

216

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Holding Our Ground

*By Rachel Shonfield,
Legislative Coordinator, Local 3599*

On February 4, 2011, Council 216 made its annual trek to a frozen Washington, D.C.; first to take care of Council businesses; second to join up with our brothers and sisters for the American Federation of Government Employees Legislative Conference; and third to take our message to save EEOC straight to Congress.

The Council met with members of Congress and their staff to tell them that EEOC needs resources, not cuts, in order to keep discrimination from costing jobs. We also explained that EEOC could work smarter by finally implementing the Union's Cost Efficient Intake Plan, which creates dedicated intake units in each office.

Facing a net hiring freeze, the Council told Congress that EEOC needs to use any available hiring to bring on board frontline staff. Finally, we stressed it's high time for the agency to compensate employees for willful overtime violations, per the 2009 Federal Arbitrator's ruling.

We also educated hundreds of AFGE members, so that they could share our message, by including our talking points in the conference materials. Additionally, Gabrielle Martin, had an opportunity to speak during the Women's and Fair Practices Civil Rights Luncheon.

A battle that very well could include a shutdown or near shut down of government.



Photo—Front row: Stephanie Perkins—President Local 3504, Pam Edwards—Delegate Local 3637, Lillian Marti—Member Local 3555 Back row: Levi Morrow—Council 216 Chief Negotiator and President Local 3637, Danny Lawson—Council 216 Secretary, Rachel Shonfield—Council 216 Legislative Coordinator and First V.P., Local 3599, Gabrielle Martin—President Council 216 and President Local 3230, David W. Skillman—Council 216 2nd V.P. and Executive Assistant to the President, Local 3230, and Patricia Morrow—Member Local 3230

Upon our return five days later, we learned that President Obama is requesting that EEOC's budget for FY12 be \$385 million. This is the amount that was requested for FY11 for EEOC, but was never implemented, due to the continuing resolution. However, this is just the starting point in what will be a dramatic government-wide budget battle. A battle that very well could include a shutdown or near shut down of government. Here is what is at stake. There is a push in Congress for an across the board cut to

FY08 funding levels. For the EEOC, that would mean cutting the current budget of \$367 million to \$329 million. This would be sending civil rights enforcement back a decade, because FY08 represented the sixth year of level funding for EEOC. For those who were not here, it was a miserable time for those who worked at EEOC or needed help from the agency. From FY00 to FY08, EEOC lost 25% of its employees, mostly frontline staff to attrition. If a receptionist or an IT person left, then an

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Taking Our Fight to Congress

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office just lost those key positions.

A cut back to FY08 would also be particularly hard for EEOC, because the agency now enforces three more laws than it did in 2008, e.g., GINA, Lily Ledbetter, and the ADAAA (disability charges were up 17% in FY10). Also, the number of discrimination charges coming in the door has increased to FY10's historic high of

999,992.

The Council built the foundation for the effort to ensure adequate resources at the EEOC through our recent Congressional visits. As the budget battle progresses, everyone will need to step up to contact your representatives and build support for EEOC in your community. We need to remind everyone that a civil right is a bipartisan issue.



AFGE 2011 Legislative Conference—March and Rally Photo above: AFGE members enter Senate office .



Photos: A) Danny Lawson, Local 3637, B) AFGE members march to Senate Office, C) AFGE Leaders J. David Cox, Nat. Secretary and Treasurer, Augusta Y. Thomas Nat. Vice President, and AFGE Nat. President John Gage, EEOC sign held by Pamela Edwards at Senate Office, D) Council 216 hold EEOC signs at Senate offices and from left is Gabrielle Martin , Levi Morrow, Rachel Shonfield, Stephanie Perkins, Lillian Marti and Danny Lawson.



Let's Fight



By Rachel Shonfield, Legislative Coordinator, Local 3599

At the opening session of the AFGE Legislative Conference, President John Gage gave a stirring call to action to all AFGE members and their supporters.

Gage said that "Federal employees are not the cause of this deficit" and so he takes issue with President Obama's two (2) year salary freeze because it "contributes to the myth that Federal employees are overpaid."

