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



Pentagon Set to Annihilate Rights & Protections of DoD's Civilian Workforce

Legislation Passes House in Mere 23 Days

While the world watched a bronze statue of Saddam Hussein fall in Baghdad, top brass at the Pentagon were pressuring key members of Congress to rubber stamp a 205-page piece of legislation to tear down the existing personnel system in the Department of Defense (DoD). The legislation, which passed the House on May 22, specifically eliminates annual pay raises, step increases, appeal rights, bargaining rights, and reduction-in-force protections for some 700,000 civilian DoD personnel.

"The Secretary of Defense is ramming a plan through Congress that would scrap more than a

century of civil service law and replace it with a new spoils system that concentrates power in his office," said AFGE National President Bobby L. Harnage. "Civilian DoD employees at installations all over the country have spent their entire careers preparing, supplying and mobilizing our troops—this is the thanks they get?"

The Pentagon plan doesn't stop at annihilating the rights and protections of DoD's civilian workforce, it will also do away with thousands of other regulations designed to protect the health and environment of their community.

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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.

Notice of Nominations & Elections

AFGE will hold nominations and elections for the offices of National President, National Secretary-Treasurer and Director of Women's Department at its 36th National Convention, which is being held on Monday, August 18, through Friday, August 22, 2003, at Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino. The Resort is located at 3950 Las Vegas Boulevard South, Las Vegas, 89119-1006. Nominations and elections will be conducted, and protests filed, in accordance with the "AFGE Rules of Conduct for an Election" as provided in Appendix A of the AFGE National Constitution, and with the Convention Rules, the current version of which is set forth in Appendix C of the AFGE National Constitution. All offices are for a three-year term.

Nominations: The Convention will convene on Mon., Aug. 18, at 10:00 a.m. Nominations shall be made by delegates in writing, stating the name of the candidate and signed by the delegate making the nomination. Under current Convention Rules, nominations shall be received by the chair of the Election Committee before 4:00 p.m. on Mon., Aug. 18. No person may be a candidate for more than one office.

Qualifications: No person shall be a candidate for, or be elected to, national office unless he or she: has been a government employee for three consecutive years; has been a member in good standing of the Federation for the three consecutive years immediately prior to the date of nomination; and is not a member in any labor organization not affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

Election: Under current Convention Rules, the polls will open to delegates for the election of officers from 7:30 a.m. through 11:30 a.m. on Wed., Aug. 20. Any required run-off election will be held immediately following the tally of votes.

The Assault on American Freedoms

Once upon a time, not long ago, we lived in a country where the pursuit of liberty was a sacred cause, where smarts and hard work were the currency of advancement. And with our liberty came a respect for privacy; your business was your business and mine was mine.



Bobby L. Harnage

Today we live in a country where the government has license to record our every move—our credit card transactions, our bookstore purchases, our e-mails, the Web sites we visit, etc.

Our country is defended by a military that relies heavily on a quality civilian workforce dedicated to America's freedom. Soon, in the civilian defense workforce, promotions and pay adjustments could depend not on your service to your country or what you know of the intricacies of the mission or your job. Instead, advancement could depend

on *who* you know or how subservient you are to following political orders.

Virtually every government agency is targeted for total takeover by the prevailing political leadership. From top jobs to janitorial crews, each position could soon be fair game in a political spoils system.

A former felon convicted of lying to the U.S. Congress has been selected by the Department of Defense (DoD) to head a previously secret program called the Total Information Awareness (TIA) project. TIA

dozen more launched by the powers that be.

The Power Grab

Beginning with the Patriot Act, which was rushed to passage in the days that followed the murderous acts of 9/11, the current administration has engaged in an unprecedented power grab that not only targets the terrorists who seek to do us harm, but grants the executive branch of government powers that far exceed those envisioned by our Founding Fathers.

Section 215 of the Patriot Act allows investigators to obtain records from Internet service providers, grocery stores, libraries, bookstores—just about any business. The search warrants required to obtain your library records are now secret and not subject to appeal. And the Act forbids your librarian from informing you that the government is monitoring you. The Department of Justice has already drafted Patriot Act II. This Act goes much further in eroding our most basic freedoms.

Capitalizing on the reasonable fear of terrorist activities, the administration created TIA and tapped Admiral **John Poindexter** (Ret.) to lead it. Yet during the 1980's, Poindexter attempted to circumvent the Constitution in the illegal arms-for-hostages Iran-Contra scandal, lied to Congress and was convicted on a felony charge. (President **George H.W. Bush** later pardoned him.)

Even when forced to accept the demands of the American people for protections from real threats—those faced at airports, national borders, etc.—the administration has used those circumstances to implement other, power-grabbing agendas like the dismantling of the civil service and the busting of unions. When the American people demanded a federalized screener workforce at our nation's airports, the administration used the new Transportation Security

***“We are to guard
against ourselves;
not against ourselves
as we are, but as we
may be. For who
can imagine what
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—Thomas Jefferson

is a computer effort designed to collect massive amounts of information about each citizen and non-citizen alike and share that information with “outside experts” and “friendly allies,” in order to “create actionable options” for all manner of civil and military authorities.

