



Vol. LXXI, No. 1

# THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD



January/February 2004

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

## Defense Guts Civil Service Protections

### Is Your Agency Next?

Civilian defense workers lost critical civil service protections when President **George W. Bush** signed the record \$401 billion Defense Authorization Act on November 25, 2003. With the simple stroke of a pen, Defense Secretary **Donald Rumsfeld** acquired unprecedented and unimaginable powers to hire, fire, demote and promote 720,000 civilian defense workers at will. A similar personnel system may be coming to your agency soon.

"Bush officials justified this massive personnel overhaul by tacking on the words 'national security,'" said AFGE National President **John Gage** of the National Security

Personnel System. "This system was designed to strip civil service protections from public workers—not to improve security."

AFGE believes the new personnel system at Defense will be replicated by other agencies.

"The War on Terrorism should not

include the loss of the same individual freedoms that Americans are fighting to preserve," added Gage. "If it does, our nation may be the victor, but its citizens will surely be the losers." For more details on the National Security Personnel System, turn to page 5.

### AFGE HOSTS NATIONAL RALLY TO PROTECT WORKER RIGHTS

Citing dozens of **Bush** Administration policies that have negatively impacted workers of all stripes, over 2,000 AFGE members and 1,000 unionists converged on the Department of Labor (DoL) headquarters in Washington, D.C., on December 10. During the one-hour long lunchtime rally, National President **John Gage** and Senator **Edward Kennedy** (D-Mass.) served as the featured speakers. Gage told the crowd, and national media, what really motivates President Bush. "This Administration repeatedly raised the red, white and blue to justify their actions when, in hindsight, it has become so clear that the only color they really care about is green."

Kennedy stressed that "if you work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, you should not be living in poverty." He then asked a simple question of President Bush: "What do you have against working people?"

### Join AFGE, Today!

It's easy to join AFGE—simply visit the AFGE Local office in your building or call (202) 737-8700. Be sure to visit AFGE on the Web at [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

**AFGE—the best investment you'll ever make!**



AFGE National Pres. John Gage (left) and Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.).

The rally was one of 70 nationwide to promote worker rights. Joining AFGE were more some 25 worker, civil and human rights groups.

### Omnibus Bill Holds 4.1% FWS Pay Increase Hostage

Federal employees paid under the Federal Wage System (FWS) have been waiting in limbo since Congress approved, for the very first time, a guaranteed minimum average 4.1 percent pay raise. The reason for the delay is because the bill that included the pay raise was in turn rolled into a mammoth spending bill—the omnibus appropriations bill. At press time, the Senate was scheduled to vote on the bill on January 20. (See more on FWS Pay on Page 4)

### Table of Contents

#### Page 2

A Message from National President John Gage

#### Page 3

DCMA Workers—Vote AFGE

#### Page 3

AFGE Launches UnionBlog.com

#### Page 4

Around the Hill

#### Page 6

Federal Times Highlights "AFGE's 'Fighting Spirit'"

#### Page 7

Contractors Reap Billions

#### Page 7

Presidential Poll

#### Page 7

DHS Update



## A Message from National President John Gage

### *My Point of View*

John Gage

I'm writing this as the 108th Congress, led by rogue Republicans, and corporate contributors are finishing up their gluttonous feast of public funds. I'm wondering if you are seeing it at home like I'm seeing it here.

I must admit, however, that after serving only five months in Washington D.C. as your National President, my point of view has been considerably radicalized. Why? Well, first off, just follow the money. Every bill, every regulation rammed through by this Administration lines the pockets of big corporations. Take Medicare, with an \$800 million shot in the arm to drug companies, subsidized HMO's and, most hypocritically, freedom from competition in setting prices. Logging companies will prevent forest fires by cutting down trees. Private companies will inspect their own meat products. Department of Veterans

Affairs hospitals will be closed or contracted out despite the one true fact of the Iraq war—today's soldier is tomorrow's veteran. And, you can already hear the salivating of Wall Street licking its chops over the big enchilada—the privatization of Social Security.