Significantly, Gage's speech foreshadowed events in Wisconsin. He said that we are seeing a cannibalism of working people. In other words, "I don't have a job or health care [so why do Federal workers]?" But he pointed out that taking away Federal employees jobs or benefits does not help the unemployed. Gage referenced the poll that states that 60% of Americans care most about jobs. Gage stated then that we need to be focused on creating jobs, not cutting the ones we have.

In defense of Federal jobs, Gage said the public does not want longer wait times at social Security, decreased inspectors that inspect mines for safety or dirty drinking water, and no VA for returning veterans. Gage rallied the listeners by saying, "This is about the survival of the labor movement and we are on the right side of this fight."

Destroying Our Foundation

There are two great documents that over time have served as the foundation and guidance for our great country. The first, the Declaration of Independence, acknowledges that all men are created equal and drew a line in the sand that arbitrary discrimination would not be tolerated. The second, the United States Constitution acknowledges and supports the equality of men. While those two documents define the foundation of equality and freedom from arbitrary discrimination, they were not enough.

Over the years, this great nation acknowledged that all was not equal and passed several Constitutional Amendments designed to cement the ideals of equality and lack of arbitrary discrimination. Discrimination was made illegal.

In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to further ensure that equality was not just a lofty ideal, but a reality in our workplaces. Title VII created an enforcement mechanism in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Since 1964, there have been several amendments to Title VII and other Civil Rights Acts have been passed to further ensure that arbitrary discrimination in the workplace is not tolerated. In 2009, additional bipartisan protections were passed.

In times when jobs are scarce the fight for equality is greater. Following a decade of level funding and increasing backlogs and incoming charges at the EEOC, EEOC limps along on limited funding. The dreams of America's workers also limp along.

Waiting more than 10 months for relief does little to maintain workplaces free



Gabrielle Martin, President Council 216, President Local 3230 speaking at the AFGE 2011 Civil Rights Luncheon

from illegal discrimination. Jobs are lost as are homes and communities. The proposed cuts in funding represent abandoning our founding doctrines and documents and an abdication of the laws.

Stand We Must

As public employees, we find ourselves in trying times. We come to work each day because we take pride in our work. We work on the front lines to make a difference for the public each day. And now, we somehow are being blamed for a slew of ills.

Bad decisions have not been addressed. Inefficient processes and ineffectiveness are just the "cost of doing business."

But when a worker stands up to say, "wait, there is a better way of accomplishing this task," rather than explore the potential of the idea, the worker is crucified, especially if the employee happens to belong to a Union.

Unions continue to be vilified, because it is an easy out. Rather than take a good look at how money is spent and rather than look beyond the claim that somehow the union is at fault, blame the unions.

Rather than look at contractors or track the amount of money spent or wasted on contractors, it is easier to target a defined group—public employees—employees who are proud to serve our country and our communities.

As public employees and Unionists, if we do not stand with our brothers and sisters in other states who are being attacked as the source of all budget woes, and if we do not stand up to politicians and neighbors who brand and target us for decisions we do not and cannot make, so go our jobs, as they will be cut. But without jobs, for many of us public employees, so go our mortgages, and our communities, as well as future generations.

If ever there was a time to stand for something, the time is now. Will you stand for your job and your community?

“Unions continue to be vilified, because it is an easy out. ”

Overtime Update



Are you wondering what is going on with the overtime case? So is Council 216! Per the agency's usual strategy, the case continues to languish. On November 15, 2010, the Federal Labor Relations (FLRA) confirmed the Arbitrator's determination that liquidated damages are owed and should equal the actual harm to affected employees, i.e., the overtime compensation owed minus compensatory time already used was correct. So, if you

used compensatory time, you already received credit.

The FLRA also definitively stated that the arbitrator's decision was final for purposes of appeal. This means that we will not get to the end of the claims process and then deal with an appeal of the Arbitrator's decision that the agency willfully violated the overtime laws.

It is anticipated that the Union will be sending out Q&A's so that you can familiarize yourselves with the claims process. The process will be an electronic one where you will scan documents, have access to time and attendance records and submit claims. The vendor is working on the data base so if you have moved, changed e-mail or mailing addresses, you should notify the attorney Barbara Hutchison at bbhattync@gmail.com.

