
A F G E - THE SSA WORKER'S UNION

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Volume 3 Marie Penington, Editor October 28, 1991

LOCAL 2505 OFFICERS

President:	Sy Overturf	Oklahoma City DO	405-231-5342
Executive Vice President:	Robert Smith	Tulsa DO	918-581-6379
Secretary/Treasurer:	Marie Penington	Stillwater BO	405-624-4454

Feel free to contact any of these three officers at any time.

STURDIVANT MAKES ON SITE VISIT TO ASSURE CLEAN UP EFFORTS ELIMINATE LEGIONNAIRE'S DISEASE AT SSA PAYMENT CENTER

National President John N. Sturdivant strapped on a respirator and entered the WNPSC on 09/16/91 to make sure that every possible clean up effort was being undertaken to remove the deadly bacteria which caused an outbreak of Type A Legionnaire's Disease at the federal facility.

AFGE Local 1122 President Dave Mack and other local union leaders at the PSC were successful in closing down the Center on 09/12/91 after an investigation led the union to believe a serious health hazard was evident in the building. Mack explained that the death of the employee, who worked for a janitorial contractor, alerted the Local's Health and Safety Committee to the possibility that Legionnaire's disease could be threatening the health of the employees. During the discussion with the agency's physicians they discovered that two other janitors were stricken and in serious condition, and that altogether 12 people were ill with pneumonia or other respiratory ailments.

Sturdivant commended the Local for its quick action to assure the safety of the federal workers it represents. "Their determinatin to get the building closed and remove others from risk, once again demonstrates AFGE's deep committment to the health and safety of all federal workers," he stated.

Also entering the building to observe the clean up efforts first-hand were Gwendolyn King and county, state, and federal health officials. the Contra Costa County Public Health Department, the U.S. Department of Health, the Center for Disease Control, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health were all there to help locate and eliminate the deadly bacteria.

"The welfare of the workers at this federal facility is of paramount concern to this union," Sturdivant stated upon his arrival at the WNPSC. "AFGE will continue to monitor the progress of this clean up effort to assure the health and safety of its members. And you can be sure that we will closely monitor the future maintenance of this facility as well to eliminate further health risks."

It is estimated that the 1200 employees who work at the WNPSC would be on administrative leave while the clean up continued and tests are completed to assure that all traces of the bacteria have been removed and no possibility exists for new growth.

The air conditioning system at the building is being completely sanitized, including the flushing and bleaching of the system's water towers. Clean up efforts also include the removal of carpeting, the sanitization of drip pans and a thorough cleaning of the computer room, as well as the basement of the building. The agency is also providing free testing to those employees who wish to be tested for the bacteria.

Identical air conditioning systems at the Chicago and Philadelphia PSCs are also being investigated by the agency and closely monitored by AFGE in light of the serious hazards experienced in WNPSC. Other SSA facilities will also be investigated to assure that the indoor air quality is good and no health hazards exist.

"The unfortunate outbreak of this deadly disease reemphasizes the need for indoor air quality legislation as well as adequate health and safety measures to protect the federal workforce," Sturdivant added. "AFGE has and will continue, to push for these much needed protections."

UPGRADE FOR CR'S
(It Could Be Moving)

SSA has been very tight lipped about its actions on the CR upgrade issue. The most recent information that we have been able to get in writing is a letter dated 08/01/91 from Commissioner King to Daniel Smith, President of SSA Manager Association (ie: The Managers' Union"). Following is the verbatim contents of this letter.

"This is in further response to your letter about the reclassification of the claims representative position.

Thank you for taking the time to write and express your support of our effort to upgrade the claims representative position. I agree that the recent arbitration decision on the Fair Labor Standards Act status for claims representative should not be linked with current Social Security Administration efforts in this area.

We are currently developing a new Classification Standard for our claims processing position, including that of claims representative. By the end of August we will send our proposed new standards to the Department of Health and Human Services for review and subsequent referral to the Office Of Personnel Management for further evaluation.

While I cannot predict the outcome of the review process, I am hopeful that our efforts will lead eventually to the reclassification of the claims representative position at a higher grade level.

Again, thank you for sharing your comments with me."

The Agency has no obligation to provide the Union with a copy of its proposals until its final draft is submitted to OPM. An "insider" did tell one of our representatives that the current SSA version contains certain deficiencies that could jeopardize the upgrade. The union will have an opportunity to address these deficiencies in response to their submission to OPM. It is speculative as to how long this process could take; however, one year would be a good guess.

