

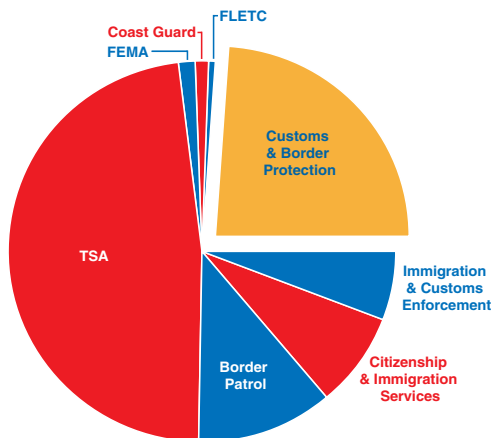


AFGE—THE Homeland Security Union

A FGE recently was certified as the sole union representing almost 5,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) bargaining unit members, part of the union's continuing efforts to secure itself as the only union to speak on behalf of Homeland Security workers across the nation.

The ICE certification covers all eligible employees, including those in Detention and Removal Operations and the Federal Protective Service (FPS). This is the first time that all of FPS, which focuses on the interior security of the nation, will be under one union.

In the fall of 2005, AFGE was awarded successorship of about 11,000 Border Patrol bargaining unit employees, and the certification for more than 7,000 Citizenship and



Immigration Services (CIS) workers is pending. CIS has agreed to the appropriateness of the unit, and no other union is involved.

AFGE's official designation as *the* nation's homeland security union is linked to an upcoming election involving Customs and Border Protection employees. CBP workers previously have been represented by more than one union; however, the Federal Labor Relations Authority last year ordered an election to be held to allow CBP workers to choose which union, if any, will represent them.

"AFGE already represents a majority of Department of Homeland Security workers, and as the CBP employees review their options, I'm sure they will see the wisdom in having one voice represent the agency," AFGE National President **John Gage** said. *(continued on page 3)*

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Spotlight: Legislative Department

AFGE Argues Against DoD Personnel System in Federal Court, Awaits Ruling

DoD Agrees to Postpone Implementation of NSPS until March 1

A FGE presented legal arguments in federal court Jan. 24 against the Department of Defense's (DoD) plan to implement its controversial National Security Personnel System (NSPS), saying the proposal would end nearly a century of civil service protections and decades of transparent, objective public sector personnel policies.

AFGE argued before Judge Emmet G. Sullivan of the U.S. District Court for the Dis-

trict of Columbia. During the hearing, AFGE scored a major victory when DoD representatives agreed to postpone implementation of NSPS until March 1 to give Judge Sullivan time to review arguments and issue a decision.

The postponement marks the second time in as many months that DoD has delayed implementation of NSPS, originally scheduled to go into effect in the spring of 2005. *(continued on page 3)*

2006 AFGE National Convention

AFGE's 37th National Convention will be held
Monday, August 7 through Friday, August 11, 2006, at:

HYATT REGENCY ATLANTA

265 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-1294 • (404) 577-1234

Important information for the 2006 AFGE National Convention:

NO ON-SITE REGISTRATION! ADVANCE REGISTRATION ONLY and must be postmarked by July 8, 2006; All delegates must be elected by July 8, 2006; and those who merely show up will not be seated.

Check your mail for complete 2006 Convention details and information.



A Message from National President John Gage

AFGE Gears Up for the Main Event

John Gage

This year is getting off to a great start for AFGE with much promise for regaining the initiative on issues of importance to government employees and the public those employees serve. After several years filled with bad news about privatization, scarce resources and funding for government agencies, and personnel reform efforts that would be detrimental to public services, the tide is turning. AFGE is at the forefront of a campaign to preserve union rights, not just for government employees, but for all Americans.

Union busting has become common practice under the current administration, and federal agencies, which are supposed to serve as model employers for the nation, are setting some bad examples. But AFGE won't let them get away with it. On Jan. 24 AFGE went to federal court to argue against the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) proposed by the Department of Defense, and we won yet another postponement on implementation of this horrendous plan.

