



The right MLA for the right mission

By **DON MONCRIEF**
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Knock, knock!
Who's there?
Orange!

Orange who?
Orange you curious to find out if the “orange” Master Labor Agreement handbook – the one most frequently seen and referred to when there’s a need for guidance, et cetera - is the “only” MLA on Robins AFB?

Most think so, said AFGE Local 987 President Marion Williams, but the truth, he said, is there are six. The orange one, which has been negotiated with the Agency through Council 214, is for the Air Force side of the house, but: “There’s actually an MLA for the fire department. AAFES has one. The Commissary has one. NAF and DLA have one. (There is also one being negotiated for the hospital, which - along with all military hospitals - is under the Defense Health Agency; still under the AF side until that-time, Williams said.)

“A lot of them basically have the same things in them because they’re driven off of DoD instructions, but they may (depending on which it is) get more in detail (depending on the issue, concern, et cetera). For example, he said, the DLA MLA has instructions for a pandemic while the orange one does not.

What they do have in common, because he is the sitting president here, is that he acts on their behalf when their councils aren’t here. (Further demonstrated, for example, with Vice President at Large, Mike Ferguson, interacting with NAF, AAFES and DeCA with their MLA and DLA representatives interacting with DLA members with their MLA and so forth.)

Sounds logical, but you’d be surprised, Williams said. “People call up, they think that contract (the orange one) covers everybody and everything. But the first thing I do is go to the right MLA. It’s a lot to read (keep up with), but when they call me, I find out where they are and I find out the rules (of the organization).”

There. Orange you glad we cleared that up? (Groan)

Notification letter

A word from AFGE Local 987 President Marion Williams to those currently teleworking. You may receive a letter giving you a 30-day notice that the Agency is going to be “disusing telework agreements,” Williams said, adding it was mainly for those in the Building 300, 301 areas. “The majority of them are still at one day a week,” he said.

The main thing, he said, is before the call back you should be given the “30-day” notice. “If not, call the union so we can contact that particular organization to find out what’s going on.”

Local 987 is looking for volunteers to serve on any of the below committees. (Call Union Hall at 478-922-5758 for more or to sign up):

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grievance | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> Women’s |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stewards | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution | <input type="checkbox"/> Retiree | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training and Education | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Young Organizing Unionists for the Next Generation | | |

Did you know?

If you recruit a new member, you get \$50 and the new member gets \$150. Sign up on your own and you get \$200. (Note: Restrictions apply if you got out of the union; i.e. you had to have been out for at least a year.)



Membership meeting

Local 987 will have a membership meeting Jan. 18 at 5 p.m. It will be held via Zoom. Membership will be verified before you are admitted into the meeting/teleconference. To that end, you must ensure you have a current email on file or you will not receive the Zoom link. You can make updates by calling Union Hall at 478-922-5758 or by emailing Linda Baxter at linda@afgelocal987.org or Jeanette McElhaney at jmac@afgelocal987.org.

Local representatives attend District 5 conference

By **DON MONCRIEF**
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“Enlightening.”

That was one word AFGE Local 987 President Marion Williams used to describe the District 5 conference/training he along with other Local representatives - staff, stewards, DLA representatives; all of the above - attended in Nashville, Tenn., recently. (It was split into two segments, Jan. 6-11 for District 5 purposes and Jan. 11-15 for DLA purposes; some attended the 6-11, some the 11-15 and some the duration; Williams was one who attended the whole.)

By **BRANDON RESPRESS**
Trustee, Chief Steward DLA, Local YOUNG Coordinator
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The graphs at right demonstrate the process for grievances for all adverse Actions (top graph) and other matters (bottom graph).

They were part of the training hosted by DLA Council 169 this past week (as mentioned in the above article). The class instructor was Executive Vice President of Council 169 Randolph Elliot.

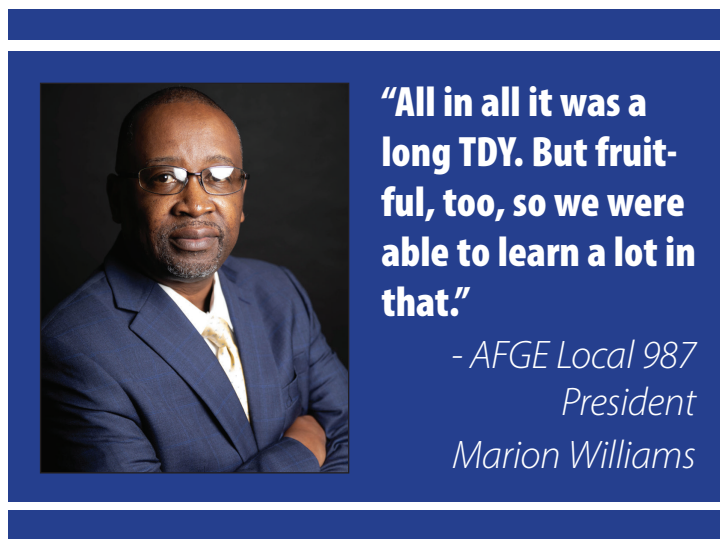
Although we did the training with Council 169, the Master Labor Agreement was decided on by a federal impasse panel, and not by our Council. We also learned that we will have this MLA for the next six years, but not to worry: If we don’t like some things listed we have the option to host mid-term bargaining halfway through the six years.

In con junction with this option, many locals are electing to locally negotiate local supplements to this MLA.

Through the training we also learned that many of the issues we are hearing our members are having with the new Master Labor Agreement are because of three appointees on the federal impasse panel who were appointed during our last administration.

As we all know as Unionist’s under the previous administration, a lot of Union rights were changed due to Executive Orders, which were then enforced.

See RESPRESS, page 6



“It was good,” he said. “The class was full. Some people who couldn’t make it, they were allowed to come in on Zoom,

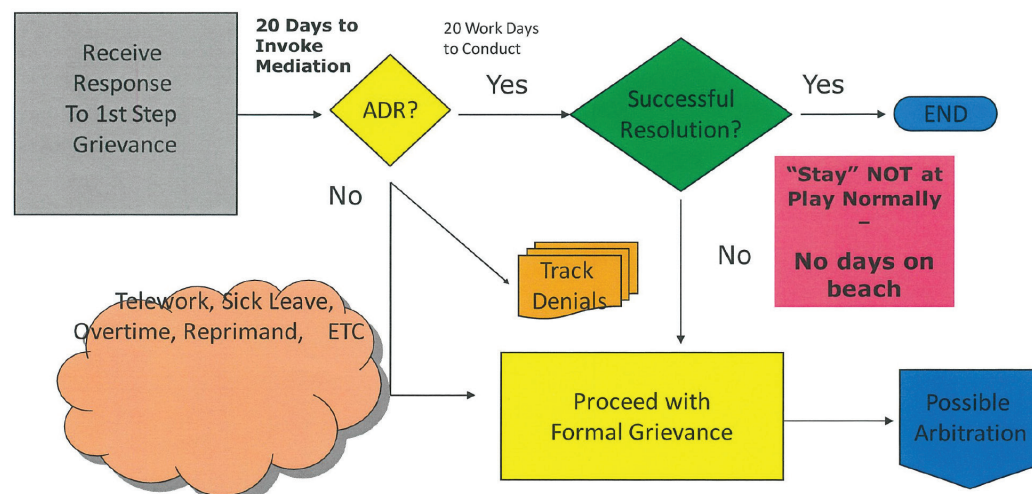
so it was nationwide training going on.”

