



# THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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

May/June 2013

Vol. LXXX, No 3

## AFGE Leads Fight Against Sequestration and Furloughs



photo by Rodrigo Alvarez Munoz

Sequestration is now upon us. Despite our best lobbying efforts, Congress allowed the \$85 billion in cuts for this fiscal year to take effect. And that has set the stage for more battles to come as we fight to repeal the full impact of sequestration – \$1 trillion in cuts to federal programs and services over 10 years. But thanks to a concerted effort by AFGE members and staff, the impact of these across-the-board budget cuts isn't nearly as dire as agencies first proposed.

Yes, the impact is still real and severe at many of our agencies. Many employees will go days or weeks without a pay check, and some agencies are putting the mission in serious jeopardy by slashing overtime, cutting hours and closing up shop altogether.

But it could have been much, much worse. The Pentagon has cut the number of days civilian employees will be furloughed

from 22 to 14 and may cut that number even further. The Justice Department dropped its plan to furlough correctional officers at federal prisons for 14 days, while the Agriculture Department reversed its original plan to close meat inspection plants for 11 consecutive days.

AFGE members were instrumental in getting these agencies to

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## A Message from AFGE's National President *J. David Cox Sr.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I am writing this on the morning that President Obama delivered to Congress his fiscal 2014 budget proposal. By now you're familiar with the more than \$30 billion in additional cuts to the federal retirement system, Social Security benefits, FEHBP, Medicare, and the consolidation of agencies and programs that will likely cost jobs. So much for his promise to protect middle and working class Americans. I'm feeling the same thing you are: why can't this president stand up for the principles he professes to hold?

The retirement system cuts hammer everybody – FERS and CSRS – hired before 2013 with another 1.2 percent in mandatory retirement funding. FEHBP cuts amount to \$8.4 billion including prescription carve outs, self plus one, regional PPOs, and raising premiums for smokers and those with other medical conditions. The one glimmer of hope: breaking the freeze with a 1 percent raise for 2014. Sen. Mikulski from Maryland promises to hold the administration to this, and we have to make sure that happens.

The cuts to Social Security and retirement benefits (and veterans' benefits) come from using the chained CPI to calculate cost of living adjustments. The estimated benefit cuts would amount to 0.3 percent a year, which is 3 percent over a decade, and so on. Nobody thinks chained CPI is a more accurate measure of the cost of living for elderly consumers. It's politics pure and simple.

***The administration offers up the elderly, veterans and federal employees in another of its endless ploys to get their political enemies to make a deal. It makes me sick.***

I'm happy to report we're making good progress in beating back these furloughs. DOD pared back from 22 days to 14 days after we helped get them new money in the continuing resolution and now they're trying to reduce it to seven days. Customs and Border Protection is backing off both furloughs and elimination of overtime in the Border Patrol. The Department of Agriculture cancelled furloughs for meat and poultry inspectors.

Numerous agencies that were contemplating furloughs have remained silent. We're going to keep fighting until we get them all cancelled.

President Obama's volunteering to take a 5 percent cut "in solidarity" with furloughed federal employees showed how wrongheaded this administration is when it comes to our issues. He should be telling the agencies to cancel all furloughs and find other ways to save, or be working to get rid of sequestration altogether. Solidarity isn't about cutting pay – your own or anybody else's. It's about lifting one another up, fighting shoulder to shoulder to improve, not reduce, living standards and economic security. All of his gestures so far – from freezing our salaries, cutting our retirement and reducing our paychecks with furloughs – are the opposite of solidarity.

Nobody can turn around these proposed cuts or get rid of furloughs except us, AFGE. And the only way to succeed is to Organize! Organize! Organize! And then Mobilize! Mobilize! Thank you for all you do for this GREAT UNION.

In solidarity,

### AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

Vol. LXXX, No. 3 May/June 2013. AFGE—The Government Standard (USPS 003-219, ISSN 1041-5335) 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).

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Produced by the AFGE Communications Department. Layout by AFGE's Service Department, and union printing by Mount Vernon Printing Co. Postmaster: send change of addresses to AFGE—The Government Standard, Attn: AFGE Data Processing Dept., 80 F St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20001.