Perhaps the most chilling example of this blatant raid on public funds can be seen in the battle waged by AFGE to block the new A-76 regulations put forward by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Administration couldn't deliver on its promise to give away 850,000 federal jobs to big corporations in return for campaign contributions with the existing A-76 regulation. The contracting out rules had to be greased to assure successful "competition" for the contractor. The Administration's brass-knuckle tactics beat by one vote an AFGE-supported bill that would allow federal employees to at least submit a bid, require contractors to show a savings and allow unfair competitions to be appealed to the General Accounting Office. The ferocity of the Administration's bullies in beating back the amendment underscores the critical importance of the issue because only a fully opened spigot of public funds could satisfy the voracious appetites of profiteering businesses and their OMB "godfather".

But this Administration was not content to merely take the money and run. The tragedy of 9/11 gave them the opportunity to hide behind spurious and deceitful national security sound bites to attempt a knockout punch to the civil service and public employee unions. In the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense, more than one million employees had their civil service rights, individual rights and union rights simply blown away. Merit System

Protection Board rights—gone. Federal Labor Relations Authority—gone. Federal Service Impasse Panel—gone. Even arbitration—gone.

For employee unions, the scope of bargaining and any dispute resolution are completely controlled by management with no avenue of appeal. New Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) regulations, denying federal employees rights to a hearing, will add the finishing touches to the "new" civil service of patronage, fear, coercion and intimidation. The guard is down for women, minorities, and experienced employees. Finally, designed to reduce overall federal pay, pay-for-performance schemes will give supervisors the unchecked power to set base pay and raises—without question, without appeal.

It is particularly disgusting now to recall how this Administration repeatedly raised the red, white and blue to justify their actions when, in hindsight, it has become so clear that the only color they really care about is green.

In the past, we have been able to operate under the radar screen to promote the best interests of federal employees. Times have changed. No longer are we under the radar, we are targeted as a big red bulls-eye by this Administration.

If my description of the state of affairs fits with how you see it, don't you feel cheated? Your work and career insulted? Your livelihood and future threatened? Your rights stolen? And your country's bounty squandered?

But inch-by-inch, friends and families first, neighborhoods and communities next, we can build a momentum based on information, and real American values, that will stop the selling of our country and the erosion of working families' rights.

#### AFGE-The Government Standard

Vol. LXXI, No. 1

January/February 2004

AFGE-The Government Standard (USPS 003-219, ISSN 1041-5335) is published bimonthly and is the official membership publication of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20001 Phone: (202) 737-8700, [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org). John Gage, **National President**, Jim Davis, **National Secretary-Treasurer**, Andrea E. Brooks, **National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices**. **National Vice Presidents:** District 2-Derrick F. Thomas, (732) 828-9449; NY, NJ, CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT. District 3-Jeffrey R. Williams, (610) 660-0316; DE, PA. District 4-Joseph Flynn, (410) 480-1820; MD, NC, VA, WV. District 5-Charlotte Flowers, (770) 907-2055; AL, FL, GA, SC, TN, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico. District 6-Arnold Scott, (317) 542-0428; IN, KY, OH. District 7-Dorothy James, (312) 421-6245; IL, MI, WI. District 8-Terrence L. Rogers, (952) 854-3216; IA, MN, NE, ND, SD. District 9-Michael Kelly, (405) 670-2656; AR, KS, MO, OK. District 10-Roy Flores, (210) 735-8900; LA, MS, TX, NM, Panama. District 11-Gerald D. Swanke, (360) 253-2616; AK, CO, ID, MT, OR, UT, WA, WY, Guam, Okinawa. District 12-Eugene Hudson, Jr., (760) 233-7600; AZ, CA, HI, NV. District 14-Russell Binion, (202) 639-6447; District of Columbia, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; Arlington and Fairfax Counties and the City of Alexandria in Virginia.

Produced by the AFGE Communications Dept.: Director, Enid Doggett; Assistant Director, Diane Witiak; Managing Editor & Communications Specialist, John Irvine; Web Site Developer, Kurt Gallagher; Communications Specialist, Adele Stan; Staff Assistant, Kim Kennedy; Communications Interns, Deneise Kirkpatrick and Shontae Harrell. Designed & union printed by Mount Vernon Printing Co., Landover, Md. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C. **Postmaster:** send change of addresses to AFGE-The Government Standard, ATTN: AFGE Data Processing Dept., 80 F St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001.