The Q&As likely will go out sometime in April and it is anticipated that by June, the notices regarding the claims process will be mailed. What this means for employees is that you should continue to pull together records, notes and any documentation you have of overtime you worked so that you are prepared when the claims process begins. Once the claims are submitted, the agency can approve the claims or the claims will go to hearing. Since the agency purposely failed to maintain the records required by law, your documentation will be important. Although the agency could propose settlement, it has failed to do so and has never responded to the Union's settlement offer. Instead of cutting its losses and using its resources wisely, the EEOC continues to dig a deeper hole for itself.

Stay tuned.

Unions are Important

On March 25 we marked the 100th anniversary of the most chilling reminder of the cost of not having collective bargaining. At the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City women as young as 12 worked 14 hour shifts to make a \$1.50 in exchange for a 60 plus hour work week. A cigarette tossed onto scraps of fabric caught fire. Exits were sealed so that workers would not leave early. One flimsy fire escape collapsed. There were no fire extinguishers. One hundred and forty six women jumped to their deaths from the upper floors or died in the flames. A strike of the International Women's Garment Workers Union had previously negotiated a collective bargaining agreement for most affected garment workers, but the Triangle Shirt Waist Factory had refused to sign the agreement.

Collective bargaining rights do not cost an employer money, so not signing an agreement or eliminating them does not save money. Collective bargaining is a term describing a group of individuals who are represented by a union, which then negotiates on behalf of the entire group. Typically, the union and the employer negotiate a set of rules to solve problems, which are referred to as a collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Obviously, the union is in a stronger position to negotiate for lots of employees, then if one employee attempts to talk to the boss on his own behalf, for instance regarding safer working conditions to avoid fire hazards.

Throughout recent history, all workers have benefited from union efforts to raise the bar. Ever see the bumper sticker, "Union: the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend"? Likewise, the labor movement is responsible for the minimum wage and overtime laws.

Please, explain to your family and friends—unionized or not - public or private sector employees- that all workers are connected and must support each other. As AFGE President John Gage urges, we must show "Unity in the Community."



EEOC's In-House Sweat Shop

By Gabrielle Martin, Council President , Local 3230 And Rachel Shonfield, Council 216 Legislative Coordinator, Local 3599

Lurking within EEOC is the agency's own homegrown sweatshop. Remember the privatized contract call center? The good news is that it was shut down by Congress. Unfortunately, when the responsibilities for interfacing with the public were returned in-house, EEOC stubbornly replicated the flawed contract call center. The call center is set up to fail because when people call to file a charge they find out taking charges is not what they do. Instead, the callers are directed to fill out a questionnaire to mail.

Unfortunately, also replicated was sweat shop working conditions for our fellow EEOC employees. The overriding theme is that in-house call center employees, Intake Information Representatives (IIRs), are excluded from all aspects of the office.

IIRs are endlessly and relentlessly chained to their telephones. How many people reading this article, who are not IIRs, have to log in a bathroom break or

hear about how long they were gone for a bathroom break? If this isn't enough, then supervisors review the daily activity sheets and hound IIRs to account for any unac-

"Why is management timing the bathroom breaks of the IIRs?"

counted time. If management really cared about the public or customer service, it would hire more than a handful of IIRs for each district, would incorporate these individuals and this function into the intake units and would make changes to reverse the high turnover rates.

IIRs have to answer many calls each day. Each call should not exceed 6 minutes. To meet these strict standards, IIRs are chained to their telephones. IIRs are illegally being denied their right to their earned annual leave. There are illegal efforts to modify their sched-

