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THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

70 Years of The Government Standard (1933-2003)

November/December 2003

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO

Worker Protections Promoted at Historic DHS Personnel Meeting AFGE Emerges Hopeful

A FGE National President **John Gage** aggressively promoted the interests of front-line employees during the three-day Senior Review Committee Meetings with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) officials. The October 20-22 Meetings brought dozens of agency heads and union leaders together to help establish one per-

sonnel system in DHS. Whatever system is selected in the upcoming months, it will impact the largest agency for decades to come.

Gage advocated for the following protections for DHS employees at the historic Meetings: 1) Union membership and collective bargaining rights for all non-management DHS employees. 2) An independent panel to settle collective bargaining impasses so that

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Photo by John Irvine

AFGE President John Gage, NTEU President Colleen Kelley (right) and NAAE President Michael Randall (left) at the Oct. 22 press conference immediately following the DHS Senior Review Committee Meetings.

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AFGE Sponsors WMD Training

During the most recent AFGE Law Enforcement Steering Committee Meeting in mid-September, AFGE members from the Border Patrol, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense and other agencies received weapons of mass destruction (WMD) training through AFGE at no cost to AFGE members.

In light of 9/11, many Federal Law Enforcement Officers have requested WMD training from their individual agencies only

to be denied. As a result, the AFGE Committee provided and planned the training through a certified WMD training course. Lessons covered included: identifying potential targets in the community; integrated and coordinated response concepts; introduction to WMD's; methods of protection; tactics and strategies in WMD incidents; and WMD scenarios. Participants were required to take a written test to complete the course.

AFGE Praises Senate Efforts to Stop Bush Privatization Plans

A FGE praised Senators **Barbara Mikulski** (D-Md.) and **Mary Landrieu** (D-La.) for their efforts to put a stop to changes by the Bush Administration to Office of Management Budget (OMB) Circular A-76. OMB has implemented a pro-contractor privatization process.

The Mikulski-Landrieu amendment to the Senate Transportation-Treasury Appropriation Bill on October 23, would have put a halt to that but failed by just one vote. The same amendment passed the House of Representatives on September 9 by a vote of 220-198.

"While we certainly can't declare victory, we feel that members of Congress are getting a deeper sense as to how privatization impacts their constituents. We applaud Senator Mikulski and Senator Landrieu for trying to reform a process which we think is vulnerable to politics and corruption and for attempting to maintain a system for government agencies that protects the interests of the American people," said AFGE National President **John Gage**.



A Message from National President John Gage

Opening Statement Before the DHS Senior Review Committee, October 20, 2003

John Gage

On behalf of AFGE, I'd like to thank DHS Secretary **Tom Ridge** and OPM Director **Kay Coles James** for holding these sessions this week. We believe that the views of the employees as they have been expressed to us and as they have been validated by the focus groups and town hall meetings must be given great weight in this process. Overwhelmingly, employees and supervisors believe that the GS system works but could be improved. Overwhelmingly, employees want the right to have a fair and meaningful avenue to appeal management actions. Whatever recommendation comes out of this committee should reflect reality.

The mission of DHS includes protecting this country from terrorism, as well as managing the immigration and customs programs, protecting the borders, guarding the coasts, and protecting against the consequences of natural disasters. The mission does not include serving as a testing ground for unneeded changes in personnel policies.

For example, not a single one of the top DHS managers who spoke to the design committee identified the pay and classification system as a priority to be addressed. Several of the personnel experts who spoke to the design

committee emphasized implementation of some of the so-called pay for performance schemes that would disrupt agency operations for months. The American people cannot tolerate having their national security jeopardized in order to implement some plan that is not even a priority of agency management.

AFGE is prepared to support the substantial improvements in the pay system, but these improvements are designed to enhance morale and productivity. These improvements are affordable and can be implemented without disrupting agency operations. There is no need to spend lots of time and effort examining options which cannot be implemented without distracting line managers and employees from carrying out the mission of their agencies or options which would require funding that won't be provided, or will predictably result in lower rather than higher morale.

Similarly, the Homeland Security Act mandates that the adverse action and appeals systems be modified so that they provide quicker decisions but without denying accused employees due process under the law. That should not be a difficult mandate with which to comply. There are several areas where the process can be speeded up, starting with the delays in management's bringing charges and the time it takes for management to make decisions after the employee responds to the charges.

