



THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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

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AFGE's Vision for Shared Prosperity



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In February, hundreds of AFGE members marched to Capitol Hill, promoting a vision for the country that puts shared prosperity ahead of austerity.

But what does shared prosperity look like? For starters, it means **creating enough jobs** so the 10 million people who remain out of work can find gainful employment.

It means **reforming the tax system** so the corporate executive pays as much in taxes as his limo driver and doesn't get rewarded for shipping his company's jobs overseas.

It means **increasing the minimum wage** so a single mother who puts in a 40-hour work week doesn't remain in poverty.

It means **investing in federal programs and services** that benefit millions of Americans every single day.

(continued on page 3)



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

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For over three decades now, Americans have been fed a steady diet of supply-side economics, and its better known cousin: trickle-down economics. The basic theory sounds good enough: cut taxes for corporations and the wealthy, and their increased production and spending will make products cheaper and more available for the lower classes.

But after three decades and trillions in tax cuts to America's rich and powerful, what do we have to show for it?

Despite the fact that the U.S. economy as a whole has grown substantially in the past thirty years, the distribution of that growth has been staggeringly one-sided. Middle class wages have stagnated. Incomes at the bottom of the scale have actually declined in real terms. All the while, incomes for the top 1% and profits for large corporations have rocketed to record heights. Whereas productivity increases once resulted in wage increases for working class Americans, all of these gains are now going to the top.

After being ignored for far too long, the issue of income inequality has finally come to the fore of the national political debate. Out of all the proposals put forward to address it, one measure stands above the rest: raising the minimum wage. This is not the only solution by a longshot, but it is the first big step toward a more sustainable model of growth: trickle-up economics.

By raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour, nearly 28 million Americans will see a pay increase by 2016. This increase in earned income will lift 4.6 million Americans out of poverty and reduce government spending on anti-poverty programs by billions of dollars. Higher incomes will also lead to more tax revenues for the federal and state governments, allowing for investments in schools, national security, and veterans' care.

With more cash on hand, low-wage workers will spend more on life's necessities. In doing so they will increase demand for these products and encourage the retailers/producers to hire more workers or pay them more competitive wages. This will in turn lift federal employee wages at all levels of the pay scale. The net effect of this virtuous cycle is more jobs with better pay for all Americans – not just the privileged few. In other words, a rising tide lifts all boats – from the bottom up.

The benefits of increasing the wage are undeniable. But just

as undeniable will be the opposition of big business and their patrons in Congress, and conservative press. As the debate plays out in the coming months, these groups will spend hundreds of millions of dollars to keep wages low and profits high. They may have the fiscal capital to fight this, but we have something they will never have: human capital.

Famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass once said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Let's spread the message of trickle-up economics with our friends, families, and coworkers to make this movement big enough to win a better tomorrow for all Americans.

In Solidarity,

AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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(from cover)

The singular aim of austerity is cutting the federal deficit, even if it means closing the door to citizens who need our help the most. Gutting vital programs and services, starving our most vulnerable citizens of basic financial assistance and attacking the pay and benefits of dedicated public servants will not create a single new job.

That's why we need to switch the conversation from austerity to shared prosperity. By creating jobs, raising wages, reforming the tax system and investing in federal programs, we will be providing a future for millions of Americans while improving the economy at the same time.

Let's take a look at four key steps to achieving shared prosperity.

Job creation

Despite how much economic progress we've made during the past four years, we still are not creating enough jobs to keep up with population growth. Even after recovering all of the jobs that were lost during the Great Recession, nearly 8 million people will remain out of work because of this jobs gap.

Government can kick-start a jobs boom by making targeted investments in public works projects that have gone neglected for the sake of austerity. Let's invest in repairing crumbling roads and bridges, restoring aging school buildings, upgrading water treatment plans and strengthening our flood control systems.

A \$124 billion investment in essential public structures and infrastructure upgrades would create as many as 2.5 million jobs nationwide, while improving the nation's health and safety and saving us from more costly repairs down the line.

Tax reform

Don't think we have the money to invest in public works projects? Think again.

Tens of billions of dollars in tax revenue goes uncollected each year because of loopholes that allow companies to outsource jobs and hide their profits in overseas tax shelters. Stopping corporate tax haven abuse would generate upwards of \$90 billion every year that could be used to put Americans to work.

In addition to closing tax loopholes, we should require the

wealthiest 1 percent of Americans to pay at least as much in taxes as everyone else. It makes no sense that a CEO pays less in taxes than his secretary.