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rethink their plans. We rallied in more than 100 cities on March 20, drawing public attention to the devastating consequences that would occur if federal employees were forced off the job. AFGE's national headquarters organized a news conference on March 13 in which many of our union leaders discussed how sequestration cuts would disrupt the delivery of programs and services and could even jeopardize the health and safety of our members. And our union officers fought back against the sweeping cuts proposed by agencies, using bargaining guidance and materials uploaded to AFGE's website.

The knee-jerk reaction from many departments and agencies was to furlough civilian employees for up to a month, forcing us to swallow huge pay cuts at a time when our pay has been frozen for three straight years. Agencies claimed they had no flexibility when it came to making these budget cuts, but we knew better. "The conventional wisdom in Washington was that federal agencies' hands were tied when it came to making these sequestration cuts," AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. said. "But we didn't take no for an answer, and we proved that we can fight back against nearly anything – even something as supposedly intractable and immovable as sequestration."

The Department of Housing and Urban Development proposed furloughing employees for up to 22 days and eliminating compressed work schedules. But AFGE bargained that down to a seven-day furlough with no impact on compressed work schedules. The Transportation Security Administration initially proposed furloughing transportation security officers for up to 7 days. But after AFGE pointed out that the agency was fully funded for two years, suddenly TSA realized it didn't need to furlough employees at all.

Still, we weren't able to win all the battles, and the cuts agencies plan to make will have real consequences – for us personally, and on the work we do. While TSA dropped its furlough plan, it still intends to eliminate overtime – which will mean longer lines for travelers at airports. About one-third of TSA's transportation security officers are part-time employees who routinely clock 10 hours a week in overtime. Eliminating this overtime translates to cutting several thousand full-time TSOs.

Thanks to aggressive lobbying by our National Border Patrol Council, the Justice Department withdrew plans to furlough every Border Patrol officer for 14 days. Still, the agency plans to eliminate overtime that officers accrue



daily while securing our borders. Wiping out this overtime will mean a 25% pay cut for officers and is the equivalent of slashing 4,000 agents, or roughly 20% of the workforce. At the Department of Defense, more than 700,000 civilian employees will go without a pay check for 14 days between June and September. While 14 days is certainly better than 22 days, zero is the number of days federal employees should be laid off without pay due to some manufactured budget crisis.

"The Pentagon had more than enough flexibility to avoid furloughs altogether, and I am outraged that our military leaders would continue to force these painful pay cuts on more than 700,000 hardworking civilian employees," Cox said.

AFGE has called on DoD and other agencies to review the massive amount of taxpayer dollars spent on service contracts. Service contractor costs have ballooned from \$72 billion to more than \$200 billion a year at the Department of Defense in the past decade, and another \$100 billion is spent annually at other agencies. Yet there has been little indication that the Pentagon or other agencies have engaged in any serious review of these contracts to determine where savings can be made.

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“The contractor workforce is larger and more costly than the civilian workforce, yet we’ve seen no evidence that federal agencies are even considering revising or cutting contracts to save money,” Cox said. “Revising these costly contracts should be the first place agencies look for savings, instead of slashing salaries for civilian employees.”

Make no mistake – unless Congress repeals sequestration, we are going to be facing more of these battles in the

months and years ahead. We can’t afford to back down now. We need to keep the pressure on our elected officials to get rid of sequestration once and for all. It’s bad for our employees, it’s bad for our economy and it’s bad for the country.

By speaking with one voice, we have proven that we can fight back against something that seems undefeatable. Now is the time to strike the final blow and slay the sequestration beast once and for all.

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## Day of Action: AFGE Leads Nationwide Protests to Stop Sequestration and Furloughs



On March 20 AFGE members, along with other labor unions and citizens groups, organized a nationwide day of protest against sequestration. Members from agencies including the Department of Labor, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Prisons held 115 rallies in states including Illinois, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Michigan, Colorado, Virginia, West Virginia, Arizona, Georgia, Alabama as well as Washington, D.C.

“Our message is very clear: sequestration has got to go,” AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. said. “If federal employees are furloughed without pay, if offices and plants are shut down, if vacancies aren’t filled because of these across-the-board budget cuts, then federal employees won’t be able to do the work that the American public expects them to do.” AFGE members and their allies banded together to demand a repeal of sequestration, which could lead to up to 22 unpaid

furlough days for more than a million federal government employees over the next six months.

