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Keep Up that Passion for the Challenges Ahead

By Gabrielle Martin, Council 216 President

We returned to work following the lockout, ready to fulfill our commitment to make America better by serving our country. Our passion during the lockout is what brought us back. We made signs, we picketed, we were on Facebook, we wrote editorials and we talked to the press. We also called and wrote our members of Congress in large numbers. In the end, we were heard in Washington, we returned to work and we got paid for the time we were locked out.

Our passion is based on what is important to us - our dignity that comes from doing useful work and making a better life for our families. Our passion is fueled by the loss of our pay and pensions, our inability to serve the public and our frustration at working so hard for an agency that lacks funding for the staff necessary to carry out our great mission.

Yes, we are back, but with uncertainty about a budget for this year, sequestration strangling us for the foreseeable future, and questions whether this will be the fourth year without a pay raise. We must not lose our passion in the face of these challenges. We must continue to fight.

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Cleveland rally: (L-R) Veta Connor, Maria Colon, Sabrina Shifman, Denise Degennaro, Luisa Burgos



President Gabrielle Martin in Denver

EEOC Unionists:

Shut Down but Not Shut Up

By Rachel Shonfield, AFGE Local 3599

Council 216 may be a small Union representing a small agency, but you would not know it from all we accomplished during the shutdown. Our employees were on local and national television, radio, social media, newspaper and letters to the editor. We planned and attended rallies. These activities kept pressure on Washington to end the shutdown. The media coverage educated viewers that Federal employees are their neighbors. Our communities learned that the important work we do enforcing civil rights was not getting done. Working families heard that, like them, we live paycheck to paycheck and

we were hurting from a layoff that was not our fault. Our consistent message of “we want to work” shattered the unjust stereotype of the lazy bureaucrat. A Pew Research Center poll taken during the shutdown showed the public had a 62% favorable opinion of Federal workers. *Here is a sample of Council 216’s shutdown efforts:*

On October 1, 2013, WDTV Detroit filmed EEOC and other Federal employees as they were locked out of work and took to the street with signs. The reporter interviewed Stephanie Perkins, AFGE Local 3504 President, who described EEOC employees as concerned about their clients.

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Parting Thoughts from Levi Morrow



My journey into retirement will begin the same way my EEOC career began, through the doors of the Houston Street Federal Building in Dallas, Texas.

I was a typical 14 year old boy living in Selma, Alabama, chasing girls and hanging out with my friends. Then, Dr. Martin Luther King came to town. His words had a profound effect on me. I participated in civil rights marches, including at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, to ensure that my parents could vote. I met many of the civil rights icons of the early 1960's. My civil rights career had begun.

Following college, I left for the Army from the Induction Center in the Houston Street Federal Building. During my military service in the Panama Canal Zone, I played on the All Army Basketball Team, traveling the region, bridging cultures and serving as an ambassador. With one year of service remaining, I was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, where racial tensions were high. My captain sent me to the Army's Race Relations Institute. I became the Race Relations Officer at Ft. Benning, teaching a weekly class on diversity amid the ongoing racial strife.

After the Army, I ended up back in Dallas where I applied at EEOC. Because EEOC took so long to contact me, I accepted a job at the Post Office, where I first joined a Union. Five months later, EEOC offered me a job. I returned to the

Houston Street Federal Building to begin work for EEOC, where I really became involved in Unions.

I joined the Union and soon became Steward, thinking it would enhance my resume. In my first attempt to represent an employee, I was treated very badly. I went home and studied the contract. For the next two years, I was at war with management to gain respect for myself as Union Steward and for the employees. I was subjected to endless scrutiny during this time. Finally Headquarters called the Union and management to a meeting, after which things calmed down.

I have enjoyed making a positive difference for employees.

