

AFGE LOCAL 3313

PROUD TO MAKE AMERICA WORK
American Federation of Government Employees
United States Department of Transportation American
Newsletter Volume IV, Issue 3 (October 2022)

Dear Bargaining Unit Employees,

I would like to welcome those employees who have returned to the office. For those that are still working from home, I hope to see you soon.

I know that the last Spotlight Newsletter was sent out July of 2019. Since then, our country, and the world, has endured one of the deadliest pandemics in history. In March of 2020, the Federal Government closed all its buildings and sent all of us home to telework full time. During the next two years, you have ensured that the people's business was accomplished in an efficient and effective manner. I salute all of you for showing our nation, and the world, that you are an adaptable and dedicated workforce.

Today, we continue to meet the challenges that the pandemic created and continues to create. We have successfully worked with management on new telework policies that now set a minimum number of days in the office and a maximum number of telework days. And to be clear, the minimum number of days in the office is set by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) based on maintaining locality pay. We also have a new Remote Work Policy at the Department level that our Operating Administrations must comply with and was bargained with the Union. Are we 100% happy with the results, no. However, given the time frame of the Administration, I think we did a great job and got most of what we wanted.

Additionally, I want to remind you that the Union has many Members Benefits with programs and discounts that help you and your family save money on everything from health and pet insurance, legal services, savings on mortgage closing costs, computer discounts, car rental discounts, and airline discounts.

Finally, as we move forward and you return to the office, we want to remind you that your Union is here to ensure you receive fair and equitable treatment under the law, regulation, and our collective bargaining agreements. If you have any questions or issues with your supervisor or member of management, you should speak with your Union representative before making a decision that may hurt you.

Stay safe and healthy.

In Solidarity,



Jennifer Rodas
President, AFGE Local 3313





AFGE (Highlights and Recent News)

AFGE LOCAL 3313

PRESIDENT

Jennifer Rodes

VICE PRESIDENTS

(VP)

Gary Shoemaker
(Executive VP)

Melinda Riddick
(VP for OST)

Kay McIver
(VP for PHMSA)

Bernadette Walker
(VP for FMCSA)

Robin Morrison
(VP for NHTSA)

Cynthia Cox-Grollman
(VP for FTA)

TREASURER

Eugene Johnson

SECRETARY

Tom Coleman

SERGEANT AT ARMS

Eugene Kinard

Human Rights and Youth

Director

Milton Poole

Congress and Schedule F

AFGE is working with Congress to protect our jobs. The Trump administration had previously advanced Schedule F, which would have undercut Federal worker protections by creating a new job category of ‘at-will’ employees. Now, AFGE is calling on Congress to protect Federal workers from future measures similar to Schedule F.

On September 15, 2022, the House passed H.R. 302, including bipartisan support. AFGE supports this bill as it moves into the Senate, tweeting that: *“This is about protecting employees who are doing a good job from political influence.”*

Judicial Decisions

Beyond Congress, battles over collective bargaining rights are also ongoing in the judiciary. Two critical decisions in the past nine months could have reduced collective bargaining over conditions of employment.

- 1) The U.S. Court of Appeals **struck down** the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA’s) attempt to restrict a union’s right to bargain over changes affecting conditions of employment for the employees it represents—FLRA’s attempt to raise the bar related to “conditions of employment” that would require collective bargaining struck down for being arbitrary and capricious.
- 2) The U.S. Court of Appeals also **overturned** a FLRA decision that would have drastically reduced federal unions’ collective bargaining by eliminating the statutory right to mid-term bargaining.





AFGE Reaches New Collective Bargaining Agreement

The FTA Union Group's mission is to fight for FTA Bargaining Union Employees (BUEs) and protect their federal employee rights. The Group is like a train that continuously stays on track and delivers, despite any obstacles in its path.

For example, a few years ago, anti-federal employee and union Executive Orders (EOs) blocked many of the Group's actions to protect FTA BUEs, removed the hard-fought gain of an FTA labor management forum, and delayed getting a new Collective Bargaining Union Agreement (CBA) in place.

After the EOs were rescinded in January 2021, the Group could see light at the end of the tunnel. And along with the Local's president, the Group delivered a long overdue, new Collective Bargaining Union Agreement to FTA BUEs in July 2021. Since then, the Group has continued to work diligently on behalf of FTA BUEs. And on occasion, also enlists support from the Local's leadership for extra strength in bargaining with FTA management.

Fair and equitable treatment, improved work conditions and a safe work environment could not be possible for FTA BUEs without AFGE Local 3313's support, including valuable input on FTA policies such as returning employees to the work during the pandemic, teleworking and remote work. This work also provides incidental benefit to non-BUEs as well!





AFGE Meets with DOT Executive Management

On 14 September, AFGE Local 3313 Executive Board members attended a Meet & Greet with Deputy Secretary Trottenberg and Assistant Secretary McNamara and members of the OST staff. Also in attendance was the AFGE Local 2814 (FRA) President Scott Hoose and Craig Bagstad.

The purpose of this Meet & Greet was to have a discussion on issues that the Union feels are important to its bargaining unit employees. For Local 3313, our topics were issues around Remote Work, Office Space, better communication from management with employees, and the need for employees to better communicate with their supervisors, and the need to include the Union more deeply in policy making. Both the Deputy Secretary Trottenberg and Assistant Secretary McNamara were very interested in the Unions perspectives and perceptions and fully understood that improvements can be made.

We stressed that the Union felt the Remote Work Policy as issued by the Department could have been better concerning the issue of travel pay for those employees who live in the local commuting area and want to remote work. The Assistant Secretary understood our concerns but said that their hands were tied by OPM regulation. We stated that we understood but felt that there were ways around OPM “policy” that we could have helped with to make remote work a better option for management.

