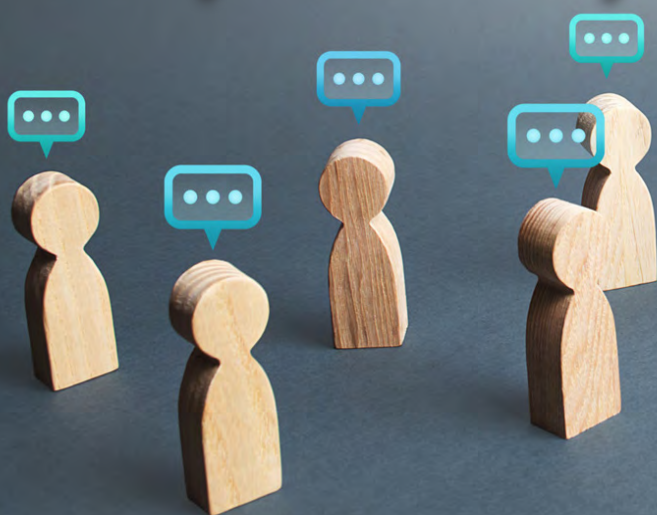


## 2025 Public Service Viewpoint Survey



## Make your voice heard

By AFGE Leadership

With the Trump administration deciding not to conduct a Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey this year, AFGE is partnering with the Partnership for Public Service to ensure federal employees can still share their workplace experiences during this critical time for the civil service.

The Public Service Viewpoint Survey takes less than 8 minutes to complete. The Partnership for Public Service – the nonprofit,

nonpartisan organization behind the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings for the past two decades – will aggregate data from the survey to understand how current management practices are affecting the federal workforce.

All responses are confidential. The deadline to complete the survey is 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on Dec. 19.

The link can be found at: <https://surveys.our-publicservice.org/s3/PSVS-UA>.

## Local to provide assistance to members in need

By **DON MONCRIEF**  
Editor, The Union Advocate  
[don.moncrief@afgelocal987.org](mailto:don.moncrief@afgelocal987.org)

AFGE Local 987 will be providing gift cards to those union members who were furloughed during the recent shutdown. It will take place this Saturday, Nov. 22, at Union Hall located on 1764 Watson Blvd., and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Those affected must show proof they were furloughed, i.e. your LES.

In addition, there will be other organizations on hand to provide food baskets and other information. They include: Benefit Architect, Black Voters Matter, the Middle Georgia Central Labor Council and the

Georgia AFL-CIO.

Also, no sponsorship is implied or real, but if you're looking for a Thanksgiving meal to feed 10 people for just over \$40, the local Aldi's off Watson Blvd., is the place to go. Their Thanksgiving list, according to a number of reports, is advertised to provide enough ingredients to make the following dishes: a 14 lb. turkey, rolls, cranberry sauce, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and gravy, sweet potato casserole, green bean casserole, stuffing and pumpkin pie.

The list, with the offer to be available from now until Dec. 24, includes: Whole turkey (\$11.17), chicken broth (\$0.99), condensed cream of mushroom soup (\$0.70), evaporated milk (\$0.95), Hawaiian sweet

rolls, 12 count (\$1.99), miniature marshmallows (\$0.95), cut green beans (x2) (\$0.50 each), 100% pure canned pumpkin (\$1.09), shells and cheese (x2) (\$1.19 each), brown gravy mix (x3) (\$0.29 each), poultry seasoning (\$1.19), rosemary leaves (\$1.19), thyme leaves (\$1.19), ground sage (\$1.19), French fried onions (\$1.79), pie crust (\$1.95), chicken or cornbread stuffing (x2) (\$0.79 each), whipped dairy topping (\$2.19), yellow onions (3 lbs.) (\$1.65), baby peeled carrots (\$0.89), celery (\$0.95 each), cranberries (\$0.99), sweet potatoes (3 lbs.) (\$1.95) and russet potatoes (10 lbs.) (\$3.25), for a total cost estimated at \$44.04, should be exempt from sales tax.



**This Thanksgiving we pause to give thanks for the qualities that make our members stand out as rare and special in this challenging world we live in today. Attributes such as honesty, integrity, hard work and dedication, loyalty, endurance and kindness, just to mention a few.**

**Thank you! We are so proud to be your brothers and sisters!**

**- AFGE Local 987**

## Buy. Sell. Swap.

For members only.

If you've been looking to sell something - or a number of items - or swap for something in particular, AFGE Local 987 is here to help. You can advertise those items and/or what you are searching for in The Union Advocate. Email the particulars to [theunionadvocate@gmail.com](mailto:theunionadvocate@gmail.com). (Membership will be validated upon receipt.)

## AFGE E-Dues

The need has never been greater! Sign up for E-Dues or direct dues. Visit [Join.afge.org](http://Join.afge.org) or [Join.afge.org/L0987](http://Join.afge.org/L0987) or [local987.com](http://local987.com) to sign up today!



## Membership meeting

Local 987 will have a membership meeting Dec. 18 at 5 p.m. It will be held at Union Hall, located at 1764 Watson Blvd.

Membership will be verified. You can make updates to your contact information by calling Union Hall at 478-922-5758 or by emailing Linda Baxter at [linda@afgelocal987.org](mailto:linda@afgelocal987.org) or Jeanette McElhaney at [jmac@afgelocal987.org](mailto:jmac@afgelocal987.org).