For my Local 3637, I went on to become Chief Steward. In 1980 I became Local President. As Local President, I joined the National Council and later was elected Treasurer. I had the opportunity to work with Union luminaries including, President Ed Watkins, Chief Negotiator Ron Crenshaw, and Antonio Villar, then President of Local 3230 (now known as Antonio Villaraigosa, former mayor of Los Angeles). I cut my teeth implementing the Civil Service Reform Act. My early Council career was trial by fire, but I learned to write proposals, conduct negotiations and apply negotiation tactics.

In the mid-80s, Ed Watkins announced to me that I would be the Council's Chief Negotiator. As Chief Negotiator, I have worked

with 11 EEOC Chairs. I was able to work well with most of them. Most interesting was Justice Clarence Thomas, because he knew what he believed in and what he wanted.

Over the years, I have strived to improve things for employees. I negotiated four Collective Bargaining Agreements and served on numerous Task Forces. I am particularly proud of: developing a financial plan which the Council uses today; getting the Council on dues allotments, so the Union could plan better; and ensuring that all Locals can attend the Council meetings. Most important to me has been negotiating flexibilities for employees, such as compressed work schedules and telework.

I have enjoyed making a positive difference for employees. I will miss the relationships built up over the years and talking to people about upcoming issues employees will face.

For those of you remaining, I share my philosophy. Be pragmatic and do not take differences you have with people personally. The relationship part of labor relations is the key to getting things done. If you believe in something and believe you have a way to accomplish it, do not let anyone discourage you or make you change your mind.

During retirement, I will spend 6 months catching up on reading. In addition, I will spend time with my parents, who laid the foundation for all I have been able to accomplish. Only then, will I come up with a plan for what is next. As I walk through the doors of the Houston Street Federal building into retirement, another journey begins.

Shutdown Not Shutup

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CNN aired a live interview on October 3 from the network's studio with EEOC Atlanta Union Steward Robyn Conley. Conley, a single mom and disabled vet, worried, "It means uncertainty and that's a scary thought. I was taught I can have a piece of the pie if I lived right, was law abiding, attended school, got an education. All of that is threatened by the government shutdown."

WSVN interviewed Rosemary Caddle, a Miami Union member, for the eleven o'clock news on October 8, 2013, with this introduction: "Caddle is a Federal inves-



Atlanta Steward Robyn Conley on CNN

tigator who looks into workplace discrimination claims." "How can they tell me, that's not essential," Caddle said.

Cleveland Union member Lynn Gagyí picked up paperwork for a rally permit on her way out from work her last day. The Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper covered the October 8th picket, including a large photo of EEOC investigators Luisa Burgos and Denise Degenaro holding home-made signs reading "Let us do our Jobs" and "Shutdown the Shutdown."

Council 216 President Gabrielle Martin marched in Union rallies across the Denver area. Martin talked to the press several times. In an interview with Colorado Public Radio (CPR) on October 8th, Martin said, "Regardless of affiliation, the American public deserves to have government working and Federal workers at work serving the needs of the public. Our nation was built by hardworking Federal employees. We want to go back to work to serve Americans, who are counting on a government that works."

Local 3230 Union member Sean Ratliff's letter to the editor was published in the Denver Post on October 8: "Every day I wait, every dollar I cannot spend, is a blow not only to our economy, but to our democratic process. I therefore ask, on behalf of myself, my family, all federal employees and their families, and the local businesses they support every day, please help! Call your elected officials and tell them to pass a clean continuing resolution."

Chicago Union member Ethan Cohen attended the AFGE rally at the Federal Plaza on October 8, 2013. He snapped pictures of the event for the Council 216 Facebook page.

As the shutdown stretched to October 11th, WLKY captured AFGE Local 3599 President Sharon Baker at a Louisville rally yelling into a megaphone, "Let us go back



Sharon Baker in Louisville

to work." She told a reporter, "We have had enough. We do our job, we contribute, we pay taxes, so let us do our job." Council Treasurer Darrick Anderson marched alongside Baker.

