

AFGE Local 2199

Newsletter 9/1/23

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Afge signs a new contract. AFGE and VA Reach Settlement Over Wrongful Terminations of VA Employees Under 2017 Firing Law. AFGE continues to welcome new leaders, Afro Festival, and T-Shirt Contest.



Upcoming Events

Local 2199 Leadership has the FLRA Attorney coming to town to provide a class on Labor Statutes and UnFair Labor Practice. Knowledge is power and we want the most knowledge we can get.

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 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.



AFGE, VA Sign New Contract

August 14, 2023

After six years of negotiations, AFGE’s National VA Council and the Department of Veterans Affairs signed a collective bargaining agreement that defends critical protections for VA workers while modernizing the hiring process.

The signing ceremony took place on Aug. 8 at the VA Medical Center in Salem, Virginia.

“We always knew the work of a union representative would never be finished. But my oh my, these last six years have shown us all what it means to never give up and keep fighting,” said NVAC President Alma Lee.

“The message is clear that when the union and management work together, we can accomplish much. Much has been accomplished here, when you look at this contract,” AFGE President Everett Kelley said. “It’s going to be better for the employees, it’s going to be better for the agency, it’s going to be better for our communities.”

Contract negotiations started in 2017, and both sides did not reach an agreement until this spring. Through years of tough negotiations and relentless anti-worker attacks, AFGE NVAC, which represents about 300,000 VA employees, remained steadfast in fighting to preserve and expand protections for VA workers. AFGE members ratified the contract in June.

“Together we listened to each other, we worked together, we focused on modernizing and improving VA’s hiring, preserving VA employee rights, fostering a positive and collaborative labor-management relationship. Now all of that is manifest in this contract,” McDonough said.

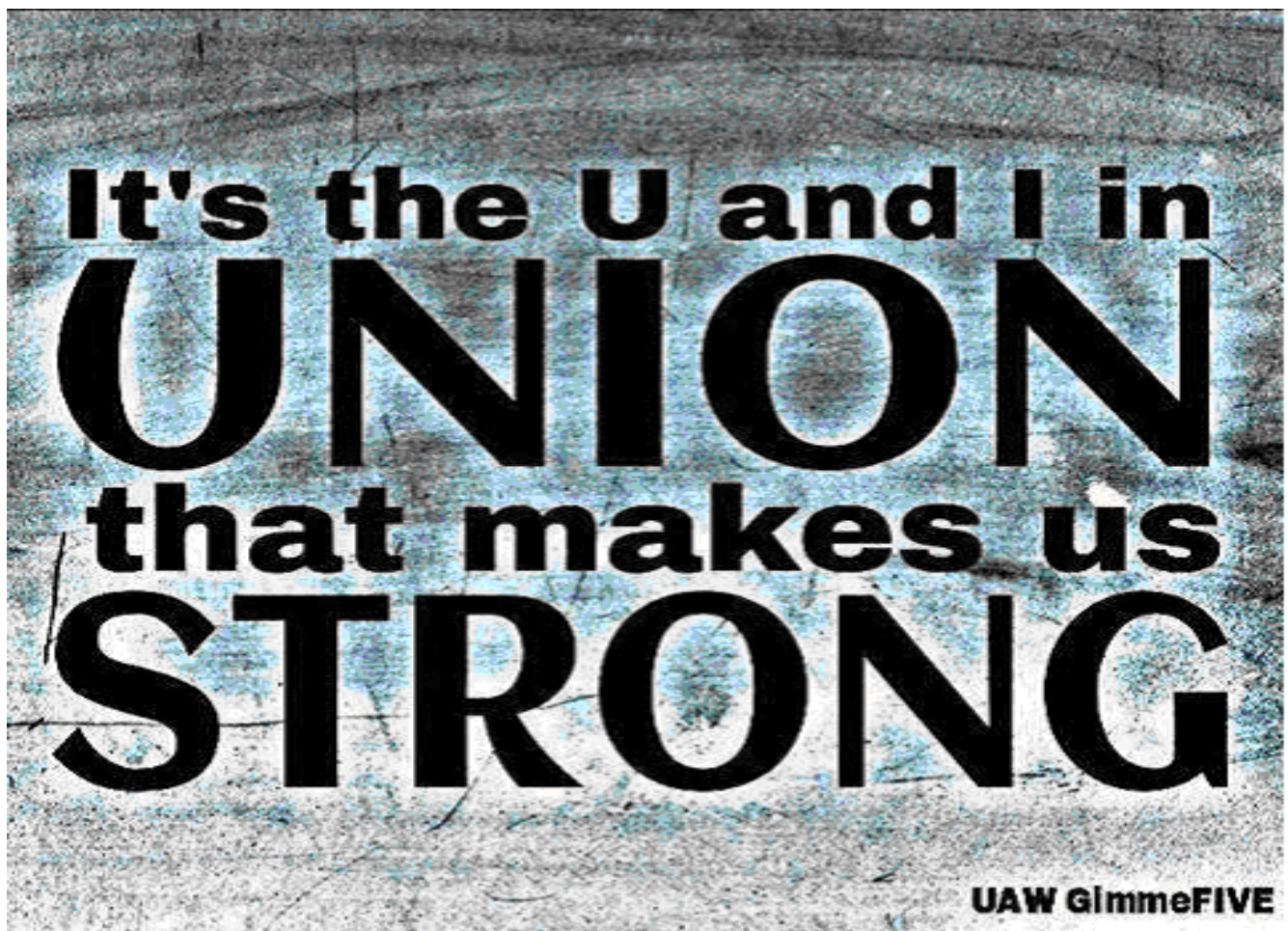
The new agreement is a remarkable milestone. It not only preserves 99% of the 2011 Master Agreement but also modernizes Article 23, specifically focusing on Title 5 Merit Promotion. The changes to Article 23 aim to enhance and streamline the promotion process, ensuring a more equitable and merit-based system for VA employees.