## AUTO

### Special Series - #5

#### Hertz vans and trucks discount

As part of this benefit, Hertz Vans & Trucks rental features include:

- ♥ Up to 25% discount every day
- ♥ Nationwide availability
- ♥ Convenient locations
- ♥ Flexible hours
- ♥ Variety of vehicle sizes
- ♥ Easy-to-drive vehicles
- ♥ Dedicated on-site support

Restrictions:

Discount applies to pay later base rate. Taxes and fees excluded. Terms apply.

#### AFGE's Farmer's auto and home insurance policies

Farmers GroupSelect provides you with access to customizable insurance coverage for your needs and budget.

- ♥ Policies available include:
  - ♥ Auto
  - ♥ Homeowners
  - ♥ Condo / Renter's
  - ♥ Boat
  - ♥ Recreational vehicle
  - ♥ Landlord's rental dwell-



**Toll-free Benefits Line:**  
**(888) 844-2343**

**Email: [Questions@afge.org](mailto:Questions@afge.org)**  
**Programs are subject to change.**

ing

- ♥ Personal excess liability protection
- ♥ and more!

#### Member Benefits Include:

- ♥ Special group discounts not available to the general public
- ♥ Apply anytime throughout the year
- ♥ Free, no-obligation quotes
- ♥ 24/7 claim service
- ♥ Extended customer service hours
- ♥ Value-added services that are included at no cost like, ID Protection Services1

#### Enjoy Convenient Payment Options:

You can choose to have your payments automatically deducted from your paychecks or bank account. With these options, insurance premiums are spread throughout the policy term with no down payments, interest charges, or service fees. Other payment options are available.

#### Auto buying program

Note: Access to this auto-buying program is provided through Union Plus

for AFGE members. AFGE receives a marketing fee providing information about the program, but AFGE does not sponsor or endorse, or set the terms of, any specific product; nor does AFGE make any guarantees, promises, or warranties, with respect to any products offered under the program or as to any individual's eligibility for such products.

Members get upfront pricing and a stress-free car buying experience with the Union Plus Auto Buying Service powered by TrueCar. Whether it's new, or just new to you, we'll help you find the perfect car for your family.

**Details about this benefit:**

#### Research & compare.

Access helpful tools to navigate through the car buying process and find the vehicle that's right for you. Research top brands, compare features, read reviews, find deals and more.

**New cars.** Get discounted member price offers online that include incentives and fees.

**Used cars.** Access over 600,000 pre-owned vehicles & connect with local or online dealers.

**Post-sale benefits.** Up to \$2,000 in post-sale benefits, plus, a \$100 rebate\* for union-made vehicles.

**See BENEFITS, page 3**





iStock via Getty Images

# What to know during respiratory virus season

(StatePoint) As temperatures drop and people spend more time indoors, the flu and other respiratory viruses can spread easily. Fortunately, you can take precautions to protect yourself, your family and your community.

The American Medical Association recommends that all eligible Americans -- everyone 6 months and older (with rare exceptions) -- get vaccinated against flu as soon as possible. While the timing, intensity and severity of each flu season is difficult to predict, vaccination is always the best way to reduce your risk of severe illness from flu -- and the best way to protect your loved ones and community by slowing its spread.

Flu vaccination also reduces missed days of work and school, prevents added medical costs, and has even been associated with lower rates of cardiac events among people with heart disease.

Based on preliminary data, the CDC estimates that getting vaccinated against flu reduced the risk of hospitalization due to flu by about 40% in adults and 50-60% in children during last year's flu season. However, fewer than half of all people nationwide received a flu vaccine last season.

"Last year's flu season was one of the worst in the United States in 15 years, and the statistics speak volumes. The low vaccination numbers resulted in more than 620,000 hospitalizations and 27,000 deaths related to flu illness," said AMA president, Bobby Mukkamala, M.D. "We cannot afford to repeat this pattern. We strongly urge everyone who is eligible to get a flu vaccine as soon as possible, ideally before illness begins spreading widely."

In addition to flu, other respiratory viruses with potentially serious complications are expected to

circulate again this year, including respiratory syncytial virus and SARS-CoV-2.

The AMA encourages all adults age 75 and older to get vaccinated against RSV, as well as adults ages 50-74 with certain medical conditions who are at increased risk for severe RSV. The RSV vaccine is not an annual vaccine, so those who have already received it do not need another dose.

Families should also familiarize themselves with the options to protect infants during RSV season, including vaccination during pregnancy or an RSV monoclonal antibody for infants and young children. Most infants will not need both options.

Anyone 6 months and older who wants a COVID-19 vaccine should be able to get one. Certain populations are at increased risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19, including adults age 65 and older, those with underlying medical conditions, patients who are pregnant, and children 6 to 23 months of age.

The AMA encourages you to speak with your physician or other health care professional to determine which vaccines are best for you, and to call your doctor or pharmacy to make an appointment for flu and other shots. AMA recently launched infographics to help patients and physicians cut through vaccine confusion and have open, honest conversations with each other. The infographics can be found at <https://ama-assn.org>.

Additional health precautions, such as covering coughs and sneezes, frequently washing your hands, improving indoor air quality, and staying home when you're sick, can also help reduce the spread of viruses. This respiratory virus season, take these steps and get up to date on vaccinations to stay healthy and protect those around you.

# Helping patients who don't respond to common bladder cancer treatment

(StatePoint) The bladder cancer treatment landscape is rapidly evolving, particularly for patients who don't respond to bacillus Calmette-Guérin, the most common intravesical immunotherapy for early-stage bladder cancer.

However, as options expand, clinicians face added complexity in individualizing treatment paths, and in knowing what's working. Fortunately, during evaluation and follow-up, they can lean on various enhanced diagnostic technologies, including approaches such as Blue Light Cystoscopy, to support timely adjustments in treatment.