AFGE also is fighting cronyism and incompetence among managers and top officials throughout the government. We have strongly opposed personnel changes in the federal sector. We are holding leaders of federal agencies to high standards, like the top officials at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) who botched the response to Hurricane Katrina with such tragic consequences. We will continue to act as a guardian of Social Security by supporting agency employees and by working to strengthen the program. We will work with our allies on Capitol Hill and candidates who are friendly toward government workers to ensure that Congress appropriately addresses our concerns. AFGE will fight to continue to represent thousands of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) employees because AFGE overwhelmingly *is the dominant* Homeland Security union.

AFGE has focused enormous energy over the past three years fighting efforts to completely redefine the civil service protections and personnel rules in the federal government because these changes are such a raw deal for government employees and for the public. Proposed personnel changes, like Max^{HR} in the Department of Homeland Security and NSPS, are founded upon the mistaken philosophy that accountability increases as evaluation standards for employees become more subjective and as unilateral power is granted to managers over pay, promotions and the right to continued, gainful employment.

If implemented, Max^{HR} and NSPS would enfeeble labor unions and impose subjective human resources policies not present in America since the high point of the spoils system in the 1800s. The proposed system of collective bargaining binds unions while allowing federal agencies to break labor agreements whenever managers see fit. It is for this reason, among others, that we won a critical legal victory in federal court last year that blocked implementation of the

Max^{HR} labor relations scheme. We anticipate a legal win against NSPS very soon that will be just as significant.

Of direct consequence for AFGE members outside DoD and DHS, officials at the Office of Personnel Management are proposing changes along the lines of Max^{HR} and NSPS in all federal agencies. The good news, however, is that the proposed legislation that would permit new personnel rules in all federal agencies, the "Working for America Act," does not yet have a sponsor nor has it been introduced in Congress. AFGE, on your behalf, vigilantly will continue to ensure that the proposed legislation does not gain any momentum on Capitol Hill.

AFGE is fighting for a more effective government in addition to fighting for your workplace rights and the right of taxpayers to have a government workforce that is accountable and held to objective standards.

On behalf of D.C. government workers, AFGE is fighting an anti-union mentality that has emerged in the Water and Sewer Authority (WASA). AFGE members in WASA protect the water supply of our nation's capital and should be viewed as partners by agency managers. Yet they have had contentious contract negotiations forced upon them because agency representatives, backed by private law firms costing D.C. taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars, have grown hostile to unions. AFGE will fight to ensure that these employees are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

AFGE is coming out swinging for the upcoming midterm elections in 2006. We have sophisticated political mobilization plans and enhanced communications capabilities. We are ready to call upon and inspire our members to join our political efforts. We will advocate, represent, fight and campaign, all on your behalf. From the smallest office to the largest agency, AFGE will be there.

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AFGE—THE Homeland Security Union

(continued from page 1)

“AFGE is poised for this election and is confident that CBP workers will make the right decision and join their colleagues in the Border Patrol and the other DHS agencies by electing AFGE as their only union.”

In addition to Border Patrol, ICE and CIS, AFGE represents DHS employees in the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, (FLETC), FEMA and Coast Guard. And although TSA screeners remain deprived of collective bargaining rights, AFGE has represented TSA screeners before the Disciplinary Review Board, the Office of Workers’ Compensation, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in the courts, before Congress and in the media. In fact, AFGE recently won back the job of TSA Local 1 President Ron Moore after he was wrongfully terminated (story on p. 4).

AFGE also is committed to maintaining a voice in CBP for agricultural specialists and technicians. Accordingly, the National Association of Agriculture Employees has urged its members to support AFGE in the upcoming election.

“The NAAE Executive Committee and its

CBP advisory committee unanimously concluded that AFGE affords Legacy Agriculture the best opportunity to stay together, have its voices heard, and to work as a union and with management to accomplish the Agriculture mission,” NAAE National President **Michael Randall** wrote in an open letter to his members.