This will not be the first time that AFGE has been involved in getting the CR position upgraded. Many do not realize that CRs were GS-9s prior to early 1973. In the late 1960's final initial claims adjudication was moved from the PSCs to FOs and assigned to CRs. SSA promised to get CRs upgraded to GS-10 because of these higher level duties. When SSA failed to follow through on its commitment, AFGE sponsored a classification appeal.

A favorable decision was rendered on this AFGE sponsored appeal in early 1973 even though SSA took a position in opposition to the upgrade. SSA even tried to avoid implementing the final decision. You only have to look at the pay schedule to figure out how much additional money this appeal is putting in your pocket each payday. Ironically, it was this AFGE appeal that made the Fair Labor Standards Act coverage for CRs germane.

AFGE TO SSA: BILINGUAL TASKS ARE "BEYOND THE CONTROL OF THE EMPLOYEE"

SSA and AFGE recently negotiated over the agency's proposed bilingual position description. The parties reached an impasse over the issue of how to appraise the performance of employees who must deal with members of the public who do not speak English and the case went before the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP) in Washington. The FSIP agreed with the union that the Social Security Administration was not fully considering or recognizing the additional time, effort, and difficulties in processing the claims of applicants who do not speak English. Therefore, said the Panel, the Union's proposal would help put bilingual employees "on an equal footing with their colleagues" and therefore give them a better opportunity to compete for awards. Rose Seaman of Akron, Ohio and Barbara Lawson of Chula Vista, California represented AFGE.

FLRA UPHOLDS CONFIDENTIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNION REP AND WORKER

In a recent case the Federal Labor Relations Authority held that the U.S. Customs Service illegally ordered a union official to disclose, under threat of discipline, statements made by a worker whom the official was representing. The Authority found that the Agency violated the Statute by threatening an employee, who was also the union representative, with disciplinary action if he did not provide information regarding the conduct of another employee, which the union representative acquired while performing his union duties.

The FLRA stated that the Statute clearly assures the right and duty of a union to represent employees in disciplinary proceedings, and the correlative right of each employee to be represented. Therefore, it follows that such rights and duties demand that the employee be free to make full and frank disclosure to his or her representative in order that the employee have adequate advice and a proper defense. The FLRA ordered the Agency to cease and desist from requiring an employee, who is a union representative, to disclose the content or substance of any statement made by an employee to a union representative.



Have a
safe
Halloween



Mortgage Program

Why a union-sponsored mortgage program?

Buying a home is one of the largest and most important purchases of our lives. However, today's home buyer faces a bewildering array of choices when looking for a mortgage. And many union members are simply shut out of the housing market by the high costs. The Union Privilege Mortgage Program offers union members, their children and parents an easier and more affordable way to obtain a mortgage.

Why this program is better than your local bank's

This program makes the mortgage application process much easier and offers many features that make buying a home more affordable. An expert mortgage consultant is available to answer your questions and help you select the mortgage best suited to your needs—not just to sell you a mortgage "product." You apply over the phone [REDACTED] at your convenience. Other advantages:

- Competitive rates at or below national average
- Refinancing of existing mortgages
- Down payments as low as 5 percent
- Low application fees and closing costs
- Save \$250 through the UnionMove program
- Favorably priced homeowners insurance and mortgage life insurance
- Pre-approval of loan amount gives you price negotiating power
- Nationwide network of real estate agents to help you

Making housing more affordable for union members

Because of rising housing prices and the large amount of cash needed up-front to purchase a home, many members are shut out of the housing market. This union benefit includes several unique features for first-time home buyers to help them realize the American dream of owning a home, including:

- 3 percent down payment
- Expanded approval criteria allows members to qualify for a mortgage through this program that they may not qualify for with other lenders
- No-points loans to lower up-front costs

Help when times are tough

Union members using the program are eligible to participate in a financial assistance plan to help them meet their monthly mortgage payments if they become unemployed due to a prolonged strike, lockout, layoff or disability.

A mortgage is a phone call away

Just call [REDACTED] to talk to an expert mortgage consultant. Applications are taken over the phone. The mortgage lender is PHH US Mortgage Corp.—one of the nation's largest and most stable. The AFL-CIO's Housing Investment Trust and the union-owned Amalgamated Bank of New York are helping to make owning a home more affordable for union members through their participation.

Contact: Sy Overturf, Pres. or Bob Smith, Exec. V.P. or Marie Penington for the 800 Number to inquire about this benefit.