Never in modern history has such a total assault on the U.S. Constitution—the source of the freedoms that define American values—been launched from the White House. From our vantage point, we, the regular working people of the U.S.A., could easily miss the totality of this assault. For while each of us focuses on the attack aimed most directly at *our* jobs or agencies or families, we are sometimes too distracted to notice the

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Administration (TSA) to set the precedent for a federal workforce deprived of selection based on merit, appeal rights before the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), and other civil service protections. (Nevertheless, AFGE is hard at work organizing the TSA screeners.)

When Congress, over the objections of the White House, insisted on the creation

Butting the Civil Service

As the President announced to the nation our victory in Iraq, DoD was waging a stealth war on the civilian defense workforce.

The Pentagon plan for a new "National Security Personnel System" in DoD will essentially gut Title 5, the section of the U.S. Code that governs

merit or national security, but on a desire to dismantle the Civil Service System that has kept our country's progress operating at a high level, regardless of what political party ruled the White House. It's about money and power, *not* security.

This legislation legalizes waste, fraud, and abuse and sets into law a spoils system. It creates a return to the era of a patronage workforce, eliminating due process in adverse actions and the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) appeal process. And, yes, it takes away the laws that guarantee union rights and collective bargaining. Freedom of association is a cornerstone of our democracy.

Act to Save America

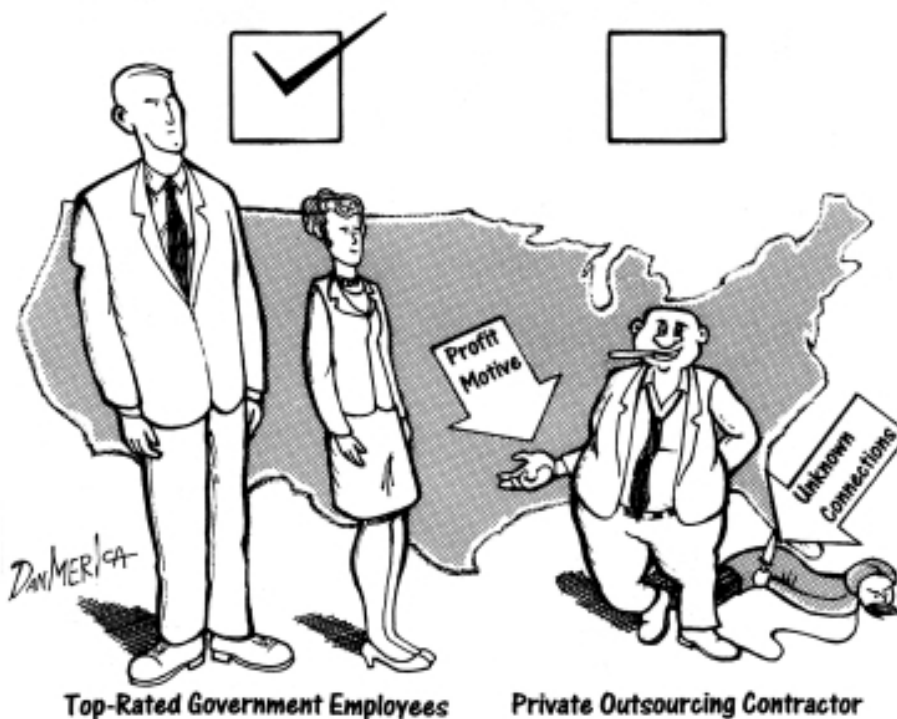
Taken together, these actions amount to nothing less than an assault on the American way of life and on the freedoms for which our men and women in uniform put their lives on the line every day. Long after this administration passes into history, the legacy of its actions will live in American law. But you can help to stop the advance on your liberties.

In these perilous times, it is imperative that you reach out to your Senators and Representatives in Congress to demand that they protect the Constitution they have sworn to defend. Tell your neighbors of the threats to their liberties and pursuit of happiness that are part and parcel of the administration's overall agenda. Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper and call into your favorite radio talk shows. The future of all America is at stake—it is every bit as patriotic to protect our Constitution as it is to protect our borders.

Thomas Jefferson warned us of the perils of straying from the American vision when he said, "We are to guard against ourselves; not against ourselves as we are, but as we may be. For who can imagine what we may become under circumstances not now imaginable?"

Bob Warnock

American's clear choices to run the Federal Government



of a Department of Homeland Security, the administration seized the opportunity to write legislation that could effectively take away your freedom to belong to your union, and deprive employees of their right to collective bargaining, fair representation, and civil service protections. The administration hoped to shove its version of the legislation quickly through Congress but, together with our allies in the labor movement and in the Senate, we were able to slow down the passage long enough to negotiate a less damaging bill.

federal employment and government organization. And if DoD succeeds in waiving the Code that shields over 700,000 civilian employees from the political winds, what's to stop other agencies from doing the same?

During Congress' spring recess, Pentagon officials dumped the 205-page bill on the desks of House members and then pushed the House leadership into rushing it through the committee process so that it could be attached to this year's Defense Authorization Act. This rush to passage is not based on

During the late 1990's, the U.S. began to pay down its national debt while the living standards for working families improved. For the first time since the 1970's, the real value of wages went up. More people were employed. Retirement funds got larger. Today, that situation has changed.