At one/some point(s), he added: “We were able to tell some of the things we’re doing at Local 987 that helped them fight some of the issues, as well as some of the things they told us we can use here also, so it was a great class.”

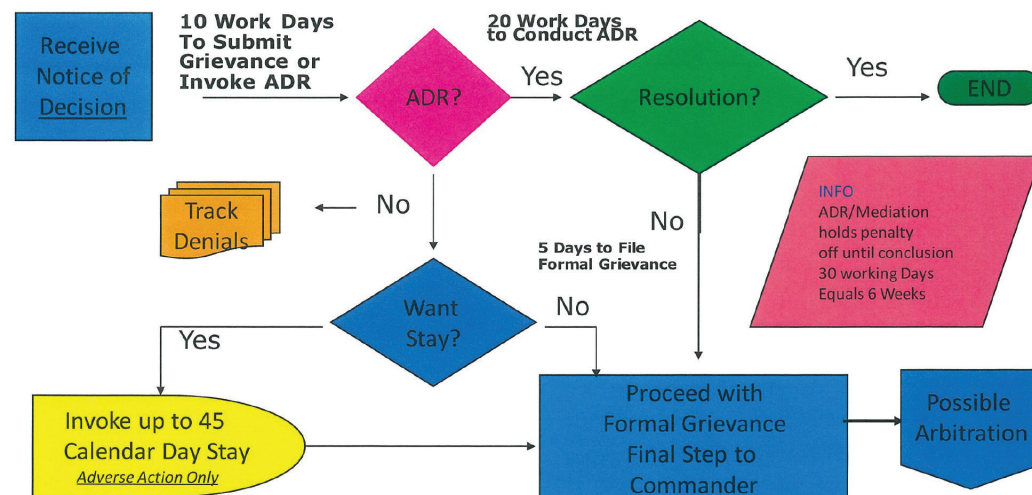
As far as some of the specific details – how things were broken down – Williams said the first day of the District 5 meeting was used to discuss the regional budget and get it approved. That was on the weekend. The week following, he said, was used for class and issues/concerns,

See CONFERENCE, page 6

Article 36/48 Grievances – Other Matters



Article 36/48 Grievances – Suspensions and All Adverse Actions



AFGE’s top legislative goals for 2023

By **AFGE Leadership**

We accomplished much in 2022 because of our hard work and perseverance, and we couldn’t have done it without our great team – dedicated AFGE members, councils, locals, districts, and staff who gave their all despite enormous challenges.

This year, we expect to reach an even higher goal of making our government a better place to work.

As we gather in Washington, DC, for our annual legislative conference in February, we will celebrate what we won together last year and strategize on what we can do to achieve even more victories this year and beyond. Because of the new makeup of Congress, we expect even more challenges, but we know that if we come together and speak with one collective voice, we can win against significant headwinds in the House trying to roll back the budget to 2022 levels intended to force massive cuts.

This year, we will be seeking reintroduction of legislation on a range of issues:

VA Employee Fairness Act, which seeks full collective bargaining rights for Title 38 employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs

TSA Workforce Act, which seeks full collective bargaining rights for Transportation Security Officers

Law Enforcement Officer Equity Act, which would improve law enforcement officers’ retirement benefits

Thin Blue Line Act, which would make killing a correctional worker, a firefighter, or other first responder an aggravating factor in death penalty determinations

Eric’s Law, which would allow prosecutors to impanel a second jury if the first jury fails to reach a unanimous sentencing decision

Chance to Compete Act, which would replace degree-based hiring with hiring based on skills and competency

DC Statehood Act, which would make Washington, DC, the 51st state

FAIR Act, which seeks an across the board pay raise for federal workers

Social Security Fairness Act, which would repeal rules that penalize public servants who receive a government pension

Equal COLA Act, which revises the formula used to calculate cost-of-living adjustments for annuities paid under the Federal Employees Retirement System to achieve parity with COLAs paid under the Civil Service Retirement System

Comprehensive Paid Leave for Federal Employees Act, which would extend 12 weeks of paid family leave to federal employees

We’re also:

Bringing VA community care access standards into line with those at VA health care facilities

Ensuring sufficient funds and hiring within the VA to meet the goals of the PACT Act, the law that expands health care benefits to 3.5 million veterans

Restoring the decade-old cuts to the Federal Employees Retirement System to retain excellence in federal service

Prioritizing hiring of federal employees in understaffed agencies, including FEMA, USCIS, SSA, EPA, BoP, and VA

With a Republican House and slim majority in the Senate, we will also be working to guard against limitations to official time, further expansion of excepted service hiring practices and other threats to the merit system, back-door efforts to close VA facilities following the elimination of the AIR Commission, and the implementation of civilian personnel caps at the DoD.

AFGE DEFCON faces a series of challenges including fighting privatization of DoD functions, further conversions of civilian positions to military positions, broad cuts to the civilian workforce, protecting civilian merit system hiring practices, and opposing further excepted service positions that don’t go through the Office of Personnel Management’s hiring rules.

402nd Software Engineering Group to host Career Fair

78th Air Base Wing
Public Affairs Office

Robins Air Force Base has employment opportunities available for those with an Engineering or Computer Science background.

To that end, there will be a Career Fair Jan. 26 from 2-6 p.m. at Project Synergy, located at 100 Park Place Drive in Warner Robins.

The Career Fair will be led by the 402nd Software Engineering Group, to connect with those seeking full time employment opportunities in the fields of Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and

Computer Engineering.

The 402nd Software Engineering Group consists of 1,400 civilians who support the Department of Defense and the U.S. Air Force by performing a multitude of tasks related to Weapon Systems, Aircraft Software, Communications, App Development, Artificial Intelligence, Radar, and Guidance Systems.

Benefits include:

- Starting salary with increases built in.
- Up to 25 percent signing bonus.
- Additional \$30,000 bonus over a three-year period (for entry-level).
- Affordable health and life insurance.
- Pension and 401K (matched up to 5 percent).
- Work 40 hours a week with overtime.
- Advanced degrees with 75 percent paid tuition (technical & non-technical degrees).