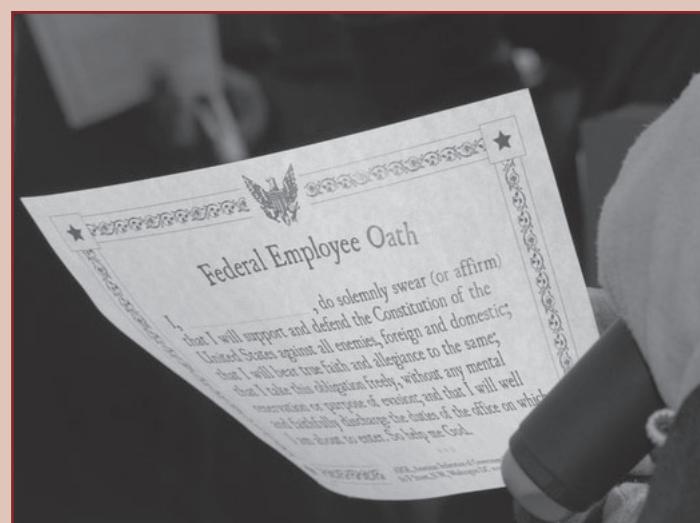
ules. Management routinely denies IIRs training requests, even for free in-house or web-based training. Job stress has caused numerous departures. Now we are in the midst of a hiring freeze, causing fewer available IIRs to absorb, crunch, and generate still greater numbers. To make matters worse, since office space is insufficient, some offices are solving space issues by moving IIRs into makeshift cubicles in the middle of the office or back corner. Now IIRs are on public display performing their grueling phone duties, while trying to hear and respond to the public over office noise. All the while, e-mails pile up, going unanswered for months at a time.

These shameful practices are another reason that the agency needs to implement the Council's intake plan. In that plan the IIRs would be trained up to and included as full fledged ISAs. They would be part of a seamless team providing substantive assistance to the public, instead of being slaves to the agency's number crunching software system.

Labor Management Forums Move Slowly at EEOC

We are now in the middle of the second year of the President's Executive Order establishing Labor Management Forums. Here at EEOC, the wheels grind slowly. Following an initial meeting in September of 2010, things have moved at a snail's pace. Although there are workgroups focusing on things like making recommendations on cost savings, obtaining information to make any recommendations has been extremely time consuming and not very productive.

While some forums aggressively pursued training dates, and now have approved agreements and have received training, there are still two district councils which have not met. Although agreements were signed in November of 2010, the Phoenix District Office (training scheduled for April 2011) and the Los Angeles District office (training schedule tentative for July) have not met. So, it appears that things are creeping along.



As Federal civil servants, we take an oath of office by which we swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. Ideally, Labor Management Forums will provide us another opportunity to effect the Constitution. The Constitution defines the work role for Federal employees – “to establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty.”

National Council of EEOC Locals No. 21

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216 Bi-Annual Legislative Meeting



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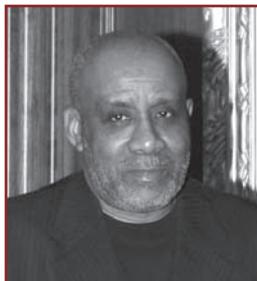


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- A. John Gage - AFGE National President and Pamela Edwards - Delegate Local 3637.
- B. Hollie Lockhart – Baltimore Office – member Local 3614.
- C. Representative Russ Carnahan of Missouri and Joseph Wilson— St. Louis Office - President Local 3629.
- D. David Norken – Baltimore Office - Local 3614 – Receiving an Excellence in Legislative Action Award - 2010.
- E. Augusta Y. Thomas – National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices, and Pamela Edwards – Houston Office - Council 216 Delegate and Member Local 3637.
- F. Representative Emanuel Cleaver - Missouri - Head of the Congressional Black Caucus and Joseph Wilson— St Louis Office - President Local 3629.
- G. Levi Morrow – Dallas Office - President Local 3637, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee of the 18th Congressional District of Houston, Pamela Edwards Delegate Local 3637, Danny Lawson – Dallas Office – Secretary Council 216.
- H. Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida and Rachel Shonfield— Miami Office - Council 216 1st V.P. and Legislative Coordinator.
- I. Council 216 - February 2011 Strategic Planning Session.
- J. Rachel Shonfield - Miami Office - Council 216 1st V.P. and Legislative Coordinator.
- K. AGFE Leaders and members march to Senate Office.
- L. Donna Walcott- New York Office – President Local 3555, Lillian Marti – Member Local 3555, and Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter of New York.
- M. Nicholas Pladson – Minneapolis Office – Delegate Local 3504, Lillian Marti – Member Local 3555, Joseph Wilson— St. Louis Office - President Local 3629, Donna Walcott- New York Office – President Local 3555.