Protesters emphasized the importance of creating jobs and improving the economy by raising wages and increasing economic security for working people. “We want Congress to understand that we don’t think furloughs are appropriate for federal employees, that there are other ways to cut the budget, and that we’re tired of being political pawns,” said Pete Steel, president of AFGE Department of Defense Local 1345.

Aside from the one million federal government employees across the country who could be affected by furloughs, local businesses and communities will also experience a trickle-down effect. “Sequestration destroys communities,” Cox said. “The government needs to be creating more jobs in this country, not less.”

## AFGE Holds News Conference to Highlight Consequences of Sequestration



From left to right: Shawn Moran, Vice President At Large, AFGE National Border Patrol Council; Paul Rinaldi, President, National Air Traffic Controllers Association; J. David Cox Sr., National President, American Federation of Government Employees; Stacy Bodtmann, Region 1 Vice President, AFGE Transportation Security Administration Council; Robin Nichols, Executive Vice President, AFGE Defense Logistics Agency Council.

**A**FGGE held a news conference March 13 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., to detail the affects sequestration will have on agencies throughout the federal government. In his opening remarks, AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. introduced labor leaders from across the federal government, and explained how budget cuts and furloughs would negatively impact agencies' missions. Cox also explained that "the decision to furlough federal employees before even looking at service contracts for savings is a political one and directly contradicts the often stated position of the agencies that their guiding principle has been mission first."

Paul Rinaldi, president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, stressed the importance of a growing, thriving airspace system. Rinaldi spoke out against furloughing air traffic controllers and emphasized the negative impact it would have on the traveling public and the country's ability to continue to compete competitively in the global market. "We just simply can't run the same level of traffic when one-tenth of our workforce is going to be sent home, and their talents and their skills will be told to take a day off," said Rinaldi.

Representing 44,000 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs), AFGE Transportation Security Administration Council Region 1 Vice President Stacy Bodtmann

explained that while TSOs weren't facing furloughs, other budgetary cuts implemented because of sequestration would impact the agency and the public. "TSA will be cutting way back on overtime at the same time that it freezes hiring. About 1,000 officers will leave the agency during the rest of the fiscal year, and not replacing them and not allowing overtime will have the same impact on the public as furloughs," said Bodtmann.

Representatives from several federal law enforcement agencies also detailed the serious consequences cutting employees' pay and reducing resources will have on border security and operating federal penitentiaries. AFGE National Border Patrol Council Vice President At Large Shawn Moran explained that funding cuts from sequestration would "reduce

the effectiveness of operations, increase response times and put the lives of agents in danger." AFGE Council of Prison Locals President Dale Deshotel painted a grim picture of the current state of federal prisons due to lack of staffing and resources, and how the situation will only get worse as the government tries to tighten its belt. "We are going in the wrong direction. Our mission is becoming impossible. This is no way to protect public safety," said Deshotel.

Also speaking at the news conference was AFGE Defense Logistics Agency Council Executive Vice President Robin Nichols, AFGE Food Safety and Inspection Service Local 2422 President Alfreda Dennis-Bowyer and AFGE National Council of Social Security Administration (SSA) Field Operations Locals 3rd Vice President Steve Kofahl.

Nicohls detailed the financial burden furloughs would have on modestly paid Department of Defense workers and stated that "the Defense Department's decision to impose disproportionate sacrifice on civilian employees from the very beginning was a political one." Dennis-Bowyer spoke later during the event, explaining the U.S. Department of Agriculture's decision to have employees take their furloughs on the same day would cause "inspection operations [to be] closed down completely" and "the live poultry and food animals [to be] left on the farm which will disrupt the entire

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cycle.” Kofahl added SSA workers are distressed they are not able to provide the level of service Americans deserve due to sequestration and “the public needs to understand that Social Security and Medicare, those programs that

are supposedly protected from sequestration, really aren’t.”

The full video of AFGE’s sequestration news conference can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/165iQ8Y>.

## AFGE Welcomes Eric Bunn Sr., Newly Elected National Vice President of the 14th District

**B**unn, who most recently served as president of AFGE Local 2725, is the federation’s first D.C. local president to be elected NVP.

Bunn has been a unionist for more than 22 years. As president of AFGE Local 2725, he represented nearly 1,000 members across six agencies in the District of Columbia government, including the departments of Housing and Community Development, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Health, Environment, and the Office of the State Superintendent of the Department of Education. Bunn also served as president of AFGE

Council 211, which represents 4,500 D.C. local members. Bunn will serve the remainder of Dwight Bowman’s term, former 14th District NVP who passed away in January.