All attendees must bring their resume and transcript and be ready to partake in a short interview.

To qualify, a degree in Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, or Computer Engineering from an ABET accredited University is required.

BBB: Resist sharing an online missing child alert

You're on Facebook and you see that a friend appears to be providing information about a missing child.

Or you may be on a buy-and-sell page for your community where you see a posting for a missing pet. Instinctively you want to help, so you share the post on your own feed.

Unfortunately, your good intentions could actually be putting family and friends at risk of identity theft or fraud.

Some of these posts are fake and designed to serve as a bait and switch in order to deceive individuals into handing over their money or personal information.

If the post appears to be from a friend, it's likely their account was hacked or replicated. With the buy-and-sell pages, posts can come from individuals who appear to be from your local community but are actually in another state or another country.

You may be wondering how sharing a post can put your social media friends at risk. After you share the post, the impersonator can change their original post to any type of promotion that could draw people in, ranging from deceptive rental ads to links pointing to surveys that "guarantee" a cash prize.

Because your friends believe you are recommending it, they are more likely to fall for the promotion.

While the scheme has many variations, they all use stories that will invoke emotion or urgency that the message should be shared to help someone in need.

Some are designed as a human interest story, such as one highlighted in a USA Today story where the publication reported on a fake post about an injured dog that resulted in 250 shares.

Local buy-and-sell Facebook groups seem to serve as popular breeding grounds for these posts, likely because there is already a sense of community and trust within these crowds, and

people may not realize that scammers are targeting members.

Scammers sometimes also turn comments off on the posts so other group members can't oust them.

BBB offers these tips to avoid being scammed by a bait-and-switch Facebook ad:

- Do a bit of digging before resharing a post on your profile. Read the information carefully and look at the profile of the person who created and shared the original post.
- If the profile is from Texas but shared the post in a Georgia group, it may be a red flag of a bait-and-switch publication.
- Find out when the poster created the Facebook profile. Scammers always create profiles when their old one gets banned.
- If you click on their profile, it will tell you how long they have been a member of the group. You can also find additional information on their public profile.
- You should see it in the news. If a child goes missing or a tragedy occurs, you'll most likely see it on different news outlets or shared by law enforcement, not on a random post.
- Do a reverse image search on Google. That will allow you to find out if the pictures you saw were used on other ads or websites in different cities.
- Find similar posts. Copy and paste the text from the post into Facebook's search tool to see if other posts with the same text and different pictures show up.
- If you suspect a post is a scam, report it to Facebook.
- If this scam has targeted you, help others by filing a scam report at [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker).



Kelvin Collins

Medal of Honor spotlight

Army SFC Junior Edwards

By KATIE LANGE
DoD News

Korea was a hard place to be in winter, especially during war and over a holiday, and Army Sgt. 1st Class Junior Dean Edwards knew that.

His quick thinking and courage in early 1951 were the linchpin to his platoon holding a critical position during battle.

Edwards sacrificed his life for the cause, and his valor earned him the Medal of Honor.

Edwards was born Oct. 7, 1926, in Indianola, Iowa, to Walter and Anna Edwards. He was part of a big family that included four brothers and four sisters.

Edwards attended school but dropped out in the ninth grade to work, according to a 1951 article in the Des Moines Tribune.

He was drafted into the Army in 1945, shortly after his 18th birthday. Edwards worked as a cook and was being trained as an infantryman when World War II ended.

He was discharged in August 1946, but his family said he didn't have a lot to do when he returned home, so he reenlisted in June 1947.

"He was always laughing and joking," his sister, A.K. Moldenhauer, said in the 1951 Des Moines Tribune article. "I think he got a kick out of the Army. He wrote us a lot and always seemed to see the funny side of things."

By August 1950, Edwards was sent to Korea, where he served as a noncommissioned officer with Company E of the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry



Photo courtesy defense.gov
Army SFC Junior Edwards

Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division.

On Jan. 2, 1951, Edwards and his company were working near Changbong-ni to wipe out an enemy roadblock that had stopped the flow of supplies to South Korean troops.

Edwards' platoon had been defending a strategic hill when they were attacked by an enemy machine gun nest set up on adjacent high ground and forced from their position.

Edwards quickly ordered a counterattack.

"As the fire of the enemy still covered the area, some of the men were reluctant to move forward," Maj. Perry A. Sager, Company E's commander, said in his account of the battle.

"Edwards personally led four of the men to foxholes that were within 50 yards of the enemy position. During these trips he was fully exposed to the enemy."

Edwards then directed fire on the enemy; however, he quickly realized that it wouldn't do much since the enemy was hidden in a hole.

He also knew he couldn't use

mortar fire against them because of their proximity to friendly troops, so Edwards grabbed several grenades and single-handedly charged the hostile nest.

The enemy withdrew but quickly returned when Edwards ran out of grenades. Edwards ran back to replenish his supply, then charged forward again.

This time, he managed to land a grenade inside the hole the enemy was in, destroying its weapon and killing its crew.

However, Edwards was forced back yet again when he ran out of grenades a second time. He ran back for more as the enemy replaced its destroyed machine gun with another and resumed fire.

When Edwards had collected more grenades, he rushed the hostile emplacement a third time through a vicious hail of fire and again managed to take out the crew and its gun.

Unfortunately, the 24-year-old was seriously wounded during that run and died.

However, his courageous sacrifice gave his platoonmates time to regain their strength and take their position back. They wiped out the roadblock, which allowed the South Korean troops who had been cut off to withdraw with a minimum loss of men and equipment.

When Edwards' remains were returned to the U.S., he was buried in the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Cemetery in his hometown.

For giving his life in battle, the young sergeant received the Medal of Honor.

His father accepted it from Defense Secretary Robert A. Lovett at a Pentagon ceremony on Jan. 16, 1952. Edwards' mother, a sister and two brothers were also in attendance.

Edwards Hall at the former Fort Des Moines in Iowa and the former Camp Edwards near Kumchon, Korea, were named in his honor.

"I think he got a kick out of the Army. He wrote us a lot and always seemed to see the funny side of things."

- A. K. Moldenhauer, sister to SFC Junior Edwards

Simple steps to excellent exterior weatherization

(StatePoint) The winter season often brings strong winds and harsh weather. However, you can stop drafts and prevent damage from occurring to your home's exterior with proper weatherization.

Follow these top tips to keep your house in great shape through the winter season and beyond.

Strong Foundation: Check for any cracks or breaks in your home's foundation by doing a thorough search. Issues in this area can lead to water damage inside your home and create the means for pests to invade.

Seal up any cracks with quick-dry mortar or expanding foam filler to provide excellent protection.