In 2003, many Americans struggle to keep their jobs. Unemployment is at its highest level in almost a decade. Healthcare coverage is increasingly rare. Savings for retirement fell almost 40 percent because of accounting scandals and the drop in the stock market. As a result, today people work harder for less and cannot guarantee a better future for themselves or their families.

Why did everything change?

Since President **Bush** took office in 2001, national priorities shifted—and not just because of the terrorist attacks. In the last two years, the trend toward inequality that started in the 1980's and moderated a bit in the 1990's, has again worsened. Because of massive tax cuts that turned record surpluses into record deficits, government programs that benefited working families will be less generous. Our outlook for the future is less hopeful. Today, more Americans are out of work, need healthcare, and worry about their retirement. In George W. Bush's America, government fights for the wealthy, not working families.

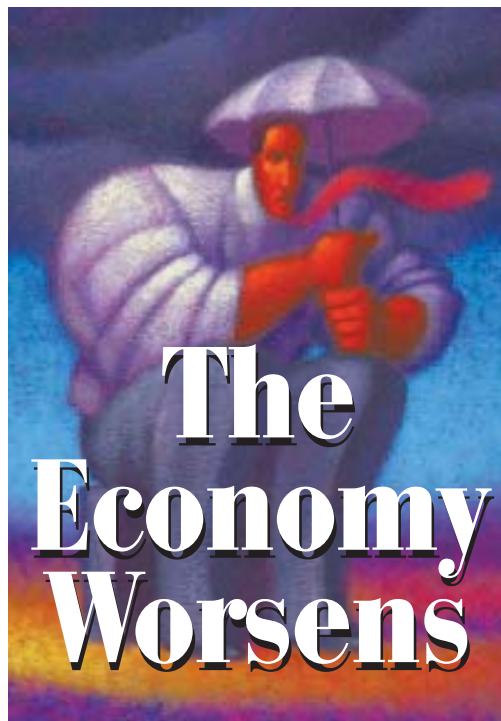
Since the start of 2001, there are 2 million fewer jobs in the U.S. Almost 9 million Americans are out of work. That matches the highest rate in nine years. Additionally, 4.8 million workers who want fulltime employment cannot find it and are forced to work only part time. To recover all those jobs, the national economy would need to add 140,000 new positions each month until the 2004 presidential election.

Unemployment affects all Americans, but has fallen especially hard on minority communities. Among African-Americans, unemployment is 10.9 percent, an increase of almost one percent over the last year. For Hispanics, the rate is 7.5 percent.

President Bush could become the first president to lead the country into a drop in employment since the 1930's. The last president to oversee this type of job loss was **Herbert Hoover** in 1928-1932, during the first years of the Great Depression.

Health insurance and retirement savings

Health insurance is becoming not only more expensive, but less secure. Over 47 million Americans are uninsured. Over half of them work full time. The number of employers that help pay for health insurance has fallen. Most people over age 65 are covered by Medicare, which provides health care to the disabled and elderly. But those who are younger often lack coverage. One in five Americans will go without health insurance at some point this year.



Federal employees and others with 401(k)-type retirement plans face serious problems with their retirement security. All three of its stock-based TSP funds have suffered serious losses since President Bush took office. The C Fund dropped over 30 percent from 2000 through 2002. It fell 22 percent in 2002 alone. In May 2001, TSP created the S Fund and I Fund. From that point through 2002, the S Fund went down 19 percent. Meanwhile, the I Fund dropped 31 percent. Many federal employees have had to postpone retirement because of these losses.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) projected 51,000 federal employee retirements in fiscal year 2002. Over 20 percent of those projected retirements did

not happen. Even OPM acknowledges that this is because many workers simply could not afford to retire.

State and Local Fiscal Troubles

The public sector is in dire straits not only at the federal level but at the state and local levels as well. Slow growth combined with Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy have forced the federal government to slash aid to states and cities. As a result, governments across the country are cutting services and raising taxes. States are facing their worst budgets in almost 60 years. California may need to cut \$30 billion from its budget for fiscal year 2004. New York is looking at a \$9.3 billion deficit. In Washington state, legislators have to fill a budget gap of over \$2.5 billion.

Around the country states are realizing that there are only two ways to balance state budgets: revenue increases and spending cuts. Fifteen states will increase taxes in fiscal year 2004. Many will target things like cigarettes and alcohol, but may also increase sales, property, and corporate taxes. States will also cut back employees and programs. Public employees face cut backs in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, and Virginia. Twenty-six states have cut programs like education, Medicaid, and health and human services.

The Cause

President Bush chose to aid the rich rather than help working families. His tax cuts focus on the wealthy. This year households making over \$1 million a year will get a tax cut of \$93,500 on average. Meanwhile, middle income households will get a \$217 cut. His tax cuts mean less money for important federal programs, homeland security, or Medicare. Jobs, affordable healthcare, or a secure retirement for working families are not part of his agenda. His policies are causing pain today and will cost over one trillion tomorrow.

The total cost of the law will be \$1.5 trillion over the next ten years. Federal employees in particular will pay the price for President Bush's irresponsible leadership both now and in the years to come.

PRIVATIZATION NEWS FLASH

The **Bush** Administration's effort to privatize government work continues at breakneck speed. Agencies have announced plans to turn over jobs to firms that put profits over service to the country. AFGE continues to fight on the front lines of this war from coast-to-coast. Here's some of the latest news from federal agencies.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The Director of the National Park Service admitted that the Bush privatization quotas take money away from programs and target minorities.

