



AFGE Local 2823

Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

Happy New Year from the Executive Board! We hope you had a wonderful and safe holiday season!



Every member **MUST** now sign up for E-DUES! Please log into your AFGE.org account and sign up today! There is a QR code located on AFGE.org for quick sign up along with a YouTube tutorial if you need assistance. You may also reach out to a member of the board, a union steward, or contact AFGE.org. Reminder: Our Local is 2823 and our Council is 262.

Membership Meeting

We held our first monthly meeting via ZOOM January 22, 2025 and it was a huge success. Some housekeeping items for upcoming meetings:

1. You must join the meeting on your lunch break only!
2. Log in only on your **PERSONAL** device.
3. Remember to mute your device!
4. Your full name 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.



Membership drive

AFGE has implemented changes to the National and District recruitment rebate policy to align with the strategic focus on E-Dues adoption.

Moving forward, recruitment rebates (both National's \$25 and Districts' \$25) will be restricted exclusively to new members joining via E-Dues. New members joining via E-Dues will receive \$25 and the recruiter will receive \$25. When there is no recruiter, the E-Dues new member will receive a rebate total of \$50. The rebates will be automatically sent by mail directly to members and/or recruiters from AFGE National. This means that neither existing members converting to E-Dues from payroll deduction nor new members joining via Form 1187 or 1158 will be eligible for these rebates.

This change, approved by the NEC, is designed to encourage more individuals to join through E-Dues, helping to secure our revenues as we prepare for potential challenges ahead in the upcoming administration.

This change does not affect additional elective District, Council or Local rebates. If your local has not opted in to E-Dues, contact edues@afge.org to get started right away. Learn more about E-Dues at www.afge.org/edues.

IMPORTANT: PLEASE REFER ALL NEW MEMBERS TO www.afge.org/edues. Our local is 2823. Our council is 262.

Return to office

Now that we are settling into the new administration, there is a lot of uncertainty. What we do know is that management is expected back in the office full-time February 24, 2025. During the all-employee town hall Director Dowdy made it clear that we do not have the capacity to accommodate every employee five days a week. It was later mentioned by Assistant Director Shannon Kelly that there are only 220 seats available since two floors were returned to GSA when the call center went remote. We learned that Cleveland Regional Office (RO) bargaining unit employees (BUEs) have not been discussed relative to a concrete return to office date as yet; however, meetings are forthcoming. There are more discussions/bargaining that has to occur prior to a date being released. There are some deficiencies that will need to be addressed considering the National Call Center (NCC), remote workers, and other employees who live more than 50 miles from the Cleveland RO are expected to return at some point as well. In the meantime, keep enjoying your work at home status.

The new executive orders and me

As many of you know, President Trump issued many new executive orders that directly impact federal and union workers. You may be wondering how those orders affect you directly. The short answer is....we are uncertain. Our national leaders have filed several lawsuits for those issues that violate our master agreement; however, as we all know, litigation takes time. What we do know is that in the meantime, we are still here for you. What we do know is that this administration was quite clear about what their plans were and now that implementation is upon us, we must fight for our rights but we may have some collateral damages while the fight goes on. Here is where solidarity means EVERYTHING! We must stand together to hold on to our rights.

Should I stay or should I go?

That is truly a personal choice. The decision can be different for each employee depending on where you are in your career. Are you still probationary? Are you ten years in with small children? Are you eight months away from retirement and an empty nester? every document that you can get your hands on. Seek legal advice. What the local recommends is that you research, research, research! Understand every implication.

Understand what benefits you currently have and what you may be losing. We know this time is very stressful. Take one day at a time and remember to take advantage of the employee assistance program (EAP) if you need help!

Holiday party

The holiday party was LIT! We had such a wonderful time seeing everyone's smiling faces. We gave away gift cards and a big screen TV. We were even able to give away gift cards to our remote workers. We conducted a random drawing and mailed out gift cards to our members who live outside the area so that they were included in the festivities as well.