# AFGE News

## DCMA—Vote AFGE

Attention Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) employees! Because of the many reorganizations you've had to face over the past several years, a question concerning your desire for union representation has been raised by the agency. As a result, the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) has ordered a nationwide election to take place for **ALL** DCMA professional and non-professional employees. The FLRA will mail ballots to the homes of eligible voters on January 13 and 14, 2004. The FLRA will count the ballots on February 11 and 12, 2004. The union with the majority of the ballots cast in its favor will become the bargaining agent for DCMA workers.

If you're a DCMA worker and have questions regarding the upcoming election, click onto the 'FLRA Orders Election' hyperlink on [www.AFGECouncil170.org](http://www.AFGECouncil170.org).

## Member Donates \$3,000 to Local

AFGE **Local 1812** in Washington, D.C., recently received a generous donation of \$3,000 from **Alexander Ten**, an International Radio Broadcaster and active member for nearly 31 years. Ten feels the \$3,000 donation is merely a way of showing his appreciation for AFGE's efforts to keep the union strong.

"AFGE works hard for its members and I wanted to show my support because I recognize the good job they're doing—the last thing they should worry about are expenses," said Ten.

## 2004 AFGE Legislative Conference

**February 8-11**

The 2004 Legislative Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. Feb. 8-11. To register online or for more information, log onto [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org). Note: The Editors Association Conference is on Feb. 12. Go to [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org) for costs or to register. The AFGE Women's Department annual caucus is on Feb. 8 and the annual civil rights luncheon is on Feb. 9. Contact **Verna Pitts** at [Pittsv@afge.org](mailto:Pittsv@afge.org) or **Denene Vines** at [Vinesd@afge.org](mailto:Vinesd@afge.org) for more information on these two events.

AFGE recently launched [www.UnionBlog.com](http://www.UnionBlog.com)—its very own Web log, or blog for short. A blog is a cross between an online diary and links to current news reports.

**UnionBlog.com**

"AFGE's blog is yet another way for AFGE members, government employees and taxpayers to make their voices heard on a variety of government issues," said AFGE National President **John Gage**.

UnionBlog.com features links to media Web sites and a regular column by Gage. Be sure to visit [www.UnionBlog.com](http://www.UnionBlog.com), today!

## Support AFGE's Media Fund

It's critical for AFGE to tell its side of the story to the American people as to why federal and D.C. workers are important to government and our democracy. But the most effective way to tell those stories is through TV and radio commercials. However, running ads regularly to alter public opinion is costly. For example, to air just one TV ad in a small market for one day and on one station costs approx. \$6,000. This does not include production costs.

With your small, generous donation, AFGE can tell the American people our story. It's easy to support the AFGE Media Fund.

Simply write a \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 or \$100 check to the "AFGE Media Fund" and mail it to: AFGE Communications Dept., 10th Floor, 80 F St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. Please, do not send cash. For more information, call the AFGE Communications Dept. at (202) 639-6419. To see sample ads, please go to [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org) to view. Thank you!

## Today's Soldiers, Tomorrow's Veterans

"The current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) proposals to close facilities and reduce services should not be implemented until the VA adequately plans for current and future veterans," said AFGE National President **John Gage** before Congress.

Under the Capital Assets Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process, the VA is proposing to close facilities in Canandaigua, N.Y.; Pittsburgh; Lexington-Leestown, Ky.; Brecksville, Ohio; Gulfport, Miss.; Waco, Texas; Vancouver, Wash.; Livermore, Calif.; and Knoxville, Iowa. The VA is also considering outsourcing 100 percent of inpatient care at Bedford, Mass.; Montrose, N.Y.; Montgomery, Ala.; Kerrville, Texas; White City, Ore.; and Walla Walla, Wash. The VA is also proposing to significantly reduce hospital services in Hot Springs, S.D. and Big Spring, Texas.

