean—is employed, all but ensuring a corporate victory.

#### Spoils system

To the victor belongs the spoils, it's been said, and the current Administration seems to regard government work as the spoils of political victory, and thereby a means of rewarding the allegiance of corporate friends and contributors. Even during the conflict in Iraq, the building of tent cities—work ordinarily performed by the Army—was given to a subsidiary of Halliburton, the

corporation from which Vice President Richard Cheney reaped millions when he served as its CEO.

(Worth noting is that Richard Perle, until recently the chairman of the Defense Policy Board, was forced to relinquish his leadership post on the board after *The New Yorker* reported on his contract for \$725,000 with Global Crossing, a scandal-ridden corporation, to overcome DoD and FBI opposition and secure approval from the Pentagon for a high technology contract with the Chinese. Perle does, however, continue to serve as a member of the board, after pulling the plug on his arrangement with Global Crossing. The Defense Policy Board is a group of business leaders who advise the Pentagon. Its members are not paid for serving on the board, but they enjoy a great deal of influence in the Pentagon and beyond.)

#### The noblest motive

As citizens who have dedicated our lives to the public good, we must be on the frontline to engage America in a much needed debate about the value of having a neutral public civil service carry out the functions of government instead of a corporate spoils system. That debate begins with each one of us in our communities. I encourage each one of you to speak proudly about what you and other government workers do for America as you go about your daily lives. When you hear someone make a negative remark, speak out. When you read a negative comment in a newspaper or magazine, pick up your pen and write a letter to the editor.

With over 220,000 AFGE members, we can get this debate going. With enough debate, we can swing the pendulum in the other direction. And once again, the American people will believe that for government functions, "The noblest motive is the public good."

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# AFGE Rallies in Seattle

Continued from page 1



Local 3197's Barbara Phinney (center wearing beret) leading the march chants.



(l-r) Local 3197's Vic Callender, an AFGE supporter, Dist. 11 NVP Gerry Swanke and Local 3197's Cheryl Kelso.

"Federal workers proudly marched with their brothers and sisters from the Seattle labor community," said Local 3197 member and event organizer **Barbara Phinney**. "It was a powerful experience that local TV and radio eagerly covered."

According to **Cheryl Kelso**, Local 3197 Legislative Committee Chair and another event organizer, the event was a success because Local AFGE members "achieved the goal of educating Greater Seattle residents about the federal government's massive privatization plan that will negatively impact the economy."

Speakers included: AFGE Natl. Sec.-Tres. **Jim Davis**; AFGE Dist. 11 NVP **Gerry Swanke**; Cheryl Kelso; Barbara Phinney; AFGE Local 3937 Pres. **Steve Kofahl**; Wash. State Labor Council Pres. **Rick Bender**; King County Labor Council Exec. Sec. **Steve Williamson**; Intl. Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) **Mark Moshay**; Society of Prof. Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA)-IFPTE Local 2001 Pres. **Jennifer Mackay**; Intl. Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 19's **Rudy Finne**; and Natl. Assoc. of Black Veterans Natl. Dir. **Ray Miller**. Public officials

who sent messages included: U.S. Senators **Patty Murray** (D-Wash.) and **Maria Cantwell** (D-Wash.); U.S. Reps. **Norman Dicks** (D-Wash.), **Jay Inslee** (D-Wash.), **Dennis Kucinich** (D-Ohio), **Jim McDermott** (D-Wash.), and **Adam Smith** (D-Wash.); and Gov. **Gary Locke** (D-Wash.).

Unions and organizations from Greater Seattle that also participated: King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish Labor Councils; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); American Postal Workers Union (APWU); Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA); Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU); Blacks in Govt. (BIG); Boilermakers; Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW); Community Alliance for Global Justice; WashTech/Communications Workers of America (CWA); Freedom Socialists; Intl. Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the U.S. (IATSE); Intl. Assoc. of Machinists and Aerospace



Steve Williamson, King County Labor Council Exec. Sec. (in hat), talks with an AFGE member between rally speeches.

Workers (IAM); Intl. Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); Jobs with Justice; Natl. Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE); Organized Labor Against the War; Puget Sound Labor for Peace; Radical Women; Seattle Education Assoc.; and United Food and Commercial Workers Intl. Union (UFCW).

