



THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

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Growth, Strength & Solidarity at the AFGE National Convention

Table of Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| President's Message | 2 |
| Your Pay on the Chopping Block | 3 |
| AFGE's 40th National Convention | 4-7 |
| AFGE/HUD Sign New Contract | 8 |
| Accountability at the VA | 9 |
| Justice for Our Fallen Brother | 10 |
| On the Cusp of 300,000 Members | 11 |
| Union Plus Mortgage Discounts | 12 |



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

From the bottom of my heart, thanks to each and every one of you for your faith and support in re-electing me as your National President. It has been the most rewarding experience of my life to lead our union these past three years.

Our convention was really about pursuing a bold vision of a strong AFGE that is big enough to defeat every challenge arrayed against us and win a better future. It was about doing what works to transform AFGE from a mid-sized union to one of the largest and most influential advocates for workers' rights in the world.

In other words, this convention was a mandate for each and every AFGE member to build this union to be Big Enough to Win. This means mobilizing our fellow members and retirees on pay and benefits issues like never before, taking our message to the media everywhere, strengthening our locals from the bottom up, and achieving not just steady but exponential growth until we are so big our enemies will think twice before attacking us again.

Today we are stronger than we have ever been at every level, but our work has just begun.

Our enemies are growing faster than ever, and we need to be ready. That's why convention delegates voted to invest new resources into our union's legislative and political mobilization, retiree, and education programs.

Now AFGE can hire more legislative and political organizers to lobby congressional offices, organize rallies, and train members and retirees how to fight attacks on our pay, benefits and jobs. These resources also will allow us to hire new trainers to develop and deliver cutting-edge, interactive online trainings to AFGE activists everywhere.

Brothers and sisters, we have all seen what AFGE can accomplish when engaged and educated activists stand up for what they believe in.

This convention just kicked that process into high gear. Our movement succeeds when you step up, and I for one am ready to roll up my sleeves and take this union to the next level. Let's work together to make it happen. The push begins today.

In Solidarity,

AFGE—THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

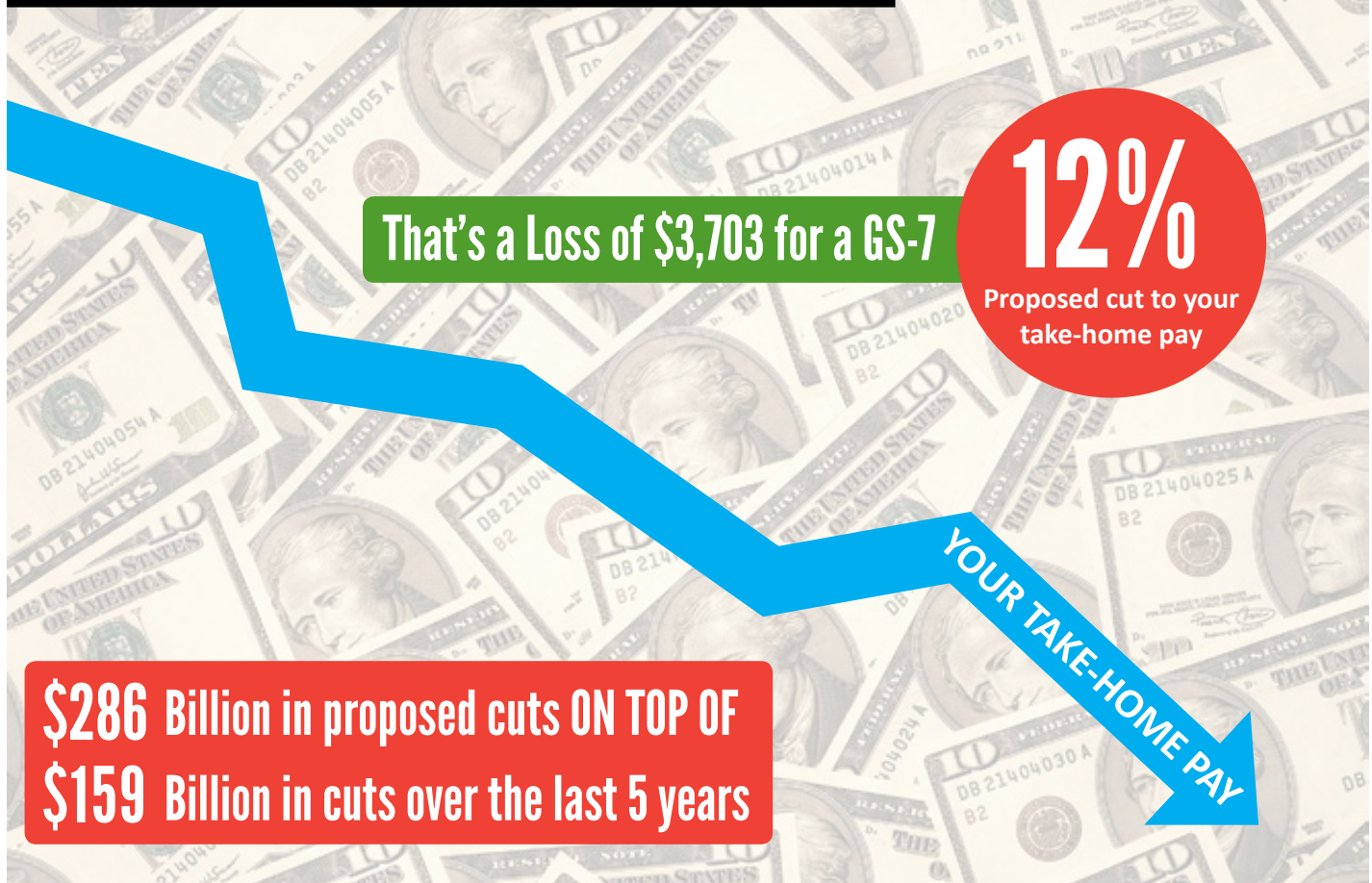
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Congress Back in Session, and Your Pay is on the Chopping Block