AFGE is therefore prepared to support substantial changes in adverse action and appeals systems but without disobeying the constitutional and statutory requirements that accused employees be provided due process of law. The objectives of the Homeland Security Act can be achieved without hurting innocent employees, and they should be.

Regarding labor relations, the Homeland Security Act is a compromise. To ensure passage, the administration agreed to very specific provisions that do not appear in the original bill. For the same reason, the administration made a number of commitments—commitments that were relied on by Senators and Representatives when they voted for final passage.

Breaking the law, and renegeing on solemn commitments, should not be an option. The law and the assurances of Secretary Ridge and

Director James make clear that collective bargaining is to continue under the new regulations. The new regulations are to speed up the bargaining processes, and ensure that bargaining requirements do not interfere with or unnecessarily delay operational changes. I am pleased to see that the options presented to us provide several ideas that achieve that goal.

AFGE is prepared to support many of the changes outlined in the option papers. We see no reason, therefore, to seriously consider the various proposals to restrict the scope of bargaining or to even convert bargaining into a process of unilateral management decision-making. Such proposals not only break the law—they would break the solemn commitment of Governor Ridge and Director James.

Finally, I am glad to see that Admiral **James Loy**, the head of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), remains a part of this committee. As you know, AFGE has sought to represent TSA screeners. The personnel operations of TSA were the target of more criticism by managers and employees than all the rest of the agencies in DHS combined. My concern is that I have been informed that TSA, for some reason, is to be exempted from the personnel system this committee is considering. I find that difficult to believe because the administration, including Secretary Ridge and Director James, sold Congress on the creation of a new personnel system precisely in order to put the employees of all 22 entities into a coherent program. No one told Congress that 25 percent of the employees will be exempt from the new system, and I suspect that a great number of Senators and Representatives will be concerned to find out they were misled by the administration.

I, therefore, take Admiral Loy's participation in this committee as a pledge that, in fact, TSA will be covered by the new personnel policies we are considering.

Thank you.

The Government Standard 70th Anniversary Quiz

Who said the following in the August 14, 1942 issue of *The Government Standard*?
"Your AFGE dues are your best investment." Answer on page 6.

AFGE-

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AFGE News

Native-American Preference is a Sham

AFGE Files with Supreme Court

AFGE filed suit with the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn an appeals court ruling involving Native-American preferences for contractors. Under current law, the Department of Defense (DoD) is directly converting federal functions to 'so-called' Native-American owned firms. AFGE contends that disadvantaged Native-American groups are not benefiting from this preference, only wealthy government contractors who simply hire Native-Americans. "To call this a ruse or a sham would be an understatement," says AFGE National President **John Gage**.

AFGE's suit [*AFGE v. United States*, 330 F.3d 513 (D.C. Cir. 2003)] challenges language in the Defense Appropriations Act (P.L. 106-79) that establishes a race-based preference for Native-American contractors, claiming the language violates the equal protection and due process guarantees of the 5th Amendment. Log onto www.afge.org for more details.

AFGE Members Respond to Hurricane Isabel

AFGE members were simply doing their jobs when they helped millions of Americans affected by Hurricane Isabel. Federal employees from several agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Coast Guard and the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, established disaster relief centers throughout the mid-Atlantic region in the days leading up to and following Isabel. All along the East Coast, federal workers aided disabled vessels, assessed damage to ports and waterways, and checked and responded to the release of environmental pollutants.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of AFGE members, millions of citizens received basic necessities and supplies such as drinking water, meals, ice, blankets, cots, tents, generators, portable toilets, plastic sheeting, etc. Unfortunately, some federal workers were also affected. The Federal Employee Education & Assistance Fund (FEEA) has created a special fund to help. For grant and no-interest loan application information, log onto www.feea.org or call 1 (800) 323-4140 or (303) 933-7580.

AFGE Local 3306, Community Says 'NO' to VAMC Closing

Economic Impact Upwards of a Quarter Billion Dollars

Some 1,000 people, including Senators **Hillary Rodham Clinton** (D-N.Y.) and **Charles Schumer** (D-N.Y.), attended a hearing to discuss the closing of the Canandaigua, N.Y. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC). **Local 3306** members, who work at the hospital, joined the Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce in organizing area residents for the October 20 hearing. According to the Associated Press, Clinton said the plan to close the hospital would have "disastrous implications" for veterans in the Canandaigua and Rochester area.