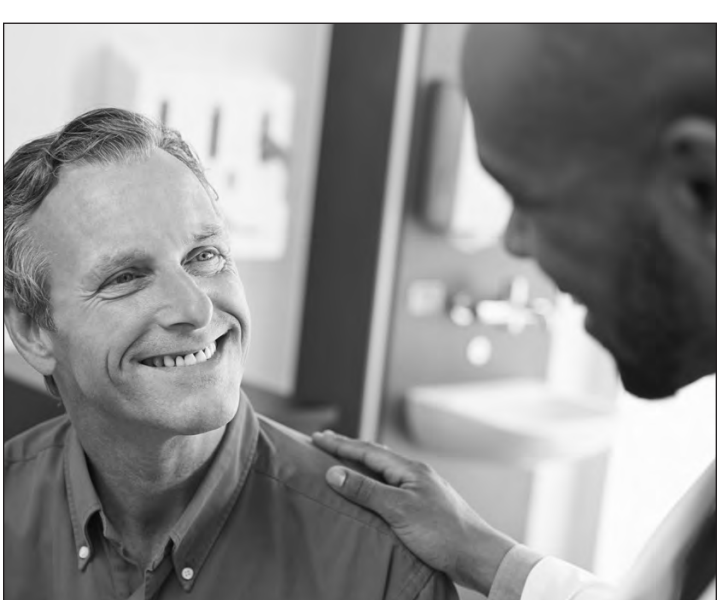
## Bladder-Sparing Therapies

Bladder-sparing therapies are offering new treatment avenues, potentially delaying or avoiding cystectomy for some patients. These therapies are aimed at managing the cancer while preventing the need to remove the bladder. Therapies include liquid treatments put directly into the bladder, such as immunotherapy and chemotherapy, biologic agents and gene-based therapies, and devices that support or optimize drug delivery to the bladder lining.

Often considered after BCG fails or in patients for whom cystectomy may not be the best choice, most regimens include a series of treatments over time, along with regular cystoscopic evaluations.

## Treatment Sequencing

Multidisciplinary teams, which could include urologists, medical oncologists, pathologists and oncology nurses, may be involved in planning and monitoring a patient's treatment. Treatment sequencing typically involves starting with one therapy, then switching therapies if clear evidence suggests a limited response to the treatment. The medical team will assess tumor characteristics, prior treatments,



iStock via Getty Images

and factors such as the patient's logistics and goals, to determine the best next step.

**The Role of Diagnostics**

Evaluating treatment response in non-muscle invasive bladder cancer often relies on cystoscopic findings that may be subtle or difficult to interpret. BLC however, is an enhanced visualization technique that uses an optical imaging agent and a combination of white and blue light to highlight abnormal bladder tissue, supporting clinicians in assessing the bladder lining and providing insight into treatment effectiveness.

Although this diagnostic method does not treat or prevent disease, it does offer numerous benefits. It can define the borders of lesions during transurethral resection of bladder tumors and support visualization during routine surveillance cystoscopies. And because it can be used to evaluate whether BCG or subsequent therapies are achieving their intended responses, it can enable doctors to quickly decide whether they should continue treatment as-is, make adjustments, or move to other therapies.

Additionally, BLC helps document baseline disease features prior to starting therapy, may improve visual assessment of tissue changes over time, and aids in guiding tissue sampling, ensuring all visible tumors are identified and removed during procedures like TURBT.

With enhanced visualization, patients and their care teams can have more informed discussions about results and next steps.

**Patient Conversations**

Patients seeking productive discussions with their healthcare team can start by asking the following questions:

- How quickly can decisions be made to adjust therapies if BCG doesn't work, and what treatments might be appropriate?
- How do you evaluate whether a therapy is doing what it should?
- Would enhanced imaging be helpful?
- What's the plan if this approach doesn't show the desired results?

Information about locations that offer BLC can be found by visiting <https://rebrand.ly/BLClocations>.

# Tips to outsmart porch pirates, delivery scams

The holidays are fast approaching, and with that comes spikes in reports to BBB Scam Tracker regarding delivery-related scams and "porch pirates" -- thieves who brazenly steal delivered items right off your front step or porch.

Con artists are aware that many people anticipate package deliveries during this season, making them less likely to question messages about delivery issues.

Additionally, thieves recognize that more packages will be left unattended on home porches and steps. These scenarios make people more vulnerable to package and delivery scams during the holiday season.

Fortunately, your BBB has several tips to help you identify and avoid delivery-related issues so you can focus on enjoying the holidays with family and friends:

**Watch for phishing texts or emails claiming to be from delivery companies.** It can be hard to tell a valid delivery text from a bogus one, but there are common red flags to watch for. The bogus messages usually claim that the shipper is having difficulty delivering a package or needs an update to your delivery preferences. In either case, a "tracking link" is included, and that's where the issues come in.

By clicking on a link in a message from an unknown or unexpected sender, you could be taken to a form that's designed to gain personal information and steal your identity. A link could also lead you to a site that downloads malware onto your computer or phone without you detecting it. This could include a virus or even spyware that allows scammers to gather your keystrokes.

As you log into your accounts, including your bank accounts, they could be tracking your login information.

**Beware of fake "missed delivery" tags or similar calls.** With these scams, someone places a note on your door that claims they're having challenges delivering a package to you. They ask you to call a phone number or visit a website to reschedule your delivery, but it's actually another trick to deceive you into sharing your personal information.