Frozen Faucet Prevention: Avoid frozen pipes during those cold winter months with the Duck brand Faucet Cover.

This easy-to-install cover helps trap the heat that naturally radiates through the interior pipes to the outdoor spigot and keeps temperatures regulated.

Simply place the cover around the spout of any exterior faucet and slide tight for cold-weather winter protection.

Garage Prep: The largest entry point of the home is often the most overlooked – the garage. However, it's easy to prevent snow, water and cold gusts of air from entering with a Duck brand Garage Bottom Seal. Heavy-duty and waterproof, the rubber material won't freeze or crack and cre-



PHOTO SOURCE: (c) jacoblund /iStock via Getty Images Plus

ates a protective airtight seal all year long.

Chimney Sweep: While it's clear outside, inspect the chimney vents on your roof to clear any blockages. This step also protects against unwanted rodents or birds taking claim in the warmth of the vents.

Nervous about handling any gas-related home maintenance tasks? Make the investment and call a professional to do a simple inspection or clean-up for a safe way to keep your fireplace running smoothly.

Regardless of the age of your home, prevention and maintenance can help it withstand harsh climate shifts, humidity and general weathering, so that it remains in excellent condition for years.

New tax credits increase appeal for heat pumps

(StatePoint) More and more people are turning to heat pumps to heat and cool their homes.

It is estimated that 18 million American households already use them. With new energy incentives being offered, and more homeowners choosing greener technologies, that number is expected to rise dramatically.

What is a heat pump? Heat pumps are powered by electricity and transfer heat using refrigerant. Heat pump technology moves heat outside your home in warmer months and is able to pull heat into your home during cooler months.

Here are three reasons to consider one for your home:

1. Sustainability. Heat pumps are electric and don't burn fossil fuels like furnaces do, making them more environmentally friendly.
2. Control. Newer two-stage and variable speed heat pumps offer high- and low-stage heating to warm your space when outdoor weather changes; they operate more efficiently for longer periods of time at lower speeds and use less energy.
3. Technology. Heat pumps today are more advanced than ever and handle both heating and cooling by redistributing air. Carrier's Infinity 24 Heat Pump with Greenspeed



PHOTO SOURCE: (c) jacoblund /iStock via Getty Images Plus

Intelligence operates at temperatures down to -15 degrees Fahrenheit, making heat pumps an advanced solution for mild and colder climates.

Does your region get colder than that? Heat pumps can be combined with a gas furnace for a dual fuel system that is energy efficient and cost effective. Looking ahead, heat pumps that work in colder temperature are in development and will be available soon.

Get the right size

There are several factors that go into picking your ideal heat pump. The size of your home, climate, sun exposure, desired features and ductwork all play into the size of heat pump.

An undersized unit will work overtime to hit target temperatures. A unit that is too large will achieve the desired temperature before its cycle is complete and waste energy.

It is best to work with a professional dealer in choosing the heat pump that is best for your home.

Money-saving tips

Heat pumps, including

installation, can range anywhere from \$3,000 to \$15,000 or more. Thankfully, there are many cost-saving options for homeowners.

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 includes federal tax credits that reward homeowners for purchasing certain high-efficiency HVAC equipment, including many of Carrier's line of heat pumps. Up to \$8,000 in tax credits are available for all-electric heat pumps.

Lower energy consumption means energy bill savings, up to \$500 on energy bills every year in some cases. Look for Energy Star certification and Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio ratings. The SEER rating is like your car's mileage per gallon – the higher the number, the greater the potential for savings.

Many manufacturers and utility companies also offer rebates and low-rate financing. Beyond the basics, today's heat pumps offer new comfort-enhancing, energy-saving features that could help you reduce your heating costs.

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Please submit articles, photos, etc to don.moncrief@afge-local987.org. For questions about story content, to pass on story ideas or to request coverage, please contact the aforementioned.

IRS sets Jan. 23 as official start to tax filing season

By IRS Leadership

The Internal Revenue Service has announced Jan. 23 as the beginning of the nation's 2023 tax season when the agency will begin accepting and processing 2022 tax year returns.

More than 168 million individual tax returns are expected to be filed, with the vast majority of those coming before the April 18 tax deadline. People have three extra days to file this year due to the calendar.

With the three previous tax seasons dramatically impacted by the pandemic, the IRS has taken additional steps for 2023 to improve service for taxpayers. As part of the August passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, the IRS has hired more than 5,000 new telephone assistants and added more in-person staff to help support taxpayers.

"This filing season is the first to benefit the IRS and our nation's tax system from multi-year funding in the Inflation Reduction Act," said Acting IRS Commissioner Doug O'Donnell. "With these new additional resources, taxpayers and tax professionals will see improvements in many areas of the agency this year."

"We've trained thousands of new employees to answer phones and help people. While much work remains after several difficult years, we expect people to experience improvements this tax season. That's just the start as we work to add new long-term transformation efforts that will make things even smoother in future years. "We are very excited to begin to deliver what taxpayers want and our employees know we could do with this funding."

These steps took place as the IRS worked for months to prepare for the 2023 tax season. The Jan. 23 start date for individual tax return filers allows the IRS time to perform annual updates and readiness work that are critical to ensuring IRS systems run smoothly. This is the date IRS systems officially begin accepting tax returns.

Many software providers and tax professionals are already accepting tax returns; they will transmit those returns to the IRS when the agency begins accepting tax returns on Jan. 23.

The IRS urges people to have all the information they need before they file a tax return. Filing a complete and accurate tax return can avoid extensive processing and refund delays as well as avoid the possibility of needing to file an amended tax return. In addition, the IRS encourages people to carefully review their tax situation to make sure they don't overlook important tax credits they may be eligible for, like the Earned Income Tax Credit.

The IRS has set a special day on Jan. 27 to encourage people to make sure they understand the important benefits of the EITC, a credit that can help low- and moderate-income workers and families.

The IRS has a variety of free services available to help people. The IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs also offer free basic tax return preparation to qualified individuals.

People can also get help from trusted tax professionals, commercially available tax software as well as IRS Free File, which provides free electronic filing of tax returns.

April 18 tax filing deadline in 2023

The filing deadline to submit 2022 tax returns or an extension to file and pay tax owed is April 18 for most taxpayers. By law, Washington, D.C., holidays impact tax deadlines for everyone in the same way as federal holidays. The due date is April 18, instead of April 15, because of the weekend and the District of Columbia's Emancipation Day holiday, which falls on Monday, April 17.

Taxpayers requesting an extension will have until Monday, Oct. 16, 2023, to file.

Tips to help with the 2023 tax season

The IRS recommends several things for people to keep in mind for a smooth filing experience this year:

■ Have the right information before filing. The IRS encourages individuals to have all the information they need before

filing a complete and accurate return.