Photos by John Irvine



## **AFGE Holds News Conference in New Mexico**

### **Announces National Alliance**

**A** FGE's National President **Bobby L. Harnage** and **District 10** National Vice President **Roy Flores**—who represents federal workers in La., Miss., N.M., Texas, and Panama—held a news conference in Albuquerque to discuss the dangers of privatization and its impact on the surrounding communities.

More than 5,000 federal employees in the Albuquerque area could lose their jobs under plans being promoted by some members of Congress to privatize close to one million federal jobs over the next two years. New Mexico could lose close to 10,000 federal jobs.

During the news conference, AFGE announced the formation of a national alliance with the National Park Conservation Association—the Alliance for Public Services in the Public Interest—to oppose the reckless and arbitrary privatization of federal jobs and to guarantee that good jobs and good public services stay in Albuquerque. AFGE believes that under this plan, the taxpayers are going to pay more and the cost of public services will increase while the quality of the services will decline.

### **Track the Contractor Workforce**

**A** FGE provided testimony before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness on outsourcing and the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Circular A-76 process. At the March 25 hearing, AFGE testified in opposition to "best value" public/private competitions, the pro-contractor rewrite of OMB Circular A-76, and gutting the 50/50 depot maintenance rule. Further, AFGE urged support for agencies to track the costs of contracting and to allow federal workers to compete in defense of their jobs, for new work, and for contractor work.

## **\$31.8 Million Contracting Scandal Uncovered**

*(continued from page 1)*

Taxpayers and military retirees owe a great debt to Rep. **Dennis Kucinich** (D-Ohio) and **AFGE Local 3283** in Cleveland. Without their persistence, this bungled contract would never have been revealed for the scandal that it is. According to the IG, a contract with a potential 10-year value of \$346 million was awarded to the contractor rather than to the lower in-house bid because of a \$31.8 million error.

Fact: The \$31.8 million error was first made by yet another contractor, **Mevatec Corp.**, that was hired by DFAS to conduct the competition.

"DFAS should immediately bring the work back in-house where it can be performed by experienced, reliable, and, above all, efficient employees," insisted Harnage.

This latest costly contracting blunder re-emphasizes all that is wrong with the Bush Administration's privatization crusade and is typical of the broken-beyond-repair contract administration process across the federal government. This competition was also supervised by honest experts from the DoD IG's office and they too got it wrong.

Non-DoD agencies have little expertise with OMB Circular A-76, having grown accustomed to privatizing work without any public/private competition. The systematic breakdown in contract administration, as exemplified by the DFAS debacle, is surely being exacerbated by OMB's unrelenting imposition of numerical privatization quotas and the threat to force agencies to finish future contracting out plans by arbitrary deadlines.

The DFAS blunder would have been brought to light sooner if the affected federal workers and their union had been given the same legal standing already enjoyed by contractors to take their grievances to the General Accounting Office and the Court of Federal Claims. If federal employees had legal standing, their fates wouldn't be entirely dependent on Congressional intervention and belated audits.

The OMB rewrite of the privatization process promises to create hundreds of DFAS-style disasters across the federal government. The new A-76 process would give agencies authority to pile additional unfair and unjustified indirect personnel costs on top of the steep 12 percent overhead rate already charged against in-house bids, so managers can inflate the in-house bids by amounts sufficient to route work to politically-connected contractors.

For example, as the IG reported, the in-house bid was charged for costs associated with the DFAS Director, but the contractor bid was not. As the IG noted, "This rationale appears questionable because when a contractor wins a competition, these government overhead costs may not be eliminated and, therefore, the government may continue to pay them." This is true of other indirect personnel costs that OMB, in its A-76 rewrite, would charge exclusively to in-house bids.

### **FACT:**

**The \$31.8 million error was first made by yet another contractor, Mevatec Corp., that was hired by DFAS to conduct the competition.**

## NASA's Problems—Mindless Privatization, Contracting Out & Downsizing

AFGE believes that no federal agency, including NASA, should have a human resources plan that explicitly encourages constant turnover and puts no value on continuity, dedication or career development for the incumbent workforce. That was the message AFGE delivered to the House Science Committee in opposition to proposed civil service changes at NASA.

