

# AFGE Local 2199

## Newsletter 1/1/23

### Inside This Issue

Pet corner: if you have a pet that you would like featured please email a photo and a brief description to [jvancuren.afge@gmail.com](mailto:jvancuren.afge@gmail.com) and they will be added to the monthly newsletter. All submissions will need to be sent before the 25th of each month.

Calling all AFGE 2199 members!! We are looking for people that want to become stewards for the CBOCS and for the main campus. Leadership goal is to try to get a steward in all departments and in every CBOC. If you are interested, please contact Rob Johnson or Jeff VanCuren at (801) 582-1565 ext 1086. We are looking for self-driven individuals that have a passion to help others and to make the VA a safer, better, place to be employed.



### Upcoming Events

Coming in January we have the MLK convention in Washington DC we will be attending and will provide updates on that convention. Also in February we have LegCon in Washington DC. This gives us a chance to meet with our state and national reps to lobby on your behalf.

### Membership Meeting

Membership meetings are held every 2nd Wednesday of the month. We welcome all to attend. Team links will be provided 48 hours in advance for those that are unable to attend in person. We are also considering changing the time for the meetings to make it more available for the masses to attend. More to come!!

### Lunch & Learn

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

"As for the future, it remains unwritten.  
Anything can happen, and often we are wrong.  
The best we can do with the future is prepare  
and savor the possibilities of what can be done  
in the present."

— Todd Kashdan



## **Clarification of Inclement Weather Protocol**

**It has been brought to my attention there is confusion regarding our current inclement weather protocol and procedures. To ensure Salt Lake City is in alignment with the use of Weather & Safety Leave, authorized absence etc., I had a meeting with our VISN CHRO and Deputy CHRO to discuss the practices in VISN 19. It was communicated that SLC is the only facility that is granting W&SL on a regular and recurring basis. Common practice is that W&SL or Authorized Absence is used on a case-by-case basis for inclement weather, requiring renewed authorization for each occasion. The expectation is for staff to plan accordingly, to ensure they make it to the workplace safely.**

**Since it has been delegated for this year, I am going to keep with the spirit in which it was intended; but clarify the verbiage to state I am authorizing up to 1-hour Authorized Absence to be used for inclement weather. This should be coded as LN, with the annotation of inclement weather. This cannot be utilized in conjunction with any other leave request.**

**However, I recognize that some employees have lengthy commutes and travel conditions can deteriorate quickly, potentially jeopardizing employee safety. Therefore, if an employee's safe passage to the VAMC or CBOC is in doubt, supervisors are encouraged to be flexible when considering requests for annual leave.**

**I hope this provides the clarity that is needed for you to ensure we are meeting our mission and ensuring that we are keeping our employees safe. If you have any questions please reach out to your supervisor. Have a great day!**

Angela

Angela D. Williams, Pharm.D., M.S.

Medical Center Director

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## In 2022, Activism Wins

*December 19, 2022*

**Categories: The Insider**

From the most membership net growth in seven years to a new law granting full retirement benefits to first responders and law enforcement officers injured on the job, 2022 has been nothing short of a great year for AFGE members.

This year, our activists continued to rise to the occasion, taking advantage of new opportunities under President Biden despite the pandemic and some hostile agency officials who've resisted Biden's pro-collective bargaining directives. We fought hard on Capitol Hill, in court, and at the bargaining table. We organized like never before because we know the only way to have a real voice and power is through all of us standing together as one.

That's why we should be proud of all our accomplishments big and small – they are testaments to our fighting spirit and teamwork.

Before we take a little break to spend time with family and friends during the holidays, let's take a walk down memory lane and remind ourselves of the great work we did and what we've accomplished together this year.

Here are some highlights:

1. AFGE got its growth motor running again this year with positive months of growth, setting us up for a good 2023. We beat our monthly goal of organizing 3,500 new members a month except for January, and we also won exciting new organizing campaigns, pushing our year-end membership higher than we were in January. We ended November with 281, 661 members, compared with 281,045 in January. In October, we had the highest net growth – a gain of 677 members – since 2015.
2. An AFGE-backed bill granting full retirement benefits to first responders and law enforcement officers injured on the job passed Congress and became law.
3. Another AFGE-backed bill became law, expanding health care benefits for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits and providing funding and training for workers needed to process these new claims.
4. We defeated the VA closure commission.
5. A 4.6% pay raise for federal workers in 2023.
6. The Department of Education agreed to refund lost union dues, ditch an imposed contract, and restore payroll dues deduction, among other things.
7. We won countless cases involving discrimination, wrongful termination, or other injustices, including this case in which a Bureau of Prisons local president was awarded \$300,000 in compensatory damages.
8. At the Department of Defense, we successfully fought back attempts to delay the ending of the two-year probationary period for newly hired DoD civilians at the end of 2022, bringing DoD in line with the one-year probationary period used at most other federal agencies. Other wins at DoD are listed here.
9. AFGE mounted a large midterm program to elect pro-worker candidates and won big.
10. AFGE fought to get Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson on the Supreme Court. She was confirmed by the Senate in a historic vote.
11. AFGE members in D.C. fought hard and won. A bill expanding paid family leave for D.C. government workers is on its way to become law.
12. The Environmental Protection Agency agreed to postpone the closure of the full-service analytical Houston laboratory until 2027. It's a temporary win, but a win nonetheless!
13. Employees at the understaffed US Penitentiary Thomson and the Federal Correctional Complex Florence were given a locality pay boost, thanks to AFGE local leadership's hard work.
14. We successfully negotiated safe re-entry agreements like this and this.
15. We continued to win expanded telework programs like this and this.

We are excited for 2023 and even more wins and membership growth!



## • **AFGE Celebrates House Passage of Legislation Expanding Collective Bargaining Rights for Healthcare Workers**

• *December 19, 2022*

- AFGE is celebrating the House of Representatives bi-partisan passage of the **VA Employee Fairness Act of 2021**.
- Having advocated for decades for the Department of Veterans Affairs health care providers who have been wrongfully excluded from certain collective bargaining benefits, AFGE applauds this victory as it reaffirms our commitment to fighting for all VA employees.
  - Sponsored by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mark Takano, D-Calif., the bill expands collective bargaining rights for all employees appointed under 38 USC 7401(1), allowing them to improve the VA's ability to provide the highest standards of care for veterans by giving these workers a voice on the job.
  - For years, the VA has used its power under Section 7422 to deny certain rights to Title 38 employees, including physicians, dentists, podiatrists, chiropractors, optometrists, registered nurses, physician assistants, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries, that are available to other VA employees.
  - The bill, H.R. 1948, aims to reduce turnover, increase staff levels, and improve the care that veterans receive by repealing the provisions from 38 USC 7422 that allows the VA Secretary to determine that certain issues are not subject to collective bargaining for Title 38 workers.
  - Without the ability to grieve issues on matters of peer review, compensation, and patient care issues, clinicians cannot speak up on issues related to patient safety, and more significant matters in VA facilities often go unaddressed. Full collective bargaining rights for all VA employees would improve the recruitment and retention of qualified clinical professionals working and seeking work at the VA.

- "On behalf of the 291,000 VA employees our union represents, we thank the House members and the Biden-Harris Administration for continuing to stand with the dedicated, hardworking employees at the VA and the veterans they serve," said AFGE National VA Council President Alma Lee.
- "For decades, the VA has been losing staff to the private sector due to better bargaining rights, working conditions, salaries and benefits, and the pandemic exacerbated the issue. If enacted, this legislation will significantly improve the VA's ability to recruit and retain top talent because VA healthcare workers will have more of a voice on the job."
- "We celebrate the House passage of the "VA Employee Fairness Act" as for decades thousands of Title 38 VA employees have been unfairly deprived of the same collective bargaining rights of their colleagues simply because of their job title," said AFGE National President Everett Kelley.
- "Our union thanks House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Takano for his leadership on this bill and the House members who voted to provide a voice to these essential workers who work around the clock providing healthcare to our nation's heroes," he added. "We call on the Senate to pass this critical legislation, and if not, President Biden and VA Secretary Denis McDonough must use their authority to provide expanded collective bargaining rights through executive action, consistent with their statement of support for the bill."



## 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



### 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- Tina Dameron  
Executive Vice President - Jeff VanCuren  
VHA Vice President - Lisa-Marie Manning  
VBA Vice President -Susan (Jackie) Neilsen  
Sergeant At Arms - Caitlinn Tanaka  
Chief Steward - Robert Malone  
Fair Practice/Young Cord. - Taylor Wensel

### **AFGE Local 2199 Contact Info:**

801-582-1565 ext 1086

<https://www.afge.org>

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