



AFGE Local 2823

Newsletter

Issue 7 – April 2025

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Upcoming Events

April 25th is the last day to move your payment to eDues and remain a member of the local!

NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT SHARE UNION BUSINESS WITH NON-DUES PAYING MEMBERS. WE ARE JUST LIKE AMERICAN EXPRESS....MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES. Beyond that, it is not fair for those who support the efforts of AFGE with their hard-earned dollars to have their privilege abused. Please be considerate of your brothers and sisters.



Current members: If you have not already moved your dues deduction to eDues, DO IT NOW! Your membership depends on it. You will automatically be dropped from agency paid allotment and your membership will cease in the next few days! Please contact: James Swartz, Cecelia Gray, Daphne Coleman, or Keyamonte Pickings for assistance; otherwise, the link can be found at AFGE.org/eDues. Reminder: Our Local is 2823, Council is 262, bargaining unit status 1272.

Membership Meeting

Reminders:

1. Monthly meetings are held every 4th Wednesday from 11:30am - noon
2. You must join the meeting on your lunch break! No excluded time is ever allowed.
3. Log in only on your **PERSONAL** device MUTED!
4. Your full name (how it appears on your VA email) must be displayed in order to remain on the call for local confidentiality. If you need instruction on how to, please go to ZOOM.com or see the January meeting minutes for the link.
5. We continue to have issues with callers not muting their devices. Those callers will also be removed from the call so that we can continue to conduct business in a timely fashion.



714 Letters and PIPs

What is a 714 letter? 38 USC 714 “supposedly” states Congress gave VA special authority to remove employees for poor performance without a PIP and any conduct issue(s) without due process. This certainly is untrue and unlawful because we have the master agreement in place to protect employees from such egregious actions. These were the same letters that costs employees their jobs in President Trump’s last administration.

More and more performance improvement plans (PIPs) are being implemented as we move forward. Traditionally, a PIP was not necessarily the worst-case scenario; however, in today’s climate, the uncertainty of it is daunting. How PIPs will be handled in the near future quite possibly will be changing.

Employees being placed on PIPs are being assigned mentors for the durations of the PIP period. The local is strongly recommending that you utilize the allotted time you have with your mentor to gain all that you can even if you feel that time is not useful. Work closely with your supervisor to ensure you are getting the work you need to be successful and do your very best to complete your PIP!

The President’s Corner will speak more to 714 and PIPs; however, I wanted to provide a detailed explanation about 714 letters.

Remember when it is time to vote whether this touches you personally or not!

For your information...

If you’re on social media, you may be familiar with Fedweek. They published an article dated on or about Sunday April 20, 2025, titled, “Reduction in Force in Federal Government”. The article can also be found at: www.fedweek.com. The article breaks down Office of Personnel Management (OPM) procedures for the RIF. It explains four categories considered for employee retention which include: tenure group, veteran preference, length of service, and performance ratings. Those categories are used to calculate points. Those employees with the highest points will be retained according to that source.

The local encourages each member to use every resource and do their own research to determine what is best for them.

eDues

We met Monday April 21, 2025, to discuss the importance of moving your payment of union dues to eDues. As of the date of that meeting, we still had close to 150 members still not signed up for eDues. April 25, 2025, is the last date to switch before your membership is disrupted. You will no longer be considered a member of the union/local at the close of business April 25, 2025. At this time, you are no longer required to submit SF 1188 because the agency is no longer going to collect dues via pay allocations, so it is imperative that you make the change as soon as time permits. You will not see a deduction from your bank account or credit card until the first pay period in May. If for some reason you are double billed, please contact Daphne Coleman, treasurer, with proof of both payments so that you can be reimbursed.

There is a \$50 incentive to encourage members to make the switch. The local will be sending out those payments as soon as time permits to those who qualify. We do have a report provided by AFGE with registration dates that we will be referencing for payments. That report is updated immediately when members switch, so we will be able to work in “real” time. The criteria for the incentive can be found at AFGE.org/eDues.