Mary Jo Mosca and Rachel Shonfield, AFGE 3599 1st VP, attended a community rally in Fort Lauderdale on October 15th. Shonfield and Miami members also planned an AFGE rally set for October 17, 2013. The rally was happily canceled when employees returned to work that day.

Did you go to a shutdown rally? The Union's leadership was marching and asking membership to get out there, and your peers responded. Sequestration furloughs and another shutdown remain serious threats. It will take all Federal workers standing up and speaking out to stop the attacks on our work and our livelihoods.



Detroit members: (L-R) Kim Nicholson, Frances Angiano, Doritha Brown, Stephanie Perkins, Jamie Dickinson

Council 216 Conducts New CBA Training for Stewards

On November 25, 2013, the new collective bargaining agreement (CBA) will go into effect. This is the first new CBA in ten years. In order to best represent you and improve your working conditions, it is critical that your stewards and alternates know the ins and outs of this CBA. In preparation for the new CBA roll-out, the Council conducted an all -day training on August 29, 2013 in Las Vegas, following the Council's biannual meeting. Fifty-seven stewards, alternates, and officers attended. The training was led by the Council's Training Committee: Sharon Baker, Gabrielle Martin, Stephanie Perkins, and Rachel Shonfield. Here is what some attendees had to say about the training:

Know Your Rights

By Sandra Nakata, 1st VP Local 3230, Denver Steward

The new CBA training started out with an ice-breaker during which we learned about our different backgrounds, as we pursue our common goal of improving work conditions. While it was sad to say goodbye to Levi Morrow, it was also uplifting to meet new Union brothers and sisters. The training focused on the changes and additions to the old CBA. The trainers provided us scenarios dealing with different articles, following up with a question and answer session. The new CBA will be available online with relevant links, e.g., for leave you can click on the DOL/FMLA link. I encourage all bargaining unit members (not just stewards and officers) to familiarize yourselves with the new CBA before you have a problem, but especially if you have a problem. **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!!**



A Wealth of Information

Crystal Grant, AFGE Local 2667, HQ

The training was great! It was also nice to have an opportunity to meet the members of EEOC Council 216 and other Locals. What I appreciated most was the knowledge of the entire Council, whom were able to impart a wealth of information to those of us who are new to Stewardship. I was happy to be in attendance.

Returning With the Knowledge to Resolve Issues

Lula Brownlee, AFGE 3599, Savannah Steward

Having retired from the Army, I joined EEOC in February 2007, as an Investigator. During my first year of employment, the Union helped me resolve a situation. For the first time, I joined a Union and in 2013, I became the Union steward for the local office. As the Union steward, I am the voice for my office. I do not take this responsibility lightly and



needed to learn how to represent in the best way possible. I was extremely pleased to attend the outstanding training sponsored by the Union. The trainers were well prepared and focused on ensuring the stewards received the best instructions possible. I returned to my office with enough knowledge to assist my co-workers in working with management to resolve their issues at the lowest level possible.

Represent!

Trent McGrath, AFGE Local 3614, WFO



It was a pretty intense training, but we all got a great overview of the new contract - with some pretty detailed hypotheticals. Not only did I meet new colleagues and make new friends, but I'm back in the home office ready to: Represent! Represent!

Training is Vital

By John Oare, AFGE Local 3230, Phoenix Union Steward

As a new Steward, I am glad that I had the opportunity to participate in the new CBA training. I not only learned a lot about the new CBA, but I also learned a lot about several other areas of the Union that will help me be a more effective steward in the future. Proper training is vital if we hope to be able to work effectively with Management, while adequately representing the workforce.

AFGE National Leadership Meeting

by Stephanie Perkins, AFGE Local 3504 President

This past September, the AFGE National Executive Council held a leadership meeting in Orlando, Florida to discuss and plan a ten year strategy for the union. Almost



Perkins with President Cox at the meeting

two thousand National officers, Local officers and new stewards attended.