The hospital, which employs nearly 800 area residents, provides services to 16,000 area veterans and cares for 200 inpatients. The hospital also works with several local businesses, purchasing many of its supplies from them. Local banks hold mortgages on employee homes and landlords rent to many of the outpatients. The employees and patients shop locally and are members of many local organizations. Using conservative figures, the economic impact of closing the Medical Center would be upwards of a quarter billion dollars! (Sources: *Coalition to Save the Canandaigua VAMC* and *The Associated Press*.)

AFGE Continues TSA Fight

"Securing collective bargaining rights for TSA screeners will improve the working conditions of thousands of federal employees now subject to a workplace riddled with arbitrary, employee-hostile policies," said **Sharon Pinnock**, AFGE's Director of Membership and Organization, before the Maryland Chapter of the Industrial Relations Research Association in September.

Despite recent court setbacks, AFGE is continuing its efforts to secure rights for TSA screeners. By fighting for TSA federal workers, AFGE is also countering what is an increasingly national anti-union trend that now threatens to spread throughout the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Defense (DoD). "This trend could potentially spillover to state, municipal and private sector workers," said Pinnock. To date, over 1,000 screeners have joined AFGE **Local 1** and 9,500 have expressed interest. Log onto www.screenersunion.org to join or for more information.

AFGE hosted a news event at the National Press Club calling for the Bush Administration to maintain a federal workforce. A recent Zogby poll found that 69 percent of American voters support a federalized workforce at the nation's airports.



Another FEHBP Premium Hike?

"Most government employees will experience a twelve percent increase for family coverage and an eleven percent increase for self coverage," said AFGE National President **John Gage** following OPM's release of the 10.6 percent FEHBP premium hike in September. The increase cited by OPM is only an average, and not reflective of the true costs employees will be forced to pay to retain health care coverage. Over the last six years, premiums have increased by 65 percent and government employees' costs have gone up by close to 75 percent.

Additionally, other large employers in the public and private sectors contribute between 85 and 100 percent of the premiums for their employees. The government pays only 70 percent. "It seems like OPM is afraid to sit down with its FEHBP's insurance carriers and demand lower, more affordable rates," added Gage. "By refusing to harness the purchasing power of the 8.3 million people in this program, OPM is doing a great disservice to all government employees and taxpayers."



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AROUND THE HILL



AFGE members from Local 1138 take a break before meeting with Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio).

D-Day, Petition Drive Sends Strong Message to Public, Congress

AFGE members working in the Department of Defense (DoD) have been participating in a series of activities over the past two months to draw attention to efforts by Secretary **Donald Rumsfeld** to dismantle the personnel system in DoD. *D-Day for DoD Employees*, held on Sept.



16, had hundreds of civilian defense employees in some 20 cities talking with legislators about why the civil service laws protecting over 700,000 defense workers should remain in place—especially while America's at war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Over 300 AFGE members in Philadelphia called Senator Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) before sending a delegation to his office. In Dayton, Ohio, a delegation of AFGE members from Wright Patterson Air Force Base, joined by AFGE members from SSA and the VA, met

with Rep. **Mike Turner** (R-Ohio). In North Carolina, AFGE members visited with Rep. **Walter Jones** (R-N.C.). In Denver and Colorado Springs, Colo., hundreds of AFGE members handed out D-Day flyers, participated in Lunch & Learns, signed Action Faxes, made cell phone calls and also visited with Senator **Wayne Allard** (R-Colo.) and Representative **Joel Hefley** (R-Colo.).

"AFGE members throughout the country spoke with several key lawmakers on the Defense Conference Committee—"D-Day" was a huge success," said AFGE National President **John Gage**.

A few weeks later, AFGE launched a

petition drive and radio ads in the Commonwealth of Virginia. During that second week in October, AFGE members collected tens-of-thousands of signatures in and around defense installations in an effort to get Senator **John Warner** (R-Va.)—the deciding vote on the Defense Authorization Bill now in Conference Committee—to support an AFGE-backed amendment. The amendment, introduced by Senators **Susan Collins** (R-Maine), **Carl Levin** (D-Mich.), **George Voinovich** (R-Ohio) and **John Sununu** (R-N.H.), supports existing appeal and collective bargaining rights. At press time, the Conference Committee had made no decision.

HHS Employees Win Outsourcing Studies

The results of 17 outsourcing studies conducted at the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in Baltimore came back in September in favor of in-house employees. In a memo to CMS employees,

a CMS official outlined that the 17 competitive sourcing studies conducted during FY 2003 showed that it was more cost effective to maintain the function in-house than to outsource it.