Organize and gather 2022 tax records including Social Security numbers, Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers, Adoption Taxpayer Identification Numbers and this year's Identity Protection Personal Identification Numbers valid for calendar year 2023.

Filing an accurate tax return can help taxpayers avoid delays or later IRS notices.

Sometimes this means waiting to make sure individuals have accounted for all their income and the related documents.

This is especially important for people who may receive one of the various Forms 1099 from banks or other payers reporting unemployment compensation, dividends, pension, annuity or retirement plan distributions.

People should also remember that most income is taxable, including unemployment income, interest received or money earned from the gig economy or digital assets. Individuals should make sure they report the correct amount on their tax return to avoid processing delays.

Visit IRS.gov first for questions.

The IRS reminds people to visit IRS.gov first for common questions and also to check on the status of their refunds. IRS.gov has much of the same information that IRS phone assistants have.

The IRS anticipates making significant improvements to phone service this year for taxpayers and tax professionals as more training for new phone assistants is completed in the weeks ahead. However, the IRS emphasizes it's important to note that call volumes remain at historically high levels. The IRS urges people to visit IRS.gov for the information they need.

"Our phone volumes remain at very high levels," O'Donnell said. "For faster access to information, we urge people to start with IRS.gov. From there, taxpayers can quickly access the variety of free resources available to help taxpayers anytime, day or night."

Speed up refunds

Speed refunds by filing electronically and choosing direct deposit. There are important steps people can take to help ensure their tax return and refund are processed without delays.

The most important is to file electronically with direct deposit. This is still the fastest and easiest way to file and receive a refund. To avoid delays in processing, people should avoid filing paper returns wherever possible.

To speed refunds, the IRS urges people to file electronically with direct deposit information as soon as they have everything needed to file an accurate return. Individuals can use a bank account, prepaid debit card or mobile app to use direct deposit and will need to provide routing and account numbers with their return.

IRS Free File now available

IRS Free File opened Jan. 13 when participating providers will accept completed returns and hold them until they can be filed electronically with the IRS.

Many commercial tax preparation software companies and tax professionals will also be accepting and preparing tax returns before Jan. 23 to submit the returns when the IRS systems open.

The IRS's Free File program, available only at IRS.gov, allows taxpayers who made \$73,000 or less in 2022 to file their taxes electronically for free using brand-name software provided by commercial tax filing companies.

Free File Fillable forms, a part of this effort, is available to any income level and provides free electronic forms that people fill out and file themselves also at no cost.

Issuance of most refunds

Most refunds issued in less than 21 days; EITC refunds for many available starting Feb. 28

The IRS anticipates most taxpayers will receive their refund within 21 days of when they file electronically, if they choose direct deposit and there are no issues with their tax return. Taxpayers should check Where's My Refund? on IRS.gov for their personalized refund status.

While the IRS will begin accepting returns Jan. 23, the IRS cannot issue a refund that includes the Earned Income Tax Credit or Additional Child Tax Credit before mid-February. This is due to the 2015 PATH Act law passed by Congress, which provides this additional time to help the IRS stop fraudulent refunds from being issued.

Where's My Refund? should show an updated status by Feb. 18 for most early EITC/ACTC filers. The IRS expects most EITC/ACTC related refunds to be available in taxpayer bank accounts or on debit cards by Feb. 28 if taxpayers chose direct deposit and there are no other issues with their tax return.

Where you can get help

Taxpayers can find online tools at IRS.gov that are easy-to-use and available anytime. Millions of people use them to help file and pay taxes, find information about their accounts, determine eligibility for tax credits and get answers to tax questions.

An IRS Online Account allows individuals to log in securely to access personal tax account information including balance, payments and tax records including adjusted gross income.

There are various types of tax return preparers, including enrolled agents, certified public accountants, attorneys and some who don't have a professional credential. Choosing a Tax Professional offers information to help people select one.

■ The Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications can help taxpayers find local preparers who currently hold professional credentials recognized by the IRS or who hold an Annual Filing Season Program Record of Completion.

■ The Interactive Tax Assistant provides answers to many tax law questions. For example, it can help people determine if a type of income is taxable, or if they can deduct certain expenses.

It also helps people find out if life event changes make them eligible for credits they didn't qualify for in the past and provides answers for general questions, such as determining filing status, if someone can claim dependents or if they have to file a tax return.

■ Where's My Refund? offers taxpayers the ability to check the status of their refund within 24 hours after the IRS accepts their e-filed tax return. The Where's My Refund? tool updates once every 24 hours, usually overnight.

■ MilTax is a free tax resource available for the military community, offered through the Department of Defense. It includes tax preparation and electronic filing software, personalized support from tax consultants and current information about filing taxes.

It's designed to address the realities of military life – including deployments, combat and training pay, housing and rentals and multi-state filings. Eligible taxpayers can use MilTax to electronically file a federal tax return and up to three state returns for free.

Key filing season dates

There are several important dates taxpayers should keep in mind for this year's filing season:

■ Jan. 13: IRS Free File opened

■ Jan. 17: Due date for tax year 2022 fourth quarter estimated tax payment.

■ Jan. 23: IRS begins 2023 tax season and starts accepting and processing individual 2022 tax returns.

■ Jan. 27: Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day to raise awareness of valuable tax credits available to many people – including the option to use prior-year income to qualify.

■ April 18: National due date to file a 2022 tax return or request an extension and pay tax owed due to the Emancipation Day holiday in Washington, D.C.

■ Oct. 16: Due date to file for those requesting an extension on their 2022 tax returns.

Before filing: Plan ahead

It's never too early to get ready for the tax-filing season. For more tips and resources, check out the Get Ready page on IRS.gov.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Decisions:

Outwest Express, American One agree to pay to resolve sex discrimination, retaliation charge

Outwest Express, a transportation services company, and American One Source, a professional employer organization that provides human resource services, have agreed to pay \$90,000 to voluntarily resolve a sex discrimination and retaliation charge filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency announced. Both companies are based in El Paso, Texas.

The agreement resolves a charge of discrimination filed with the EEOC alleging that a female recruiter was fired immediately after she complained that her boss treated her differently from male employees because of her sex.

The recruiter was hired by American One Source and worked at Outwest Express's Kansas City, Missouri terminal recruiting and training new truck drivers. She alleged that during her three months of employment, her boss repeatedly cursed at and ridiculed her, but that he did not treat male employees in a similarly demeaning manner. She alleged that when she complained to human resources about the treatment, she was fired the next morning.

The EEOC investigated and determined the companies' alleged conduct violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on sex and retaliation for complaining about discrimination. Outwest Express and American One Source deny the recruiter's allegations.