Wage equality

In February, President Obama raised the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour for federal contractor employees. But that will affect just a fraction of the millions of Americans who earn the minimum wage – including some federal hourly employees who aren't covered by the president's executive order.

Minimum wage workers today earn less than they did in 1950, when adjusted for inflation. We need to raise the minimum wage for all workers so anyone who puts in an honest day's work can actually afford to feed his or her family and put a roof over their head.

Wage equality also means ensuring that all federal employees are treated the same when it comes to their locality pay. Currently, blue-collar employees earn a different locality pay than their white-collar counterparts, even if they work in the same location and travel the same routes to work.

At Tobyhanna Army Depot, for example, General Schedule employees earn the locality pay for the New York metropolitan region, while Wage Grade employees earn the much-lower locality pay for the Rest of the U.S. The disparity is unfair and needs to end.

Federal programs and services

Years of budget cuts, pay freezes and layoffs have taken a toll on federal programs and services. Federal employee morale is at an all-time low, even as most Americans say they value the work that federal employees provide.

Congress needs to stop making federal employees and retirees the scapegoat for an economic crisis they had no part in creating. Instead of slashing pay and benefits for hard-working civil servants, let's stop the destructive and costly practice of outsourcing federal jobs to private contractors whose main goal is turning a profit, not serving the taxpayer.

With everything from the Obamacare rollout to security clearances, it's clear that federal employees can manage government programs and services for less money, with more oversight and greater success than unregulated, untested and unskilled corporations. It's time for Congress to lift arbitrary civilian workforce caps and allow agencies to bring more work in house, which will benefit all taxpayers. □

Lawmakers at AFGE Legislative Conference: Feds Have Given Enough



Federal employees have been taking a beating like no other group of Americans in recent years.

Since 2011, federal employees have been asked to hand over a total of \$138 billion in pay freezes and an increase in employees' retirement contributions for new hires, not including up to seven days of sequestration furloughs forced on thousands of federal employees.

Though more than 700 AFGE members came to Washington to visit their elected leaders on Capitol Hill, some members of Congress chose to come straight to them instead. Addressing a standing room only crowd at AFGE's Legislative Conference, the Congressmen clearly stated that federal employees should no longer be asked to bear any more burdens of deficit reduction.

"A lot of that sacrifice has come directly from federal employees. That is one heck of a contribution to the fiscal problems of this country. And I would say that's probably

about as far as we can go," **Rep. Tom Cole** of Oklahoma said.

Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware, who was an important force behind AFGE's fight to kill anti-official time bills in the Senate, said federal employees don't just work for the government; they take care of veterans, make sure our borders are secure, make sure our kids get an equal start, make sure our planes are not going to blow up, and make sure we have transportation infrastructure that works.

"I'm proud of each and every one of you. For every one of my colleagues who's ever described you as a nameless, faceless bureaucrat, I would just say, they can go to hell," Carper said to a huge applause.

Also speaking at the conference was **Rep. Chris Van Hollen**, who played an instrumental role in preventing current federal employees from taking a \$20 billion hit to their pensions.





AFGE Members Take the Hill for "Shared Prosperity, Not Austerity" Rally

AFGE's 2014 Legislative Conference got off to a fast start, but it ended with a bang. Just a day before the close of the conference, hundreds of AFGE members took their fight straight to Capitol Hill and put elected officials on notice. "Shared prosperity, not austerity!" chanted the hundreds of AFGE members who gathered at the West Front Lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Sharing the same sentiment with federal workers were **House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, Sen. Ben Cardin, Rep. Jim Moran, Rep. Donna Edwards, and Rep. Keith Ellison** who braved the cold to show support for the workers.

The lawmakers praised AFGE members for standing up not only for themselves but for all workers who don't have a voice at work. They urged federal employees to keep the pressure on Congress to do the right thing for the whole country and not the privileged few.

"I want you to know I've been with you every step of the way since May of 1981, and I'm going to be with you every step of the way until I'm no longer here," Hoyer said from the stage. "Because I want to see equity and I want to see a sharing of the prosperity, not the austerity. Keep the faith. Keep faith. And keep on, keeping on." "America Deserves a Raise!" Edwards said.

Also joining AFGE members at the rally were **American Postal Workers Union National President Mark Dimondstein**, our brothers and sisters from the **United Steelworkers**, and **Americans for Tax Fairness Executive Director Frank Clemente**, who told the crowd that instead of freezing federal pay, Congress "should have frozen out the lobbyists swarming Capitol Hill trying to get tax breaks for their powerful clients."