Only a fool would try to deprive
working men and working women of
their right to join the union of their
choice.

— *Dwight D. Eisenhower* —

AZ QUOTES





VA Montana Director Judy Hayman, pictured here at a VA meeting with U.S. Sen. Jon Tester in June 2023, was removed from her directorship, the Department of Veterans' Affairs announced July 20.

AFGE, VA Reach Settlement Over Wrongful Terminations of VA Employees Under 2017 Firing Law

August 07, 2023

AFGE and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have **reached** a settlement in which nearly 5,000 VA employees were wrongfully disciplined and terminated under the controversial firing law enacted in June 2017. The VA unilaterally implemented the law without first satisfying its bargaining obligations with AFGE, prompting findings from the Federal Labor Relations Authority and a federal arbitrator that it violated the law.

Under the terms of the settlement and depending on the facts and circumstances of an individual case, employees unjustly removed under the 2017 law have the option to return to the VA with compensation. However, those employees who engaged in what the parties defined as “grievous misconduct” are not eligible for reinstatement.

Additionally, if an employee does not wish to return to the VA, they are eligible for a lump sum payment.

The VA said it agreed to the settlement to allow both parties to move forward and continue to serve veterans without having to worry about legal challenges as a result of the 2017 law.

AFGE welcomes the news.

“This historic settlement shows what’s possible when labor and management come to the table in good faith to solve problems together,” said AFGE President Everett Kelley. “As a result of the agreement between our union and the VA, thousands of low-level veteran employees who were overcharged for minor offenses will finally get the due process and justice they deserve while hundreds of former employees who engaged in truly grievous misconduct will have their terminations upheld.”

“The AFGE National VA Council filed a national grievance almost immediately after VA implemented Section 714 demotions suspensions and removals. An NVAC attorney prevailed, and it was determined that VA illegally implemented 714, affecting about 4,500 employees,” said AFGE NVAC Third Executive Vice President Bill Wetmore. “That litigation and the subsequent mediation to determine how those illegally affected would be made whole took almost six years. This marks another victory for the NVAC in our relentless efforts to represent our bargaining unit to the best of our abilities. It also further exemplifies the great skill of our legal team under the leadership of Council President Alma Lee.”