In similar cases, you might receive a phone call from someone claiming to be with a legitimate



Kelvin Collins

delivery company. Your caller ID could even show that they're calling from a well-known delivery business - but a delivery company will rarely call you.

Caller ID spoofing apps are readily available and often used by scammers to change their info and trick you into believing you're being contacted by a trustworthy company.

You can take several precautions to ensure safe delivery of your orders and gifts:

- Always get delivery tracking numbers and check the shipping progress periodically. If you've ordered gifts that will be delivered to your home or directly to family and friends, be sure you always get delivery tracking numbers and check the shipping progress periodically. You only want to check by using what you've confirmed is a valid website for the shipper that is providing delivery.
- As noted above, another issue shoppers face is package theft. According to a Security.org study, package thieves stole more than \$18 billion in merchandise over the last year.
- Many consumers have had their packages stolen before they arrive home from work. Thieves also snatch packages from doorsteps or lobbies of apartment or condo complexes. Criminals even follow delivery and postal trucks. As soon as a truck leaves, the crooks move in and grab the parcels.
- To help minimize the chance of having your packages hijacked, consider taking one or more of the following steps:
  - Don't leave unattended packages. When possible, do not leave delivered packages unattended for long periods. If you are expecting a package, attempt to schedule its delivery when you know you will be home. Ask trusted neighbors to pick up and hold a package(s) for you, especially if you plan to be gone for an extended time. Also consider having the package delivered to your workplace or directly to the address of a trusted friend who you know will be home.
  - Sign up for notification services:

See TIPS, page 3

# Medal of Honor spotlight

## Marine Corps Sgt. Robert 'Malley

By KATIE LANGE  
DoD News

Marine Corps Sgt. Robert Emmett O'Malley embodied the Marine ethos of honor, courage and commitment. During heavy fighting in the Vietnam War in 1965, he was more concerned about saving the lives of those around him than his own. His actions led him to become the service's first Vietnam War Medal of Honor recipient.

O'Malley was born June 3, 1943, in Woodside, a neighborhood in Queens, New York, to parents who emigrated from Ireland about 15 years prior. He had a sister and three brothers who also served in the Marine Corps.

When he was about 13, O'Malley took a job as a paperboy for the Long Island Star Journal newspaper. He continued to work there until after he graduated high school in 1961. That fall, he joined the Marine Corps.

After boot camp, O'Malley was initially stationed at Camp Pendleton, California, with the



Photo courtesy defense.gov

Marine Corps Sgt. Robert O'Malley

1st Marine Division. About two years later, he deployed to Okinawa, Japan, with the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines, 3rd Marine Division. By November 1963, he worked his way up to the rank of corporal.

O'Malley returned to Camp Pendleton and the 1st Marine Division in 1964. But by 1965, he deployed again, this time to Vietnam as the build-up of U.S. troops began. For this tour, he was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division.

On Aug. 18, 1965, O'Malley

was a squad leader with Company I during Operation Starlite, which marked the first time U.S. troops fought Viet Cong insurgents in open battle in regimental-sized formations.

As O'Malley and his squad accompanied tanks past a hedgerow near the town of An Cu'ong, they came under intense small-arms fire. When they realized the fire was coming from a trench just past the hedgerow, O'Malley and another Marine quickly raced across an open rice paddy and jumped into the trench with the enemy soldiers.

O'Malley attacked the insurgents and single-handedly killed eight. He was, however, injured in the foot by a grenade during the melee.

After clearing that trench, O'Malley led his squad in helping an adjacent Marine unit that had suffered heavy casualties. He continued to press forward through enemy fire, reloading and firing upon the enemy "with telling effect," his Medal of Honor citation reads.

O'Malley then helped evacuate several wounded Marines before regrouping his squad and returning to the fight.

When the units were ordered to evacuate, O'Malley gathered the badly wounded men in his unit and, despite heavy enemy fire, led them to a helicopter for withdrawal. O'Malley had been hit three times during the fight -- in the leg, arm and chest -- and was badly injured, but he refused to immediately get

See HONOR, page 3

When they realized the fire was coming from a trench just past the hedgerow, O'Malley and another Marine quickly raced across an open rice paddy and jumped into the trench with the enemy soldiers.

THE UNION ADVOCATE

AFGE

Published by the American Federation of Government Employees Local 987, Warner Robins, Georgia.

Contents of The Union Advocate are not necessarily the official view of AFGE Local 987, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of the Air Force or The Document Company.

The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts, does not constitute endorsement by The Union Advocate, AFGE Local 987 or

Printer

Houston Home Journal

Editor/layout and design

Don Moncrief

the purchaser, user or patron.

Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by AFGE Local 987. Submitted news and editorial content/photographs are welcome - applicability to AFGE Local 987's mission to be determined by the discretion of the editor and/or president.

Please submit articles, photos, etc to [don.moncrief@afgelocal987.org](mailto:don.moncrief@afgelocal987.org). For questions about story content, to pass on story ideas or to request coverage, please contact the aforementioned.



BENEFITS

From page 1

**How it works:**  
1. Pick a vehicle.  
Select the new or used vehicle and options you want and consider a union-made vehicle. View price ratings, narrow down your preferred options, incentives and explore payment options.  
2. See what’s out there.  
Enter your contact information and connect with a certified dealer to view inventory and get an upfront member price offer online.  
3. Connect with a dealer.  
Connect with a Certified Dealer via phone, email or text to answer any questions, schedule a test drive, ask about financing or vehicle delivery options.  
\*If you purchase a new, qualifying union-assembled vehicle, you will receive a check for \$100 within 6 to 8 weeks after purchase. (The rebate checks come from Union Plus and not from the dealer). Union Plus receives a monthly report on the sales activity from the program provider to verify that a rebate check should be sent to a member who purchased a qualifying vehicle. This process is automatic, there are no forms to complete. Keep a copy of your Union Plus Auto Buying referral email that can assist in researching your purchase if you think you qualified for a rebate but did not receive a check.