In an internal Interior Department memo, which was leaked to the press, Park Service Director **Fran Mainella** said the high costs of privatization will have "serious consequences for visitor services and seasonal operations." She also admitted that privatization targets minorities. In Washington, D.C., minorities hold nine out of ten positions scheduled for contracting out. Privatization plans in San Francisco and Santa Fe, N.M., would also force many minority employees of the Park Service to lose their jobs.

SEAFOOD INSPECTION

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) wants to privatize its Seafood Inspection Program. This program protects the public from disease by maintaining strict health standards. Every year seafood inspectors examine 17 percent of the seafood in the U.S. They inspect products for 2,500 businesses around the country. Seafood inspectors examine food provided to American soldiers and to children through the School Lunch Program. Ignoring the risks, NOAA would like to turn this work over to a private company that focuses on profit, not services.

AFGE is fighting back. Members of AFGE **Local 2594**, who are located in various states across the U.S., filed a challenge to the privatization plans using the FAIR Act. Then they reached out to members of Congress. The agency has not made a final decision on the issue, but it knows that the Seafood Inspectors will fight to protect their jobs and American consumers.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The Department of Labor wants to get rid of thousands of jobs across the country. These workers protect American workers' pensions, wages,

and job safety. The agency targeted Mine Safety and Health Inspectors, Occupational Safety and Health Compliance Officers, Wage and Hour Investigators, Federal Workers Compensation Claims Examiners, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Officers, Pension and Welfare Benefits Administrators, Bureau of Labor Management Standards and the indispensable and experienced support staffs upon whom they rely.

The National Council of Field Labor Locals (NCFL) fought back. Using the FAIR Act, it challenged this wholesale attempt to turn

the public trust over to the private sector. In response, the agency agreed to informally consult with the NCFL regarding the positions that would be subject to competition. This process provides the union with information about which positions will be targeted. It will give the union the information necessary to fight to protect important government services and good union jobs.

COAST GUARD

The Coast Guard planned to privatize building services functions in the Facilities Design and Construction Center, Norfolk, Va., (FDCCLANT).

The architects and engineers in these positions operate as contract managers. They ensure that Coast Guard and public interests are met during planning, design, and construction. As such, they exert tremendous influence, direction, control and authority in making sure public funds are budgeted and used to satisfy mission needs and ensure public trust. At any one time FDCCLANT may be monitoring as much as \$350 million in active design and construction projects.

AFGE **Local 2747**, which represents Coast Guard employees, registered a victory in the privatization fight. Ultimately, the agency agreed that these positions should remain in-house. By leading this fight, Local 2747 guaranteed that federal tax dollars would be protected by independent government employees—and they also preserved good union jobs.

THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICAL CHARTING OFFICE

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) wants to privatize 221 positions in the National Aeronautical Charting Office (NACO). Since 1926, NACO has

produced aeronautical charts, books, and data for air navigational use by the public, private, and military aviation communities of the United States and beyond. The general public and private companies rely upon NACO services and data, which is available at no cost in the public interest, to produce aeronautical charts and products that enable pilots to fly safely through our nation's airspace. The air traffic control system of the FAA depends on NACO services, products, and data to control air traffic in the national airspace system. The high quality and accuracy of the products, services, and data produced by government employees has always been an integral factor in maintaining the high degree of flight safety in our nation's airspace.

When it heard that the FAA planned to privatize this work, **Local 2703** went into action. It held a Lunch & Learn to educate employees about the privatization risk and organize new union members. It issued a FAIR Act challenge to the agency to prove the work should remain in-house. Then the Local took the fight to Capitol Hill. Local President **Ron Carberry** visited Congressional delegations from the D.C. metro-area to tell his workers' story. Stay tuned for updates in this ongoing battle as the Local continues to tell its story to key lawmakers.

For some, it was their first trip to Washington, D.C., so the Local also made arrangements to tour the Capitol.

"An AFGE Legislative Representative spent the entire day guiding us through the halls of Congress. He attended the meetings at Rep. **Nick Rahall's** (D-W.V.) and Byrd's offices, fully understanding the complexities of vessel documentation and how it was an inherently governmental function that could not be privatized. AFGE members were thoroughly impressed with the professionalism and knowledge of AFGE staff and were thrilled to see how receptive the legislators were to our concerns. The Hill staffers promised to work with the employees to fight back against privatization.

"The whole trip was an exercise in empowering the employees. We no longer felt that we were alone. We no longer felt that management was invincible. We knew that we had an ally that we could count on—one that was even stronger than management. This was a great feeling for AFGE members. It was reassuring to know that someone would fight for our jobs. It took the concerted efforts of the AFGE National Office and the dedicated members of our Local to pull the whole thing off.

"AFGE's Legislative Department helped us organize a second trip to D.C. in October. That time we scheduled visits with Senators **John Rockefeller** (D-W.V.) and **Arlen Specter** (R-Pa.) in addition to revisiting Byrd. We secured a commitment from Rockefeller's office

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to send a letter to the Coast Guard Commandant's office and a letter that criticized the Coast Guard's effort to privatize such an efficient and award-winning facility. The Senator came through with the letters. We posted them on Local 43's bulletin board where they remain to this day—a symbol of our victory over despair and inaction.