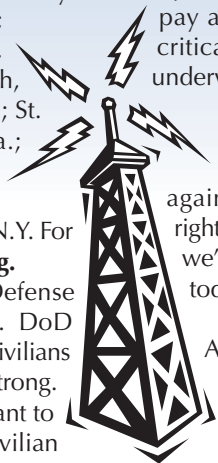
Radio Days: 60-Seconds on D-Day

The following 60-second radio ad, read by AFGE National President **John Gage**, was heard in the following cities on D-Day: Washington, D.C.; Dayton, Ohio; Norfolk, Va.; Oklahoma City; Macon, Ga.; Colorado Springs, Colo.; Raleigh, N.C.; Topeka, Kan.; Montgomery, Ala.; St. Louis; Richmond, Va.; Roanoke, Va.; Philadelphia; Frederick, Md.; Evansville, Ind.; Greenville, N.C.; Albuquerque, N.M.; and Watertown, N.Y. For an audio copy, log onto www.afge.org.

"If you're a Department of Defense employee, this message is for you. DoD employees protect America. We're the civilians who keep our military prepared and strong.

"The politicians in Washington want to take away the rights of hard working civilian

employees of the Department of Defense. They want to take us back to the days of patronage, by eliminating the laws that provide decent pay and fairness for DoD employees. A critical House/Senate Conference is now underway.



"Tuesday, September 16th is 'D-Day' for Department of Defense employees—it's time we fight back against the attacks on DoD employees' rights and jobs. If you're a DoD employee, we're asking you to call your Local union today and find out what you can do!

"I'm John Gage, President of the American Federation of Government Employees. Please contact your AFGE Local today and visit us on the Web at www.AFGE.org/DoD."

fairness is insured. 3) Any changes in the current General Schedule (GS) system should be made to enhance the current system. And, 4) a third party appeals process for employees to contest management actions.

Gage specifically called on DHS and OPM officials to abandon various personnel proposals relating to pay for performance. "A pay for performance system has been tried before," said Gage. "There is no evidence it works, it only wastes taxpayer money and it disrupts agency work to evaluate systems that don't ensure maximum effectiveness." Gage also stressed that the scope of bargaining should not be diluted. "Narrowing the scope of bargaining will create a far less credible personnel system in DHS."

Some 100 AFGE members working in Border Patrol, Coast Guard, FEMA, INS, CIS and FPS came from California, D.C., Texas, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Vermont and West Virginia to sit in.

Immediately following the Meetings, Gage held a press conference with National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) President **Colleen Kelley** and National Association of Agriculture Employees (NAAE) President **Michael Randall**. "While we feel we've been heard," Gage stated, "the rubber will meet the road when DHS Secretary Ridge and OPM Director James arrive at their final decisions—let's hope that Ridge holds to his promise of union representation for the dedicated employees."

See page 2 for Gage's Opening Remarks before the DHS Senior Review Committee on October 20. For the most current information relating to DHS, log onto www.DHSWorkers.org.

Don't Let the EEOC Abandon Its Mission to Women and Minorities

By **Andrea E. Brooks**, AFGE National Vice President for Women & Fair Practices

Shortly after **Martin Luther King's** historic "I Have A Dream Speech" 40 years ago, the historic Civil Rights Act was established and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was born. The commission was created primarily to end the blight that racial and sexual discrimination have caused in the American workplace. Eight years later, in 1972, the EEOC was extended to provide legal recourse for private sector and federal workers.

Now there's word that EEOC is proposing changes to the system. The commission has been holding hearings on a proposal being advanced by EEOC Chair **Cari Dominguez** to close most of the 53 EEOC field offices. Under the plan, field offices would be replaced by a privately owned tele-service center contracted out to the lowest bidder. In addition, complaints would have to be filed via e-mail, requiring people to submit the intimate details of their complaints (including sexual harassment complaints) to an unknown entity. In other words, there are plans to radically downsize the tiny agency that alone fights unlawful discrimination in this country.

Soon thousands of federal workers, mostly women and minorities, will be without a forum to protect their basic workplace rights.

Moreover, millions of workers will lose their right to a hearing before an independent EEOC judge.

Last year, field offices received visits from nearly 100,000 persons filing complaints ranging from sexual harassment to disability discrimination. Now, because of modern technology, workers may lose personal access to basic EEOC protections and have no place to turn for consultation, investigation and enforcement of civil rights violations.