AFGE supports the bi-partisan efforts by Senators **Hillary Rodham Clinton** (D-N.Y.) and **Mike Enzi** (R-Wyo.) to make sure that before implementing any proposals to close VA facilities or reduce veterans' services, the VA must address the long-term care, domiciliary care and mental health care needs of current and future veterans.



# AROUND THE HILL

## FWS Pay Specifics *(continued from Page 1)*

Presuming the bill passes soon and President **Bush** signs the legislation into law, the 4.1 percent pay raise provision specifies that FWS employees will receive **no less than** the percentage pay raise received by their General Schedule (GS) counterparts in the same location. Therefore,

the exact percentage pay raise will depend on the GS locality of the FWS worker's duty station. For example, a FWS employee in the Boston GS pay locality will receive the same pay increase as their GS counterparts in the Boston pay locality. FWS employees who are not in a specific GS pay locality will receive the same percentage as provided to GS employees in the "Rest of United States" or RUS. FWS employees in Alaska, Hawaii or Puerto Rico will receive the same pay raise as RUS.

FWS employees should receive their pay raises at the same time of the year as they have in the past. The provision in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 funding bill **does not** require that FWS employees receive the pay raise in January. Wage surveys can still be conducted

but FWS employees will receive no less than the percentage received by their GS co-workers. Additionally, the cap on FWS pay raises is still in effect for FY 2004 but FWS employees will be guaranteed at least the same percentage pay raise as their GS co-workers.

The guaranteed pay raise is not permanent because this provision only applies for FY 2004. AFGE and its members will have to once again work with lawmakers for FY 2005 to preserve the guaranteed pay raise for Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security and FWS employees. Key lawmakers involved in securing the 4.1 percent pay raise for FWS workers included: Senators **Daniel Akaka** (D-Hawaii), **Robert Byrd** (D-W.V.), **Susan Collins** (R-Maine), **Barbara Mikulski** (D-Md.), **Patty Murray** (D-Wash.), **Paul Sarbanes** (D-Md.), **Richard Shelby** (R-Ala.) and **Ted Stevens** (R-Alaska), and Representatives **Steny Hoyer** (D-Md.), **David Obey** (D-Wis.), **John Olver** (D-Mass.), **Jim Moran** (D-Va.) and **Bill Young** (R-Fla.).

The FWS pay raise needs to be put in context of the GS pay raise as well. The 4.1 percent increase represents at least \$2 billion more in AFGE members' pockets than the 2 percent pay raise proposed by Bush. Also, the FY 2004 pay language ensures that DoD and DHS employees will also receive the 4.1 percent pay increase.

## The National Security Personnel System *(continued from Page 1)*

**What does the new law provide?** The Department of Defense (DoD) can create its own pay system, not bound by the laws governing the federal civil service system. The law does not change pay rules itself—it allows DoD to change the rules, such as going to a pay-for-performance system sometime in the near future. But, thanks to AFGE the regular January 2004 pay increases for federal employees will also apply to DoD workers.

**Can DoD make other radical changes in its personnel system, unconstrained by much of civil service law?** Yes. The biggest areas of concern have to do with job security. It appears that DoD's priorities are to: 1) Run reductions-in-force on the basis of management preferences rather than

objective criteria and 2) Make it harder for accused employees to fight discipline charges.

**Can DoD change its labor relations system?** Yes. Based on DoD's rhetoric, its intent appears to be to eliminate the union's ability to bargain effectively—particularly at the local level—through a variety of mechanisms. These include forcing some bargaining to the national level, eliminating the obligation to bargain over the implementation of operational decisions, and using national security as an excuse to take away the collective bargaining rights of many employees.

**What is AFGE going to do?** The new law requires that no changes be made (other than national level bargaining) without DoD

going through a three- or four-month process of collaboration with AFGE at the national level. AFGE will use that process to maximum effect.

Unfortunately, prospects for success may be limited due to low membership in Defense. Doubling AFGE membership would send a powerful message to DoD, the Administration and Congress that federal employees will not passively take this abuse. Instead, they're turning to AFGE to make their voices heard. It may also be necessary for AFGE to secure additional resources to be more effective on Capitol Hill, in the media and the courts to represent effectively members and take part in national level bargaining. AFGE has never been more important to DoD employees and is here to stay!