**Levi Morrow,
Chief Negotiator**

LEVI'S OUTLOOK: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

I believe we are currently at a level of crisis at EEOC. The back log for private sector charges is on

pace to reach over 100,000 charges by the end of fiscal year 2011. We lost nearly 30% of our frontline staff from fiscal year 2000 to 2008. The processing time for private sector charges has climbed to just over 300 days. The negative effect of this large inventory is the delay in charge resolutions for thousands of charging parties. This also hampers the Agency's ability to serve the public efficiently and effectively.

The Agency's solution to the problem has been to raise office goals each year and require investigators to close more cases in a shorter time frame. As we all know the goal is to meet the numbers. Yet this approach is hurting the agency in terms of investigator staff time. We must develop a new collaboration between managers and employees concerning how we will perform our work.

It is time for the agency to conduct a complete review of procedures, policies, methods and means of how we perform our jobs. The last complete review was completed in 1995, over sixteen years ago.

If the agency is to continue successfully challenging discriminatory employment

practices in 2011, the service we deliver to the public must be improved. Since our last publication of 216 WORKS, the U.S. Senate approved the appointments of Jacqueline Berrien as Chair, Chai Feldblum and Victoria Lipnic as Commissioners, and P. David Lopez as General Council. We now have the Agency's leadership in place for the next several years. There must be regular consultation and collaboration between the National Council, The Chair, and the Commissioners. Unless we are ready to address the aforementioned problems they will only get worse and to date we have seen very little substantive change. It is now time for the Commission to either put up or shut up.

Struggle and Union Solidarity

By Camille Monahan, Alternate Union Steward Local 3504 in the Milwaukee Area Office

On Feb. 11, 2011, six weeks after he took the oath of office, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker proposed the Budget Repair Bill. Touted as legislation necessary to deal with Wisconsin's budget shortfall, the bill contained provisions that would eliminate the ability of public employees to collectively bargain on any issue except for wages. The bill further capped bargaining on wages to the rate of inflation. While asserting that gutting public employees unions was an economic necessity, Gov Walker failed to acknowledge that his own policies had in part exacerbated the State's money woes.

Three weeks prior to the introduction of the union busting legislation, Walker signed nearly \$100 million in tax breaks

for businesses. Left further unexplained is how elimination of automatic dues deduction from union member paychecks or the requirement in the Bill that public sector unions conduct annual decertification votes would positively impact the State's bottom line. In fact, the general counsel of the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission, the state agency that conducts public employee union elections, stated that the agency did not have the staff to conduct 2,000 elections each April, as required by the bill. Despite Gov. Walker's attempts to fast track the Budget Repair Bill, voting in the State Assembly was open for just 15 seconds. Union workers and the state's democratic senators acted boldly to hold the line for justice. The 14 democratic senators fled the state to prevent the necessary quorum for the state senate to vote on the legislation.

Meanwhile, union members and supporters held mass rallies both in Madison and around the state. Some rallies have had as many as 100,000 protesters demanding removal of the union busting provisions from the Bill. AFGE and AFGE members have stood in solidarity

with Wisconsin's public sector unions. AFGE Local 3504 members in the Milwaukee office have attended rallies and both Local 3504 President Stephanie Perkins and Council 216 President Gabrielle Martin sent letters expressing our support of union workers and union rights to Governor Walker and the Republican senators. Both letters were published in the Wheeler Report on Feb. 20, 2011 (a Wisconsin news outlet), major Wisconsin newspapers' and Wisconsin labor union newsletters.

Despite the back room shenanigans of March 9 that lead to this unfair law being enacted, our union stands together with Wisconsin public employees and will continue to act as an ally in this fight for civil rights. The next fight will be in the courtroom because on March 19, 2011 a judge issued a temporary restraining order that prevents this law from taking effect. Federal workers know that it won't be long before Congress looks to strip these fundamental rights from public sector workers at every level of government. We too will need our allies so together we will defeat these blatant efforts to strip workers of rights they have held for over 50 years

Three weeks prior to the introduction of the union busting legislation, Walker signed nearly \$100 million in tax breaks for businesses.