**Firestone tire and auto care discounts**  
Members save instantly on all maintenance, repairs and tire purchases from leading tire brands such as union-made Bridgestone and Firestone tires.  
**Retail Locations:**  
The plan is accepted at over 2,300 Firestone Complete Auto Care, ExpertTire, TiresPlus and Wheel Works locations nationwide. Most of those locations are open late daily and open on Sundays.  
Only the company-owned Firestone Complete Auto Care, TiresPlus, ExpertTire and Wheel Works locations will accept the savings certificate. Since some non-company stores look similar, members should use the store locator feature to

choose a store most convenient for you.  
**How it Works:**  
Download and print the “Print Savings Certificate”  
Bring the certificate to the participating store of your choice.  
Give the store your certificate to get savings.  
Before your next visit, log back onto the site and print out a new certificate.  
**Details About This Benefit:**  
Members can register all the vehicles in your household. Choose that vehicle before you print out a savings certificate. You do not need to carry a membership card, just the savings certificate.  
**Tires:**  
♥ Save 15% off any Bridgestone or Firestone tire purchase  
♥ Save 15% off Computerized Wheel Balance  
♥ Save 15% off Valve Stems  
**Service:**  
♥ Save 15% off your maintenance and repairs  
\*15% member savings off the regular retail price. Tires and service savings cannot be combined with advertised, internet or promotional specials.



**Boxes and supplies**  
How much can you save by using your union benefits to move? For 20 boxes, tape, bubble wrap wrapping paper and a marker you’d pay \$85.84 at U-Haul. With Union Plus, you’d only pay \$48.30!  
The 25-50% savings for AFGE families are typically a better value than moving supplies purchased through U-Haul, professional movers and other providers.  
More about this benefit:  
♥ AFGE families save 25%-50% on moving boxes and supplies.  
♥ Members receive FREE shipping within the U.S.  
♥ For purchases over \$40 of moving supplies you’ll receive a \$25 Restaurant. com gift card.  
♥ For purchases over \$100 of moving supplies you’ll receive a \$25 Restaurant.

com gift card, plus a 4-pack of room tape.  
**Storage PODS**  
Need to move or store your belongings, but don’t have the space or vehicle to do it? Move, store and save with PODS!  
PODS containers can be used for moving, storage or both. Use PODS for:  
♥ On-site storage at your location,  
♥ Storage in a secure PODS storage center,  
♥ Local or long distance moving,  
♥ Staging during renovations or events,  
♥ Office relocation.  
**More about this benefit:**  
♥ AFGE families can get savings of 10% on local moves and storage, and 10% on long distance moves and storage.  
♥ Use this benefit to move in town or across the country.  
♥ Access and pack your belongings at your location or a secure PODS facility.  
♥ There’s no rush! By using PODS you can pack and unpack at your own pace.  
♥ PODS are available in more than 20,000 cities.  
♥ Don’t worry about lifting big items! PODS allow you to load at the ground level – no ramps needed.  
♥ Once you’ve finished, PODS will pick up the container and deliver it across the street, across the state, or even across the country. Or, you can choose to store it at a PODS secure storage center.  
PODS’ patented PODZILLA lift system keeps your container - and your possessions - level while loading onto and off the truck. If you have a big job you can order multiple containers that can be delivered together or separately.

**Moving vans**  
Enjoy a stress-free and affordable experience with Union Plus discounts on full-service moving vans through the leading national moving brands and union companies Allied Van Lines and North American Van Lines.  
Preferred moving van and moving services discounts especially designed for AFGE members can save you hundreds of dollars on a typical interstate (state-to-state or long-distance)

move. Plus, you’ll get added savings on in-transit storage and personal property protection coverage.  
**More about the benefits:**  
♥ Exclusive AFGE member discounts on interstate moving, packing and in-transit storage  
♥ Free \$50,000 of Full Replacement Coverage from North American Van Lines  
♥ Double the coverage on property protection from Allied Van Lines  
♥ Peak rates waived year-round  
♥ On-time delivery guaranteed  
♥ Members receive \$125 per diem if the interstate delivery date is missed due to no fault of the member. Per diem is only paid on shipments weighing 3,500 pounds. or more for Allied Van Lines and 5,000 pounds or more for North American Van Lines.  
**Budget truck rental**  
Now you can make that do-it-yourself move cost even less with a discount at one of the nation’s largest truck rental facilities. AFGE members can save 20% when renting a Budget truck or van with the new Union Plus Budget Truck Rental discount.  
**More about this benefit:**  
As part of this benefit, Budget truck rental features include:  
♥ 20% discount every day  
♥ Reliable, easy-to-drive trucks  
♥ Over 2,800 convenient locations nationwide  
♥ Provides 24/7 roadside assistance  
♥ Moving kits, boxes and moving supplies offered  
♥ Car carriers and towing offered  
♥ Select optional insurance and protection plans  
♥ All major credit cards accepted  
**Limitations and restrictions:**  
To take part in this benefit, members must present the discount code through prior registration. The offer is not valid at the Budget Truck counter.  
Discount cannot be combined with any other discounted rate or promotional offer.  
Discount applies to truck rental only. Taxes, surcharges, refueling, moving supplies, and optional items are an additional cost.