“I join with all of our AFGE brothers and sisters in welcoming Eric Bunn as the new 14th District national vice president. I look forward to working with him as we continue fighting for the rights of federal and D.C. government employees in the 14th District,” said AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr.

# More than 9,000 AFGE members have joined



Arnold Burbage  
Local 1869  
Charleston Air Force Base

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## AFGE's National Border Patrol Council Elects New Officers

**A**FGE's National Border Patrol Council (NBPC) elected new national and regional officers on March 3, 2013 at its biennial convention in Las Vegas, Nev. Brandon Judd was elected president of the council and brings more than 15 years of border patrol experience to the post. More than 150 delegates voted unanimously to elect Judd as president of NBPC, which represents more than 17,000 Border Patrol agents and support staff.

"The safety and security of our borders is in the hands of dedicated federal employees and the challenges they face on the job are unique, and often very dangerous," said AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. "We are pleased to welcome Mr. Judd into this new role and confident he will continue to fight for the rights of our agents."

Other officers elected include Executive Vice President Chris Bauder, Vice President (North) John Perkins, Vice President (South) Paul Perez, Vice President (East) Eric Sparkman, Vice President (West) Derek Hernandez, Vice President (At Large) Shawn Moran, Vice President (At



Large) Albert Trevino, Vice President (At Large) Art Del Cueto, Treasurer Edward Tuffly and Secretary James Stack.



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## Celebrating Your Heritage

**M**ay is Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month. The Women's and Fair Practices Departments would like to celebrate the diversity of our membership by acknowledging the great mixture of languages, religions, and cultural traditions of the Asian-Pacific American community that contributes to this union and our society.



In the 1970s, organizations like the Organization of Chinese Americans, Japanese American Citizens League, and the Organization of Chinese American Women started the campaign to attain greater recognition for Asian-American

contributions in this country. The history of Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month started in a Congressional bill introduced by Reps. Frank Horton of New York and Norman Y. Mineta of California. The resolution that they put forth in June 1977 called upon the president of the United States to name the first 10 days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week. The beginning of May was chosen because of two significant historical milestones: on May 7, 1843, the first Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States; and on May 10, 1869, Chinese workers completed the transcontinental railroad.

Sens. Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga introduced a similar bill the following month. Both of the bills passed and on October 5, 1978, a joint resolution was signed by President Jimmy Carter to designate the first week of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week.

In 1992, 12 years after the bill was signed recognizing the heritage week, the president signed an extension to

increase the celebration to include the entire month of May.

We appreciate the many contributions from this community and will continue to advocate for fair and equal treatment for all people. Without the architecture of I.M. Pei, the music of Yo-Yo Ma, or the spirit of Eleanor Mariano, we would be missing important parts of American history.



## AFGE Secures Three-Year Bond Renewal Coverage

**A**s mandated by the delegates of the 2012 National Convention, AFGE is seeking to be more efficient in cutting costs wherever feasible. As a result, bond renewal coverage for each local and council has been converted to a three-year term for 2013 – 2015. Eberts & Harrison has offered AFGE a three-year term as opposed to an annual

renewal term for our affiliates, which results in a \$32,000 discount. Locals will no longer receive paper bond certificates. Digital copies of each bond certificate can be made available upon request. To request your bond copy, please contact Dr. Arla J. Johnson, executive assistant to the National Secretary-Treasurer, at 202.639.6438.

Stay connected to the latest AFGE news and events! "Like" us on



and follow us on



## Did You Know About AFGE's Legal Rights Program?

**F**ederal and D.C. government workers get fired or suspended every day. The letter is always a shock to an employee: "...you are hereby removed from service." Shock turns to anger, which quickly turns to "What can I do?" or "I need an attorney."

If AFGE is your union, your Local can help you file a grievance or an appeal. And, if the case involves potential back pay, your Local can request assistance with arbitration or other appeal from the AFGE General Counsel's Office under our Legal Rights Program. If your case is not barred by statute, case law, rule or regulation, AFGE will provide a lawyer for your case for free, as long as your Local agrees to pay for the cost of the hearing, like an arbitrator's fee, transcript costs, etc.

A recent case at Offutt Air Force Base shows how AFGE Legal Rights attorneys get results.