AFGE has actively fought on behalf of DHS workers across the country, most recently winning millions more dollars on behalf of hundreds of current and former employees of DHS (ICE, CBP and CIS) to compensate employees for unpaid overtime.

This decision follows a \$20 million initial payment that AFGE secured from the agency last June and covers “suffer or permit” overtime, which is time worked that remains undocumented in agency records. An example would be time spent while traveling to a temporary duty station.

The case initially was filed against the Immigration and Naturalization Service 11 years ago on behalf of thousands of INS employees who were not properly compensated for their overtime. Much of INS

became part of ICE when DHS was created in 2002. After years of delaying tactics—first by INS, then later by DHS—arbitration hearings began in December 2003 and concluded in November 2004. The initial payment of \$20 million, covering traditional overtime, was made in June 2005, following several months during which AFGE pressured DHS to honor its obligation to compensate the affected employees.

“This is just another example of AFGE’s philosophy of aggressively representing the rank-and-file CBP employee,” Gage said. “We may not win every battle, but we can be counted on to fight every round.”

AFGE Awaits Ruling

(continued from page 1)

AFGE, along with several union coalition partners, started its fight to protect the rights and pay of civilian DoD workers by filing a lawsuit in February 2005 challenging the legality of the rules.

AFGE has argued that DoD defied Congress by refusing to engage in any meaningful collaboration with the unions that represent the department’s employees, as called for in the legislation that authorized the creation of NSPS. AFGE has consistently stated that NSPS stands to devastate the federal workforce by gutting worker pay, eliminating collective bargaining rights, rendering whistleblower protections moot and wasting millions of taxpayer dollars.

The AFGE-led lawsuit that prompted the Jan. 24 hearing mirrors a lawsuit filed by AFGE and other labor unions against comparable personnel regulations at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Twice last year, Federal District Judge Rosemary M. Collyer ruled to block implementation of the DHS proposal because of illegal provisions.

“We are confident that Judge Sullivan will rule against DoD’s extreme personnel proposal,” said AFGE National President **John Gage**. “AFGE won a similar case against the Department of Homeland Security, and we will win against this misnamed DoD scheme.”

If implemented, NSPS would eliminate the decades-old general schedule (also known as GS) pay scale system and other federal workplace rules and affect 750,000 civilian defense workers.

AFGE to Continue Efforts to Protect Vets From Threats to Health Care Programs

In 2005, AFGE activists worked tirelessly to shed light on the administration’s efforts to compromise the care of the nation’s veterans by outsourcing the jobs of those that protect their well-being. In 2006, AFGE will continue to pressure the administration and Congress into keeping the promises made to the men and women who proudly served their country. Here are some updates on pending legislation and a look ahead to what veterans and activists can expect in the future from AFGE.

Contracting Out. AFGE will be closely monitoring the progress of a contracting out proposal contained in Section 7 of the Veterans Health Care Act of 2005 (S. 1182). As a result of AFGE’s diligence, that proposal contains a ban on spending \$300 million in veterans’ medical dollars for contracting out studies of 36,000 jobs at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). At the same time, it allows the VA to establish a limited two-

year pilot project for comparing the Office of Management and Budget cost competition process and the VA’s own business process reengineering approach to increasing efficiency.

As S. 1182 moves through the House, AFGE will continue to monitor and block any attempts to weaken the spending ban language and will work to ensure that the pilot project is carried out responsibly and the results are reported properly to Congress.

Budget. Earlier this year, the VA admitted to a health care funding shortfall of more than \$1.2 billion because the VA and the administration inexplicably failed to estimate the number and impact of veterans returning home to the United States from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. To plug the budget holes, Congress and the administration approved \$1.5 billion in emergency funding for fiscal year 2005.

(continued on page 4)

AFGE Wins TSA Employee Reinstatement

An employee with the Transportation Security Administration received the perfect holiday gift: his job back.

Thanks to the efforts of AFGE, the employee was restored to his job as a transportation security screener at Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

Gony Frieder, assistant general counsel in the AFGE General Counsel's office, described the screener's reinstatement as a "stunning victory" for him and other workers at TSA. On the screener's behalf, AFGE successfully argued that he was given insufficient notice of the alleged offense before his termination.