After the conference, AFGE members paid a visit to their



Rep. Steny Hoyer (Md.) fires up the crowd at AFGE's "Shared Prosperity" Rally

senators and congressmen to discuss their concerns over the attacks on their compensation, their union, and hostile bills and proposals. AFGE had a lot to say to our elected officials, and we got our message across loud and clear all across Capitol Hill.

AFGE Council of Prison Locals Holds Candlelight Vigil to Honor Fallen Correctional Officers



Family members of fallen officers remembered their loved ones at the AFGE vigil.

AFGE's Council of Prison Locals (CPL) held a candlelight vigil to remember Bureau of Prisons correctional officers killed in the line of duty during the union's annual Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Participants marched from the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill to Upper Senate Park carrying glow sticks and signs to commemorate the fallen officers.

Speakers included **Sen. Bob Casey** (Pa.), **Rep. Matt Cartwright** (Pa.), AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr., 5th District National Vice President Everett Kelley and

Don Williams, father of slain correctional officer Eric Williams. Family members of Jose Rivera and Osvaldo Albarati also were in attendance. The vigil served to remember all correctional workers killed in the line of duty at the Bureau of Prisons. Rivera was killed in 2008 by two inmates with homemade weapons at the U.S. Penitentiary Atwater in California. Williams was killed in February 2013 while working at the U.S. Penitentiary Canaan in northeastern Pennsylvania. Albarati was also killed in February 2013 in an ambush attack while he was driving home from the Metropolitan Detention Center Guaynabo in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

AFGE and CPL also recently introduced the Safe Prisons Project, which seeks to increase safety for all staff in the Bureau of Prisons. Specifically, the campaign has three main goals:

- Increase funding for the Bureau of Prisons to address chronic understaffing issues that put officers in danger
- Expand the Pepper Spray pilot program to all federal prisons so correctional officers can defend themselves
- Support mandatory sentencing reform by backing the Smarter Sentencing Act of 2013 (S. 1410) to reduce overcrowded federal prisons.

2014 Civil Rights Luncheon Focuses On Building Community within the Labor Movement



During the 2014 Legislative and Grassroots Mobilization Conference, AFGE's Women's and Fair Practices Departments held their annual Civil Rights Luncheon. This event welcomed hundreds of AFGE leaders and activists for a lunch program energized by dynamic speakers on issues of civil and workers' rights, in line with the luncheon's theme, 'Protecting Your Vote, Protecting Your Rights'. Guest speakers for this year's event included AFGE National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices Augusta Y. Thomas, Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists President Rev. Terry Melvin.

Each of the speakers built upon a message of defending voting rights, inclusion and fighting for the rights of our fellow workers. NVP Thomas outlined the attacks on the Voting Rights Act and emphasized the importance of activists getting out to vote. She delivered an impassioned address on the need for labor to lead the way in ensuring equal opportunity at the voting booth. Speakers also addressed the significance of AFGE members not only supporting issues facing government workers, but of all working people.



Denying TSOs Rights Won't Fly: Transportation Security Officers Rally for Fairness and Equality at TSA Headquarters

Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) and union activists from across the country picketed in February outside of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) headquarters. The picket, organized by AFGE TSA Bargaining Council 100, took place during AFGE's Legislative and Grassroots Conference. More than 125 TSOs and their supporters, all members of AFGE gathered in support of full Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) rights, fairness and equality for all TSA officers.

Approximately 45,000 TSA officers currently do not have the right to review by an independent third party when faced with adverse actions like removals and suspensions of 15 days or more.

"AFGE has sought to ensure that these employees have the same due process protections as the vast majority of other federal employees. The right to appeal such adverse actions to the MSPB would ensure fairness and transparency that has been missing at TSA," said J. David Cox Sr., national president of AFGE. Currently, appeal review at TSA has been limited, with internal procedures left under the control of TSA management.

Management-level employees at TSA have MSPB rights but TSA refuses to grant those same rights to TSOs. "Denial of independent appeal rights to TSA officers unfairly singles them out for less due process than all other TSA employees," said Hydrick Thomas, president of AFGE's TSA Bargaining Council.

"TSA Officers employed at over 400 airports around the country deserve MSPB rights to ensure fair treatment," Cox said. "For an agency where employee satisfaction and labor relations are among the lowest in the government, establishing independent appeal rights would be a big step in the right direction."



TSA Officers and other AFGE activists rally in front of TSA headquarters in Arlington, VA.

AFGE Activist Decries Problems with VA's Benefits Claims System in Testimony Before House VA Committee



Jenkins. "AFGE requests the establishment of a working group to improve VBMS, which would include AFGE, management and Veterans Service Organizations' (VSOs) stakeholders." AFGE also recommends that VBA develop a contingency plan that will maintain productivity and credit employees working via alternate systems when VBMS is shutdown.