Congress is back in session after taking off most of the summer, and unfortunately that can only mean one thing – more attempts to slash your pay, take away your benefits, and cut your jobs.

In case you've forgotten, Congress passed a budget blueprint earlier this year that would cut your take-home pay by 12 percent. They want to take away your hard-earned salary by making you pay more toward your retirement and increasing your health care costs.

All told, Congress wants to make \$286 billion in cuts to federal employees over the next decade. That's in addition to the \$159 billion in cuts you have already sacrificed during the past five years as a result of frozen or insufficient pay raises, lost income from being furloughed due to sequestration, and increases in retirement contributions for new employees.

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The only way to stop these cuts from taking place is to let your members of Congress know that you can't afford another 12 percent pay cut, and you won't stop speaking out until these reckless cuts are abandoned.

AFGE has created an online Budget Action Center where you can find all the tools you need to lobby Congress. By visiting www.afge.org/BudgetActionCenter, you can email your members of Congress, share your story about how a 12 percent pay cut would affect you, and share content on social media websites like Facebook that will show your friends and family what a 12 percent pay cut would mean to you.

Please visit the site today and take action to save the pay and benefits you have worked so hard to earn. If you don't stand up for your livelihood, who will?



2015 Convention Charts Course for a Stronger Future

A FGE opened our 40th Convention with a message of growth, strength, and solidarity in the labor movement – the key components that will help us defeat the ever-increasing attacks against our union.

Over 1,500 AFGE leaders and activists gathered for the five-day convention at one of the most important times in the union’s history as the **Koch Brothers** and corporate-funded members of Congress are waging a war against federal employees, AFGE, and all unions.

Orlando was a fitting place to hold this convention as it was the place where 700 AFGE leaders from across the country gathered on the eve of a government lockout in 2013 to forge a strategy to overcome the attacks on our members. That conference gave birth to the Big Enough to Win strategic plan, which AFGE locals, councils, districts, and the national office continue to implement all across the country.

On the final day of convention, delegates came together and chose to invest new resources in expanding AFGE's ability to mobilize and lobby on important issues like pay, providing more and better training to members, and building coalitions with other unions that will have our back. Now that the convention has come and gone, the hard work of growing this union and overcoming an anti-worker

Congress remains – and we need you to be a part of the fight.