TSA has a policy that prohibits screeners from having delinquencies of greater than \$5,000 unless they show proof that they are adhering to payment plans. Last year, TSA required the screener to prove that he was in compliance with the agency's debt policy due to an alleged debt of \$20,812.

The TSA gave the screener only 10 calendar days to supply the evidence. Before

the 10 days were up, however, it proposed to terminate the screener for failing to provide an explanation for the alleged indebtedness.

On an appeal to the TSA's Disciplinary Review Board, AFGE argued that the TSA failed to provide meaningful notice to the screener before termination. AFGE said the screener was not given sufficient time to respond and was not progressively disciplined. AFGE said also that because the screener did not actually owe a debt of greater than \$5,000 as alleged, he was not on notice that he had to correct any financial wrong. The DRB's decision adopted many of the points made in appeal.

AFGE is the only union that has actively fought on behalf of employment rights for TSA's screeners. Although screeners remain deprived of a collective bargaining agreement, AFGE represents screeners before the Disciplinary Review Board, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, courts, in Congress and in the press.

AFGE to Continue Efforts to Protect Vets From Threats to Health Care Programs

(continued from page 3)

In November 2005, Congress agreed to appropriate \$70 billion in VA funding for fiscal year 2006, which includes \$22.5 million in health care funds, a more than 8 percent increase over last year. Congress also scrapped heavily criticized plans to apply a 1 percent budget cut to the VA budget. Despite these gains, the VA remains chronically under-funded, and veterans suffer as a result.

In 2006, AFGE will continue to fight for a more assured funding process that brings certainty to program funding. AFGE also will closely monitor the appropriations subcommittees to ensure that no health care funds are set aside for contracting out reviews and that the fiscal 2007 budget meets the needs of the nation's veterans.

Physicians Pay Bill. In recent years, AFGE activists and lobbyists worked behind the scenes to ensure the passage of the Physicians Pay Bill. The bill, which sets up new provisions to recruit and properly pay physicians recruited into the federal workforce, finally took effect on Jan. 8, 2006. However,

AFGE remains concerned about the future enforcement of the law because doctors and dentists have largely been excluded from the implementation process during the past year despite written demands from AFGE.

However, after writing members of Congress, VA management has agreed to meet with National VA Council President Alma Lee to hear AFGE concerns about representation on compensation panels, market pay rates, performance pay and the exclusion of union officials from key meetings. In 2006, AFGE will continue to pressure the VA to involve unions in the implementation process and to ensure that federal physician pay ranges reflect the current market.

IT Centralization. The VA is a pioneer in electronic medical records usage and a variety of technological innovations. In 2006, AFGE will continue to monitor new legislative IT proposals, especially ones that would aim to centralize IT functions, and inform Congress about changes to the IT system that may adversely affect the ability of physicians, nurses and other health care providers to serve patients.

Holidays Left You Short?

The Holiday Bonus Bucks Campaign Is Your Answer!

Need help paying those holiday bills? Don't forget the Holiday Bonus Bucks campaign. You have until February 28, 2006, to earn money for every co-worker you get to join AFGE. You can pay off debts, add to your savings or buy yourself that something you've always wanted—all while building AFGE! Everybody wins.

For details, membership applications and complete instructions, visit www.afge.org and look for "Holiday Bonus Bucks" or call the Membership and Organization Department at 202-639-6410.

iPod Sweepstakes

There's Still a Chance to Win an iPod Nano!

Due to the holiday crunch, we have extended the deadline to enter the sweepstakes for a chance to win a 2GB iPod nano, courtesy of the Member-Only Benefits program and Apple Computer.

Enter online or by mail by March 15, 2006! Go to the Member Benefits section of the AFGE Web site: www.afge.org, or send your name, address and member number to: AFGE, M&O Department, 80 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

The Apple Member Purchase Program also offers AFGE members a variety of great deals on popular Apple products—some surely will bring music to your ears. For more information go online to AFGE's website or call 1-800-MY-APPLE (1-800-692-7753).