Instead of careful consideration of whether NASA's mission could be most effectively and economically carried out by hiring in-house employees, it has engaged in wholesale privatization—not competitive sourcing—and made reliance on contractors the rule. AFGE also charged in testimony on March 12, that too much contracting out and privatization caused NASA's workforce deficits and only a reversal of contracting out and privatization will solve them.

AFGE charged that the draft proposals do not provide a separate, supplemental funding mechanism for bonuses or 'super salaries'—

incentives that would likely be financed from existing salary accounts. Stressing its opposition to removing limits on demonstration projects, AFGE stated that such authority would be highly destructive of civil service standards and destroys the concept of demonstration projects as an experiment or pilot plan.

AFGE urged NASA and other executive branch agencies to stop looking for short-term fixes in stating that taxpayers' interests are best served by knowing that federal workers—sworn to uphold the public good and work in the public interest—perform government work. In order to get rid of a worker without notice or any due process, the agency seems willing to be staffed by a group of contingent workers to whom absolutely no loyalty, commitment, training or career development is offered.

For a complete transcript of the March 12, 2003, testimony, log onto [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

## Postal Workers Equally Concerned with Bush Privatization

The George W. Bush Administration isn't limiting its privatization and union-busting efforts to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the other agencies it directly controls.

The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) reports that President Bush recently formed a little noticed commission to recommend sweeping changes to the Postal Service's charter and operations that many critics fear would end affordable, dependable mail service for many Americans.

In addition to cutting services for "less profitable" rural and inner-city communities, the commission has been asked to consider privatizing or commercializing the Postal Service, closing postal facilities, introducing geographically phased postage rates, ending six-day delivery, and of course, rolling back postal workers' collective bargaining rights.

With a top Administration official declaring that "everything is on the table," the commission's makeup and accelerated schedule suggest that many of its conclusions have been predetermined. Created in response to lobbying pressure from the Direct Marketing Association and the Mailing Industry CEO Council, the panel is dominated by Bush loyalists—none of whom have any expertise



APWU President William Burrus

in postal affairs—and it does not have representation from either postal workers or the AFL-CIO. And despite its sweeping mandate, the commission has been charged with producing its final report by July 31, after only seven months of study.

"Bush is responding to political pressure from the nation's largest business and advertising mailers who are interested only in protecting the below-cost postage rates they now enjoy," charged William Burrus, APWU President. "Subsidized postage for the mailing industry has drained billions of dollars in postal revenues, created substantial deficits, and it is undermining the Postal Service's ability to serve all of America," Burrus continued. "The subsidies are the real problem, it appears the President's commission is ignoring them."

The Postal Service employs nearly 700,000 unionized workers. Their unions engage in collective bargaining—over wages, hours and working conditions—that culminates in binding arbitration. They participate in the same federal health and retirement programs as AFGE members.

*Editors' note: This article was printed in cooperation with the American Postal Workers Union (APWU).*

## Rights of 1,322 Lost at NIMA

The Director of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) terminated the collective bargaining rights of 1,322 workers on Jan. 30. The reason: NIMA jobs now affect national security.

NIMA workers, who are represented by AFGE Locals 1827 (St. Louis) and 3407 (Bethesda, Md.), are performing the same jobs they've performed for years. Approximately ten years ago, Congress specifically grandfathered in the collective bargaining rights of hundreds of NIMA employees. At the time, Congress clearly said the Director could not strip them of their rights unless their roles were modified to include intelligence, counterintelligence, investigative or security duties not previously assigned, and that the performance of the newly assigned duties directly affected national security.

NIMA's mission has not changed. The NIMA Director insisted that the need for employees to obtain security clearances makes it necessary to terminate collective bargaining rights. NIMA employees already have significant security level clearances. In fact, employees in NIMA's collective bargaining unit often have to shepherd contractors around the agency's installations because they have security clearances and the contractors do not. AFGE has filed an opposition to the Director's action with the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

## National TSA Local is Chartered

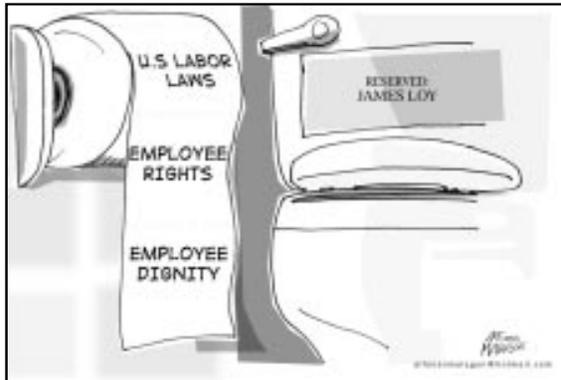
**A** FGE announced the charter of a nationwide Local to represent employees working for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at a news conference on March 3. TSA employees desperately need a collective voice on the job now, and AFGE is going to make sure they have that voice.