AFGE Re-elects Top Three National Officers

National President **J. David Cox Sr.**, National Secretary-Treasurer **Eugene Hudson Jr.**, and National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices **Augusta Y. Thomas** all were returned to office for another three-year term. Cox and Hudson were first elected in 2012, while Thomas was first elected in 2009.

Cox won the top office with 63 percent of the votes. **Dana Duggins**, executive vice president of the National Council of SSA Field Operations Locals Council 220, received 21 percent of the vote. **Alex Bastani**, president of AFGE Local 12, received 11 percent. **David Owens** received 5 percent.

In the race for National Secretary-Treasurer, Eugene Hudson ran unopposed and was re-elected by acclamation.

Augusta Thomas was re-elected as National Vice President for Women and Fair Practices with 75 percent of the vote. **Jacob Baker**, unit vice president of AFGE Local 1770, received 25 percent of the vote. The officers were sworn in by AFGE President Emeritus **Bobby Harnage** and National Secretary-Treasurer Emeritus **Rita Mason**.



Convention attendees browsed dozens of AFGE national, district, and guest exhibits at the 2015 National Convention.

Thomas thanked the delegates for allowing her to continue the fight for fairness and inclusion. Hudson vowed to be a good steward of the union's finances. Cox urged unity, solidarity, and proactive thinking to move the union forward.

A Fight for the Nation

The **Rev. Dr. William Barber**, who has led a civil rights and labor movement in North Carolina known as the Moral Monday movement, set the tone by urging AFGE delegates to continue to fight racism, economic inequality, and attempts to take away the social safety net, voting, labor, and women's rights.

"It's fighting time, y'all," he said. "We're fighting for the soul and the heart of this nation."

Why We Need to Be Bigger, Stronger

Echoing Cox's sentiments was Iraq war veteran and co-founder of the 220,000 member veterans group **Votevets.org** **Jon Soltz**, who gave an impassioned speech about why he needs AFGE to be Big Enough to Win. An Army officer, he was sent to Iraq in 2003 as a captain during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

When he came back, he went to the VA hospital in Pittsburgh. Asked why he was there, he couldn't produce an answer. He told one of the nurses that he

was not the person he used to be. "I then sat there and cried. You know what that nurse said to me? You came to the right place." Soltz said AFGE needs to be Big Enough to Win to save the VA so veterans get the care that they need and deserve – just like the care he received in his time of need. VA is the brand that veterans know. VA employees, a third of whom are veterans, understand veterans' needs better than anybody else.

Soltz is against privatization of the VA. He talked about how he was not permitted to get into a press conference held by a member of Congress to ask why President Bush, who started the Iraq War, wanted to close VA hospitals.

American Postal Workers Union President **Mark Dimondstein** asked AFGE delegates, "Is it true that AFGE is becoming Big Enough to Win?" He got a resounding "Yes" as a response. Dimonstein said not only AFGE but all the unions need to be Big Enough to Win.

"The labor movement needs to be Big Enough to Win. And not only big enough and strong enough, we need to be united enough to win because all workers are under attack," he said, adding that the system is rigged in favor of the rich and big corporations. While big banks got bailed out, government employees got cuts to pay and retirement.



The Rev. Dr. William Barber addressed delegates in a rousing opening speech at the AFGE National Convention.



AFT President Randi Weingarten and AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. were greeted by dozens of AFGE children and their parents.

Solidarity Forever

American Federation of Teachers President **Randi Weingarten** told AFGE delegates that 1.6 million AFT members stand with federal employees today and every day. Besides sharing the same complex in Washington, Weingarten said both unions have many things in common. Both share a strong commitment to organizing. Both give our hearts and souls to our workers. Both share a vision for America where all Americans have access to a good education, jobs, health care, fair treatment at work, retirement with financial security, and a well-resourced VA.

The AFT president said both unions are facing serious threats, and our enemies intend to wipe us off the map.

“It’s important for us to stand shoulder to shoulder, our two unions. If the history of the American labor movement taught us anything, it’s that when we come together, we win.”