We also discussed workspace issues that may arise due to the new Telework and Remote Work policies and how they may impact having your own cube or the need to hotel. These issues will be addressed later, and the Union plans to be involved. We all agreed that we should have similar meetings on a recurring basis, probably quarterly, to discuss issues, brainstorm ideas, and to just keep the lines of communication open. We will keep you informed.

We discussed career ladder issues and how the agency uses career ladders to attract the best and brightest people for the opening and the expectancy is the employee will reach the highest grade with a few years depending on if the career ladder is 2 or 3 steps. The employees meets the time in grade, which is one year, and a successful performance review of achieved results or higher, but the work needs to also be available at the next grade level. Management often uses this as an excuse to not promote and employees feel trapped. The Assistant Secretary has asked the Union for a meeting at a later date to discuss further. We will keep everyone informed.

Finally, The Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary wanted us to pass along to all our Bargaining Unit Employees how appreciative they are for the great work you all have done over the past two and a half years. It’s a testament to your dedication and professionalism as Federal employees. Your Local’s Executive Board would like to second those sentiments and say thank you for your dedication to the mission and public service.





Virtual Town Hall

AFGE Local 3313 will be hosting a virtual Town Hall over lunch in November, 2022 on Microsoft Teams. Several AFGE board members will be there to answer questions and discuss AFGE's role in dealing with the current political climate. Stay tuned for the precise date, time, and an invitation link.

Help us recruit. In doing so, both the new member and the recruiter will get \$60 for every new member that signs-up! AFGE is only as strong as its membership—our success depends on you! Note, only bargaining unit members will be able to attend the virtual Town Hall.

Joining AFGE is even More Important in a Virtual Environment

The workforce is drastically different today. It's been three years since the last newsletter, and in that time, the largest difference may be where we all work. Many of us now work the majority or all of our time from home. The majority of the workforce nationwide prefers to have some sort of hybrid work environment, so even if and when COVID-19 disappears, the nature of the workplace will continue to be a mix of in-person and virtual activities.

For BUEs, we want to flag two potential relevant items related to a virtual work environment.

First, supervisors have the ability to record a phone conversation in Teams. This is not true for a meeting meeting, but if a supervisor calls someone on Teams, management has the capability to record the conversation.

Second, after more than two years, don't forget your Weingarten rights. Agencies are not required to inform employees of their right to union representation if they inform their employees annually of their Weingarten rights. It is a good reminder for Recommend Bargaining Unit Employees (BUEs) to periodically refresh their recollection of what to say to management. If a BUE believes he or she is entering a formal meeting that may include an investigation and possible discipline, he or she may assert their Weingarten Rights, stating that:

Weingarten Statement

"I believe this discussion could lead to my being disciplined. I therefore request my AFGE representative or officer be present to assist me at the meeting. I further request reasonable time to consult with my AFGE representative regarding the subject and purpose of the meeting. Please consider this a continuing request; without representation, I shall not participate in the discussion. I shall not consent to any searches or tests affecting my person, property or effects without first consulting with my AFGE representative."





Administrative Leave for COVID-19 Booster(s)

As of September 2022, you may be able to use up to four hours of administrative leave to obtain a COVID-19 booster. If you are interested, consult with your OAs human resource official if you are eligible, and how to code these hours in your timekeeping system (Castle).

AFGE Members Get Access Membership Benefits

Members have access to college scholarships, college test preparation discounts, insurance savings, free budget and credit counseling and 10-15% discounts on almost everything. Visit www.afge.org or call 1-888-844-2343 to learn more. A benefits flyer can be found at:

<https://www.afge.org/globalassets/documents/flyers/afge-membership-flyer.pdf>

Membership - You get a voice on Capitol Hill by Joining AFGE

Without Union members, you have no voice and no advocate. With AFGE, you are stronger than negotiating or advocating on your own. AFGE has over 700,000 members nationwide. AFGE's large size makes the organization a heavyweight in Congress. Lobbyists employed by AFGE National, the largest Federal employee Union, work with other organizations to defend our pay, benefits and job security. Through lobbying, AFGE has saved jobs and stymied adverse legislation from passing. AFGE strengthens our voices through a powerful grass roots lobby. The more you participate at the grass roots level, the more likely we will win the fight.

How Can Someone Join AFGE?

Email your relevant mode's contact and complete the required paperwork. Steward modal contacts are:

Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) - matt.chambers@dot.gov

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) - paul.veltri@dot.gov

National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) – johnny.gibson@dot.gov

Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) – william.fink@dot.gov

Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration (FMCSA) – michael.evans@dot.gov





Spotlight

Tom Coleman is the new AFGE 3313 Secretary. He will be working on AFGE Newsletters and assisting with other business as needed. He and his wife have lived in Washington D.C. for more than ten years. He is very passionate about transportation; he and his wife took the WMATA Green Line to their wedding from Archives Station (shown here).



Bargaining Unit Employees (BUEs) and Union Members

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION - 106 of 462 Union Members (23%)

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION - 78 of 242 Union Members (32%)

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION - 45 of 243 Union Members (19%)

PIPELINE AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS SAFETY ADMINISTRATION - 24 of 178 Union Members (13%)

FEDERAL MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADMINISTRATION - 71 of 199 Union Members (36%)

TOTAL - 324 of 1324 (24%)

Social Media and Contact Information

Websites: <http://www.afge-local3313.org/> and <https://www.afge.org>

Follow National AFGE on Social Media:

Twitter: @AFGENational

Instagram: @AFGEunion

Please send us feedback for our next newsletter:

thomas.coleman@dot.gov; cc: Jennifer.Rodes@dot.gov