Never Stop Learning—AFGE Education Department Launches New Web Site—education.afge.org

AFGE members—at the local, district and national levels—do battle every day on behalf of the American people and the government employees who serve them. Our job in AFGE's Department of Education and Leadership Development

is to shore up this battle with quality training programs and tools that empower AFGE members to become effective leaders at work, in the union and in the community.



In December 2005, the Education Department launched its latest leadership tool—the AFGE's Education Web Page. Log onto education.afge.org and check out:

- AFGE's 2006 Training Calendar
- Leadership Classes
- AFGE Training Modules and Handouts
- College Scholarships for AFGE Members and their Families
- Volunteer Opportunities

And remember, “*Never Stop Learning.*”



December New Leaders Class Informs and Inspires

Nearly 40 AFGE local leaders participated in the New Leaders Training held this past December at the National Labor College. From Bath, ME, to Sacramento, CA, Officers from 25 different locals honed their skills in representation, organizing, and political action.

Back row, from left: Curtis Mitchell, L916; Ken Brucks, L911, Rudolph Porter, L503, Joseph Riley, L2, Victor Gadson, L31, William Allen, L2785, Cecilia Barnes, L4055, Jeff Vanzandt, L916, Gail Brown, L1534, Robert Swanson, L510. *Middle row, from left:* Monroe Johnson, Headquarters Staff, Lawrence Williams, L1534, Ginny duRivage, Education Director, Francisco Smalls, L2263, Russell Varnado, L476, Miriam Rockmore, L1793, Jennifer Salmon, L510, Denis Salmon, L510, Bryce Davis, L1969, Paul Masich, L1698, Glenroy Richards, L2440, Nancy Lopez, L2440, Mohamed Elmesewdy, L51, Terrence Johns, L2341, Toni Douglas, Education Staff. *Front row, from left:* Letisha Nickson, L2718, Randy Maluchnik, L1969, Nancy Jacobs, L2906, Wayne Stubblefield, L1438, John Gross, L2152, Daniel Pursch, L1616, Gerald Caswell, L1840, Ida Gage, L31.

Activists: The Heart of AFGE

Union activism is critical to the future of the American Federation of Government Employees, according to **Robert Nicklas** of the Legislative & Political Action

Department at AFGE headquarters.

“After 30 years in this work there’s a sight that still puts a smile on my face: It’s AFGE activists standing up for their rights,” he said.

“The situation varies from helping to sign up potential members to attending a rally, meeting with their management, or handing out fliers. What matters, and what puts the smile on my face, is that regardless of the action, AFGE members have decided to get involved. That decision is critical to the future of our union.”

Nicklas added that the more activists AFGE has, the “more we will grow, and that

improves our ability to win better pay, better benefits and better working conditions for federal employees. Given the challenges we face, we need more activists than ever before.”

Activism does not have to be time-consuming, he said. It only takes a few minutes to call, write or e-mail your lawmaker. Members with an hour or two to give could stuff envelopes for a mailing to other AFGE members.

“Or you can walk down the hallway and spend an hour helping to sign up potential members at a lunch and learn or pass out leaflets before or after work,” he said. “There’s a lot to do, no time to waste and each activity, no matter how small, helps make us a stronger union.”

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AFGE Wins Overtime Money for ICE Employees

AFGE Says Decision Cements Its Status as the Homeland Security Union

The American Federation of Government Employees has won additional money on behalf of hundreds of current and former employees of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to compensate employees for unpaid overtime.

This decision follows a \$20 million initial payment that AFGE secured from the agency in June 2005.

"Finally, ICE employees will be compensated for overtime worked, that until now was illegally denied by the agency," said **Joe Goldberg**, AFGE assistant general counsel and the attorney who pursued the case.

This decision covers "suffer or permit" overtime, which is time worked that remains undocumented in agency records. Examples of "suffer or permit" overtime would be time spent while traveling to a temporary duty station or time spent when an

employee worked through an "off the clock" lunch.