Many of the persons filing such complaints are distraught and fearful, and need the personal contact that is a part of the current EEOC complaint system. Most do not have access to the Internet.

Some may believe there is no longer a need for civil rights enforcement—that there's no longer any need for civil rights enforcement. But we still face the problem of resolving issues of discrimination in this country. King spoke of a dream—that dream has not yet been realized. Technology can improve the process, but some situations require more than a taped message at the other end of the phone or an unknown person receiving an e-mail. The EEOC should not abandon the civil rights of America's working men and women.

Retired from Work, not from AFGE

A FGE's Retiree Program update: Eleven of the 12 AFGE Districts have appointed Retiree Representatives (RR's), and the last one will be appointed in the very near future. Their names can be found on AFGE's Retiree Web page at www.afge.org. In discussions with several RR's, there is agreement that the first priority should be retention of retiring members.

As a result of 2003 Convention actions, the AFGE Constitution has been amended to establish a new category of member; Retiree Affiliate. They include former AFGE members who have dropped their membership and wish to rejoin, and any federal government employees who never were members and wish to join. The per capita for these members is \$25.00 per year, plus any amount that is set by the AFGE Local they join. Dues must accompany the application, paying a year in advance.

In the case of a person joining an AFGE Local, they cannot hold office or vote, but may attend Local meetings. They will be able to access Union Plus benefit programs as well and we hope to obtain additional discount benefits in the future.

At this time, the only way for us to advertise the new category is through *The Government Standard*. We are exploring other advertising means. In the meantime, AFGE Locals can attempt to contact former members and others, to advise them of the action taken by the convention. We have had numerous requests from former members to rejoin.

If a former member has been out for a short period of time, the AFGE Local can reinstate them as regular retired members. Go to the Web site for more details. Questions? Call or e-mail AFGE Retiree Coordinator **Stan Gordon** at (202) 746-6707 or gordos@afge.org.

Join TODAY



The Membership and Organizing Department (M&O) has announced that AFGE Locals and members can purchase the *Government Workers: Everyday Heroes* video that was introduced at the AFGE Convention in August. Please send your check in the amount of \$10, made payable to "AFGE SOF" to AFGE, M&O Department, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001. Include your name, Local number, a street address (please, no Post Office Boxes) and a daytime telephone number with your order. Any questions regarding this offer may be directed to the M&O Department at (202) 639-6410.

Labor/Management 101

What is collective bargaining?

Collective bargaining is the preferred, statutorily established, method for employees to participate in making the decisions that affect their working conditions. It is the most effective form of pre-decisional involvement that there can be. In collective bargaining there is an equal partnership between management and the employees, speaking through their union representatives, at least as to the matters the law requires be bargained.

What is the difference between a CBA, an MOU and an MOA? Legally, all three of these acronyms mean the same thing: Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

All three of these are written agreements, or written notes of mutual understandings, between management and the union speaking collectively on behalf of the employees. Typically, however, CBA is used to describe the master contract, the document that covers a broad range of working conditions, and goes for two or three years without change. Then it is re-negotiated.

The so-called memos usually cover single, less-important, subjects. They are often used to settle grievances. They don't have any expiration dates. That means that they remain in effect until the parties agree otherwise. Log onto www.afge.org for more information on labor/management terms.

2004 Legislative Conference— February 8-11, 2004

The Women's Department is holding its annual caucus Sunday, February 8, 2004. The annual civil rights luncheon will be held Monday, February 9. Contact **Verna Pitts** at Pittsv@afge.org or **Denene Vines** at Vinesd@afge.org for more information.

**The Government Standard
70th Anniversary Quiz**

Question on Page 2

James B. Burns, AFGE National President

70 Years of The Government Standard

“The Government Standard herewith makes its bow to the American Federation of Government Employees, whose cause it serves and for whose objectives it will fight.”

**The Government Standard,
December 29, 1933**

The *Government Standard* first touched the fingertips of federal workers on December 29, 1933—just 16 months after AFGE was officially formed. Headlines of “100 Per Cent Payroll Appropriation Demanded,” “End of Overtime Due to Furlough Aim of AFGE,” and “Prompt Repeal of Pay Cut Asked” dotted the front-page. Though the newspaper’s layout, frequency and number of pages have changed since ’33, it remains the source of news and information for front-line government workers.