L-R: Marcie Mitchell, Paula Jacob, Malcolm Loungway, Krystal Clark, and Carla Hatley of Bookpals San Francisco.

San Francisco Working in the Community

"Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading." - BookPals

Union Members in the San Francisco District have partnered with the Screen Actors Guild's Bookpals program to combat illiteracy. BookPALS is a nationwide all volunteer program of the Screen Actors Guild Foundation, the charitable arm of the Screen Actors Guild. Bookpals was founded in 1993 by Barbara Bain, of "Mission Impossible" fame.

In the evening after work, Union members will read to children in the Hamilton Family Center system. The mission of Hamilton Family Center is to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Hamilton House takes a "Housing First" approach and provides a continuum of housing solutions and comprehensive services that promote self-sufficiency for families and individuals, and foster the potential of children and youth. For Hamilton House, the relationship between illiteracy and dropping out of school, poverty, unemployment, lack of health care,

homelessness and crime is undeniable and disturbing.

Illiteracy is a core problem in our society.

Hamilton Family Center has been working for 25 years to end homelessness in the San Francisco Bay Area, and they are the largest provider of shelter, eviction prevention assistance, rapid re-housing, youth programming, and support services for homeless families in San Francisco. Hamilton Family Center has received

national recognition and numerous awards for their innovative programs such as First Avenues – Housing Solutions for Families, which helps families move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and assists families at risk of becoming homeless to avoid eviction in the first place.

By reading to children, San Francisco District employees intend to stimulate children's interest in books, motivate their desire to read, help develop reading and listening skills and encourage their feelings of self-worth by giving them our time and attention.



David Skillman reading to kids at Raphael House Shelter in San Francisco.

The Call: Wisconsin and Beyond

By Joe Wilson, President, Local 3629

The increasing attacks on public employees and unions over the last few months have been a wake-up call to all workers around the country. As we have seen most recently in Wisconsin, there is a growing and concerted effort to demonize public employees and strip away some or all of their collective bargaining rights. The state employees and public school teachers in Wisconsin have been bravely fighting against those who want to take away their rights to collectively bargain. Other states, including Indiana and Ohio, also have seen a rise in efforts to remove collective bargaining rights from public employees.

On the federal level, federal employees have been facing a barrage of attacks as well. Federal employees have already seen their cost-of-living raises frozen. There are numerous other proposals that could have an even greater negative impact on federal employees, including proposals to reduce retirement benefits, increase in health insurance premiums, freeze within-grade and between-grade promotions, roll-back

agency budgets to levels not seen in several years, and furlough employees.

In response to such attacks, we have witnessed greater activism by unions and public employees around the country. Public employees, as well as members of the general public, have taken to the streets to protest the draconian proposals to strip away their rights. Unions are now working "overtime" to educate the general public about the value of public employees, as well as the importance of unions and collectively bargaining.

Those efforts appear to be paying off. According to a New York Times/CBS News poll released on March 1, 60% of Americans oppose stripping the collective bargaining rights of public employees and a similar percentage oppose cutting their pay or benefits to reduce deficits. The American people are right. Public employees are not the reason that most states are experiencing a budget crisis. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 45 out of 50 states anticipate budget shortfalls in the coming year. Twenty-two out of 50 states have right-to-work laws



Joe Wilson, President Local 3629

with few or no collective bargaining rights for state workers, yet most of those states are facing huge budget deficits just like Wisconsin.

As the attacks on unions and public employees continue, we have seen the importance of public employees, unions, and members of the general public working together to fight back against efforts to destroy the hard-fought rights to collectively bargain for better working conditions.

First Time On The Hill



By Pat Marrow,
Local 3230

I am the steward in the Albuquerque Area Office. Although I have been a steward for a long time and active with

various politically motivated groups in my community, this past February was my first trip to the American Federation Of Government Employees Legislative Conference. If I were to sum up the experience in a word or two for me those words would be "very moving."