Association of Flight Attendants-CWA International President **Sara Nelson** stressed the importance of unions and solidarity in the labor movement. To drive home the point, she shared how United Airlines failed to pay her in her first month on the job and her co-worker wrote her a personal check for \$800 and told her to call the union.

“I learned two things that day. As flight attendants and workers, we take care of each other. And as union members, you are never alone,” she said. “That experience ignited a passion in me for union work.”

Nelson was stationed in Boston when 9/11 happened. She flew on Flight 175 frequently and it could have been her on that fateful day. She lost her friends when two planes were hijacked and flown into the World Trade Center. Back then, airport security was set up to fail because screeners were overworked and underpaid.

“When airport security was federalized, security improved immediately. When TSOs took over airport security, my personal security improved immediately,” she told the cheering crowd. “Safety and security doesn’t just happen; it happens because we crew members, as well as TSOs, demand it.”

National Association of Letter Carriers President **Frederic Rolando** opened his speech by saying that 274,000 members of his union support AFGE in everything we do. He thanked AFGE and Cox in particular for always being a strong supporter of postal workers. He stressed the importance of solidarity as the attacks against public workers are not perpetuated by a few bad people; it’s rather a systematic attack propelled by ideology permeating throughout Congress and the media.



Members showed their support for the speakers' causes in a display of solidarity.



*AFL-CIO Executive Vice President
Tefere Gebre*

Also speaking at the convention was AFL-CIO Executive Vice President **Tefere Gebre**, who applauded AFGE for our involvement in many causes

important to the labor movement, such as the trade deal known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Gebre thanked AFGE members for the work that they do. As a refugee from Ethiopia who walked across the desert to a refugee camp in Sudan when he was 15 years old and was sent to California to start a new life, it was government employees who helped him adjust to his new country.

“I’m grateful to AFGE before I knew AFGE,” he told the crowd. “It’s not only your job but our job to fight for you and your job.”

We Can’t Rest

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Emeritus **Arlene Holt Baker** said too many Americans are still

struggling. There have been attempts to take away Social Security and suppress voting rights of the poor, the young, the old, the disabled, and people of color. Women are still struggling for pay equity and affordable child care.

“I can’t rest because more and more people that I know are working two or three minimum-wage jobs just trying to make ends meet. So what do I do? I march. I agitate,” she said. “And I serve on non-profit boards, some of them supported by AFGE, that work with the labor movement to raise wages, fight for a living wage, protect our voting rights, and fight for the right for workers to be able to organize in this country.”



Local 2779 President Muriel Newman accepted the Special Organizing Award on behalf of her members.

Congratulations to our Major Convention Award Winners!

Randolph-Humphrey Human Rights Award *William Boseman, Bureau of Prisons*

Special Organizing Award *AFGE Local 2779, Veterans Affairs*

Ed Klein Political Action Award *Ron Demicheli, retired member, Dept. of Energy*

Clyde M. Webber Award *National Border Patrol Council*

Bernice Heffner Award *Barbara Jackson, Social Security Administration*

Young Emerging Leader Award *Francis Nichols, D.C. Pre-Trial Services*

Outstanding Young Woman Award *Jennifer Green, Army*

For a complete list of Convention award winners go to www.afge.org/conventionawards

After Nearly 20 Years, AFGE, HUD Sign New Contract

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and HUD AFGE Council 222 signed a new labor-management contract this August, the first in nearly 20 years.

The new agreement includes substantial improvements and big gains such as a brand new allotment for Maxiflex – the most flexible of all possible flexible schedule models – a full telework provision, new provisions for student loan repayment programs, a drastically improved performance appraisals section, new battery of protections for contracting, tremendous day care

subsidies, dramatically improved official time, and big improvements in pre-decisional involvement for space management.

AFGE congratulates the council and the membership on their new agreement.

This contract is a major step forward for HUD's AFGE employees, said Holly Salamido of HUD. "The contract contains expanded provisions on work schedule flexibility, allowing employees to both work a maxiflex schedule and telework. The new contract also provides for an expedited grievance process."