Here’s to 70 years as THE newspaper for AFGE members—the dedicated Americans charged with running the greatest democracy in the world. For more AFGE, labor and U.S. history, be sure to read *The Government Standard’s* “AFGE History” in the ‘About AFGE’ section on www.afge.org.



I Have a Story

By Gus Stefanow, AFGE Local 2209

“My story is one example of what can happen to us when apathy sets in. This occurs when we either tire of the fight or when we fail to speak out when we should. I am one who should have spoken out, but got caught up in the moment and failed to do so. I looked after the needs of the family, eyeing only on whether or not I would be employed after the Air Force sold our jobs to a contractor. Regrettably, I did little to fight for myself and others in that painful summer of ’98.

“When I was offered a job at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in the spring of 1989, I was a lucky man indeed. The base had been a steady employer of veterans for many decades and I was certain that if I got in, I would have a job with good pay and benefits forever. Unfortunately, things did not last as long as I thought they would.

“Several hundred dedicated civil servants were anxiously awaiting word on whether or not they would continue to work on base. We had gone through meetings to determine where our spending could be cut. We organized our thoughts and plans into winning the bid to keep the work that we were already doing. When decision day finally came, we held our collective breaths.

“About 10:00 a.m., we got the word that we had indeed lost our bid to keep our jobs. We then had to wait to be called up to the boss’ office for placement elsewhere on base. No one knew what to expect.

“One-by-one, our names were called in alphabetical order. After the first co-workers descended the stairs, it quickly became apparent that if one carried a thick packet, no job was available and unemployment near certain. A thin packet meant continued work somewhere.

“I kept a close eye on my co-workers and their reactions. I watched as grown

men, all military veterans, struggled to cope with what was happening. There were no smiles, even for those with jobs to keep. One man, a crippled Vietnam veteran, wiped his eyes as he limped down the stairs. Another veteran struggled to compose himself when handed a thick packet. A Navy veteran seemed too proud to allow himself to cry. I got a temporary offer, but eventually had to move out of state to stay employed. It was a heart-wrenching thing to experience and one that will likely always haunt me.

“While all the political wrangling goes on in Washington over whom could best serve the American public, many of us have already been exposed to the pain of outsourcing. We know that a dollar saved in one place will only be spent somewhere else! Beyond that, we know that it saves us NOTHING as taxpayers try to get rid of good, reliable people in order to pad a corporation’s bottom line. Our government is up for sale to the lowest bidder.

“How do we stop the bloodletting that’s going on? We must first shoulder up and stand together. That is accomplished by linking arms and joining AFGE. Secondly, we must put our elected officials on notice that we WILL NOT be silent over what is occurring. Most importantly, we must be willing to enlist and fight with a fervor that many of us may never have been willing to use before!

“I refuse to stand idly by, being silent and introspective, any longer. I have chosen to fight this time with every ounce of energy I have as a proud AFGE member. I pray that I never have to see another soul weep over losing a career. It is just too painful. The question remains; will we have the fortitude to stand up to this injustice?”

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 to identify everyone. Please, no Polaroids. All stories and photos become property of the AFGE Communications Department.

Get Smart!

with Union Plus SCHOLARSHIPS

Since 1992, the Union Plus Scholarship program has provided more than \$1.8 million to help fulfill the educational dreams of students who represent more than 13 million working families across the nation. Union Plus Scholarships are presented annually to union members or their families who want to begin or continue their secondary education.

Applications for the 2004 Union Plus Scholarship program are now available. To download an application, go to the College Financing page of the AFGE web site, www.afge.org, or send a fax request to (202)639-6492. To receive an application by mail, send a postcard with your name, return address, telephone number and local number to AFGE, M&O Department, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

The application deadline is January 31, 2004.

Funding for the AFGE Union Plus Scholarship program is provided through the Union Plus Education Foundation.



Tools for Learning

Be certain the student in your family has all the advantages of your AFGE membership. You can buy an entire computer system through the Easy Computer Purchase Program (ecp²), AFGE's newest members-only benefit. Pay for the system over 12 months through payroll deduction at 0% interest, with no credit check. Learn more online at <http://afge.ecp2.com> or call (800)540-4142. Buy now and have your computer delivered within weeks.

Check out these other AFGE members-only Union Plus benefits which help members and their families save time and money. The programs include:

- money-saving credit card
- free and discounted legal service
- discounted prescriptions and health care services
- a home buying program
- travel and recreation discounts
- **for more, call (888) 844-2343**



For more information about all the AFGE members-only Union Plus benefits, visit www.afge.org.