The case initially was filed against the Immigration and Naturalization Service—which became part of ICE when DHS was

"AFGE will continue to fight on behalf of government employees, . . . regardless of bullying tactics or attempts to unjustly strip employees of their workplace rights."

—AFGE National President John Gage

created in 2002—11 years ago on behalf of thousands of INS employees who were not properly compensated for their overtime. After years of delaying tactics by the agency, arbitration hearings began in December 2003 and concluded in November 2004.

The initial payment of \$20 million, covering traditional overtime, was made in June 2005 following several months during which AFGE pressured DHS to honor its obligation to compensate the affected employees.

"AFGE is the union of the Department of Homeland Security," AFGE National President **John Gage** said. "AFGE will continue to fight on behalf of government employees, including employees of the Department of Homeland Security, regardless of bullying tactics or attempts to unjustly strip employees of their workplace rights."

AFGE is leading a legal fight against DHS over proposed personnel changes (Max^{HR}) that the union says would impose subjective rules for pay raises and promotions, strip employees of whistleblower protections and illegally impede unions in the federal workplace. In August 2005, AFGE and four other unions won a decision against DHS that declared several major provisions of Max^{HR} to be illegal. In October 2005, the same judge reaffirmed her decision and told DHS that it could not implement any portion of its proposed personnel system until it was made consistent with the law.

AFGE Wins Arbitration for CBP Employee Rights

AFGE recently won a victory in its efforts to protect the rights of Customs and Border Protection officers on shifts and work assignments.

An arbitrator ruled that Customs and Border Protection (CBP), an agency in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), must bargain with local unions—not simply with national unions—on issues covered by collective bargaining agreements such as shift hours, overtime, and communications with bargaining unit members on grievances, personnel policies, and other areas (Case No. NY-2005-1596, Arbitrator's Docket No. 05433-B, COSS Grievance).

The arbitrator's decision grew out of a grievance filed Feb. 8, 2005, by AFGE Local 1917 on behalf of federal workers at John F. Kennedy Airport under Articles 9(A) and (9) of an accord, known as Agreement 2000, which covered "legacy" employees from the old Immigration and Naturalization Service. The local union accused CBP of changing long-established practices on shifts and work assignments without nego-

tiating or discussing them with the locals.

The agency argued, however, that Agreement 2000 was superseded by Executive Order 13203, which relieved agency officials from certain collective bargaining obligations but did not prohibit them from such bargaining, and the National Inspectional Assignment Policy (NIAP). The agency claimed the union failed to exercise its right to bargain over the NIAP when that document was issued, but the arbitrator ruled that the union provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it did request bargaining, including filing several unfair labor practice charges with the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

When the federal government set up DHS, it said that all collective bargaining obligations that existed in the agencies folded into the department would "carry forward" and remain active.

The grievance charged CBP with changing practices, such as posting temporary and permanent schedules and permitting employees to trade shifts.



New Nurse Steering Committee to be Created

The National Executive Council has approved the creation of a Nurse Steering Committee. National Vice President Jane Nygaard has been designated by President Gage to head the committee.

The Nurse Steering Committee will craft a plan of action to respond to the many challenges of working as a nurse in the federal sector.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Nurse Steering Committee, please send an e-mail to mcquic@afge.org with the following information: name; job title (RN, LPN, etc.); agency; years of federal service, and a short statement about why you would like to be considered to be a member of the committee.



Bureau of Prisons Local Still Fighting To Resolve Pay Issues for Officers Who Battled Hurricane

Feds Called Unprepared for External Threats to Correctional Units

Despite higher marks for the federal and state response to Hurricanes Rita and Wilma in comparison to Katrina, the correctional staff at the Beaumont Federal Correctional Complex in Beaumont, Texas, can attest that not every federal agency is prepared to confront emergency situations.

As virtually the entire population along the Gulf of Mexico between Galveston, Texas, and Shreveport, La., was being evacuated, the Beaumont correctional officers (COs) were being abandoned.