In the middle part of the last decade, Julie Sheehan led a successful AFGE organizing campaign for the Ehrling Bergquist Clinic's professionals and non-professionals. Serving as VP of Local 1486, she filed numerous grievances and unfair labor practice charges on behalf of herself and other members. And she attended a national

labor-management meeting held to brainstorm about replacing the National Security Personnel System.

Rated a top performer throughout 11 years of service, Sheehan was soon subjected to claims of performance shortcomings shortly after her immediate supervisor was replaced. Management refused to allow Sheehan to attend a follow-up meeting on the new personnel system, which resulted in AFGE pulling out of the design team meetings.

In seven days of hearings, AFGE Legal Rights Attorney Evan Greenstein successfully demonstrated that Offutt management displayed hostility toward Sheehan and her protected activity. The arbitrator found management had used a performance improvement plan as a cover for eliminating a troublesome union activist. The arbitrator overturned Sheehan's removal and ordered her reinstated with full back pay.

If it can happen to a top performer like Ms. Sheehan, it can happen to anyone. The AFGE Legal Rights Program provides expert attorneys to represent federal and D.C. government workers facing suspensions, demotions, removals and other adverse actions.



## AFGE Council 120 Wins Labor-Management Cooperation Award

**A**FGGE's Council 120 and its United States Coast Guard management counterpart have been awarded the 2013 Labor-Management Cooperation Award by the Society of Federal Labor & Employee Relations Professionals. The award is presented annually to the federal agency

and union that best exemplify cooperative labor-management relationships. Council 120 and the Coast Guard were recognized for working together to improve their relationship through the establishment of labor-management forums, engagement in pre-decisional discussions and LMR training. Congratulations!





## Are You “Inside Government”?



Listen to AFGE’s radio show nationwide at [InsideGovernmentRadio.com](http://InsideGovernmentRadio.com) to hear:

- Reps. John Sarbanes of Maryland and Hank Johnson of Georgia discuss the negative consequences of sequestration
- Highlights from AFGE’s Legislative and Grassroots Mobilization Conference, including interviews with Rep. Colleen Hanabusa of Hawaii, A. Philip Randolph Institute President Clayola Brown, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) President Lee Saunders, and Virginia Democratic gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe
- A special report from Capitol Hill at AFGE’s joint rally for jobs with AFSCME featuring National President J. David Cox Sr. and Rep. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland

- Additional sequestration analysis with Air Force Materiel Command Council 214 President Troy Tingey, Housing and Urban Development Council 222 President Eddie Eitches and Department of Defense Local 2142 President Joe Gonzales
- Council of Prison Locals President Dale Deshotel advocate for additional staff and protective equipment for BOP correctional officers in the wake of an officer killed in the line of duty

To hear these shows and many more, go to [InsideGovernmentRadio.com](http://InsideGovernmentRadio.com). Follow us on Twitter and Facebook! [Twitter.com/afgeradioshow](https://twitter.com/afgeradioshow) and [Facebook.com/afgeradioshow](https://facebook.com/afgeradioshow).

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## Register Now and Save: AFGE Regional Training



SAVE THE DATE	Midwest Regional Training		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IN, KY, OH</li> <li>IL, MI, WI</li> <li>IA, MN, ND, NE, SD</li> <li>AR, KS, MO, OK</li> </ul>
May 20 – 24, 2013	Spearfish Holiday Inn Convention Center	Spearfish, South Dakota	

## Midwest Regional Training May 20 – 24

Join other AFGE leaders and activists at the Midwest Regional Training in Spearfish, S.D., May 20 – 24. The training, hosted by Districts 6, 7, 8 and 9, will be held in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota. For experienced labor leaders and activists, several new advanced-level courses will be offered at this event. Register by May 3 and save \$50 off the regular registration fee.

For complete registration and conference information, go to [www.afge.org/midwestregion](http://www.afge.org/midwestregion).

Photo by Robert Alvarez Munoz



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## Human Rights Training Conference – August 19-22, 2013

The theme for this year's Human Rights Training Conference is "The Battle is Not Over!" We must continue to fight for justice! This is our country and we can't give up until equality and fairness is achieved for all! Our featured training classes will include all levels of

EEO training, including D.C. government, collective bargaining, WFP coordinator, new leaders, work/life, diversity and conflict resolution trainings. Come to the HRT and gain skills to empower your union!

You can register online at [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org)