AFGE National President J. David Cox warned participants that we face a toxic environment that threatens a bleak future for us and most of working America. The purpose of this meeting was to forge a strategy to overcome the attacks and win the future of our choice.

The statistics were sobering – as of July 2013, AFGE ranks as AFL-CIO's 13th largest union. At the top of the rankings are: AF-CSME, Food and Commercial Workers, and Teachers, each with over one million. AFGE's membership growth peaked in 1970 with 300,000 members, bottoming out

in 1991 at 169,000 members. In recent years, AFGE has bounced back, with our current membership holding at just over 284,000.

To spur AFGE's growth, break-out teams developed recommendations to: build on the power of the union; engage new leaders; and energize and activate current and potential members. Participants made commitments to develop short and long term strategic initiatives for their Locals.

All of the recommendations were recorded and will be used to create a Strategic Action Plan. Stay tuned to hear how you can get involved in AFGE's future.

Maxiflex Survey Demonstrates Support for New Schedule Option

By Matthew Albucher, AFGE Local 3504

One of the most exciting components of the new collective bargaining agreement is the establishment of a maxiflex pilot program, which will test the implementation of the new schedule option at several offices around the country. Maxiflex is a type of flexible work schedule which allows for the fluctuation of work hours on a daily or weekly basis, so long as the basic 80-hour biweekly work requirement is met.

Unlike a straight 8-hour schedule, 5/4/9 or even 4/10, which usually mandates a set number of hours on a given day each week, maxiflex could allow an employee to work a 6-hour day, followed by a 10-hour day and then an 8-hour day (or a potentially unlimited number of combinations that include off days). Maxiflex is used at several

Federal agencies, including NASA and USDA. At EEOC, where workloads can fluctuate drastically on a daily or weekly basis, having maxiflex available will increase employee productivity and work/life balance.

Recently Local 3504 conducted a survey of Chicago employees to gauge our members' support for the establishment of a maxiflex option. Over 80 percent of those surveyed indicated that maxiflex would help them in meeting their job obligations. Likewise, a similar percentage said they would either probably or definitely elect to participate in a maxiflex schedule, if available.

The main driver of employee support is the enhanced workload efficiency that maxiflex would allow. Investigators stated in the survey that many charging parties and

witnesses are only available to talk after normal business hours. Having a longer day during the week to schedule interviews and on-sites would help investigators more efficiently process their cases. Likewise, mediators could use a longer day to conduct mediations, which often run over eight hours. Trial attorneys could use longer days for trial preparation, which could allow for shorter days or off days when the workload is not as heavy.

Those offices that are eventually included in the pilot should aim to take full advantage of all the flexibility that maxiflex will allow. If we can truly show that maxiflex enhances each employee's ability to advance the mission of the agency, the chances that the program will be established agency-wide will be greatly increased.

Forecast: Furloughs with a Chance of Shutdown

By Rachel Shonfield, AFGE Local 3599

Many of you are thinking, how can it get stormier for our jobs? We just went through the 16 day shutdown, which turned our work and personal lives upside down with stress and uncertainty.

This summer we lost five days of pay to EEOC's sequestration furloughs. EEOC had three more furlough days in the works that were stopped by the successful campaign spearheaded by the Union. Our co-workers, who have had enough, are retiring or resigning left and right and not being replaced. Their work is doled out to those who remain. Still, the forecast calls for even more work woes ahead.

The chance of a future shutdown is low, but remains a threat. Polls during the unpopular recent shutdown showed 60% ready "to throw all the bums out." Thus, the one thing the new budget committee agrees on is avoiding another shutdown. But, high pressure for politicians to avoid primary challenges could combine with hot air in Congress to produce a second shutdown. If Shutdown II makes landfall, employees should prepare to ride out the storm from

the end of the continuing resolution through the next debt ceiling deadline, i.e., January 15- February 7, 2014.