The board would like to send a special thank you to all that volunteered to make this evening special and to all that came out even with the weather not being ideal. We love our members!



Benefit's corner

Did you know AFGE members are eligible for hardship help through Union Plus? Union Plus partners with AFGE to help with mortgage payments, credit cards, personal loans, and other obligations due to layoffs, furloughs, disasters, unforeseen disability and help negotiating medical bills. Considering the climate we are currently facing, it may be feasible to familiarize yourselves with the benefits that are available to members. Please log into your [AFGE.org/memberbenefits](https://www.afge.org/memberbenefits) for more information.

Local Updates

- Dues increased \$.50 and is now \$23.21.
- The Local has been made aware that several VSC employees have received letters of concern. Please ask for any training that you may need in writing. You may carbon copy (cc) the Local and as always send a copy to your personal email address for your records.
- Master agreement local supplement bargaining will soon be underway.
- We have a couple grievances pending.
- We anticipate official time will soon be eliminated. Members should know that the Local will still be available to assist you with your needs before or after business hours and during lunch times only.
- Jim will be traveling to DC next month to share current VBA concerns.
- A good amount of trainee RVSRs will be released to single signature January 31, 2025. If you find yourself in need of additional training after you've been released, please put it in writing with specific needs with a cc to the Local.
- As mentioned above, new union members will no longer be able to join via SF Form 1187. They will be directed to www.afge.org/edues. The new payment information is detailed above.
- **We are still in dire need of your help!**
Unfortunately, the request for help has continued to go unanswered. We want to ensure that when you come to us for help, that we have the resources in place to offer the help you need. It is understood that in today's environment, it very well may mean using your own leave to do the work for the Local; however, consider the sacrifices that came before you (answered calls and texts after 2:30pm, meetings conducted before 6 am and after 2:30 pm, multi-day trainings using personal leave, and more). Won't you consider sharing your time for the good of the Local?

President's Corner

"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times". I would have used the word unprecedented, but I think that word is being used an unprecedented amount these days.

Hello my Union family. There are many wheels in motion, but please be assured the Local is doing our best to protect not just employee rights but our civil liberty as well. We must remember, just like our own families, there are many different political views. Although we may not agree, we are still a "Union family", we may not agree with others' views or choices, but still need to remain respectful of each other. Respect is something that no-one can take from us, we must give it away.

Regarding the request for "resignation" that went out, there are many uncertainties. I have been reading where this offer may be illegal, it is not funded as a line item, the continuing resolution won't allow funding beyond March... It has been my personal experience that strangers don't "give" anything away. The conspiracy theorist in

me is very skeptical and thinks the offer is too good to be true. Once you resign, you resign. Whether the Government keeps their end of the bargain up or not is irrelevant. The legal question then becomes, did you resign? "Bait and Switch" is not unique to the people involved. Whatever, your decision is, do not make it hastily. You may want to seek advice from a legal expert, which I am not. AFGE does not support the resignation. However, they nor the Local "makes your money, or spends your money". These are life decisions you must make on your own.

There are many concerns about work at home. As of now, we do not have enough seats for everyone to come in full time. The most from my guesstimation is the Agency may be able to go week in week out. Should the RO decide to get more space, it would still take a few years for them to move forward. There would have to be cost analyst studies to find out how much money would need appropriated, then the money would have to be appropriated, contracts signed, Rumination of asbestos and other contaminants that may or may not be present, designers for optimum space utilization, restructuring of the needed space, and I'm sure I'm missing many other details.

We had a saying in the Army, "Hurry up and Wait". This saying has applied to many aspects of my life. This is no exception. The most important thing is to not let undue stress impact or disrupt our lives. We can only control what we can at our level. As the saying goes, "Remember in November".

There is one constant, your Union family will continue to fight for you, your rights, and your civil liberties!

In Solidarity,

Jim
James R. Swartz, President
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