The union is also critical of the current work credit system that is not based on data and does not accurately account for the complexities associated with the claims process. Feedback from AFGE members indicates that the current system deprives work credit for numerous required tasks, increases workplace stress,

puts pressure on employees to rush through claims, and devalues the importance of evaluating claims on their individual merits.

"The absence of a valid work credit system exacerbates the well documented problem of VBA managers manipulating backlog data to improve performance measures," said Jenkins. "Veterans who fought for this nation deserve to have their claims processed in an accurate and timely manner."

AFGE urges the committee to adopt the approach set forth by Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders that would establish a working group tasked with evaluating and recommending changes to the current work credit system based on data.

Jenkins is a 15-year veteran of the Marine Corps, a service-connected veteran and has worked for VBA for nine years.

AFGE Local 1738 Shop Steward Eric Jenkins testified in early February before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs' Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs regarding the current state of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) benefit claims processing technology. Jenkins' testimony focused on greater communication between AFGE and the agency regarding improving the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), the impact of frequent system shutdowns on the ability to process veterans' claims in a timely fashion, and improving the agency's broken work credit system.

"AFGE consistently receives reports from members at regional offices nationwide regarding shutdowns and technical problems with VBMS. We would like to remain a strong partner with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to improve VBMS to better process claims and to make the system more user-friendly," testified



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Membership & Organization Update: AFGE Continues to Grow!

AFGE ended 2013 with the highest number of active members that the Federation has had in recent years. It is because of the collective commitment from the Locals, District, Council and National Offices to increase our membership that we are one of the few unions that have achieved a significant increase in membership.

Our continuous organizing of new members and mobilization of our membership in the face of severe attacks on our pay and benefits, has yielded success in fighting against those attacks.

Now more than ever we must encourage non-members to join the AFGE membership rolls. Increased membership at the local level is essential to improving AFGE's capacity when negotiating with management to improve working conditions and assist in gaining political clout with local politicians who support the issues that matter to you.

Last year federal employees were the focus of congressional attacks on government at all levels. Because federal employees have joined our great union in record numbers, AFGE was successful with receiving more media and press coverage than it had in recent history. That media coverage assisted in taking our message to the general public during the government lockout and the fight against new cuts to your retirement.

Imagine the work that our union can achieve if we are able to double our membership this year. This can be achieved if every member commits to signing up at least two members each month. This would make us stronger and more successful than ever! It also would help make federal employment a job that not only provides an opportunity to give back to the community, but an industry where opportunities for personal growth and stable employment are offered.

Women's and Fair Practices' 2014 Diversity Week

The Women's and Fair Practices Departments are happy to announce that the 2nd Annual Diversity Week will be held at the Hilton Minneapolis this year! The exciting week of events will include the 3rd Annual Y.O.U.N.G. AFGE Training Summit, the 2nd Annual AFGE Pride Training Summit, and the popular Human Rights Training Conference. These three amazing trainings will take place August 23-29, 2014.

The 3rd Annual Y.O.U.N.G. AFGE Training Summit will be held August 23 & 24. This year's theme is "Takin' it to the Streets". Young activists who have been fighting back

against vicious attacks on their rights in the work place will be given the tools they need to build upon what they've learned, and apply it back at home in their districts, locals and agencies.

The 2nd Annual AFGE Pride Training Summit will be held on August 25. The theme for

this summit is "Can't Stop! Won't Stop!" AFGE lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members and their allies will come together for a day of support, networking and education.

The Human Rights Training Conference has always been the AFGE event that provides the most comprehensive training courses and the most up-to-date information regarding civil, human, women's and workers' rights. This year's Human Rights Training Conference theme is "Not One Step Back." It will be held August 26 – 29. This training will include core classes such as all levels of EEO training, Collective Bargaining and Coordinator Boot Camp, as well as our more diverse classes such as Diversity and Work Life.

The Hilton Minneapolis is located in the heart of downtown Minneapolis. We are proud to support this popular union establishment. It is in walking distance to Target Field, the Metrodome, and a short commuter rail ride away from the famous Mall of America. Mall of America is the largest and most visited mall in the United States with plenty of stores, an amusement park and an aquarium inside.

On time registration ends July 4 and late registration ends August 10. You can register online at www.afge.org.



AFGE DEFCON Mentorship Program Offers Lifeline to Struggling Locals



AFGE's Defense Conference (DEFCON) has created a successful mentorship program for struggling locals that could be replicated across the federation.