On June 23, 2017, then President Trump signed into law the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, promising to help the VA get rid of unethical managers and help veterans get their health care faster. The act came into existence allegedly due to the wait list scandal in which managers manipulated the data to qualify for big bonuses.

But as AFGE predicted, the law has been a massive failure. Since enactment of the law, thousands of lower-level VA employees such as housekeepers, food service workers, and nursing assistants have been fired. Within its first year, more than 2,600 employees were fired – with only 5 being top officials. Instead of making the VA more efficient, it's created even more damage to this massive agency that takes care of nine million veterans every year.

The AFGE National VA Council filed multiple grievances and argued that the VA’s unilateral implementation of the law violated the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute and the union contract, which states, in part, that the VA must provide employees with a legitimate chance to

improve performance prior to initiating performance-based disciplinary action.

AFGE **won** many of these challenges, prompting the VA to stop using the 2017 law earlier this year after being ordered by judges to reinstate illegally disciplined employees.

“AFGE members are eager to put this matter to rest, move forward in a spirit of cooperation, and focus on continuing to deliver world class health care for our nation’s heroes,” Kelley added.



AFGE continues to welcome new leaders and activists to our family, and this year is no different. With more than 900 locals nationwide, our union strives to make sure new unionists have the tools and resources they need to succeed.

At our Human Rights Training Conference last week, for example, AFGE offered classes such as lobbying, equal employment opportunity, collective bargaining, diversity, equity and inclusion, racial justice, health and safety, and organizing.

One of the classes was the New Unionist Training designed especially for those new to the world of union activism and AFGE.

During the class, which was taught by the National AFGE

Y.O.U.N.G. Committee, attendees learn about the resources AFGE provides:

Broadstripes, a program that helps local unions text, email, and even call members and potential members.

AFGE's website at www.afge.org, a treasure trove of information everyone needs to check out and know how to navigate.

Virtual and in-person trainings on all kinds of topics related to being a local officer and activist. Just click on the Leaders + Activists tab on afge.org and click on Training & Education.

AFGE social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. Be sure to sign up to stay connected and show support for our union.

AFGE constituency groups: Y.O.U.N.G., PRIDE, B.L.A.C.K., A.P.O.W.E.R., HISCO, Human Rights Committee, Retirees, and Veterans. If you haven't done so, check out the AFGE Y.O.U.N.G. Podcast where we discuss real world topics and share personal experience stories from all levels of the labor movement. Check out Women and Fair Practices Departments, which host several of our constituency groups.

AFGE logos which can be downloaded and put on newsletters, emails, T-shirts, etc.

They also learned about free resources available online:

Discord – a free cloud communication app that syncs over all devices. It's like Whatsapp and Zoom combined.

Trello – a mobile friendly collaboration system that allows you to make a list of what you need to get done.

Zoom – a video conference call platform.

Teams – a communication platform that allows for instant messaging and video/calls.

Taylor Wensel, AFGE District 11 Y.O.U.N.G. coordinator who was one of the Y.O.U.N.G. members who took turns teaching the class, said a lot of the attendees are local Y.O.U.N.G. coordinators, new unionists, and unionists that want to learn more about Y.O.U.N.G.

The common questions she receives are “How do I get involved?” and “How do I get involved in Y.O.U.N.G. if I’m not young?”. She always encourages the attendees to approach their NVPs and inquire if there is a District Y.O.U.N.G. coordinator. They can also ask about the local Y.O.U.N.G. If they’re over the age of 40, they should look at the mentor position and help support the “Y.O.U.N.G.” of AFGE.