It was a very moving experience for me because while in D.C. I witnessed the people on the EEOC Council and from AFGE coming together to fight for a good

cause – government workers. Our people, Gabrielle, Rachel, Levi, David, Lillian, are so dedicated to generating support for the EEOC's mission. Gabrielle spent time with me instructing me on how to make presentations to the legislative aides I would be meeting while in D.C. I shadowed her through several of her interviews with an assortment of Congressional personnel. I was whole heartedly impressed by how motivating and knowledgeable Gabrielle is on the issues. It was inspiring to hear and see the people who fight for all of us under the AFGE umbrella. They were amazing and worked very hard morning till night and always with the membership foremost in mind.

In addition to the meetings I attended with Gabrielle and some time at the AFGE rally, I had my own appointments with the New Mexico Senators and Represen-

tatives. I was able to get appointments with all but one. All of the meetings were successful. Much to my delight, instead of meeting with legislative aides, I got meetings with Congressman Ben Ray Lujan and Representative Martin Heinrich and I got to take pictures with them too. It was evident from my conversation with the Congressman Lujan and Representative Heinrich that Congress is aware of our issues. For example I was asked questions about how the Commission is handling the overtime grievance. We also talked about the Union's intake proposal that was sent to management over a year ago and my offices formation of a Labor-Management Forums or partnership.

Upon my return, I reported back to the bargaining unit about my D.C. meetings. The membership and I are arranging follow-up contacts with our Congressional representatives here in Albuquerque.

Social Networking and the Revolution

"The revolution will not be televised" proclaimed musician and poet Gil Scot-Heron in 1970 but he, and most everyone else, couldn't imagine a revolution could be tweeted or organized via Facebook on the internet.

In case you been busy since Mr. Scot-Heron made his infamous declaration, a tweet is a brief personal status update on the social media web site Twitter. Facebook is another social media web site that allows its users to create personal profiles, upload photos and videos, and connect with family, friends, and colleagues. Both are accessible on the internet, and if you don't know what the internet is at this stage of its growing utility, than I suspect you probably want to continue not knowing.

But I digress...

Even with the advent of public access to the internet and email, keeping up with friends and family or socializing through social media was not within my imaginative grasp a few years ago. And, organizing union members on social media seemed unlikely just a few days ago. Frankly, union organizing through social media seemed to be a change not necessarily for the better to me for reasons too numerous to list.

Yet, having never claimed to be the "sharpest tool in the shed" I need not suffer the arrows of my ignorance or consume humble-pie when technology proves me . . . mistaken. I love technology and technological changes which improve my life in ways that make me money, save me money, or save me time.

We are now witness to another "time-saving" phenomenon of social media. You may recall the internet is a place where close to 2 billion users connect, which in case you are wondering represents 28.7% of the worlds population, seeking to gather, distribute, or exchange information, ideals, photos, and experiences. The internets importance can't be easily dismissed or its potential singly imagined. Its significance in our social fabric is

heightened by sites like Twitter, with its 50 million tweets per day, and Facebook, with its 60 million status updates per day.

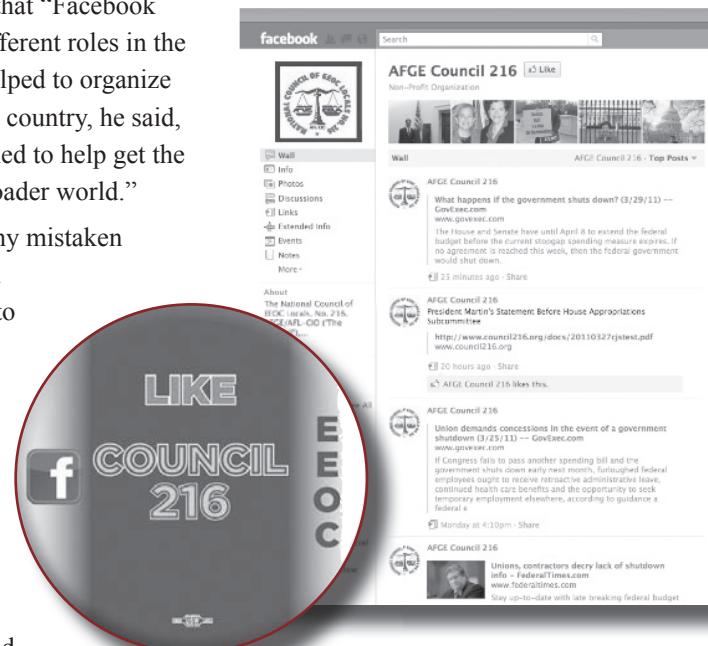
With this backdrop, the Libyan uprising and the Egyptian Revolution highlighted social media importance. From most reports social media played a pivotal role in organizing citizens. As to Egypt, a social media expert and founder of Paidcontent – a news/resource site, Rafat Ali, stated to WIRED magazine that "Facebook and Twitter played different roles in the uprising. Facebook helped to organize the activists inside the country, he said, while Twitter functioned to help get the message out to the broader world."