The program was piloted last year at Fort Huachuca, an Army installation about 15 miles north of the Mexican border in southeast Arizona. At the time, Local 1662 was beset with low membership, troubled finances, lack of representation for members, and a contentious relationship with management, District 12 National Vice President George McCubbin said.

The first step was for a group of DEFCON leaders to visit the installation and meet with management and employees. The group consisted of DEFCON Chair Don Hale, Army Caucus Chair Bill Ward, former DEFCON Vice Chair Patty Viers and former Marine Corps Caucus Chair Brian Leonard.

The next step was to recruit volunteers who could tackle longstanding problems and help get the local back on its feet. Each mentor was a subject matter expert in a particular area: representation – retired Local 2302 President Bob Thompson from Ft. Knox, Ky.; administration – retired Local 703 (now Local 15) President Terri Blackburn of Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.; and organizing – Local 1148 President George Dunson of the Defense Logistics Agency in Columbus, Ohio.

Mentors' 4 Steps to Helping Troubled Locals

- 1 Visit by union leadership to assess situation
- 2 Recruit volunteers to tackle problem areas
- 3 Identify Local members committed to lead
- 4 Stay on ground until all problems are resolved

DEFCON Chair Don Hale said it was important to select mentors who were outside the local so their only allegiance would be in helping the union. "We couldn't have found more committed individuals," Hale said. The mentors certainly had their work cut out for them. The local president was located off site, no one worked in the union office and the answering machine didn't work. Financial and membership records were nowhere to be found. Employees had been subjected to years of discrimination, retaliation, wrongful terminations and other violations without receiving any assistance from the union.

The mentors spent five months on the ground, getting the local's financial house back in order, meeting with agency officials to establish a working labor-management relationship, and tackling an extensive backlog of unresolved employee grievances. To work with the mentors, DEFCON identified a local member named Katy Rasdall who was "disgruntled" and "frustrated" but who believed in the mentorship program and had hope for the union, Hale said. Rasdall was elected the local president during a special election.

Dues were increased for the first time in 15 years, enabling the local to get out of debt. Longstanding grievances were resolved, with several employees getting their jobs back. Membership has swelled from 74 to 200. "It is making a huge, huge difference," Rasdall said. "Employees are just happy to have someone answering the phones."

The second round of the mentorship program already has begun at Offutt Air Force Base. McCubbin said he hopes the program continues to help struggling locals for many years to come. "I want to see this program grow in the federation because it's going to help all of us," he said.

AFGE Health and Safety Online: New training tools available at www.afge.org/healthsafety



Online health and safety resources available on www.afge.org/healthsafety:

- Basic Occupational Health Concepts
- Roles and Responsibilities of Joint Health and Safety Committees
- Conducting an Internal Investigation
- Conducting a Workplace Assessment
- Your Health and Safety Rights
- Ergonomics
- Indoor Air Quality
- Federal Workers' Compensation Resources and Forms

Go to www.afge.org/healthsafety to learn more about how to protect yourself and your co-workers today.

For more information or questions, please contact Milly Rodriguez, Health and Safety Specialist at rodrim@afge.org.

AFGE Teams Up with Kaiser Permanente to Help You Get and Stay Healthy

AFGFE and Kaiser Permanente are working together to offer AFGE members information and tools to live healthier. Kaiser Permanente is a nonprofit, union-represented health care organization whose goal is to make it easier for you to take care of yourself and your family. Take a look at some of the programs and services this partnership will bring:

- **Weekly e-health tips:** You'll get a link to a health tip every week by signing up for news and alerts at www.afge.org. In March, you'll be able to view these tips on a special website created by Kaiser Permanente for AFGE members. You'll also be able to sign up to get tips by email.
- **Health Talks Online podcasts:** Also available in March, you can learn about living healthier with Kaiser Permanente's monthly Health Talks Online podcasts. Topics include how to eat better, exercise more, manage ongoing conditions, reduce stress, and manage allergies. Visit www.afge.org Member Benefits page to access the podcast link.
- **Lunch and Learn workshops:** Lunch and Learn workshops will be offered to AFGE members in Kaiser Permanente service areas (California, Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Georgia, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington DC.) These on-site workshops are a convenient way to learn about a variety of health topics. They're also a great opportunity for AFGE members to come together, ask questions, and learn from each other.
- **Dedicated website for AFGE members:** Visit the www.afge.org Member Benefits page to link to the website where you can read health, listen to podcasts, read articles, learn about local events, get healthy recipes, and more.

AFGE



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