Agency seeks more power to enforce campaign finance law

by Ty Tagami - Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — The state agency that oversees election finance wants more power to investigate probable violations, and a key state lawmaker expressed interest in bestowing that authority.  
The leader of a special Senate committee on election-related investigations said he wants to tighten state campaign finance laws to hold donors and recipients more accountable for reporting when they give and receive money.  
“We’re wanting it to be transparent to the public so we can know who is pushing these different agendas,” Sen. Bill Cowser, R-Athens, said Thursday. “And we also want to make the system fair so that big money doesn’t dominate our politics.”  
Cowser, who is running for state attorney general, is leading the Senate’s special committee on investigations. It heard Thursday about the years-long legal fight that led to the largest campaign finance fine in state history, when a nonprofit founded by two-time Democratic gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams settled with the state early this year.  
The New Georgia Project and a separate fundraising arm agreed to pay \$300,000 for failure to disclose \$4.2 million in contributions and \$3.2 million in spending on behalf of Abrams’ 2018 campaign for governor.  
A fine was not enough, Cowser said, suggesting that Georgia should increase the penalties for campaign finance violations.  
“No individual’s been held responsible,” he said.  
Abrams did not respond to a request for comment. In the past, her camp had argued that the nonprofits were not technically political campaign organizations and did not have to file disclosures. The State Ethics Commission, which enforces campaign finance law, disagreed, leading to the negotiated settlement and the fine.  
Democrats have accused Republicans of using the Senate committee — and the settlement — for political grandstanding. The committee can require production of documents and issue subpoenas.  
Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who brought an election interference case against President Donald Trump and his allies, has become another target. She was supposed to testify at Thursday’s hearing after fighting in court against the committee’s efforts to subpoena her last year. Cowser said in October that she had agreed to testify, but she did not appear on Thursday because, Cowser said, her lawyer had a scheduling conflict. Cowser said Willis would appear before the committee in December.  
So instead the committee heard from David Emadi, executive secretary of the State Ethics Commission.  
Emadi addressed past accusations by Abrams allies that his agency had behaved in a partisan way, saying he had also pursued complaints against Republican-aligned organizations, such as the Georgia Republican Assembly. But his presentation Thursday focused on the New Georgia Project, its affiliate the New Georgia Project Action Fund, and the Abrams campaign.  
He said his investigators cannot compel witnesses to talk under oath prior to establishing probable cause that a crime was committed. That makes it difficult to develop a case that will make it to court, he said, especially when the case involves suspicions of covert coordination between independent political committees and campaigns.  
Independent committees can raise unlimited sums of money from individuals, corporations and other donors. Campaigns cannot. The two are not supposed to coordinate political advocacy activities.

Cellphone bans proving popular at elementary, middle school levels

by Ty Tagami - Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — A mandatory cellphone ban could be coming for all public high schools in Georgia after the positive outcomes reported by schools that have already implemented such policies.  
A new state law will require every public elementary and middle school in the state to lock up students’ phones and other personal devices starting next fall, but many already have such policies in place, including at high schools.  
Teachers have reported strong support, with 92% backing an extension of the ban to high schools, according to a survey of 3,000 educators by Georgia Southern University detailed at a state Senate hearing Wednesday.  
And educators and advocates who testified recounted similar enthusiasm at their schools and among parents.  
Teachers and administrators have seen academic gains accompany the silencing of phone notifications. Studies show distractions bump minds off task, sending students’ minds careering. Banishing cellphones has also removed a tool used by miscreants to bully peers, coordinate fights and unleash other mayhem.  
Students behaved better at Lakeside High School in DeKalb County when the phones were taken away last year, and they interacted with each other more, said Susan Stoddard, the principal there. “You heard the joyous fun of school in the hallways. They were talking to one another,” she said.  
The district experimented with phone bans at several schools, then measured the impact.  
“It was transformational academically, behaviorally and socially,” Stoddard said, noting that prior to implementation, classroom observers had counted an average of 16 notifications on each student’s phone every half hour. That added up to nearly 300 disruptions per classroom each half hour, she said.  
Similarly, Marietta City Schools banned phones in middle school last year. Superintendent Grant Rivera said district surveys found near-universal approval among teachers. He said the students themselves reported a 22% improvement in classroom behavior in the Georgia Student Health Survey, an annual questionnaire administered by the Georgia Department of Education.  
Rivera’s enthusiastic testimony about the policy during the legislative session last winter may have helped to convince lawmakers to back the lower grades prohibition. House Bill 340 passed with broad bipartisan support.  
Rivera said Wednesday that he needed a similar ban at the high school level but lacked community support for it. Too many parents had grown accustomed to reaching their teens, he said.  
He wished lawmakers luck if they tried to extend the prohibition.  
A refrain among critics of a high school ban is that parents need to be able to reach their kids if a shooter enters the building, a concern amplified by what happened at Apalachee High School last fall. Police counter that cellphones make schools less safe in an emergency by distracting students from following instructions.