## White House Officials Alter Privatization Language

### Worker Appeal Rights Stripped after Passage

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is requiring federal agencies to put as many as 416,000 jobs up for bid. Earlier this year, the White House issued new guidelines for these public/private competitions (OMB Circular A-76) that favored contractors and stacked the deck against federal employees. In an effort to eliminate some of the advantages contractors were given under the current process, Senator **Barbara Mikulski** (D-Md.) and Representative **Chris Van Hollen** (D-Md.) worked hard with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to get language included in the Transportation-Treasury Appropriations Bill. Unfortunately, most of these provisions that were included were later stripped from the bill by White House officials without the vote of a single member of Congress when

it was included in the FY 2004 Omnibus Appropriations bill.

"I worked hard to have a bipartisan, bicameral agreement that leveled the playing field for federal employees. But now, behind closed doors, OMB has rewritten the language. I will keep fighting to fix the competition process that is shamefully slanted in favor of private contractors," said Mikulski. "This good faith legislation was destroyed by Republicans in a backroom deal," said Van Hollen.

The Maryland lawmakers worked with their Republican and Democratic colleagues to fix seven of the most egregious problems with the new contracting process. These fixes were included in the Transportation-Treasury bill, which passed the House-Senate Conference Committee on November 12,

2003. Mikulski was a member of that Conference Committee. However, after Committee passage, several changes were made to the legislation before it was made final.

The following changes were made to the final legislation, which watered down or stripped agreed to provisions: 1) Removes requirement that contractors must show significant cost savings; 2) Strikes workers' rights to appeal; and 3) Weakens a provision guaranteeing workers the right to submit their own best bids. However, the final legislation retained the following provisions from the original bipartisan compromise: 1) Drops requirement that forced workers to re-compete every five years; 2) Prohibits sending contracted jobs overseas; 3) Requires greater accountability; and 4) Provides funding for monitoring government contracts.

## Headquarters Spotlight: Beth Moten

### Director, Legislative & Political Action Dept.

**Beth Moten** may be from a small Texas town, but she's navigating an enormous legislative agenda for AFGE—the largest federal employees' union in the U.S. As Director of the Legislative & Political Action Department, Moten's primary job is to encourage lawmakers to support bills and government programs that benefit taxpayers and improve the working lives of federal and D.C. workers. Just over the last 90 days, Moten—working with other AFGE lobbyists, Grassroots Mobilization staff, and of course, AFGE activists—secured a 4.1 percent pay increase, challenged White House privatization policies and went head-to-head with Bush officials in the Department of Defense over gutting the civil service system. Working closely with Moten are Political Affairs Director **Marty Dunleavy**, Political Action Committee & Issues Mobilization Director **Robert Nicklas**, and Lobbyists **John Threlkeld**, **Linda Bennett**, **Joe Lopes**, **Alan Kadrofske**, as well as, Legislative Assistant **Valencia Newman**.

Throughout her childhood, Moten saw her mother—a public school teacher—

struggle for decent wages and benefits without collective bargaining rights. It was through this experience that Moten realized how important it was to be part of a union that would effectively seek justice on behalf of hard-working people.

On any given day, Moten is making sure members are aware of what's taking place on 'The Hill' and, more importantly, why they should participate in the legislative process. "Keeping members up-to-date on legislative matters and Administration policies is paramount." Although actively engaged in many of the union's goals, she's focusing heavily on privatization and the civil service system.

"All issues are important," says Moten, "but right now, because of this hostile Administration, we are focusing on fighting privatization and retaining civil service



*Beth Moten*

protections for AFGE members. However, we are also very engaged in the pay raise and trying to make health insurance more affordable."

As for next year, Moten encourages AFGE members and federal employees to assess the last three years before making a decision. "The election will certainly determine our success on many of the issues relating to federal and D.C. workers." In '04 and beyond, Moten's passion for helping hard-working people will continue to aid AFGE.

*Editors' Note: 'Headquarters Spotlight' will be an on-going feature in 2004.*

### Iraqis Denied Worker Rights Under U.S. Occupation

Labor journalist **David Bacon** exposes how the **Bush** Administration is systematically busting unions in Iraq to facilitate privatization and how none of the \$87 billion appropriated by Congress for reconstruction will go to Iraqi workers or the unemployed. Read the full story at [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org).