At the moment, AFGE may not be able to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement, but as the largest federal employees union, the union can provide TSA workers representation in other critical areas, such as on Capitol Hill, in the courts, and at their workplaces. AFGE can represent TSA workers in EEO complaints and workers' compensation cases, can train TSA workers to file unfair labor practices, lobby Congress, and make sure their whistleblower rights are protected.

TSA employees have been forced to work mandatory six- and seven-day workweeks and 10- and 12-hour shifts. Some employees have been forced to work 21 straight hours. Supervisors continually cancel leave and regularly change work schedules without notice, not for national security reasons, but based on poor management. Baggage handlers are forced to go through luggage for explosives in open areas of airports without any protective barriers for the public or themselves. Some employees have not received paychecks for up to six weeks and, unfortunately, some have experienced sexual harassment on the job.

No one is more interested in making our nation's airports secure

than the dedicated men and women working for TSA. They are the frontline guardians against terrorist attacks at our airports and in the skies—they deserve better treatment.



Turn to page 12 for more TSA news.

## **Bush Takes One Month to Sign Pay Increase**

**F**or 30 days, President **Bush** refused to issue an Executive Order (E.O.) that would implement an additional one percent pay increase for federal employees. Bush signed a 4.1 percent adjustment that Congress inserted in the omnibus spending bill on Feb. 20. For whatever odd reason, he waited 30 days to sign the required E.O. to provide 1.8 million workers their one percent increase. On March 21, Bush finally signed the E.O. providing for a 3.1 percent increase in base pay and one percent in locality. It was AFGE, working alongside key members of Congress like Rep. **Steny Hoyer** (D-Md.), that secured the pay increase for federal workers. The increase is retroactive to the first pay period of 2003.

## **AFGE Court Victory**

**I**n an important decision for AFGE members, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit held that a union's right to be present at "formal discussions" includes the right of a union to be present at so-called Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) mediation sessions on formal EEO complaints when a unit employee and an agency representative are both present.

In ruling that the union's right to attend formal discussions extends to mediation sessions on EEO complaints, the court reiterated its long standing view that, for purposes of the "formal discussion" right, the statute's reference to a union attending discussions concerning a "grievance" includes meetings concerning EEO complaints and Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) appeals, as well as meetings concerning a grievance under the negotiated grievance procedure.

The court also rejected agency arguments to the effect that a conflict exists between, on the one hand, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) statutes and the Privacy Act and, on the other hand, a union's right to attend formal discussions concerning employee complaints by simply noting that nothing in any ADR statute or in the Privacy Act precludes union attendance at any mediation session. The court also rejected the distasteful agency suggestion that union representatives are incapable of keeping confidential any matter required to be kept confidential by noting that "[u]nion representatives are often in the position of having to maintain confidentiality." A copy of the court's decision in *Dept. of the Air Force, 436th Airlift Wing v. FLRA and AFGE Local 1709*, Case No. 01-1373 (Jan. 17, 2003) may be found on the AFGE's Web site, [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

## **DoD Amendment Makes a Mockery of EEO Complaint Filing**

Having failed to convince the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) or the courts that unions can be excluded from individual formal discussions that affect the terms and conditions of the entire bargaining unit, the Department of Defense (DoD) is now seeking relief from Congress. DoD has proposed language to the defense authorization act that would change the Federal Service-Labor Management Relations Statute to give an agency the right to refuse union representation presence during any formal discussion not part of a pending grievance procedure under the collective bargaining agreement.

"This amendment, if enacted, would enable the agency to nullify many contract rights by chipping away, one piece at a time, hard earned bargaining unit protections through individual settlements in EEO, MSPB or agency dispute procedures," states AFGE Women's/Fair Practices Director **Andrea Brooks**.