The greatest risk for job disturbance is more furloughs resulting from sequestration, which remains in effect until 2021. In FY13, agency budgets were slashed when a percent of funding was required to be held back or "sequestered." Deeper cuts go into effect on January 15, 2014, unless Congress replaces sequestration. Like in FY13, EEOC is predicted to pass these cuts along to its employees in the form of furloughs, rather than cutting contracts, management travel, in person training, etc.

Furloughs are more insidious than shutdowns, because rolling employee absences spread over months are not so visible on the public's radar. News channels don't display ticking furlough clocks. But furloughs wreak their own destruction. Furloughs cut the days frontline Feds are available to serve the public. Furloughs cut the paychecks of working families, with no retroactive pay coming later to fill the void.



(L-R) Mary Jo Mosca and Rachel Shonfield in Fort Lauderdale

This Union stopped EEOC's second wave of furloughs in FY13. To succeed again, if more furloughs are proposed, we must ramp up participation. More employees must e-mail Chair Berrien to tell her how furloughs hurt our work and our families. More people need to e-mail and visit their members of Congress. If you posted on Facebook last time, you should also Tweet. You need to ask more friends and family to do the same. If you did nothing, then you need to do something.

We must all prepare for the storm to avoid getting hit with more "furlough Friday" pay cuts. This is about your job, and your job is to protect other people's jobs. Collective action must include you. Stay tuned for furlough alerts that affect you and the public we serve.



Darrick Anderson in Louisville

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Stephanie Perkins
Local 3504

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Local 3599

Regina Andrew
Local 3614

Joseph Wilson
Local 3629

Levi Morrow
Local 3637

Goodbye Reflections

By Council Delegate Pamela Edwards, Local 3637



It was my mother who taught me the importance of Unions. I thank my mom for taking me with her to picket lines when I was a child. That's

when I knew I wanted to be part of a group that worked to improve working conditions. As an adult, I was so excited about working for the EEOC that I took a \$10K pay cut. Thirty-five years later, I am leaving a job I loved, where I worked with our Union and helped people.

I benefitted from the EEOC's upward mobility program under which I progressed from being a secretary to an investigator. I served my Local Union as Steward, Council Delegate, Vice-President, and on the labor management forum in Houston. As Steward, I was the conduit between management and the employees, facilitating good working relationships, helping employees with problems, and making it a better workplace.

My fondest memories of the Union include the cohesiveness of the Council in developing and presenting our legislative message to our Congressional representatives. I was also proud that the Council was concerned about its members. I saw first hand that I could take an issue to the Council and know, for example, that a clerk's cry was

being heard and acted upon by our Council.

I also enjoyed taking our message to the streets, marching and picketing with the Council. Not even extremes of weather have stopped me from serving our members! Whether I had to pull out my heavy coat to be on the picket lines in winter in Washington, D.C. or grabbing water bottles to march in the heat at the end of our work day in Las Vegas, I walked with my Union, seeking worker justice, as my mom taught me.

I leave behind the crush of intake, but miss helping people the

best I can. I miss my work family who stuck together over the years. I remind you all to do the best job you can, because you never know who is watching or who you might be able to help. I remain concerned for fellow Federal workers. During the shutdown, I could not fully enjoy the early days of my retirement.

My final reflection on retirement is that I am grateful for the input, teachings and blessings, which I learned from my mother and the Union. Those experiences not only shaped my work life, but will also carry me through retirement!

Proud to be a Big Loser

By Phyllis Fletcher, Houston Office

The quote that helped me the most in completing the challenge was "Today I will do what others will not, so that tomorrow I can accomplish what others cannot." The "Biggest Loser Challenge" in the Houston District Office (April – July of 2013) was truly rewarding. Our office united and we became a "Team of ONE." During the 15 week challenge twenty-nine participants walked, took Zumba classes, and exercised. Speakers provided advice on nutrition and health.