"To date, we have derailed the Coast Guard's effort to privatize our workplace. We survived not only that but also an effort

to decertify Local 43. Employees began to see how effective and important an ally AFGE was in fighting to keep our jobs. Of course, not everyone is happy with our success. The Director of the NVDC is quite upset that AFGE opposes turning the NVDC into a government corporation. We wear his dissatisfaction as a badge of honor.

"We continue to maintain contact with the offices of Byrd and Rockefeller and were surprised to hear that during a recent Senate Appropriations Committee meeting, Byrd asked the Coast Guard Commandant if he was going to change the motto from 'Always Ready' to 'Always Privatize.' Of course the workers were thrilled that Senator Byrd asked the tough questions.

"We hope that our story will serve in reminding our members there is hope when we fight back."

Editors' note: Want to know more about Local 43's fight? AFGE members can visit the Members-Only Privatization page at www.afge.org.

Senator Byrd (D-W.V.) Discourages Bush Nominee from Privatizing Federal Jobs

U.S. Senator **Robert C. Byrd** (D-W.V.) recently pressed a top Bush Administration nominee, **Clay Johnson**, about the President's plans to contract out federal jobs. Johnson is the President's nominee to be Deputy Director for Management at the Office of Management and Budget and currently serves as the White House Presidential Personnel Director. He was President Bush's Chief of Staff when Bush was Governor of Texas.

If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Johnson would oversee the implementation of the President's Management Agenda. Since the agenda was unveiled in August 2001, Byrd said the White House has directed agencies to adopt a competitive sourcing initiative to let private contractors compete for at least half of all federal jobs deemed not to be "inherently governmental."

"The Administration's efforts to overhaul the

federal workforce have so far been undertaken without meaningful legislative oversight or input from Congress," stated Byrd. Before agencies turn over work to the private sector, "we need to look more closely at other factors in addition to cost, such as the quality of the services performed by contractors and the ability of agencies to recruit and retain the best possible workers.

"Many federal workers have devoted their lives to public service. To reward their service by blaming them for the problems of government, by privatizing their jobs and threatening their health care and retirement benefits is terrible management policy and a prescription for high turnover and lower quality service," stated Byrd.

Byrd, who serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee, said he has questioned top agency and department heads about job privatization plans. Before meeting with Johnson, Byrd discussed the proposal with the new IRS Commissioner, the Commandant of the Coast Guard and the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.



Sen. Robert C. Byrd
(D-W.V.)

"Many federal workers have devoted their lives to public service. To reward their service by blaming them for the problems of government, by privatizing their jobs and threatening their health care and retirement benefits is terrible management policy and a prescription for high turnover and lower quality service."

AFGE Applauds DVA Bill

The VA Medical Workforce Enhancement Act of 2003 (H.R. 1951) was introduced on May 6, in recognition of Nurses Day by U.S. Representatives **Stephen Lynch** (D-Mass.) and **Jack Quinn** (R-N.Y.). AFGE applauded the bill's introduction, pointing out that the Department of Veterans Affairs' (DVA) staffing ratios, like many private hospitals, are unsafe and placing veterans at unnecessary risk. Healthcare workers are also concerned that when they are forced to care for too many patients, they do not have adequate time to provide each veteran with high quality and compassionate care.

This bipartisan bill would give dedicated DVA health care professionals the tools to work within the DVA to establish agreed upon nurse-to-patient ratios and patient caseload levels for other healthcare givers and providers that would reduce the risk of patient deaths or serious complications and enhance the quality of care.

A recent article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* establishes that there is a clear link between nurse-to-patient ratios and patient successes. For every additional patient over four in a Registered Nurse's (RN) workload, the risk of death increases by seven percent for surgical patients. Unfortunately, many DVA facilities do not meet the threshold safe ratio of one RN to four medical/surgical patients.

AFGE noted that at both the DVA Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla., and in the DVA's Boston Health Care System, nurse-to-patient

ratios for surgical patients run anywhere from one to six during day shifts to as high as one to 13 on night shifts.

H.R. 1951 would help improve the quality of care and staffing levels on weekends by authorizing the DVA to pay Saturday premium pay to all Title 5 employees who work in DVA hospitals. The bill ensures that the DVA is able to retain highly skilled and qualified nurses by improving promotion opportunities for nurses and other

workers. It also strengthens the clinical performance-based criteria for rewarding and recognizing nurses, and advances the DVA's efforts to mentor and support nurses at the beginning of their careers.

AFGE believes that the provisions in H.R. 1951 will greatly enhance the quality of patient care by giving the DVA's caregivers the tools they need to be more effective advocates for patients and enhancing the DVA's ability to retain and recruit key hospital staff.

AFGE represents some 150,000 DVA employees nationwide.



TSA UPDATE

AFGE Files Response Brief in TSA Lawsuit

AFGE filed an opposition brief on May 9, in response to the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) request that the District Court dismiss AFGE's lawsuit. AFGE originally filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on January 10, 2003, charging that the TSA Administrator did not have the authority under the Aviation and Transportation Security Act to prohibit screeners from organizing.