Anytime management and one other employee want to ignore responsibilities and obligations contained in the collective bargaining agreement, all they would have to do is wrap their shameful intentions around an EEO allegation or other non-"grievance" dispute, and execute a "settlement" that violates the contract. "This amendment not only makes a mockery of EEO complaint filing, but also attempts to repeal any effective role of the exclusive representative in the workplace other than as a case representative for pending union grievances," adds Brooks.

DoD has not offered any record of abuse to substantiate this radical amendment to the statute, nor justification for such civil service reform through the Armed Services Committee rather than the Government Reform or Governmental Affairs Committees.

# 2003 Legislative & Grassroots Mobilization Conference



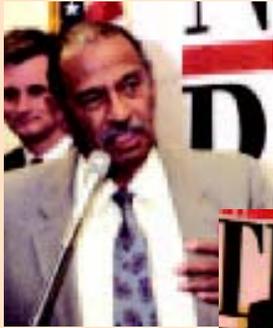
(Center) Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii)



(Third from left) Rep. Mel Watt (D-N.C.)



Rep. Jo Ann Davis (R-Va.)



Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.)



Rep. Artur Davis (D-Ala.)

Over 1,000 members traveled to the nation's capitol to attend AFGE's annual Legislative & Grassroots Mobilization Conference between February 9-12. AFGE members welcomed Senators **Susan Collins** (R-Maine), **Edward Kennedy** (D-Mass.) and other high profile speakers who discussed legislative and policy initiatives involving federal and D.C. workers. Here are just a few of the members of Congress and labor leaders who proudly support AFGE.



(l-r) Reps. Jim Marshall (D-Ga.), Rob Andrews (D-N.J.) and Alcee Hastings (D-Fla.)

Photos by Jocelyn Augustino



Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.)



(l) Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) and (r) Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.)



Rep. Tom Allen (D-Maine)



Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.)

Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.)



Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)



Rep. Robert Wexler (D-Fla.)



Rep. Lincoln Davis (D-Tenn.)



Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.)



AFL-CIO Sec.-Tres. Richard L. Trumka



## DVA Docs and other Pros Say “Union Yes”

**A** FGE recently celebrated election wins for two units of professional employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). In the District of Columbia, some 350 Medical Center (VAMC) employees, including physicians, will be included in the new bargaining unit now represented by AFGE **Local 2798**. The Local already represents the non-professional employees at the VAMC. Local 2798 Pres. **Cleo Pennington**, EVP **Dwight Lamar**, Sec.-Tres. **Richard Settle** and DVA Council 53 Rep. **Valorie Reilly**, were instrumental in the election win.

Not to be left behind, 160 DVA pros at the VAMC in Las Vegas overwhelmingly chose AFGE as their union. In so doing, these workers—doctors, registered nurses, psychologists and social workers—joined the non-professional workers currently represented by AFGE **Local 2297**. Hats off to Local Pres. **Lula May Jones**, VP **Les Mitchell** and DVA Physician/Organizer **Mark Ellis** for their tireless efforts in bringing these workers into the AFGE family.

## AFGE Wins Case for DVA Physician

**M**ore and more physicians in the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) are joining AFGE because it has proven it can, will, and does protect unionized physicians. A recent decision involving an AFGE physician at the DVA Medical Center in Columbia, Mo., proves that point.

AFGE’s DVA Council believed the hospital director disciplined **Dr. Gary Parker** because he’s an AFGE Local President and they wanted to “make a statement.” The attempt by management to dissuade doctors from joining AFGE failed.

AFGE Attorney **Martin R. Cohen** represented Parker on his appeal to the in-house Title 38 Disciplinary Appeals Board (DAB). The three-member board, seeing through the false claims by the hospital director, exonerated him. DAB reached the correct and just conclusion because Parker, a Title 38 employee, was able to successfully contest a patient care related disciplinary action. Also helping Parker’s case was the fact that the agency’s final decision was subject to judicial review.

It was AFGE that lobbied Congress for this statutory language in 1991 when the Title 38 personnel laws were being overhauled. AFGE’s effective legislative and legal efforts ten years ago helped Parker win his case. Following the decision, AFGE’s General Counsel’s Office filed for and won an award for attorney fees and travel expenses totaling \$21,508.88.