In addition to providing monetary relief for the recruiter, Outwest Express and American One Source will train their supervisors and employees and report to the EEOC for three years.

Circle K to pay \$8 million to resolve EEOC disability, pregnancy and retaliation charges

Circle K Stores Inc. has entered into a nationwide agreement with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to resolve disability, pregnancy and retaliation discrimination charges, the federal agency announced.

This resolution resolves multiple charges of discrimination filed against Circle K and related entities, ending an investigation in which the EEOC determined it had reasonable cause to believe Circle K denied reasonable accommodations to pregnant employees and those with disabilities, subjecting them to actions such as involuntary unpaid leave, retaliation, requiring employees be 100% healed to return to work, or terminations.

Circle K will pay \$8 million to resolve this matter, which includes a class fund to compensate aggrieved individuals and will cover impacted individuals employed at Circle K between July 10, 2009, to September 26, 2022.

In addition, the company has agreed to update its policies, as needed; appoint a coordinator to provide oversight on pregnancy-related disability policies, requests for reasonable accommodations, and maintenance of records; conduct climate surveys and exit interviews with specific attention to their accommodation process; conduct anti-discrimination training to all employees, including management; and require performance evaluation of managers include consideration of compliance with EEO laws. This settlement is in effect for four years.

Jerry's Chevrolet, Motor cars to pay \$62,500 to settle equal pay, retaliation suit

Jerry's Chevrolet Inc., and Jerry's Motor Cars Inc., leading Baltimore County auto dealerships, will pay \$62,500 and furnish other relief to settle a pay discrimination and retaliation lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency announced.

According to the EEOC's suit, a female employee worked as a dispatcher but was paid less than a male dispatcher, both performing equal work. When the female employee complained to human resources about the wage disparity, that department told her that someone would look into the matter. Instead, a week later she was fired. The company claimed that a profanity she had uttered during a break was the reason for her termination, although months earlier, a male employee who had engaged in far more offensive conduct had received only a written warning.

In addition to providing \$62,500 in monetary relief to the lower-paid female, the two-year consent decree resolving the suit enjoins the company from sex-based pay discrimination and retaliation against employees seeking equal pay in the future. Jerry's Chevrolet and Jerry's Motorcars will adopt a policy which creates channels for employees to report unequal pay and procedures for handling those complaints. The company will train its managers and supervisory employees on preventing sex-based wage discrimination arising under Title VII and the Equal Pay Act and those statutes' retaliation prohibitions, with particular emphasis on retaliation against those who request equal pay. The company will also report to the EEOC on how it handles any pay discrimination complaints.

Rural office of Community Services, Inc., to pay \$320,000 to resolve sex discrimination charge

Rural Office of Community Services Inc., a Wagner, South Dakota-based social services agency, which serves low-income families and individuals across multiple locations in South Dakota, will pay \$320,000 in monetary relief to a class of affected employees to voluntarily resolve an employment discrimination charge filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency announced.

The agreement resolves a charge filed with the EEOC alleging Rural Office of Community Services Inc. discriminated against employees because of their sex by subjecting them to sexual harassment and retaliated against certain employees who complained by terminating them. The EEOC found that the female employees were harassed by executive director. Despite complaints to management and the board of directors, the EEOC found the harassment continued over several years.

YOUNG

Young Organizing Unionists for the Next Generation

The AFGE Young Organizing Unionists for the Next Generation program seeks to mobilize young union members to become leaders and activists for social change within AFGE and the Labor Movement.

AFGE members who are under the age of 40 and those mentors that are over 40 will work together to include younger workers into the union structure and keep them engaged in what's at stake for working class Americans.

AFGE YOUNG intends to provide young members with networking opportunities and resources to engage in mobilizing other young workers into AFGE, union training to promote leadership skills, innovative social gatherings, AFGE conference meetings, and other engaging events. In doing so, AFGE YOUNG participants work to build lasting labor solidarity, advance issues of social and economic justice, and find more inclusive ways to engage the current and future generations in the Labor Movement.

For more information, or to get involved at the Local 987 level, contact Brandon Respress at brandon.respress@afgelo-cal987.org.

6 Ways to Build Lasting Healthy Habits

FAMILY FEATURES

Starting on a path toward healthy habits is often easier than maintaining them long term. This year, you can avoid a major pitfall of healthy resolutions and build healthy habits that stick by working small, positive steps into your daily life.

In fact, healthy habits are the first suggested treatment strategy for people whose blood pressure and cholesterol levels are creeping higher than normal, according to an American Heart Association scientific statement.

“The current guidelines for managing high blood pressure and cholesterol recognize that otherwise healthy individuals with mildly or moderately elevated levels of these cardiovascular risk factors should actively attempt to reduce these risks, and increasing physical activity is a great place to start,” said Bethany Barone Gibbs, Ph.D., chair of the statement writing group and chair of the department of epidemiology and biostatistics at West Virginia University School of Public Health.

These six ideas from the American Heart Association’s Healthy for Good Habit Coach can help.

Photos courtesy of Getty Images

Bust Common Habit-Building Myths

You may be surprised to learn the truth about creating and sticking to healthy habits. One myth is getting healthy means doing things you don’t like. Research shows positive emotions make habits stick, so set your intentions on something you enjoy. Another misconception is big results require big changes, which may lead to overly ambitious habits. However, the simpler the routine is, the more likely it is to become habit.

Work with Your “Brain Loops”

Your brain creates “loops” for habits made up of three things: a cue, a routine and a reward. Each time the loop is repeated, it becomes more routine and may become automatic. Knowing this, you can design cues for developing new, healthy habits, such as setting walking shoes by the bed to start a walking habit. The routine is putting on the shoes and walking around the block, and the reward is the pleasant sensations and brighter mood from a morning stroll.

Create Cues That Work for You

Most successful health habits begin with a cue. The cue can be external in your environment or internal in terms of your mindset. The more consistent the cue, the more likely it is to trigger the habit. Hacking your brain’s reminder system can help you remember your cue. Some examples of visual cues are placing a sticky note where you’ll see it often, keeping a water bottle on your desk or refrigerating fresh veggies at eye level.

Use Rewards to Make Habits Stick

Start by choosing a habit you enjoy that’s rewarding by itself. If you’re more of a dancer than runner, increase your physical activity with an upbeat dance class. You might also look for a more enjoyable version of a new habit, such as getting more fruits and veggies by sipping on a delicious smoothie.

Build a Routine That Supports Your Goals

Positive and consistent habits are important to achieve your personal goals. Small habits done consistently can add up to big results. To create a new healthy habit, think through the steps that could lead to your desired outcome. Ask yourself whether you want to do it, if it’s easy and if it’s high impact. It’s important to choose habits that make a difference and move you closer to your goals.