“I believe that the classes such as the New Unionist Training, Stewards Trainings, and Coordinator Bootcamp are a great base of fundamental knowledge to help our activists understand AFGE as a whole,” said Wensel. “These classes can then help the activists figure out if they want more knowledge in different areas that we help our members, such as Worker’s Comp. and EEO. The Unionist Training helps the activist understand the foundation of AFGE and helps them understand organizing, leadership roles, and Robert’s Rules – a set of rules that helps groups hold orderly meetings. The National Y.O.U.N.G. wants to provide knowledge to new unionists to help aid in their success in AFGE.”

Yadira Suero, Veterans Affairs Local 1667 secretary who attended the New Unionist Training last week, said she learned a lot from this class.

“I learned about social media and how to access different groups of AFGE. What she showed us was actually helpful, like I didn’t know there are many different parts of AFGE – branching off into different committees,” she said.

Michael Angel, a TSA officer and steward from Local 556 in Orlando, said this was his first Human Rights Training since joining TSA in October and becoming an AFGE member earlier this year.

At HRT, he enjoyed networking with people who are facing the same kinds of issues. He also enjoyed learning new things like women issues and workplace bullying.

“Our role is to help people. It’s like being a teacher, a protector. I feel like that’s very important,” he explained.

GK FOLKS
FOUNDATION

PRESENTS

Afro Utah Festival

SEPTEMBER
30TH
12PM

JAZZ, HIP HOP, REGGAE, CALYPSO, AFROBEATS, AMAPIANO, SOCA, TANGO, MERENGUE, BACHATA

Live @
Gallivan Center

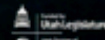
239 S MAIN ST, SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84111

Sponsored By

ZIONS BANK



GET YOUR TICKETS
FREE





T-SHIRT

AFGE Local 2199

DESIGN CONTEST

**MAKE A COOL T-SHIRT
DESIGN FOR AFGE Local
2199.**

**THE WINNER WILL RECIEVE
A FREE T-SHIRT WITH THEIR
DESIGN ON IT AND 100.00
VISA GIFT CARD .**

CONTEST RULES:

No Profanity, Hatch Act Compliant, In Good
Taste, Solid colour shirts only. Can be fron and back

**SUBMIT ENTRIES BY September
15,23 Jvancuren.afge@gmail.com .
Can upload jpgs, scanned drawings,
or text design to 801-448-9252**

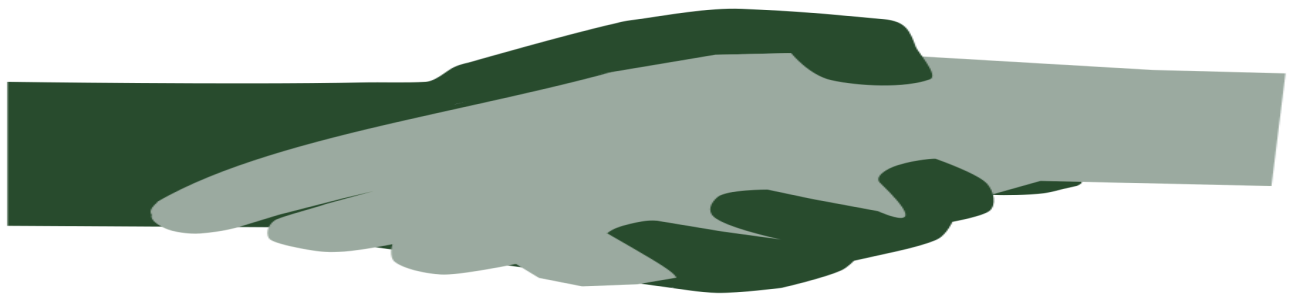


Your partnership with AFGE doesn't have to end when you retire.

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- 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
PRIDE Coordinator- Jackie Kinsey
B.L.A.C.K.- Coordinator-Kendra Childs
APOWER Coordinator-Caitlinn Tanaka
HISCO Coordinator- VACANT

AFGE Local 2199 Contact Info:

801-582-1565 ext 1086

<https://www.afge.org>

Facebook - [Local 2199](#)