# AFGE's 'Fighting Spirit': Gage Outlines Challenges

Federal labor unions are at war with the Bush administration on a number of fronts, says John Gage, national president of the American Federation of Government Employees. He cites the emphasis on competitive sourcing, the push for performance pay, and new personnel rules affecting 900,000 workers at the Defense and Homeland Security departments as prime examples of the administration's attacks on union members' collective bargaining rights.

"It's got our fighting spirit aroused," he said.

The union lost one fight when the administration recently won congressional approval of changes to Labor Department overtime rules, which eventually will affect federal workers. And there are more battles ahead, Gage said. In a recent interview with the *Federal Times* staff, Gage answered questions about his views on changes to traditional civil service rules at Defense and Homeland Security, the administration's support for performance-based pay, and the equal employment opportunity complaint process. Following are edited excerpts.

**ALSO** **Careers:** Managers' tips to improve union relations. Page 16

**Federal Times: What's the biggest worry you have about the Defense Department's new personnel authorities?**

**Gage:** They're going to define the scope of bargaining and employee appeals. They say that this is not an anti-union shot, but they can define us right out of business, obviously. We're very concerned about that. We have no idea where they're going. We tried to initiate a number of conversations over there at DoD but they're pretty tight-lipped. We don't even know what the process is going to be from here on.

I'm really concerned that we're not going to have any input into the pay-for-performance scheme, and I think that would be terrible.

It sounds good on paper, but I think in practice it's going to be a huge problem for all the agencies that move into it.

**FT: What differences and similarities do you see between the Defense Department personnel system and the Homeland Security Department system?**

**Gage:** Well, I haven't seen ei-



ALAN LESSIG/FEDERALTIMES

**'Maybe it's just the heat of battle, but it seems this administration is attacking civil service, period.'**

John Gage

ther one. In DHS we're further along because we have seen a number of options, and none of them really inspires me.

We just don't see [performance pay] working at all for law enforcement types of jobs. It encourages exactly the wrong type of morale and focus for law enforcement types, who should be working more as a team and looking out after one another. [Pay for performance] makes you compete and be a cannibal. I think they're going to have a whole lot of problems.

I think it's going to be very, very difficult for them to come up with a system, first of all, and then to implement it and not have disruption and really a change of culture for law enforcement personnel. I think it's exactly the worst agency to experiment on.

**FT: You have mentioned how important it is to train managers in how to properly measure whether people are performing.**

**Gage:** I was being nice. I really don't believe there is training that exists that you're going to be able to have supervisors who may see their employees once a week, once a month — sometimes in the Border Patrol once every six months — and you're going to have those supervisors deciding base pay for these folks.

I think we're going to see a lot of patronage, a lot of discrimination. I think minorities and women are going to come out

on the bad end of this thing right off the bat. I really don't have a lot of hope for pay for performance. The funding scares me, the amount of training that it would cost, the disruption. Basically I think it's a bad idea to begin with.

**FT: Why should the government be any different from the private sector? Most private-sector companies pay employees based on their performance or contribution to the organization.**

**Gage:** When you're talking about a job that's inherently governmental and it's not really based on a profit motive, those measurements get a little obscure. I don't see a whole lot of jobs in the private sector that are that similar to government jobs. And I don't see where it's working all that well in the private sector, either.

**FT: How is this new performance-pay approach going to affect turnover, and is it a bad thing if it does prompt higher turnover?**

**Gage:** I think it's a very bad thing in some jobs — for instance, the Border Patrol. Their salaries can't compete with the San Diego Police Department, who are about \$13,000 to \$15,000 in starting salary above the Border Patrol. When you have that experience, a guy with 10 years' experience, and he jumps off to go work for a [state or local] police department somewhere, it takes 10 years to

get that experience back.

A lot of people are just taking a look at where, for instance, the [Homeland Security] personnel system is going to go and whether pay is going to be adjusted, whether they work out the locality pay issue, whether overtime changes, which employees can get onto the police retirement [system]. There's just a lot of issues that are hanging out there, and I think if they're not careful we could see a real exodus from the Border Patrol as well as some of our other law enforcement agencies.