HONOR

From page 2

on the chopper.  
Instead, he stood in the open and continued to provide cover fire for his squad until all of them boarded. Only then did he join them in the aircraft as it flew to safety.  
O’Malley was eventually flown to Japan, where he received treatment for his many injuries, including surgery to remove shrapnel from his lungs.  
A few months later, while he continued

to recover, O’Malley was promoted to sergeant. He left active duty in April 1966 and joined the Marine Corps Reserve.  
O’Malley married a woman named Barbara, and they moved to Goldthwaite, Texas.  
On Dec. 6, 1966, O’Malley received the Medal of Honor from President Lyndon B. Johnson during a ceremony at a plaza outside the Federal Building in Austin, Texas. His family and seven Marines who witnessed his heroics in Vietnam attended.  
As decades went by, family and friends said O’Malley was never one to talk much

about the war or what he did there.  
In April of this year, O’Malley, now 82, moved into the new Tuskegee Airmen Texas State Veterans Home in Fort Worth, Texas.  
Coincidentally, another Marine who later posthumously received the Medal of Honor was a friend of O’Malley’s from childhood. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Thomas Patrick Noonan attended the same grade school as O’Malley and was five months younger than him. Sadly, Noonan lost his life in Vietnam performing the actions that earned him the nation’s highest medal for valor.

TIPS

From page 2

Most retailers provide tracking details with links to delivery services; some even send their own emails to let you know when something has landed on your stoop. Opt-in to shipping-related emails. Set up your own notifications with your smartphone or app to remind you of the date and time of expected delivery.  
● Use a security camera. Installing a home security system with cameras or a video doorbell is a great way to deter package theft, especially when highly visible. You can also set up camera alerts, so you know

exactly when the package is delivered. Consider including a sign that specifically states that the residence is under surveillance.  
Even if a package is stolen from your porch, the video evidence will help law enforcement track down the thieves.  
● Require a signature. Many delivery companies include the option to require a signature before leaving a package, letting you take physical possession of the item as soon as it is delivered. While this option works well for those often at home, especially for expensive items, it may create difficulties in receiving packages if your schedule and the delivery service differ.

Be sure to check with the delivery company on their policy for packages that are not signed for, as they may return it to the sender after a certain number of attempts.  
● Ship to store or a designated delivery location. If you’re purchasing an item from a retailer with a physical location near your home, consider shipping it there instead. Retailers will require proof of purchase or identification before releasing packages they have received, and this is a sure way to avoid porch pirates.  
● Consider a package receiving service. Some major retailers, such as Amazon, offer secure package-receiving loca-

tions away from your home that you can access with a key or code. Some independent businesses also specialize in this service, allowing you to designate a different delivery location for your packages and the ability to pick them up on your way home.  
● P.O. Box rental: If porch pirates are often in your area and you are planning to do quite a bit of online shopping, you may want to consider renting a P.O. Box to receive package deliveries. The cost may outweigh the headaches.  
For more information about shopping and safety during the holidays, visit BBB’s holiday HQ at bbb.org/holiday.

**BLACK webinars**  
*Don't miss out on these Black Leaders Advancing Change and Knowledge, webinars; every third Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. Visit afge.org for the*

link:

- December 17
- Jan. 21, 2026
- Feb. 18, 2026
- March 18, 2026
- April 15, 2026
- May 20, 2026
- June 17, 2026
- July 15, 2026
- Aug. 19, 2026

- Sept. 16, 2026
- Oct 21, 2026
- Nov. 18, 2026

Webinar ID: 839 6265 0110  
Passcode: 992956  
Please submit any questions to: Matthew.Uchaker@afge.org

ADVERTISE WITH US  
CALL  
478-733-9772  
OR  
EMAIL  
THEUNIONADVOCATE@GMAIL.COM











# Showstopping Party Bites for *Holiday Celebrations*

**FAMILY FEATURES**

When gathering around the table with family and friends during the holidays, the main course is often front and center, but every great host or hostess knows it's not always the star of the show. Kick off the evening with effortless, crowd-pleasing party bites that will impress your guests and set the tone for a memorable night.

If you're looking for inspiration for your next seasonal gathering, look no further than accompaniments made with premium European ingredients like Grana Padano PDO cheese and Prosciutto di Parma PDO – some of the world's most delicious cheeses and cured meats.

Only products made following traditional methods within defined geographic regions, under strict supervision and using carefully monitored ingredients, qualify for Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) certification from the European Union. The PDO system helps distinguish these foods from imitators and guarantees high quality, authenticity and traceability.

Made in the Po River Valley in northern Italy from raw, semi-skimmed cow milk, Grana Padano PDO cheese is naturally lactose free due to the characteristics of its production and long aging process and rich in protein, vitamins and mineral salts, especially calcium. A 100% natural product, Prosciutto di Parma PDO contains no additives such as nitrites, nitrates or hormones. Produced only in Parma, Italy, its all-natural aging process creates a wide variation in flavor profiles and textures, from mild and nutty to mature and full-flavored.

These artisan meats and cheeses can be enjoyed on their own alongside olives, nuts, bread and your favorite jam for a quick and easy holiday snack board. And they shine in culinary treasures like Whipped Ricotta Toast with Prosciutto di Parma and Hot Honey or Grana Padano and Nutmeg Cheese Puffs that feed the soul and warm the heart.

To ensure authenticity, look for the red and yellow PDO logo, and visit [distinctlydeliciouslyeuropean.eu](https://distinctlydeliciouslyeuropean.eu) for more seasonal recipe ideas and pairing tips for your next get-together.

## Whipped Ricotta Toast with Prosciutto di Parma and Hot Honey

Yield: 3 toasts (6 halves)

**3 large slices thick-cut sourdough bread**  
**1 container (16 ounces) whole milk ricotta cheese**  
**salt, to taste**  
**pepper, to taste**  
**hot honey**  
**6 slices (3 ounces) Prosciutto di Parma PDO**

In toaster oven, toast bread to desired doneness. Set aside.