An added benefit was that the invisible walls that separated the different departments in the office tumbled down and camaraderie soared. We started feeling better about ourselves and our health. We would compare notes and share information regarding better ways to exercise and eat. I found that I have a lot more energy and I feel so much better after losing 26 ½

pounds.

We made happy memories together. Words will never fully express my sincere gratitude to the organizers and the participants for helping each other in setting the stage for a new healthier life and making this event so much fun. With all these benefits, everyone was a winner!



*Biggest Loser Winner
Phyllis Fletcher*

Mark Your Calendar:

- 11/25/13 New CBA Implementation
- 1/15/14 End of Continuing Resolution
- 2/7/14 Debt Ceiling Deadline
- 10/1/14 New performance plan system

Overtime Update: EEOC Still Refusing to Pay

In 2009, a Federal arbitrator ruled that EEOC violated overtime laws nationwide. EEOC has since dragged out the claims process. In August, 2013, the Union's attorney received a response from EEOC challenging all claims. The EEOC faces an obvious credibility problem since the arbitrator previously credited the testimony of supervisors and managers that employees did work overtime. The Union attorney contacted many current and former employees where clarification was needed to respond to

the agency's desperate attempt to create new challenges. On October 31, 2013, the Union's attorney filed her response to the agency's claims with the arbitrator. How the claims process will continue from here will be determined by the arbitrator. Rest assured that Council 216 will continue to keep you informed and aggressively pursue your lost wages. Please keep your e-mail address up to date with the Union and ask current and former employees to do the same.

Council 216 Elects New Officers

On August 26, 2013, Council 216 conducted elections for National Officers. Re-elected were Gabrielle Martin as President and Rachel Shonfield as First Vice President. Newly elected were Stephanie Perkins as Second Vice President, Lisa Powell as Secretary and Darrick Anderson as Treasurer. Two long-time officers retired: Treasurer, Levi Morrow, who built the Council's current financial structure, and Secretary and Parliamentarian, Danny Lawson. Sharon Baker stepped down as Second Vice President to assume the role of Chief Negotiator, previously held by Morrow. We wish our new Executive Board the best during this time of transition and the tremendous challenges faced by all Federal employees.



(L-R) Perkins, Powell, Martin, Shonfield and Anderson being sworn in

Keep Up the Passion

Continued from page 1

EEOC used furloughs to deal with sequestration cuts last year. We all served five days without pay while the work piled up. This year we face the same or a smaller budget from Congress. EEOC will likely use furloughs to address any shortages in FY14. We must use our passion to fuel our fight for an adequate budget so we are not sent back to the streets without pay.

We must join and support our Union. We must be active. We must

prepare and follow action plans in each office, which include home email addresses and phone trees for passing along information. We must continue to participate in informational pickets and rallies. We must continue to dial into the Union's town hall meetings and phone conferences. We must continue to contact our Congressional representatives and tell them that we do not want any more government shutdowns, which mean we are out of work, our families are

challenged, the public goes without important services and without civil rights, and our communities suffer, because we cannot support local businesses.

We certainly will continue to be challenged in the coming months, but we must continue to use our passion to rally for our jobs, our benefits, and to provide the public important services, which make our nation great. We must continue to fuel our passion to face down the challenges ahead.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Why did EEOC post shutdown info on inSite, which was not accessible during the shutdown?
- Why make employees come in October 1, to change e-mail/v-mail that could be changed from home?
- Why did "essential" managers distribute work to empty desks instead of doing it themselves?
- Will FY13 evaluations account for EEOC furlough days?
- Will FY 14 goals account for the lockout?
- Will EEOC commit to making the new CBA's maxiplace pilot a success?
- Will the LMC do anything useful, other than check a box to please OPM?
- Will new evaluations bring more of the same, or become truly useful?
- Will EEOC cut mgt. travel, in-person training, contracts etc. to avoid FY14 furloughs?
- How will EEOC manage more systemic cases with even fewer employees?