

AFGE Local 2199

Newsletter 4/1/24

Inside this Issue

Social Worker Update..All employees must be properly compensated for their work..Local 2199 shirts available at union office 12.00 each



Upcoming Events

AFGE Social Worker vote. AFGE Local will be announcing case load, wins and losses in future issues.

Membership Meeting

Membership meetings are held every 2nd Wednesday of the month. We welcome all to attend. The link to attend the meetings are on the website, AFGELocal2199.org, and once you book the meeting then the link will be sent to you via email.

Lunch & Learn

New Year, new dates for leadership to be swinging by all CBOCS to check in and see how things are going and for questions and info sessions.



Did You Know?

April

By BethAnne Brink-Cox

Like, for starters, yes, it's the fourth month according to the Gregorian calendar. But it wasn't always so. In the Roman, or Julian, calendar, April was the second month of the year (in the earlier version, April was the fifth month) and January and February didn't exist. Another quirk of that Julian calendar? April had only 29 days. When Caesar established the calendar in 45 B.C. he added the 30th. No wonder it's named for him.

APRIL FOOL'S DAY

Let's get back to April Fool's Day for a minute, though. Some of the more famous pranks included the BBC running a news piece about spaghetti being farmed in Sweden, and another about flying penguins.

There are other fun days to celebrate in April. How about April 6? It's International Pillow Fight Day.

Maybe you'd prefer April 9, which is National Unicorn Day. There are all kinds of ways to celebrate—cupcakes, glitter, movies with unicorns, the possibilities are endless. But did you know the unicorn is actually the national animal of Scotland? It is deeply beloved there and has been on the Scottish Royal Coat of Arms since the mid-1500s (or longer.)



APOLLO 13

And some of us know from the actual history while others know from Ron Howard's magnificent film, APOLLO 13, that April 11, 1970 was the day space flight was launched. Two days later, great difficulties meant the astronauts could be effectively marooned in space, with no way home. The line so often quoted is actually MIS-quoted – what was said? "Houston, we've had a problem here." NASA rolled up their figurative sleeves and worked every problem one by one, solving and improvising any way possible, and all three astronauts returned safely on April 17, undoubtedly the longest week of their lives.

photos: shutterstock.com

Probably the first thing you think of when the month of April is mentioned is, well, the first, as in April Fool's Day. But there's so much more about the fourth month of the year.

Most of us know that April 22 is Earth Day, but April 25 is World Penguin Day.

And April is the equivalent of October in the Southern Hemisphere, which seems odd when we equate it with spring flowers.

Babies born in April become adults who are known for their optimism, and according to research, they live healthier lives and excel at their careers.

BABIES

Diamonds are their birthstones, and daisies and sweet peas are their birth flowers, both imbued with happy feelings, as the sweet pea signifies bliss and pleasure, and daisies are said to represent childhood innocence, loyalty and purity.

ENTERTAINMENT

The most influential writer of all time – William Shakespeare – was born April 26, 1564. He wrote 38 plays, 154 sonnets, and invented dozens of words! And 400 years later, in 1964, the Beatles held all top five positions on the Billboard singles chart in the U.S. with "Can't Buy Me Love," "Twist and Shout," "She Loves You," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," and "Please Please Me."

April is National Humor Month, created to share the therapeutic value of humor. It is also BLT Sandwich Month, Grilled Cheese Month, Soft Pretzel Month, and peanut butter and jelly has its very own National day—April 2.

When you've finished your picnic, you can celebrate National No Housework Day (April 7) and National Hug Your Dog Day (also April 7.) It could certainly be argued either or both of those might be popular every single day!



And there's National Garlic Day (April 19) and International Jazz Day (April 30.) Not mentioning Tax Day, though, which has been in effect since 1913.



POP CULTURE

The first Doc Martens boots, model 1460, were released in 1960.

We've also got April to thank for the invention of Twinkies in 1930.

Last but not least and also in 1930 on April 18, the BBC reported there was no news, and then played out with piano music. ■



... and now you know!



AFGE National VA Council: All VA Employees Must Be Properly Compensated for Their Work

March 25, 2024

An AFGE representative last week testified before Congress urging lawmakers to pass a bill to ensure that all Department of Veterans Affairs employees are accurately compensated for working overtime, the night shift, weekend shift, or on a holiday.

Speaking before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on pending legislation, AFGE Local 1633 Secretary-Treasurer Joycelyn Westbrook, representing workers at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston, Texas, expressed strong support for a bill that would prevent the VA from using its authority to prevent Title 38 VA employees from filing grievances for incorrect paychecks.

Specifically, the VA Correct Compensation Act, introduced by Reps. Mark Takano and Mike Bost, will allow Title 38 VA employees – physicians, dentists, podiatrists, registered nurses, physician assistants, optometrists, chiropractors, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries to ask for remedies to routine payroll errors.

“This is commonsense legislation that will give employees the opportunity to file a grievance and have a fair process to make themselves whole and help with retaining clinicians at the agency,” said Westbrook, who has served as a registered nurse at the

VA for the past 40 years. “Unfortunately, payroll errors are a common problem at the VA. All too often, the VA fails to accurately calculate if a covered employee worked overtime, the night shift, weekend shift, or on a holiday.”

Westbrooks pointed out discrepancy in the right to correct payroll errors. If the affected employee is a Title 38 hybrid employee who is employed under a combination of Title 5 and Title 38 laws, such as therapist, pharmacist, licensed practical nurse, that person will have no problem filing a grievance and receive the money owed under the law. But if an employee is appointed as a pure Title 38 employee, the VA can and does invoke its authorities to deny the grievance.