AFGE protects its unionized physicians in the DVA—something more and more physicians like Dr. Gary Parker are realizing everyday.

## DVA Nurses — Make Your Voices Heard

**I**n order to address problems with the recruitment and retention of Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) nurses, Congress formed the *National Commission on VA Nursing*. The Commission held public hearings in New Orleans, Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia throughout April.

AFGE members who are Nursing Assistants, Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses, Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, etc., submitted written testimony to the Commission regarding the current DVA performance of nursing staff review (standards boards), promotion, recognition, respect and rewards.

The Commission will consider all testimony when making legislative and policy recommendations to Congress and the Secretary of the DVA for enhancing staff retention and recruitment, as well as defining the future of nursing in the DVA.

Any nurse can go to AFGE’s Web site, [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org), to find out more about the Commission.



# AFGE News

## Enter AFGE's 2003 Web Site Contest

To recognize AFGE Locals, Councils and Districts that have taken advantage of the Internet to strengthen the union, AFGE will be holding the 2003 Web Site Contest. This year's contest will have two divisions—Locals and Councils/Districts.



Criteria for the contest can be found on AFGE's Web site, [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org). One first place award and one second place award for general excellence will be given in each division. The three independent judges may also award honorable mentions. Written entries must be postmarked by Friday, May 2. For complete details and submission information, log onto [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

## APR-HHH Award

AFGE's 2003 A. Philip Randolph-Hubert H. Humphrey Award will be presented during the union's 36th National Convention to an AFGE member who has demonstrated outstanding service in a community activity or in the development of community or workplace service programs or policies. Nominations must be postmarked by May 16, 2003. For complete details, visit AFGE's Web site at [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

## AFGE Food Inspection Council Doubles Its Size

The Federal Labor Relations Authority's (FLRA) Boston Region issued a decision on a petition filed by AFGE seeking clarification of the National Joint Council of Food Inspection Locals' (NJCFIL) bargaining unit. In question was the newly created position of Consumer Safety Inspector working for the Office of Field Operations of the Food Safety Inspection Service, USDA. The ruling, dated March 6, includes Consumer Safety Inspectors in the Council's bargaining unit, nearly doubling the size of the unit from 3,437 employees to a total of 6,572 employees.

## 2003 AFGE National Convention

AFGE's 36th National Convention will be held Monday, August 18, through Friday, August 22, 2003, at:

**Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino**  
3950 Las Vegas Boulevard South  
Las Vegas, Nev. 89119-1006  
(702) 632-7777

### Note Important Changes

*Important changes for the 2003 AFGE National Convention:*

- 1) **NO ON-SITE REGISTRATION! PRE-REGISTRATION ONLY and must be post-marked by July 21, 2003;**
- 2) **All delegates must be elected by July 18, 2003;** and
- 3) Those who merely show up will not be seated.

**Check your mail for complete 2003 Convention details and information.**

## Do You Have a Story?

Do you have an AFGE-related story you'd like to share with 220,000 of your union brothers and sisters? If so, send your 300-words or less story to: "I Have a Story" c/o *The Government Standard*, 10th Floor, 80 F St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. All stories must include a contact name, Local number, address and phone number. If including a photo, be sure everyone is identified. Please, no Polaroids. All stories and photos become property of the AFGE Communications Dept.



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## Three Locals See Member Power as the Answer

Approaching the challenge from different perspectives, three AFGE Locals recently sought to add a fresh, new dimension to their organizing programs. Two of the Locals—NASA Space Center **Local 513** in Florida, and Kirtland Air Force Base (AFB) **Local 2263** in New Mexico—devoted two full days off the clock to work on the development of strategic plans. In St. Louis, Agriculture **Local 3354** began its action planning process with a weeklong session of interviews with the workforce (both members and potential members) to identify issues of interest to workers, as well as identifying natural group leaders for possible leadership development.

What is noteworthy about these approaches is that each of the three Locals sought to build membership by building power at the grassroots level of their organizations. Instead of merely scheduling a couple of Lunch & Learns or a benefits table, each Local President took a road much less traveled within AFGE—they held up a mirror to their individual organizations and took a hard look at how the Local was operating.