AFGE's response brief rebuts TSA's assertions that the TSA Administrator's decision is not reviewable by the District Court and that AFGE's complaint should be dismissed for lack of jurisdiction.

AFGE has held the position that TSA officials do not have the authority to deprive workers of their right to join a labor union and that its broad and highly questionable personnel authority certainly does not include taking away First Amendment rights.

To date, AFGE has filed 14 petitions with the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) to represent airport screeners at the following airports: Baltimore-Washington; LaGuardia; Pittsburgh International; Chicago Midway; Greensboro (N.C.); Harlingen (which includes three small airports in South Texas—Harlingen, McAllen and Brownsville); John F. Kennedy; Orlando; Cincinnati;

Columbus; Dayton; Detroit; Charlotte; and Atlantic City (which includes three small airports—Trenton, Atlantic City and Salisbury, Md.).

When the first petitions were filed, TSA warned the FLRA that it did not have jurisdiction over the TSA Administrator and that any election order would not be enforceable. Now, adding new meaning to the term blatant hypocrisy, TSA is asking the Court to dismiss AFGE's lawsuit because the issue is before the FLRA. In a 'heads-we-win, tails-you-lose' argument, TSA is telling the Court that it will honor the FLRA's ruling only if it agrees with the TSA Administrator.

On March 3, AFGE established a new nationwide Local for TSA employees with 13 charter members. AFGE continues to strongly believe that if airport screeners and baggage handlers are to keep our skies safe, working conditions must improve—and improve dramatically. AFGE also contends that TSA's recent announcement to reduce the number of screeners protecting the American public raises serious security questions. Maintaining an adequate and stable workforce of screeners is essential to protecting our nation's skies.

For a copy of the brief and more federal screener information, log onto www.screenersunion.org.

AFGE =

A FGE has aggressively been working simultaneously on two fronts in relation to the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Within DHS, AFGE's been involved in a three-stage process (outlined below) with officials to design a new personnel system that includes an avenue where AFGE members' views are voiced and promoted. On the grassroots and organizing front, AFGE has put in place a working group comprised of AFGE staff and Council and Local leaders in DHS to develop and launch a campaign

to inform and mobilize DHS workers. A number of staff members from the Office of Labor and Management Relations (OLMR), Political Affairs (PA), Membership and Organization (M&O), Legislation, and Communications have been dedicated to work on both fronts. At press time, that staff has been deployed around the country to cover town hall meetings and focus groups related to the development of a new personnel system at DHS and to meet with Local leaders and AFGE members at special AFGE meetings.

Within DHS

Since the legislation passed, AFGE has aggressively promoted the employees' voice through numerous meetings with top DHS and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) officials including Secretary **Tom Ridge**, Director **Kay Cole James**, Under Secretary for Management **Janet Hale**, Under Secretary **Asa Hutchinson**, and others. In all of these meetings, DHS and OPM officials have repeatedly stated that they want to work with AFGE in this process of establishing a new personnel system for DHS.

AFGE played a large role in negotiating with DHS and OPM officials in how the process to design a new personnel system would be structured. AFGE was able to obtain a process in each of the three stages where we will be fully involved in research, analysis and developing options for a new system.

AFGE has one-half of OLMR working full time with OPM, DHS and other representatives in designing the new personnel system in Stage 1. The three permanent AFGE staff members from OLMR are **Phil Kete**, **Charlie Bernhardt**, and **Terry Rosen**.

The fourth member—former AFGE NVP **David Schlein**—is working on a term basis. Also involved in Stage 1 are eight AFGE Council/Local leaders, a.k.a. the Field Review Team, who will provide analysis and feedback during the design process. The Field Review Team includes **T.J. Bonner** (Border Patrol), **Rich Pierce** (Border Patrol), **Iggie Gentile** (INS), **Brenda Neuerburg** (INS), **Ivan Lebron** (Immigration Inspector), **Janice Montana** (Local 511), **Demetrios Stroubakis** (Coast Guard Local 43), and a FEMA member to be named.

Three-Stage Process for Developing DHS Personnel System

Stage 1) Research and Option Development (April-August 2003): During this phase, a wide variety of options for personnel systems will be developed. No recommendations are made. AFGE has 12-total representatives at this level of the process. This stage includes town hall meetings and focus groups in El Paso, Atlanta, Norfolk, Miami, Detroit, NYC, Seattle and Los Angeles;

Stage 2) Senior Review Committee (September-October 2003): Includes AFGE President Harnage and top DHS and OPM officials where the options will be narrowed;

Stage 3) DHS Announces a Proposed System (November 2003): Announcement initiates a 30-day comment period followed by another 30-day meet and confer period with a possible Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) process, followed by final notification to Congress of final decision.

A Strong Voice for DHS Employees

Grassroots and Organizing Front

The campaign for a strong voice is focused on building our collective power through an organizing/mobilizing and communications strategy. While the workgroup has been meeting regularly in AFGE, AFGE has also been meeting regularly with leaders on the road. For example, meetings have been held with INS Council and Local leaders at various INS events, trainings and national board meetings.

The campaign workgroup is making great progress. They've constructed and launched **www.DHSWorkers.org**, conducted online surveys (see page 10), and developed a comprehensive mobilization, education, and media campaign that serves as a call to action. The campaign will ask every single DHS worker to get engaged in the process to help get the best personnel system in place at DHS.