**FT: Do you have a strategy for convincing the American public that your interests are their interests? Do you think that's necessary?**

**Gage:** I very much do. How to do it without sounding shrill and over the top is what we're wrestling with now. I think you're going to see AFGE out there in this campaign, and some issue ads that will highlight this attack on collective bargaining and employee rights.

I think it's more than that, though. Maybe it's just the heat of battle, but it seems this administration is attacking civil service, period. Getting rid of the unions, I think, is the first step. But this pay for performance is definitely a hand grenade into the civil service, and it's not going to be something that increases productivity.

**FT: Some in the administration have the attitude that civil servants are the problem. Where does that come from?**

**Gage:** The surveys we've done show that 48 percent of our members are Democrats. It seems that we are certainly targeted and we're one union that the executive branch can raise some wood on, and they have. It doesn't seem to be about the well-being of the agency. We want these agencies to be successful, and it seems some of the political appointees who come in are not that interested in their agency being successful. Maybe dismantling [government] is too strong a word, but definitely cutting down the mechanics of government, which then affects these important programs.

**FT: Some federal workers feel the equal employment opportunity complaint process is set up to benefit agencies and managers. What steps can be taken to address that concern?**

**Gage:** One step that shouldn't be done is to take away administrative hearings for federal employees, which is what the sound bite is down at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. If you take away these administrative hearings, I think that [will

mean] a rebirth of a lot of the discrimination that has very effectively been rooted out of the civil service. There's still some there, but I think the government truly is an equal opportunity employer, and I think a lot of that has to do with the role the EEOC has in federal employment.

**FT: What part of the process would you like to see reformed?**

**Gage:** Speed. Many of our members say the biggest problem with the EEOC is it takes too long. That basically was because management would drag their feet and hope the case went away.

**FT: Managers often say that 99 percent of workers can be motivated, and it is too hard to remove the other 1 percent that do not perform well.**

**Gage:** I think there are ways to deal with that. Nobody, especially workers in a unit, likes to see someone not trying to pull their fair share. We made some suggestions at DHS about where a supervisor, when he sees a person has stopped [working], he can declare that worker not in good standing; that worker wouldn't be eligible for promotion, wouldn't be eligible for awards, wouldn't be eligible for any within-grade increases, and if the worker doesn't come up to the top, then they will put the worker on a serious performance plan.

It's not hard [to fire a poor performer], but it does take some effort and some time, and you're going to have to document it.

**FT: Many see the DoD and Homeland Security debate and issues like poor performers as progress toward civil service reform. What do you think about the prospects of reforming the civil service system?**

**Gage:** Well, they're reforming the law, all right. In every bill, they take away huge protections. Civil service, in my experience, has been reforming all the time. But I really don't know exactly what you would do — and I hope it wouldn't be the same thing that DoD and Homeland Security got over with. I think they got over on the American people with the security threats to the country and just wiped out collective bargaining rights and employee rights.

The classification system? I think it could be worked on a little bit. I always get upset because I see the Office of Personnel Management say we have to scrap the classification system, and they're the ones we've been arguing with for years on any changes and basically interpretations of classification issues.

This article was reprinted with permission from the *Federal Times*.

## Study: Contractors Reap Billions Bush Rakes in Donations

More than 70 American companies and individuals have won up to \$8 billion in contracts for work in post-war Iraq and Afghanistan over the last two years, according to a new study by the Center for Public Integrity. Those companies donated more money to the presidential campaigns of **George W. Bush** than to any other politician over the last dozen years, the Center found.

Kellogg, Brown & Root, the subsidiary of Halliburton—which Vice President **Dick Cheney** led prior to being chosen as Bush's running mate—was the top recipient of federal contracts for the two countries, with more than \$2.3 billion awarded to the company. Bechtel Group, a major government contractor with similarly high-ranking ties, was second at around \$1.03 billion.