For example, if one of your goals is improving your heart health, a meaningful habit might be to move more. Increasing physical activity can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol along with many other health benefits, Gibbs said.

Understand Resets are Part of the Process

New habits are experiments. If they don’t stick, you haven’t failed. Instead, you’ve learned what doesn’t work, which is useful. Get curious and ask yourself which part of the habit didn’t work for you. Maybe the cue was ineffective. Maybe the steps of the routine were too ambitious and you need to split them into smaller, easier steps. If you realize you don’t enjoy the habit, stop doing it and try something else.

Find more inspiration and ideas to jumpstart healthy habits this year at heart.org/habits.

2 steps to save a life

The importance of hands-only CPR

(Family Features) More than 350,000 sudden cardiac arrests occur annually outside hospital settings. However, a hands-on emergency intervention like cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), especially if performed immediately, can double or triple a cardiac arrest victim’s chance of survival.

According to the American Heart Association, 70% of cardiac arrests - electrical malfunctions in the heart that cause an irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) and disrupt the flow of blood to the brain, lungs and other organs - occur at home, but often family and friends who witness a child, spouse, parent or friend going into cardiac arrest hesitate to perform potentially lifesaving CPR for fear of making the situation worse.

“By equipping people with Hands-Only CPR training, we are empowering them to spring into action if a loved one needs

help, as the majority of cardiac arrests occur at home,” said Dr. Anezi Uzendu, M.D., interventional cardiologist and American Heart Association volunteer.

As part of its Hands-Only CPR campaign, nationally supported by the Elevance Health Foundation, the American Heart Association aims to increase awareness about the importance of bystander CPR and offers these two simple steps:

1. Call 911.
2. Push hard and fast in the center of the chest of the individual experiencing cardiac arrest.

Using the beat of a familiar song with 100-120 beats per minute, such as “Stayin’ Alive” by the Bee Gees, can help you stay on pace with the necessary compressions.

“Being able to efficiently perform Hands-Only CPR in the moment can mean the difference

between life and death, and by following these two simple steps we can increase someone’s chance of survival from cardiac arrest,” said Shantanu Agrawal, M.D., board certified emergency medicine doctor and chief health officer at Elevance Health. “As a longstanding supporter of the American Heart Association, we remain focused on working together to improve health inequities in our communities by expanding access to training and increasing the number of people who learn and feel confident performing Hands-Only CPR to save lives.”

To find more information, watch a livestream video demonstration of Hands-Only CPR or download a first aid smartphone app, visit heart.org/CPR.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images
Source: American Heart Association

JOIN AFGE IN 4 EASY STEPS

STEP 1:

Go to www.joinafge.org

STEP 2:

Select your Agency and Local Number

STEP 3:

Fill out the one-page membership form and click “Join”

STEP 4:

If you’re a new member, select a rebate campaign and fill out the brief form (local participation may vary)

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

You ever been bad at splitting portions into thirds? I halve.

My wife has this weird OCD where she arranges the dinner plates by the year they were bought ...
It's an extremely rare dish order ...

Instruments

A J D W T C M G H O F J K W M K F S N A Y H
S U L V A R J B G M E V I O L A H M A P D Z
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ACCORDION
BASSOON
CELLO
DRUM
HARMONICA
OBOE
TROMBONE
VIOLA

BAGPIPES
BELLS
CLARINET
FLUTE
HARP
PIANO
TRUMPET
VIOLIN

BANJO
BUGLE
CYMBALLS
GUITAR
HORN
PICCOLO
TUBA
XYLOPHONE

A little humor ...

“Have you got any kittens going cheap?” asked a customer in a pet shop.
“No, sir,” replied the owner. “All our kittens go, ‘Meow.’”

“Look over there!” said the frightened skunk to his pal. “There’s a human with a gun, and he’s getting closer and closer! What are we going to do?”

The second skunk bowed his head and calmly replied, “Let us spray.”

Two goats wandered into the junkyard and had a field day. One of them spent a particularly long time bent over a reel of film. When he was finished, the other goat came over.
“So, did you enjoy the film?” The goat replied, “To

STATEPOINT
CROSSWORD

THEME: THE GRAMMYS

ACROSS

1. Spencer of Hollywood's Golden Age

6. Eyeball, e.g.

9. “Tosca” song, e.g.

13. Theater passage

14. Bovine call

15. “___ came a spider...”

16. *Univision's _____ Grammy Awards

17. Barley bristle

18. Turning token taker

19. *President with a Grammy

21. Diabolical

23. Sold at the pump

24. Russian monarch

25. Back of a boat

28. **“Shallow,” 2018 recipient from “A ___ Is Born” movie

30. *Camila Cabello and Ed Sheeran's nominated song

35. College dwelling

37. Footnote note

39. Shade of violet

40. Huron's neighbor

41. Head of the abbey

43. Done in a pot

44. City in Bolivia

46. Not manual

47. Mend, healthwise

48. Eye cover

50. Egghead

52. Four quarters

53. Dog in yoga

55. Triple _____

57. *____.com Arena

60. **“Vegas” and “Woman” nominee (2 words)

64. Unit of electrical energy

65. Hoover's agency, acr.

67. Discompose

68. Shade of yellow

69. I in T.G.I.F.

70. Small, olive-gray bird

71. “Cheers” regular

72. Inquire

73. Open up

DOWN

1. Bath powder

2. Iranian coin

3. ____ Spumante

4. Be needy

5. Gossipy ones

6. Arabian Peninsula country

7. Column's counterpart

8. Holiday surprise for employee

9. Palo ____, CA

10. Agitate

11. Inwardly

12. *1970 two-time winner “The ____ of Aquarius”

15. Hindu retreat

20. Ancient Rome's neighbor

22. Nail a criminal

24. Popular newspaper name

25. **“30” performer

26. Pillage

27. Beef ____, dim sum choice

29. **“Don't Shut Me Down” group

31. Alan Alda's classic TV show

32. Type of hawk

33. Type of flu

34. Multi-colored dog coat

36. One of three square ones

38. Shower with affection

42. Human trunk

45. Sliding fastener

49. Part of “I”

51. Past-life experience? (2 words)

54. Capital of Bulgaria

56. Airbnb option

57. Chanel of fashion

58. German industrial valley

59. Big Bang's original matter

60. Disc, alt. sp.

61. Popular dieter's foe

62. Between ports

63. Chris Hemsworth's superhero

64. *Award-winning Bon Jovi's lead singer

66. *Coldplay's collaborators

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8		9	10	11	12
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71						72				73			

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R	A	B	N	U		K	S	A				M	R	O	N
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“What the hell is that on your collar?!”

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“Sustained. Counsel, is this favorite dinosaur thing going somewhere?”

tell you the truth, I liked the book better.”