As part of the grassroots and organizing component, AFGE will be providing regular updates on the Web site, workplace flyers, local media training, as well as information on how members can participate in town hall meetings and focus groups. Go to **www.DHSWorkers.org** for more information.

DHSworkers.org
the source for DHS workers

Continued on page 10

AFGE = A Strong Voice for DHS Employees

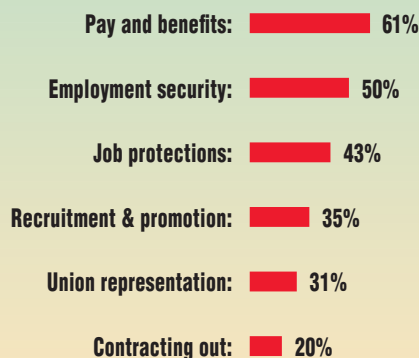
Continued from page 9

Why Get Involved?

We need AFGE members involved in the process *now* to impact the end product. Your attendance at the town hall meetings and focus groups, letters to members of Congress, and grassroots involvement with local media will shape the product that will be eventually released by Secretary Ridge. After the proposed rules and regulations are open for comment, we'll conduct a vote of AFGE members. This is a keystone of the grassroots and organizing component because it will demonstrate to DHS that the employees are just as engaged and interested in fair treatment and collective bargaining rights as they are in protecting U.S. citizens.

SURVEY RESULTS

Q: *Of the following areas relating to your employment in DHS, what concerns you the most?*



AFGE News

New Benefits Page on

www.AFGE.org

The AFGE Members-Only Benefits Page on the AFGE Web site has been redesigned. More consumer tips have been added, along with new links giving members more information than ever before. More importantly, you'll find information on several new benefit programs such as: Pet services (see below); Goodyear Tire & service

discounts; Cellular telephone discounts; Expanded union hotel discounts; Home computer discounts; and, movie rental discounts at Blockbuster & Hollywood Video. Take advantage of these benefits and save some of your hard-earned money today.

AFGE's Pet Services Program



About half of all union households include a pet. Pet related costs could have a substantial impact on a household budget. Overall, pet owners spend some \$12 billion a year on veterinary care and \$28 billion on pet products. The Dept. of Labor projects that the use of veterinary services will increase 44 percent by 2010. Pet health care coverage can provide substantial savings.

AFGE members can now choose pet health insurance to help cover the costs of an illness or accident. For pets that do not qualify for pet insurance for reasons of age or pre-existing conditions, a low-cost veterinarian discount plan can offer substantial savings.

AFGE has selected Pethealth as the provider of pet health insurance for the Union Plus Pet Services Program. For discounted veterinarian services, AFGE has selected Pet Assure, with a network of 2,900 participating veterinarians. PETCO, one of the largest

pet product retailers, will offer online discount pet products for the program.

Program Features: 10 percent discount on pet health insurance premiums from Pethealth; 40 percent discount on cost to join Pet Assure; 25 percent discount on veterinarian services at 2,900 veterinarians nationwide; and, special discount promotions from Petco.com. **Program Access:** AFGE members can access the programs online at www.afge.org. PETCO discounts are only available online. AFGE members can also use the following toll-free numbers: Union Plus Health Insurance 1 (866) 473-7387; and Union Plus Health Savings 1 (888) 789-7387.

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.

It's Your Civic Duty

Are You Registered?

In the next four months, AFGE will undertake a major list update and voter registration drive. Geared toward getting ready for next year's elections, list maintenance is necessary because when our membership files are compared to lists of registered voters, AFGE members' voter registration and membership information 'match' only 58 percent of the time. This grossly underestimates our actual voter registration and our power at the polls.

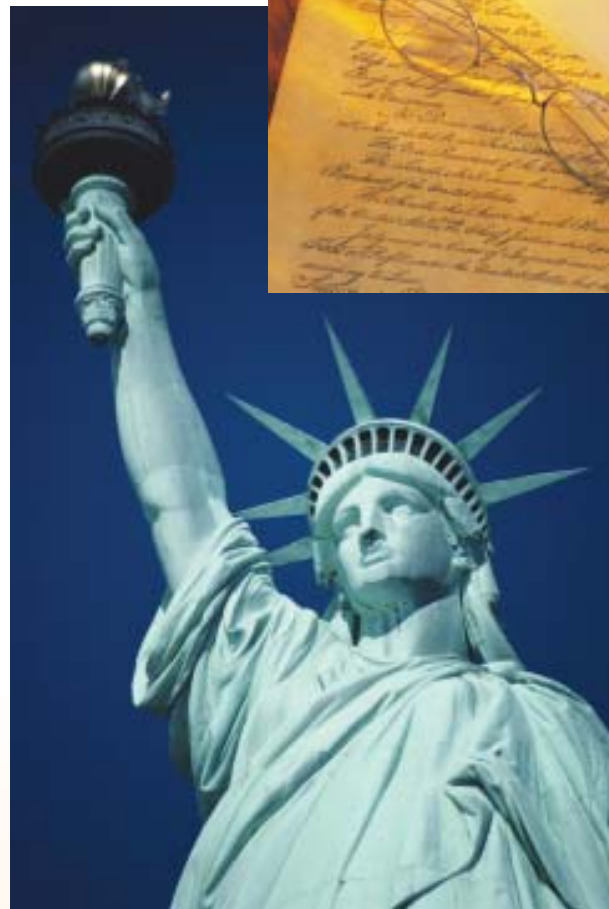
We ran a similar program for the first time last year, but it was hampered by the outdated nature of the membership list. New data has been compiled using the freshest information available, which should help eliminate this problem.