In large bowl, with electric mixer, beat ricotta until whipped and creamy, about 2 minutes. Add salt and pepper, to taste.

Spoon ricotta onto each toast evenly. Drizzle each with hot honey, as desired. Top each with two slices prosciutto.



## Grana Padano and Nutmeg Cheese Puffs

Servings: 4

**1 3/4 cups milk**  
**1 cup unsalted butter**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**1 2/3 cups flour**  
**1 cup, plus 1 tablespoon, grated Grana Padano PDO cheese, divided**  
**6 medium eggs**  
**black pepper, to taste**  
**nutmeg, to taste**  
**canola oil, for frying**

In pan, boil milk, butter and salt until butter is dissolved.

Add flour and stir using wooden spoon over low heat until mixture doesn't stick to bottom of pan. Add 1 cup cheese and stir 1 minute. Remove from heat.

Put mixture in mixing bowl and add eggs one by one until mixture is smooth. Add black pepper and nutmeg, to taste.

Let mixture cool and form dough into small, round parcels.

Fry parcels in hot canola oil, about 325 F, until golden. Dust with remaining cheese and serve.



**DISTINCTLY. DELICIOUSLY. EUROPEAN.**

**Taste what Europe does best.**



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or of the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## 5 Health Benefits of Whole Milk for Kids

**FAMILY FEATURES**

Forget the outdated nutrition advice that told parents to skip whole milk. A growing body of research is turning that idea on its head, making it time to rethink what "healthy" means for growing kids.

For decades, families have been told low-fat milk is the best choice once children turn 2. However, those recommendations were largely based on data from adults, not children. Today's evidence paints a different picture – one where whole milk supports kids' growth, development and long-term health.

"Parents are often surprised to learn whole milk isn't just safe – it's beneficial," said Jaclyn London, MS, RD, CDN, nutrition consultant and spokesperson for Dairy Farmers of America. "When we look at the latest research, whole milk provides the high-quality protein, healthy fats and essential nutrients kids need during key stages of development – without increasing risk for obesity or heart disease."

With 13 essential nutrients and vitamins – including calcium, vitamin D and protein – real dairy milk is a simple, nutrient-dense staple. It's also an easy addition to family favorites like Breakfast Cookies and Homemade Cream of Tomato Soup.

Here are five research-backed reasons to feel confident about choosing whole milk.

**Whole milk is not associated with higher obesity rates.** Multiple large-scale studies from "The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition," the "International Journal

of Obesity" and "Preventive Medicine Reports" show children who drink whole milk have lower or similar body fat levels compared to those drinking reduced-fat milk.

**Whole milk does not increase risk of heart disease.**

According to "Advances in Nutrition," whole milk does not increase cardiometabolic risk in kids; in fact, it's associated with better vitamin D levels with no adverse effects on cholesterol or glucose.

**It's nutrient-dense and supports optimal growth.**

All types of milk, including whole, provide essential nutrients like calcium, protein and vitamins A and D – all critical for bone development and healthy growth in children, per "Nutrition Research Reviews."

**Kids like the taste – and that matters.** Children often prefer the taste of whole milk over low-fat versions, according to the "Journal of Dairy Science," which can lead to more consistent consumption.

**Adults may benefit, too.** Among adults, full-fat dairy is associated with greater satiety, improved blood sugar regulation and a reduced risk of metabolic syndrome, according to a study published in "Nutrition & Metabolism," helping reframe full-fat dairy as part of a balanced diet.

Learn more at [DFAMilk.com](https://DFAMilk.com).

## Homemade Cream of Tomato Soup

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4

**2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**1/2 medium white onion, chopped**  
**1 1/2 teaspoons finely chopped garlic**  
**1 can (28 ounces) crushed tomatoes**  
**1 tablespoon parsley flakes**  
**1/4 teaspoon baking soda**  
**1 tablespoon roughly chopped fresh basil leaves**  
**1 tablespoon honey**  
**2-3 cups milk**  
**salt, to taste**  
**pepper, to taste**  
**basil leaves, for garnish (optional)**

In 2-quart saucepan over medium-high heat, heat olive oil; add onion and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, 2-3 minutes. Add tomatoes, parsley and baking soda. Cook until mixture comes to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook 10 minutes. Stir in basil and honey.

Stir in milk to reach desired consistency. Cook over medium-high heat until heated through, 2-3 minutes. Add salt and pepper, to taste.

Garnish with basil leaves, if desired.



## Breakfast Cookies

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Servings: 12

**Cookie Base:**

**2 1/2 cups old-fashioned oats**  
**3/4 cup all-purpose flour**  
**1/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar**  
**1 teaspoon baking powder**  
**1/8 teaspoon salt**  
**1/4 cup butter, melted**  
**1/2 cup whole milk**  
**1 egg**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

Heat oven to 350 F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper; set aside.

In large bowl, stir oats, flour, brown sugar, baking powder and salt. In medium bowl, stir butter, milk, egg and vanilla until well mixed; add to oat mixture. Stir until combined and evenly moistened.

Drop 1/4 cup dough onto prepared cookie sheets. Slightly flatten dough with hand.

Bake 15-17 minutes, or until lightly browned, firm to touch and baked through. Move to wire rack to cool.

**Variations:** Add maple syrup and crumbled bacon; sliced almonds, dried cherries and almond extract; semisweet chocolate chips and banana pieces; or peanuts and peanut butter.



**Got a recipe you want to share with our members?**  
**Email it to [theunionadvocate@gmail.com](mailto:theunionadvocate@gmail.com) and**  
**let's get to cooking and eating!**