So, despite my many mistaken reasons against, social media is the gateway to increased solidarity and cohesiveness within our locals and in the national dialog. However, it requires leaders and members willing to embrace the technology. The old lunch room bulletin board, circular, or flyer was great in its

day but it just does not have the same reach and immediacy of a tweet or status update on Facebook. "Water-cooler" talk in social media has the potential to reach and influence millions of people, and if we as union members fail to use and support it then we do so at great peril.

A blog reporter on Vimeo, Matt Wisniewski, summoned it up for me when he recently reported from Wisconsin: "[T] here is a very strong force that has driven so many thousands protesters to Madison Wisconsin from all over the country. This has become a national focus, and it happened at the speed of light. The driving force behind it is none other than social media... demonstrates the enormous power that this medium has. An estimated fifty to sixty thousand people showed up today, which never would have happened in less than a week by setting up phone banks and sending out email blasts."

Join Us!



*Have you gotten your 'Like Button' yet?
See your local steward or president.*

Know Your Council 216 Member: *Pamela Edwards*

Pam Edwards likes being on the Council because the “work” of the Council benefits the employees of the Agency, and “we get results!”



Getting results are important to Pam. She is a Steward in the Houston office and finds it presents her with “the opportunity to bring the concerns/interests of the Bargaining unit to management and work out solutions.” She sees her job as a conduit for management to channel their plans to the bargaining unit which can result in employee, management and customer satisfaction.

Pam was born, raised, and lives in the city of Houston Texas. She loves Houston for its diversity and culture.

Pam attended the University of Houston, where she studied Business Administration. She is a Certified Mediator in Civil and Family Law.

Pam is the third of four children and her hobbies are bowling, going to the movies, eating out, traveling, spending time with family and baking cakes from scratch. She has two children —son, Kennon Sylvester, age 27 and daughter, Brittany Sylvester, age 22.

- Why did EEO only distribute FY11 goals after half the year had gone by even though it been promising them since September of 2010?
- Why are managers reluctant to use RESOLVE (EEOC's internal mediation program) even when employees have the same complaint about the supervisor?
- Why management does not promote employees in career ladder positions in a timely manner?
- Why, given the small budget growth, the large growth in charges and growing backlogs, EEOC refuses to address more cost efficient and effective ways to do business?
- Why EEOC implements new programs, like QUICKTIME, on short time frames and then takes a “just deal with it” attitude when problems arise?
- Are more people receiving meaningful training under the new training request protocol?
- Why EEOC insists on continuing its failed call center model with a standard of “6 minutes of customer service” and then punishes IIRs who talk to the public longer?
- Is EEOC misusing hiring authorities to preselect employees?
- Why EEOC is unable to pay people on the dates it promises in settlement agreements? Why does it always takes several months and additional grievances before they pay what they agreed to pay?
- Why were SES bonus funds for FY11 increased when we are in a hiring freeze?

POINTS TO PONDER

Longtime EEOC Union VP Mike Davidson Retires

Longtime EEOC Union Activist Michael Davidson retired on January 28, 2011. Mike served as First Vice President of Council 216 from 2000 to 2010. He also served as founding editor of this publication during those years, earning three consecutive AFGE awards for excellence.



Mike also formerly served as President of Local 3504, which honored him with a retirement celebration and beautiful plaque. National President Gabrielle Martin made a personal appearance at Mike’s retirement party hosted by his family to share mementos and pass on the good wishes of the Council. Happy retirement!

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