Americans expect federal and state agencies to have plans in place for responding to an emergency or disaster. Yet as Hurricane Katrina tragically demonstrated, existing plans may be inadequate and rendered ineffective by incompetence among top managers. The experiences of the Beaumont correctional staff that lived through the landfall and aftermath of Hurricane Rita suggest that the Bureau of Prisons (BoP) is woefully unprepared for external threats to correctional facilities.

The projected path of Hurricane Rita, one of the most powerful hurricanes ever recorded, prompted a massive evacuation along the Gulf of Mexico. The mayor of Port Arthur, a community near Beaumont, ordered a complete evacuation, including first responders and police. Yet BoP made no effort to evacuate Beaumont FCC, nor did the agency send any emergency supplies—such as food, water, generators, medical supplies, tents, or cots—to the facility in advance of the storm.

On Friday, Sept. 23, 2005, word came down from BoP headquarters that non-essential personnel would be permitted to evacuate, as would one parent in a family where both parents worked at the facility. Staff forced to stay brought food, water, blankets, boats and jet skis to the facility in preparation for the storm's landfall. Prisoners held in cells on the ground floor were relocated to the second floor in anticipation of flooding, resulting in four-to-five inmates per cell.

As the power failed on Friday night, Hurricane Rita roared toward land as the most powerful type of hurricane, a Category 5 storm.

"The prison buildings are constructed of steel and cinder blocks, but they didn't feel safe under the onslaught of the storm," said **Isaac Ortiz**, president of Local 1010 at Beaumont, and a correctional officer.

"If Hurricane Rita hadn't weakened, we might not have survived," Ortiz added.

Although Hurricane Rita was downgraded to a Category 3 storm by the time it made landfall, circumstances inside Beaumont had just begun to get ugly.

Without electricity or emergency generators, the clear skies following the storm caused temperatures to rise inside the correctional buildings to dangerous levels. Staff and inmates found it difficult to breathe in the swamp-like atmosphere.

Staff slept wherever they could—on desks, in chairs, or on empty patches of floors. Inmates made due with sandwiches that were prepared before the storm, while staff consumed the food they were able to bring from home.

Water consumption had to be carefully rationed—a dangerous practice in the extreme heat—lest the safe supply in the Beaumont water tower run out. The lack of running water meant that inmates had to use plastic bags for their bodily wastes and correctional officers had to collect the bags.

According to AFGE representatives, miscommunication and miscues marked the agency's response in the days following the storm. BoP officials turned away emergency

generators. Other supplies offered by the National Guard were also turned away initially by management, only to be redirected back to Beaumont. Supplies did not begin to trickle into the facility until Sept. 27.

Relief crews of correctional staff from other facilities in the region were waylaid at a bus terminal near Houston, sleeping on cots, instead of quickly being deployed to Beaumont.

"After several days of keeping the relief crews in limbo, the council had to step in and demand that the Bureau of Prisons either deploy the relief staff, put them up in a hotel or send them home," said **Bryan Lowry**, president of the Council of Prison Locals. "It was the only leverage we had to get some assistance to Beaumont, and it worked."

The relief staff arrived at Beaumont on Sept. 28, five days after the landfall of Rita.

Months later, the council is still struggling to resolve issues on behalf of the Beaumont COs. Lowry explained that the bureau has refused to pay overtime to those who worked through the storm, despite the fact that staff were unable to leave until relief crews arrived.

"We risked our lives, remaining at our posts, yet now the Bureau of Prisons wants to get petty on overtime," said Ortiz. "The COs who lived through this are devastated because of the lack of support from our agency."

Activists: The Heart of AFGE

(continued from page 5)

Nicklas offered a few tips for getting involved.

First, he said, members need to get connected. "Go to www.afge.org right now and sign up for **AFGE Actions News**," he said. "That's our e-mail alert system that will keep you posted on hot issues and what you can do about them. Point, click and write, call or e-mail your lawmaker in just a few minutes."