The problem of a 'non-match', when a member shows up as unregistered, occurs either because the member is actually not registered to vote or because the name and/or address given to AFGE is not the same as the name and address listed on the member's voter registration. The latter situation happens more often than you think. People move and forget to re-register to vote. Women marry and don't update their names on their voter registration card. Members sometimes give their business address to AFGE instead of their home address. It's our hope that we can register members who are not registered to vote and adjust the membership list for those whose information on file does not match their voter card.

If AFGE doesn't have your correct voter registration data and home address, we cannot contact you with information regarding candidates and the issues that will affect your jobs. This project is not just about making our lists neat, this is about AFGE

being able to get information into your hands on issues that matter to federal employees and their families. Communicating with our members has always been an important goal, but with the attacks on government workers becoming increasingly strident, it is now nothing short of a crucial priority.

Many people may not realize that they are coming up as unregistered voters. Please take a few seconds to compare the information kept by your Local office to your voter registration card. If the name and address do not match, you are showing up in our files as unregistered. This program will not be successful unless this data is brought in sync, so if your voter registration contains outdated information, e.g., your voter card reflects a former address, please re-register. If it is your Local that has the bad data—you registered to vote at your new house but your Local still has your old address on file—please inform your Local of your correct information so that your Local President or Treasurer can notify us of your amended data.



Of course, if you are not registered to vote, we encourage you to register as soon as possible. Online links can be found at www.afge.org, or you can call your local Board of Elections. Remember to register and vote—your job may depend on it! If you have any questions, please call **Kristin Nabers** in the AFGE Political Dept. at (202) 639-6407.

AFGE Is Fighting Privatization

AFGE members know that government privatization wastes tax dollars, jeopardizes the livelihoods of government workers, and disproportionately affects women, minorities and veterans. Here's what your union has been doing about it. For more information on how you can fight privatization efforts in your area, go to www.afge.org and click on the picture of Uncle Sam.

...MORE ON PAGES 5-6

AFGE Locals in Ariz. Rally 1,200+ to Save Government



(L-R) NVP Eugene Hudson, Central Ariz. CLC Ted Murphree, NO Joe Diggs, Natl. Pres. Bobby L. Harnage

More than 1,200 AFGE and AFL-CIO union members from the Phoenix area rallied against the White House's privatization plans and Department of Defense (DoD) legislation to end civil service union rights and the GS pay system. AFGE Locals **2382, 1547, 2401, 3964, 2924** and **2991** were joined by National President **Bobby L. Harnage** and District 12 NVP **Eugene Hudson** on May 17, at what has been called, "the largest rally in recent Arizona state history."

The rally served its purpose in educating and informing Phoenix residents about President Bush's privatization plan—a plan that

would affect over 28,000 federal workers in Arizona, including workers at the Department of Veterans Affairs, SSA, the Bureau of Prisons, and at Luke Air Force Base.

AFGE has been arguing that the privatization of jobs in every federal agency would negatively impact the quality of services taxpayers have come to rely upon while significantly reducing the tax base in states due to lost wages and benefits. Additionally, history has shown that privatization does not save money and does not make government more efficient.

"This privatization plan will become a burden on the Phoenix community," stated Hudson. "As the pay and benefits of Phoenix workers are cut, local businesses—like our dry cleaners and dentists—will see fewer customers, fewer dollars. And, our local and state governments will lose payroll and sales taxes while also picking up the tab to increase social service programs."

More than 50 AFL-CIO affiliated unions and community groups from Greater Phoenix joined AFGE members and federal workers at the rally.

White House privatization plans will cost D.C., Maryland and Virginia over 110,000 jobs. That's why AFGE and a number of Greater D.C. environmental, civil rights and labor groups came together and held a joint press conference against privatization on May 20.

The press conference was held at Freedom Plaza, just two blocks from 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., to educate and inform Greater D.C. residents that privatization plans will affect the jobs of some 35,000 in D.C., 25,000 in Maryland, and over 50,000 in Virginia.

Joining AFGE National Sec.-Treas. **Jim Davis** at the press conference were representatives from the NAACP, AFSCME, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the National Association of

AFGE Holds Press Conference in D.C. to Save 110,000 Area Jobs



Government Employees (NAGE), the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), and the National Park Conservation Association (NPCA).

The press conference highlighted how privatization is: 1) Wasting tax dollars; 2) hurting the environment and communities; 3) eliminating well-paying jobs; 4) targeting women, minorities and veterans; and 5) jeopardizing homeland security. Many jobs in Greater D.C. will go to private companies that have a history of paying less

in wages and benefits, and gouging taxpayers. Just two months ago, taxpayers were taken for \$31.8 million when a DoD contract scandal was uncovered. In the process, taxpayers lost their shirts and government employees lost their jobs.