“In practice, this means that a Registered Nurse does not have the same rights as a Licensed Practical Nurse, an optometrist does not have the same rights as an audiologist, and a psychiatrist does not have the same rights as a psychologist,” she explained.

“Beyond this inherent inequity, over 30 years, the VA’s use of this authority has discouraged employees from even filing grievances to correct their pay, which harms morale around the country.”

Westbrooks gave an example of a grievance AFGE filed on behalf of operating room nurses at the VAMC Asheville, North Carolina. The nurses were called in to work overtime between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday, which were outside their regular work schedule. The VA had denied the nurses the night differential and weekend pay. The arbitrator, however, ruled in favor of AFGE and directed the VA to correctly pay them. But the VA refused to comply, citing its authorities under 38 U.S.C. 7422 that have been broadly interpreted.

The AFGE National VA Council, which represents more than 75,000 Title 38 employees, urged Congress to pass the VA Correct Compensation Act as Title 38 employees deserve the same rights as all other union members.



Social Worker Update

Time To Celebrate, Social Workers are up to vote to be part of AFGE Local 2199.

The tentative time frame is as follows:

The dates are:

Those who are eligible to vote must be hired one or before Friday, February 24.

FLRA ballots will be mailed out Monday, March 18th

Ballot Replacements need to be requested on or before Thursday, March 28

Polls will close on Thursday April 4th (specific time TBD)

Vote tally will happen Friday April 5th

Pet of the Month



NANI

Dog

Location Salt Lake City

Looks like Shepherd / Black Labrador Retriever / Mixed

Estimated Birth Date December 12, 2021

Size Large

Color Black with White

Sex Female

Meet Nani, the sunshine-loving, squirrel-chasing sweetheart! This adorable pup is on a mission to find every squirrel in the neighborhood, often spending hours in the backyard playing a game of "squirrel patrol." While fetch is fun, those furry critters can be quite the distraction for this squirrel enthusiast! She's a smart cookie who knows the basics like sit, paw, and stay, though sometimes her squirrel obsession gets the best of her focus. But don't let her squirrel antics fool you - Nani is a bundle of affection and energy, always ready to shower you with bounces and wiggles galore. With a love for walks and a keen sense for treats (just mention the word and watch her zoom to her crate), Nani is ready to bring endless joy and laughter into your home!

<https://bestfriends.org/adopt/adopt-our-sanctuary/20067728/nani>



AFGE BIG WIN FOR PRIOR EMPLOYEE

Local 2199 was informed that a past employee of VHA won their wrongful termination suit against the VA. This is great news for the employee. Due to the win the person was compensated \$200,000.00.

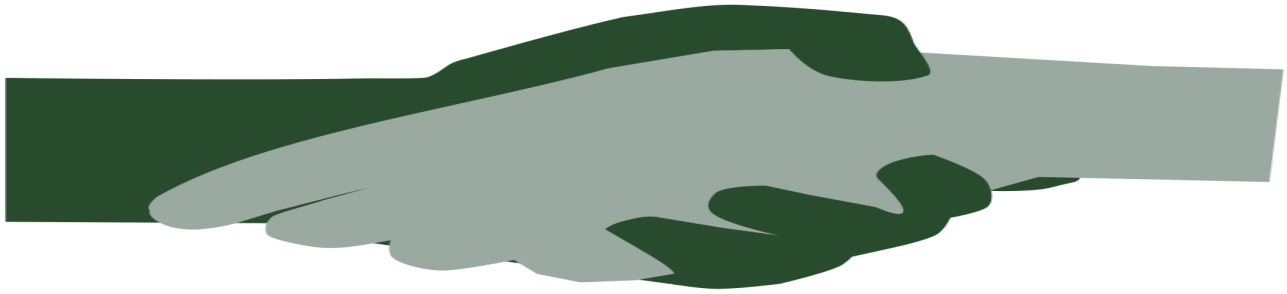


Your partnership with AFGE doesn't have to end when you retire.

AFGE Retirees are front and center in our efforts to honor and defend government employees. That means advocating for a productive, healthy, and secure retirement as well as good jobs, pay, and benefits for those who are still working.

- **Stay connected with friends through social activities and volunteer opportunities**
- **Keep informed about issues affecting retired and active government employees**
- **Take action to protect retirement security, jobs, and government employee pay**
- **Save money on a host of benefits – Retirees receive all AFGE discounts and benefits**
- **Share your skills with the next generation of union leaders and activists**

LEARN AND LEAD



BECOME A STEWARD

Transparency and Availability

Union officers are to provide more transparency and availability. What does this mean for the members? This means that if you need a rep to assist you then you will get one quickly. If you want to know what is happening in the local chapter, then we will have a monthly briefing to inform you of upcoming events. Our goal is to keep everyone informed of local events and events happening on the national level that will affect the VA and the employees.

AFGE LOCAL 2199

Union

President — Robert Johnson
Treasurer/Secretary- Lisa-Marie Manning
Executive Vice President - Jeff VanCuren
VHA Vice President - Lisa-Marie Manning
VBA Vice President -Susan Nielsen
Sergeant At Arms - Caitlinn Tanaka
Chief Steward - Robert Malone
Womens Fair Practice - Michelle Weeks
YOUNG Cord. - JoJo Begay
PRIDE Coordinator-Vacant
B.L.A.C.K.- Coordinator-Kendra Childs
APOWERS Coordinator-Caitlinn Tanaka
HISCO Coordinator- VACANT

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