Please keep in mind that local officials will be working on their personal time for the good of the local which includes representation of its members. Since official time will be discontinued, most likely by the end of April, there is no contractual/legal obligation for representation of non-dues paying employees. In lay terms, that means local officials will be working for its members only. Sadly, we are already seeing an uptick in requests for help. Don't be left to your own devices to fight alone. Make the switch today!

Return to the office

We are just a week away from the mandated return to the office date where every employee should be reporting five days a week. What has changed? What do we know? Well for us local folk, absolutely nothing! We still have a seating issue where the "math ain't mathing"! We've been told that we will not be sharing desk. What that means is that there will not be two people sitting at one desk at one time. That idea is just not feasible thank goodness. The rumor is that the agency will be assigning in office days for employees with assigned seats. Please note that the local will not be fighting this issue because we are more concerned with employees having a job rather than when they report and where they sit.

There has been word that some remote workers have seats available in "offices" near their homes. They will be reporting five days a week. Those employees have already been contacted.

President's Corner

As we are all well aware, the Union is under attack by the president. Dues deductions from agency payroll has been discontinued (yes, I believe it is just as illegal now as it was his first term) but we still have to have our day in court. If you have not registered with eDues, you will be cut from the local. You can still sign up for eDues, but it may impact your length of time in the local. I would say if, but I believe it is when, we lose official time, we will not have the ability to represent individual non-dues paying members. All union work must be on personal time, and there are only so many hours in a day. If you have friends that have not joined, now is the time to push, and if you have not converted to eDues, please, please, please, do so now!

I have heard rumors, from pretty reliable sources, that the president, through the secretary, has ordered the agency to no longer honor the contract or PIPs. However, locally, we will be honoring the PIPs until the RO gets something formal. If this is the case, my guess is they will terminate employees under 714, or discipline like they did under Trump's last administration. I am also willing to bet if PIPs are not passed within the thirty days, the RO will no choice but to let employees go.

As far as DRP and the VERA, I have learned that they are having employees who that "the deal" sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). I don't know how legit that is and my limited understanding is that NDAs are difficult to hold people accountable to. My guess is that the current administration wants these so that you have no way to fight any type of negative action as a result of either separation agreements. Again, I am not an attorney and that is my opinion. There is also a new twist that if the agency wants you work until the end, you have no choice.

We are still fighting to protect employees. I have heard rumors that BVA will look into removing 4300 VBA employees. This is to be done by RIF or whatever means necessary. These are just rumors, but....Now is the time to act. Call and write your representatives! Tell them that you don't want them to be the reason that Federal employee lose their jobs. Tell them how you expect them to represent you, not the whims of the party. Be sure that you are on your own time, and own equipment.

I have no additional information regarding House Bill 2249; however, our local is working with friends in Congress and the Senate to stop HR-2249.

HR-2249 is a bill that has passed the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. It allows an incoming president to disavow any existing collective bargaining agreements with unions representing federal employees. The bill amends Chapter 71 of Title 5 of the United States Code to provide the president with expanded discretion in negotiating and modifying collective bargaining agreements.

I know I said this last time, but it is imperative to contact your representative in both Congress and the Senate to stop this. The union is the only thing that is standing in their way of a hostile takeover of our lives, employment, retirements, and benefits. I recommend going on the websites to express concerns about union representation and employee rights. Tell them the damage they are doing and ask them to stop the attack against federal employees.

The local has been actively working with AFL-CIO, members of Congress and the Senate as well as local news outlets to get the word out and educate the public. April 9, 2025, the local provided testimony before the DAMA Committee to discuss problems with the National Work Queue (NWQ). The hearing was cut short, but we were able to follow up with additional information.

I understand that I have said this before, but we must stand together if we are to keep our jobs and our benefits. For those who are veterans, let your representatives know that you are a veteran helping veterans!

In Solidarity,

Jim
James R. Swartz, President
AFGE, Local 2823

AFGE LOCAL 2823

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VP: Dwayne Walker
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www.afgel2823.org