One day a chicken went to a library and said, “Book, book, book.”

The librarian gave the chicken three books, and the chicken went on its way.

The next day the same chicken came into the library and said, “Book, book, book.”

So the librarian gave the

chicken three books again, but this time she became suspicious of where the chicken was taking the books, so she decided to follow the chicken.

After awhile, the chicken came to a swamp and stopped beside a frog. The chicken gave the three books to the frog, and the frog said, “Read it! Read it! Read it!”

What did the snail say when he hitched a ride on the turtle? “Wheeeee!”

covered it was raining hard.

“Shall we walk?” said one flea. “No,” said the other. “Let’s take a dog.”

Why are frogs so happy? They eat whatever bugs them.

What does a bankrupt frog say? “Baroke, baroke, baroke.”

Did you hear about the skunk that went to church? He had his own pew.

What animal has more lives than a cat? A frog, because he croaks every night.

A chicken walks into a restaurant. The hostess says, “We don’t serve poultry!” The chicken says, “That’s okay; I just want a soda.”

STR8TS

No. 624

Tough

			5				
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6		9					2
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You can find more help and strategies at www.str8ts.com along with more puzzles, Apple apps and books.

Previous solution - Medium

		2	3	8		6	7
4	2	3	7	1	6	5	8
2	1	4	6	5	7		9
3			5	4		7	6
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7	4	5		2	3		6
8	7		2	3	1	9	4
9	5	8	1	6	4	2	3
	6	7			2	3	5

How to beat **Str8ts** – Like Sudoku, no single number can repeat in any row or column. But... rows and columns are divided by black squares into **compartments**. These need to be filled in with numbers that complete a ‘straight’. A **straight** is a set of numbers with no gaps but can be in any order, eg [4,2,3,5]. Clues in black cells remove that number as an option in that row and column, and are not part of any straight. Glance at the solution to see how ‘straights’ are formed.

CONFERENCE

From page 1

et cetera, affecting locals.

“It was very intuitive,” he said. “What we found out is we, our Local is so ... I don’t want to say advanced ... but the things we were doing are already outside the scope of what they were teaching in the class.”

With a caveat, he added: “But they were dealing with smaller locals. I think the one closest to us had 600 members, something like that, and we’re well over 3,000.

“(But), there were aspects they were trying to teach on how to get started that made sense to us. But one thing she did say was the bigger you are, the busier you are. So a lot of times if you’re busy putting out fires daily, you don’t have time to project these goals out.

“So we were able to sit down and work out some things we’re going to work on this year.”

The DLA block, he continued, focused on “Train the Trainer” – the actual name of the course. (See more in Brandon Respress’s article below.) It, Williams said, went over the DLA’s Master Labor Agreement and they “high-lighted certain aspects of it that were good for the employee and some that weren’t,” Williams said. “But the main goal they wanted to put out was that during negotiations they never came to an amicable agreement. They couldn’t agree on anything, the Agency or the Council (169).

“And this wasn’t negotiated by Local 987. We had nothing to do with this particular contract. It was negotiated by Council 169. Some employees at Robins are kind of upset about some of the things in there and they think that we had something to do with it, but we had nothing to do with that particular MLA. We offered to help. They declined our assistance.”

Williams continued that

because the Agency and Council “constantly butted heads and couldn’t agree on it, there was no agreement on any particular article (he said there were 52 articles total),” that it was then labeled an “impasse” and sent to the FLRA for a decision.

“And their attorneys look at it and determine if they’ll accept the Agency’s proposal or the Union’s. Well, during that timeframe, that was when Donald Trump was in and they were given direct orders to support the Agency.

“So everything in that contract (also extended from the normal three years to six, he said) was given to the Agency. Whatever they wanted, they got. The Union lost all their proposals basically. So their contract was basically rigged by the FLRA. Not the Council. They had no real input. They didn’t accept any of their ideas. They took all the Agency’s ideas and put them into affect.

“Some of them,” he added, inadvertently I think helped the employees while the majority I think was not so good for them.”

He also added that he thought DLA was trying to fight “some of that” based upon what he said he believed was an Executive Order from President Joe Biden that if it “wasn’t done fairly, to go back to the table and redo it. So, I’m not sure where that’s at. That wasn’t discussed (at the training). They just wanted to go over the high points in the contract.”

So, those were some parts of the training that stood out for him, he said. One more was having a chance for them to talk to a MSPB judge. It was an online question and answer session – informative/instructive at the least – that also resulted in him being able to set up a future training session for the Local here.

“All in all it was a long TDY,” he summed. “But fruitful, too, so we were able to learn a lot in that.”

RESPRESS

From page 1

However, elections can have consequences. We now have many of our rights back as Unionist’s under the current administration.

We encourage all of our members to know their MLA’s for themselves. We also

encourage all of members to contact us at the Union Hall at 478-922-5758 if there is any help needed understanding anything in the new MLA.

Also, we host monthly Union meetings every third Thursday at 5 p.m. via Zoom and in person at our Union Hall at 1764 Watson Blvd. We would encourage you to attend one of these available formats.



36 Reasons Why You Should Thank A Union



1. Weekends without work
2. All breaks at work, including your lunch break
3. Paid vacation
4. Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
5. Sick Leave
6. Social Security
7. Minimum Wage
8. Civil Rights Act/Title VII – prohibits employer discrimination
9. 8-hour workday
10. Overtime pay
11. Child labor laws
12. Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA)
13. 40-hour workweek
14. Workers’ compensation (workers’ comp)
15. Unemployment insurance
16. Pensions
17. Workplace safety standards and regulations
18. Employer health care insurance
19. Collective bargaining rights for employees
20. Wrongful termination laws
21. Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA)

22. Whistleblower protection laws
23. Employee Polygraph Protection Act (EPPA) – prohibits employers from using a lie detector test on an employee
24. Veteran’s Employment and Training Services (VETS)
25. Compensation increases and evaluations (i.e. raises)
26. Sexual harassment laws
27. Americans With Disabilities (ADA)
28. Holiday pay
29. Employer dental, life, and vision insurance
30. Privacy rights
31. Pregnancy and parental leave
32. Military leave
33. Right to Informational Picket
- Note: Government employees are not permitted to strike.
34. Public education for children
35. Equal Pay Acts of 1963 & 2011 – requires employers to pay men and women equally for the same amount of work
36. Laws ending sweatshops in the United States



Your Union Insurance Benefits



Life: Permanent, Portable, Cash Value, Living Benefits. A Much Better Plan than FEGLI.



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Aflac Hospital Indemnity: Pays Benefits for on and off-the-job accidents and sickness/surgery/maternity.



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*Max Benefit of \$6,000 per month.

Nick Wells

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ENROLL



MORE INFO