The results of the Center's six-month investigation provide the most comprehensive list to date of American contractors in the two nations. Based on the findings, it did not appear that any one government agency knew the total number of contractors or what they were doing. Congressional sources said they hoped such a full picture would emerge from the General Accounting Office, which has begun investigating the postwar contracting

process amid allegations of fraud and cronyism. For a complete copy of the report, log onto [www.publicintegrity.org](http://www.publicintegrity.org).

## DHS Update AFGE Testifies before Congress

AFGE recently told Congress that too many of the personnel options being proposed for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would lead to widespread political cronyism in pay, hiring and adverse actions.

AFGE National President **John Gage** told lawmakers before the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Civil Service and Agency Organization that DHS employees are, among several things, highly critical of personnel options to eliminate the outside administrative review process for adverse actions, appeal rights and due process rights.

"It will be important to the employees of the agencies and to the taxpayers that the Congress maintain an ongoing oversight role with respect to the exercise of these authorities," concluded Gage. For a full transcript, log onto [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).



## Presidential Poll

As we head into this Presidential election season, we believe it's important to know what you think about the candidates running to be your next boss. As this is being written, we're looking at a very crowded field and we want to hear your opinion before the National Executive Board votes on any endorsement. If you would, please take a moment to fill out this ballot and mail by **Friday, January 23** to: Political Affairs Director **Martin Dunleavy**, 80 F St. NW, Washington D.C., 20001. This survey is also available at [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org).

Your early and continued activism and feedback over the coming months will make all the difference for this union and for federal and D.C. workers. We hope you view this as just your first step in the Presidential selection process. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Please indicate your first choice for a Presidential endorsement (check only one):

- Carol Moseley Braun (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- George W. Bush (R) \_\_\_\_\_
- Wesley Clark (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- Howard Dean (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- John Edwards (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- Dick Gephardt (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- John Kerry (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- Dennis Kucinich (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- Joe Lieberman (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- Al Sharpton (D) \_\_\_\_\_
- Undecided \_\_\_\_\_
- No Endorsement \_\_\_\_\_

## "Power Up...Log On... And Fight Back."

— John Gage, National President

AFGE's new computer purchasing program couldn't come at a better time.

"There's a lot at stake for federal employees and the Americans we serve in 2004. We need to mobilize members, potential members, family and friends to get the facts and get involved. The more activists we have who are wired in to information 24/7, the easier it's going to be to mobilize them to take action."

The easy computer purchase program is a valuable and effective benefit for AFGE members. To buy a computer, there is no money down, no credit check and 0% interest. Payments will be set up as a payroll deduction over the next 12 months. Bundles come with a color printer that copies and faxes, Microsoft® software, 3-year manufacturer's warranty, Internet access, an Office Depot® gift card, and more.

For more information or to order, call **800-540-4142** or visit [afge.ecp2.com](http://afge.ecp2.com). Please have your AFGE local and membership number ready.

**AFGE**   
<http://www.afge.org>  
 888-844-2343 (in DC: 639-6941)





# Start the New Year with a New Way to Save.

**AFGE** The American Federation of Government Employees is proud to announce a wonderful new partnership with **BondRewards**®. And it benefits you in a big way: it turns everyday shopping into real savings.

Just sign up today for a free membership at [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org). Then start shopping at the hundreds of major retailers through the BondRewards website and you'll earn BondDollars™ with every purchase. For every 50 BondDollars you earn, you'll receive a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond, and as an AFGE member you'll be earning BondDollars faster than any other Federal or D.C. Government Employee.\*\*

## MEMBERSHIP IS FREE AND EASY:

1. Go to [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org) or call 1-866-REWARDS (739-2737) to join. Please have your AFGE Local and member numbers ready.
2. Shop with our partners and earn lots of BondDo'
3. Receive \$50 U.S. Savings Bonds directly from the U.S. Treasury.



# BOND REWARDS®

Here are just a few of our online partners:



For members located in the Greater Washington D.C. Area, we have a growing number of participating stores in your neighborhood. Visit [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org) to locate the store nearest you.

\*BondDollars are earned from all participating retailers. See program details and a complete list of participating retailers at [bondrewards.com](http://bondrewards.com).

\*\*For purchases made from any of our participating online retailers.