Union Privilege, AFL-CIO

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PS-MP1-491

NEWS You Can Use

ADDITIONAL INTEREST INFORMATION ON UNION PRIVILEGE PROGRAMS

- I. MORTGAGE PROGRAM: Under this plan you can save money by refinancing if your interest rate is lowered by at least 1½%. the normal industry standard is 2%. This difference is primarily due to lower closing costs. On 10/09/91 the home mortgage exchange rate on a 15 year mortgage was 8 1/8% + 3 points or 8 3/8% + 2 points. A mortgage over 15 years was 8½% + 2 points or 8 3/4% + 2 points.

- II. AFGE MASTERCARD: The interest rate declined from 13.5% to 13% effective 10/01/91. The occurred because the Prime Rate was 8% on 09/30/91. The Mastercard interest rate is set at 5% above the Prime Rate on the last day of the previous quarter.

STUDENT LOAN PROGRAM FOR AFGE MEMBERS

This is a new membership benefit. AFGE has arranged with the Maryland National Bank for this student loan program. There are three types of loans available as outlined below. If you want more details, contact either Sy Overturf, Pres or Marie Penington, Sec for a flyer with more details.

- I THE PLUS LOAN: (For parents of dependent undergraduate and graduate students). Listed below are this loan's major features.
 - 1. There is no financial needs test. Members can qualify regardless of income or assets.
 - 2. Parents can borrow up to \$4,000 per year per student to a cumulative maximum of \$20,000 per child. There is no family maximum.
 - 3. Under most circumstances, parents can defer payment of both principal and interest while students are still in school.
 - 4. The interest rate is variable, but it can never exceed 12% by law. It is based on the 52 week US Treasury Bill rate plus 3.25% and adjusts annually on each July 1st.
 - 5. There is a 3% loan guarantee fee which is deducted from the loan prior to disbursement.

- II THE STAFFORD LOAN: (For qualifying students based on need). It includes the following major features.
 - 1. To qualify for this loan, your school must first determine your financial need.
 - 2. Undergraduates can borrow up to \$2625 per year during the first two years and \$4,000 per year during years three through five. A cumulative total of \$17,250 is available for each student.
 - 3. Graduates can borrow up to \$7,500 per year and a cumulative maximum of \$54,750.
 - 4. The annual interest rates are 8% for the first four years of repayment and 10% thereafter.
 - 5. There is a 5% federal origination fee and 3% guarantee fee. All fees are deducted from the loan prior to disbursement.

- III The SLS Local: (For financially independent students).
 - 1. The provisions of this loan are essentially the same as the PLUS Loan (#I above) except that students instead of parents are the borrowers.

AFGE CONVENTION

Sy Overturf, Bob Smith and Marie Penington represented Local 2505 at the AFGE Council 220, the National Council of SSA Field Operations Locals and the AFGE National Convention held in Anaheim, California August 24 - 30, 1991.

Council 220 elected the following officers:

- President: Witold Skwierczynski
- Executive VP: Ralph DeJuliis
- 1st VP: John Riordan
- 2nd VP: Rose Seaman
- 3rd VP: Jim Campana
- Secretary: Ken Keillor
- Treasurer: Rita Pyle

The Council raised its monthly per capita from \$1.00 to \$1.25 per month.

The delegates heard reports from officers and committees on job classification, TQM, performance standards, preparations for the next round of contract negotiations in late 1992, health and safety and taking SSA off-budget.

The following National Officers were elected:

- President: John N Sturdivant
- Secretary-Treasurer: Bobby L Harnage
- Women's Director: Joan C Welsh

The National raised its monthly per capita for the next three years: 50¢ on 10/01/91, \$1.50 on 01/01/92, 50¢ on 01/01/93 and 50¢ on 01/01/94. This was accomplished after much debate. A committee is to study changes needed in AFGE with each district to elect two persons to serve on this committee. The election of these two person to represent the Ninth District is upcoming 12/07/91 in Springfield Missouri where Sy, Bob and Marie are again delegates to further the action of the convention.

The delegates to the National Convention in August also had a chance to listen to AFL-CIO President Land Kirkland and Chairman Ron Brown of the Democratic National Committee on the opening day of the Convention. President Kirkland reinforced organized labor's support for full collective bargaining for government employees and for revisions in the restrictive Hatch Act. Chairman Brown also blasted the Hatch Act and attacked the Administration's domestic policies.

Besides the activities on the convention floor each day there were other activities both before and after each day's session. Monday night there was a PAC party which helped to raise PAC money. Tuesday morning there was the Women's Leadership Breakfast at which Reverend Jesse Jackson was the keynote speaker. Thursday morning was the Editor's Breakfast, which was attended by the editor of this paper. Thursday night was the banquet.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"A well informed employee is the best salesperson a company can have."

E. J. Thomas