TSA Contract Negotiations Are Underway



TSA contract negotiations are officially underway. Since August, the AFGE TSA bargaining team has been at the table with TSA management to advocate for full Title 5 Rights for TSOs, fair pay raises, and improvements to passenger and TSO safety.

TSOs currently lack the same basic workplace rights as their federal employee counterparts. Granting TSOs Title 5 rights would allow them to be paid according to the GS pay system and be protected under the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and other OPM guidelines.

The bargaining team is urging TSA to explore new

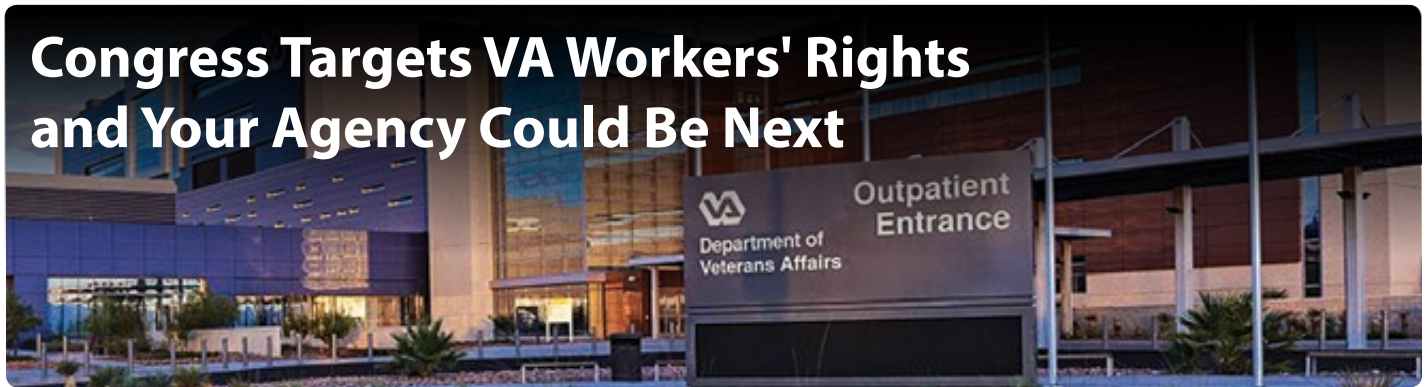
opportunities that strengthen morale among frontline employees through improvements in the workplace rights of TSOs. AFGE is encouraging TSA to address the understaffing issues, unrealistic line-speed standards, and the need for more training for employees on the front line.

"The new contract negotiations are our opportunity to expand upon the benefits we received in TSA's very first collective bargaining agreement," said Hydrick Thomas, AFGE TSA Council 100 president. "We've gained a lot over the past few years but there's still work to be done to improve working conditions at TSA."

AFGE is continuing the fight at the bargaining table to improve TSO pay, benefits, and working conditions and to ensure fair treatment at work. The bargaining team is certain that with a positive labor-management relationship, we can foster a healthy working environment for TSOs and continue providing valuable services to the flying public.

Contract negotiations are scheduled to conclude in December. You can stay up-to-date about the TSA contract negotiations by visiting www.afge.org/TSAContract.

Congress Targets VA Workers' Rights and Your Agency Could Be Next



The war on workers rights has shifted to a new and unlikely battleground these past few months: the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. And for the more than 300,000 employees and the millions of veterans they serve, the stakes could not be higher.



Two lawmakers – **Rep. Jeff Miller** and **Sen. Marco Rubio** – are set on depriving VA employees of their Constitutional rights to due process rights they count on to prevent discrimination, wrongful firing, and whistleblower retaliation.

According to Miller and Rubio, the only way to ensure accountability at the VA is to make every employee at-will, including the 115,000 veterans who work there.

While accountability sounds nice, their true motives are much more disturbing. These bills are designed to implement the wishes of the **Koch Brothers** and corporate-backed front groups like Concerned Veterans for America, who are more interested in busting unions and workplace rights than caring for veterans.

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Now that H.R. 1994 has passed, only the Senate and **President Obama's** veto pen stand in the way of stopping this awful legislation from becoming law. It's time to stop playing politics with our veterans.

