

AFGE



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AFGE Local 1969 Newsletter

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

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WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

Did you know that as a bargaining unit employee, you have a right to ask for union representation if your supervisor asks you questions related to your job?

"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or termination, or affect my personal working condition, I respectfully request that my union steward be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions."

Union Prevails in Court Decision Regarding Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs)

The National VA Council (NVAC) legal team prevailed against the Department in arbitration over the Agency's illegal elimination of PIPs. As you may know, the Agency has misinterpreted and misapplied the Accountability Act by taking performance based actions against employees without first providing them with the opportunity to improve that is guaranteed by Article 27 of the Master Agreement. The NVAC filed a national grievance over this issue arguing that the Accountability Act did not supersede the protections of Article 27. The arbitrator agreed and ordered the Agency to cease and desist from taking performance based actions against employees without first providing them with the contractually mandated PIP.

As expected, the Agency has filed timely exceptions to the arbitrator's award before the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA). In contrast to a court decision, an arbitrator's award does not immediately become final and binding if an agency takes timely exceptions to the FLRA. Accordingly, the arbitrator's award has not yet become final and is not yet legally enforceable until the FLRA has a chance to review the award and make a decision. The NVAC will vigorously defend this arbitration victory at the FLRA.

In the meantime, managers who take performance based actions without providing employees with a PIP do so at their own peril. If the FLRA affirms the award, such employees will be reinstated and made whole.

AFGE will provide an update on this decision once a final decision is issued by the FLRA.

*Source: AFGE NVAC President's Briefing

Meeting Reminder

AFGE Local 1969 holds regular business meetings on the third Thursday of each month. All bargaining unit employees are welcome to join. The meetings are at 5:00 PM in VA Medical Center Auditorium. Please join us to hear the latest union updates and news and to get involved with AFGE!

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Thursday, January 17, 2019
Thursday, February 21, 2019
Thursday, March 21, 2019

You may also call in to this month's meeting using the following line: 844-358-7954, access code: 660301122 Conference ID: 660301122 (same as access code)

In the event that you would like union representation, please contact the union office:

VBA:

P: 612-970-5760

E: VAVBASPL.LOCAL1969@va.gov

O: G501 & G502

VHA:

P: 612-467-2203

E: VHAMINAFGELocal11969@va.gov

O: Room 4H-102

"Being a union member means looking out for everyone in the workplace. It is about lifting up those individuals whose voices are otherwise silenced. It is about joining together in solidarity to ensure better working conditions."

-J. David Cox, Sr.,
AFGE National
President

Steward of the Month

Each issue, we will introduce you to one of our stewards here at AFGE Local 1969 so you can get to know the people working for you! This month, we talked to VBA Chief Steward Terri Phillips.

Q: When did you start at VA and what do you do?

A: I started in April 2001 at the VAMC in Minneapolis and in December 2001 at the Pension Management Center (PMC). I am currently a Decision Review Officer (DRO) in the PMC.

Q: Why did you choose to become a steward?

A: Over the last couple of years, there were a number of changes occurring in the PMC that affected all employees. I was solicited by John Mickelson for my knowledge of adjudication. Shortly after, I was asked to be a steward. I was given the privilege of becoming Chief Steward when John retired.

Q: What is your favorite part of being a steward?

A: It is always satisfying when you are effective in helping employees. When I succeed, I am extremely pleased that Local 1969's actions show the continued need for an employee union.

All Employee Survey (AES) Communication Work Groups

AFGE recently had the opportunity to participate in the AES Focus Groups in the Veterans Service Center and will participate in Pension Management Center focus groups this week. The AES work groups set out to collect employee feedback regarding communication at the Regional Office and offer solutions for issues identified by employees. Communication was one of the areas recognized as needing improvement following review of the results of the 2018 AES.

Each focus group consisted of a small random selection of employees from each team. Ideas for improvement will be reviewed by local management and implemented over the next few months. We hope to see some positive changes come from these groups.

In support of the mission of the workgroups, AFGE is also working to improve communication between the union and employees by offering periodic updates and news. AFGE would love to hear your feedback on how communication could be improved between employees and the local. Please submit feedback to VAVBASPL.LOCAL1969@va.gov (VBA) or VHAMINAFGELocal1969@va.gov (VHA).

Fun Fact

The Nordic countries of Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway are five of the six most unionized nations in the world, according to 2012 data. A whopping 82.6 percent of Iceland's workers belong to a union.

*Source: The Chicago Tribune