“When I came to AFGE’s Local Presidents Training last December and completed the training on strategic planning, the concept just wasn’t clicking,” says **Michelle Sandoval**, Pres. of Local 2263. “I knew what I wanted, but never recognized it as strategic planning.”

Like Sandoval, **Bill Killpartrick**, Local 513 Pres., had been a member of the same class of new Local Presidents that attended training in D.C. Killpartrick also wanted to build a powerful Local, but was unsure how to go about it. When the suggestion was made that Local 513 engage in a two-day strategic planning session to include each of the Local’s Executive Board members and Stewards, Killpartrick jumped at the chance.

“Our Local had been struggling just to stay afloat,” Killpartrick shared. “Mem-

bership was low and we just couldn’t see how things would get any better any time soon. After two days of focus on our mission, we developed a sound action plan that at least gets us moving in the right direction.”

Although both Locals developed “Power-Plans” based on the AFGE Strategic Plan developed at the National Leadership Meeting held in Chicago in 2002, each was careful to look first at the Local’s strengths and weaknesses in deciding which priorities to tackle first. In both cases, testing commitment of the Local leadership team represented the first challenge to overcome.

“For the strategic planning session, we invited all of our Executive Board members and Stewards—a total of 16 people,” recalls Sandoval. “I was worried about who would show up because we weren’t able to offer official time or lost wages. Folks had to use their annual leave or work without pay. I honestly expected just a few Executive Board members and Stewards. Instead, we ended up with only three people who couldn’t make it.”

In the case of Local 3354, **Steve Hollis** envisioned a step prior to the strategic planning process. “We need to revitalize our Local, not just recruit more members,” said Hollis. “To do this we felt we needed to hear back from our workforce about their views of the future direction of the Local. Finding volunteers to help build our power meant addressing various tensions in the Local—some of which were racial, others a matter of process or procedure.”

Hollis arranged for approximately 60 bargaining unit employees to be interviewed one-on-one by four AFGE field staff. Each of the interviews took approximately 45 minutes to complete, and questions ranged from views about the Local to political and legislative issues and communications processes.

“Interviewees were provided a specific time frame to participate and the Steward

for that area was assigned the responsibility of getting the employee releases. Those interviewed were matched demographically with a staff interviewer (Black, Latino, White, etc.) and both members and potential members were targeted,” Hollis reported.

Hollis says that his Local will take the information it has gathered through the interview process and will use it to inform and support the development of a Local Action Plan. As with the NASA and Kirtland Local Presidents, Hollis sought an approach that would include more, not fewer, workers in the decision-making process of the Local. Although conducting the interviews was a labor intensive and time consuming process, Local 3354 now knows much more about what employees want the union to do and how the workforce can help the Local leadership build union power at the job site.

According to AFGE Education Director **Virginia duRivage**, mobilizing for power at the workplace is the most logical thing for AFGE Locals to do given the enormous legislative and political challenges facing the union.

“Building an effective mobilization structure at the Local level is a must-do task for union leaders who are serious about fighting back. Two or three union officers and a handful of Stewards just aren’t enough to get the job done,” duRivage asserts. “But by fortifying the Local with a sound mobilization structure, issues like contract and midterm bargaining, legislative and political action and membership recruitment can be addressed in a consistent way that also helps to build union power through increased grassroots strength.”

If you would like more information about how you can help your Local increase its power at your work site, contact your area Steward or Local President.



# TSA SCREENERS' UPDATE

## THE PROUD AND THE BRAVE



The 13 new charter members of TSA Local 1 are (from left to right): Matthew Earnest, William Richard, Cynthia Cavalie, Anthony Howell, Robert Marchetta, Joyce Castillo, AFGE National President Bobby Harnage Sr., Lynne Holley, Les Marzke, Dennis Cullity, James Ferace, Shawn Franklin, Kurt Kugelberg, and Chris Ashcraft.

**O**n March 3, 2003, just days after moving into the Department of Homeland Security, 13 TSA screeners from various U.S. airports became founding members of AFGE TSA Local 1. These brave security officers took a step toward building what will be a model labor organization (union) for the 21st century. In being sworn in by AFGE National President Bobby L. Harnage Sr., the charter members pledged “loyalty to the government of the United States and the faithful performance of official duties.”

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