Members also need to join the AFGE Volunteer Corp. "AFGE launched the **Volun-**

teer Action Corp in 2004," he said. "You can volunteer for a wide variety of activities from helping out at a lunch and learn to attending a rally or stuffing envelopes." Members can sign up for the Volunteer Action Corp at <http://education.afge.org>.

Most importantly, members need to think positively and long term, he said.

"We can continue to successfully meet the challenges we face by organizing and mobilizing our members in ever greater numbers each year."

At Your Service: Legislative Department

Beth Moten, legislative director, says that if she were not a lobbyist at AFGE, she would still be working for another union. "I love standing off the House and Senate floors asking legislators for their votes on AFGE issues."

Beth started her career as a national representative for the National Federation of Federal Employees where she held positions as both a lobbyist and legislative director. She joined AFGE in 1989. Beth received both a bachelor's degree in English and finance from the University of Texas. She is married to another labor lobbyist and has two union-loving children.

John Threlkeld is the assistant legislative director and works mostly on contracting out and privatization issues for AFGE. Prior to coming to AFGE, John worked as a legislative aide on Capitol Hill, as well as worked for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. John believes that even though Congress is operating under a hostile administration, AFGE still has had successes on some important issues. "It's very rewarding to know that all the hard work pays off," says John, especially with the Transportation Security Administration and Department of Defense wins. John attended Columbia University and the UCLA School of Law.

Marilyn Park began her career at the Social Security Administration and later worked with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society. Marilyn said she loves working with the National Veterans Administration (VA) Council officers and its members. "They make us proud with how well they serve the veterans in the VA system," she said. Marilyn graduated from Barnard College and George Washington University Law

School. "If I weren't working here at AFGE, I would work at Senator [Daniel] Akaka's [D-Hawaii] district office since he is so pro-veteran, and I could outrigger canoe year round in an idyllic environment," Marilyn said, smiling.

Alan Kadrofske began his career at AFGE five years ago. He enjoys analyzing AFGE

and Political Action Department. Charity will focus on lobbying on behalf of AFGE on Transportation Security Administration issues, in general, with a particular emphasis on the issues of airport screeners. She will also work with District 14 in representing the interests of D.C. workers.

"I am inspired by interaction with local union members, especially in mobilization efforts," says Charity. Prior to her employment with AFGE, Charity worked for the AFL-CIO, first as a legislative representative in the legislation department, then as the lead coordinator for equity issues in the department of public policy.

She handled immigrant and low-wage worker issues and provided policy support for the department of civil rights. Charity graduated from the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville School of Law.

Linda McCumber began working at AFGE in 1977 in the old Pay and Classification department and has been

with the legislative department since 2004, after being reassigned from the national president's office. "I enjoy the fact that we are helping to make a difference in people's lives," says Linda. "We have a great group of people working together to make that happen."

As a legislative assistant, Linda contributes in all areas of the legislative department. In addition to her administrative duties, Linda researches the status of bills and pending legislation. For the last several years, she has assisted with hotel logistics and the registration process for the **AFGE Legislative Conference**. The conference will be held this year on March 5-9 at the Hyatt Regency in Washington, D.C. (www.afge.com).



The staff of the Legislative Department includes (front row, left to right) Charity Wilson and Beth Moten. Back row: Linda McCumber, Marilyn Park, Alan Kadrofske, and John Threlkeld.

issues and making the "case" to members of Congress. Alan says his first "real" job was as a legal assistant at the law firm of McNamee & Associates in Port Huron, Mich., a firm which specialized in worker's compensation and Social Security disability issues. He also worked as a legislative assistant in the offices of U.S. Representatives Peter H. Kostmayer (D-Pa.) and Tom McMillan (D-Md.).

Alan has run three 26.2 mile marathons: the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C.; the Irish Marathon in Dublin, Ireland; and the New York City Marathon. He is also planning to run the Italian Marathon in Florence, Italy, in December 2006.

Charity Wilson recently joined AFGE as a legislative representative in the Legisla-