Lawmakers need to focus on true VA reform approaches like those proposed by **Rep. Mark Takano** and **Sen. Richard Blumenthal** in their bills **H.R. 2999** and **S. 1856**, respectively. Their approach to VA reform preserves essential due process rights and allows VA employees to continue to blow the whistle against mismanagement without fear of termination.

Each bill carves out an exception to current civil service protections when an employee presents a clear and direct threat to public health. The bills also reduce mismanagement by curtailing a widespread revolving door problem in the VA and improving management training and performance measures.

Time is short to stop Rubio's proposal from passing the Senate, so we need all AFGE members to stand up for our fellow members and veterans. Go to www.afge.org/vadueprocess today to take action.



AFGE Pickets Plea Bargain for BOP Officer's Killer



Dozens of AFGE members from different prisons and agencies showed up to support Rivera's family.

a correctional officer is a survivable offense.

"We want everyone to know that we stand together as one," said Vincent Kirksey, a correctional worker and member of AFGE Local 1013 in Yazoo City, Miss. "To issue another life sentence is not fair; it sends a message to the inmate population that they could take a life and they don't have to give one."

A FGE Council of Prison Locals held an informational picket at the Los Angeles District Courthouse on Spring Street this August to show support for fallen Officer José Rivera and his family, and to condemn the plea deal given to Joseph Cabrera Sablan, his convicted killer.

Surrounded by AFGE members in the Los Angeles area, Council of Prison Locals President Eric Young remembered Officer Rivera as a man who served his community and his country at every opportunity, including a deployment to Iraq.

About 50 picketers circled the front of the courthouse for more than an hour, holding up signs that said Justice for José and Protect Those Who Protect America. They came from California and beyond to stand in support as the Rivera family faced José's killer in court.

An urgent concern among officers is that the plea bargain exposes correctional workers to more threats because it sends a message to inmates that murdering

As a memorial, AFGE is working on establishing a park outside of USP Atwater, dedicated to Officer Rivera and his work at the prison.

To make a donation to the José Rivera Memorial Park Fund, send a check to the following address:

409 Cleveland Ave, Forrest City, AR 72335

Please write "José Rivera Memorial Park Fund" in the notes section of the check.



The Rivera family thanked attendees for their support and pledged to continue their fight for justice.



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Text **AFGE** to **225568**

From your personal phone and never from a government phone.

298,802 MEMBERS STRONG

AFGE Stands at the Cusp of 300,000 Members

You have heard many times that organizing is the lifeblood of this union that is why building and maintaining a large, active membership base gives us the resources and people power we need to win on the local and national stage on issues that matter to AFGE members.

Today, we stand at the cusp of 300,000 members—a historic milestone for this union and a potent symbol of a new culture of organizing at all levels of AFGE. Organizing new units is key to increased power, but aside from the 670,000 workers AFGE represents, there are an additional 500,000

federal employees who do not yet have any union representation at all. Bringing these employees into the AFGE family will nearly double our strength and position this union to win.

In 2013, AFGE launched an initiative to gather information on unrepresented bargaining units that are co-located on facilities and installations where there are established AFGE locals.

Workers vote to join AFGE over and over again because they see the importance of collective power in confronting the attacks on our jobs, pay, pension, civil services, and union rights.

More Federal Employees Say "Union Yes" – New Organized Units in 2015:

Defense, Military Entrance Processing Station, Baltimore, Md.

Defense, Pentagon Force Protection Agency

Army, Dental Clinic, Ft. Lee, Va.

General Services Administration, Region 6, Building Operations Branch, Kansas City, Mo.

Homeland Security, Coast Guard, Base Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.

Homeland Security, Coast Guard, Petaluma Training Center, Petaluma, Calif.

Veterans Affairs, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, Hines VA Hospital, Hines, Ill.

Defense, Shaw Air Force Base, Shaw AFB, S.C.

Veterans Affairs, Physicians Assistants, Richmond, Va.

National Park Service, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, N.Y.

Buckley Air Force Base, Defense Contracting Agency, Aurora Col.

AFGE



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