

PROUD TO MAKE AMERICA WORK

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (AFGE) -AFL-CIO LOCAL 3599

***Representing: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
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October 1, 2010

Greetings to all our members:

This letter is to catch you up on what has been happening since my last correspondence to you. At the Council 216 elections/meeting held August 30-September 1, 2010, the following persons were elected: Gabrielle Martin, President, Rachel Shonfeld, 1st VP, David Skillman, 2nd VP, Danny Lawson, Secretary, and Levi Morrow, Treasurer

My correspondence to the Chair regarding the increased goals for everyone and the status of the overtime settlement and intake problems was not answered by the Chair. Therefore, when I had the opportunity to speak to her face to face during the recent national partnership meeting I asked her the same questions along with others. I am sorry to report that our Chair was not able to answer the questions, but apologized to me for not responding to my letter. So what does this tell us? For me not answering the questions gives me the answer that no action has been taken regarding any of the issues that the union has brought to her attention, and that they are not a priority. The only action that we can say has occurred is the increase in our goals (management term) or production standards (union term).

All of you by now should have been presented with a form to complete regarding the increase of goals/production given to you during the fourth quarter. I know you were trying diligently to meet your goals/production and may not have had time to respond. But, it is very important that you do your best to complete the form. The National Council has acted on our behalf and filed an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) regarding the new "numbers." However, without your assistance, the ULP will not be sustained. This is about you and for you. Do not wait until you receive your evaluation to complain, then it may be too late, do it now!

Partnership is here. For those of you who have been here for at least ten years you have some idea of what partnership is all about. I attended the first National Council Partnership meeting in HQ from September 13 & 14, 2010. By now you should all have received a copy of the National Partnership Agreement (NPA). The NPA establishes district partnership councils. Bargaining unit members will be appointed to the partnership by the Local union president and management will be appointed by the District Director. Your office stewards will be provided with additional information regarding how their union duties interface with the district council. The partnership does not replace the CBA or any EEOC directives. All district councils must be established by November 25, 2010. My goal is to appoint members that represent the various positions from all offices within the districts, but yet keep the group down to a manageable number.

The overtime payout issue is still pending. As of today the arbitrator has accepted a claims form that each affected member will have to complete to claim their overtime award. I have been informed that each member would be given 8 hours of official time to complete the form. However, the agency is still putting up roadblocks to stall our moving forward with the claims process. The period that will be covered is April 1, 2003 thru April 28, 2009. Please check your time sheets, travel logs, calendars, any record you may have that will support your overtime claim. (This is not the first time you heard this). Each claim form will require supporting documents be attached or an affidavit that supports the claim and lack of documents.

The agency has not accepted that intake has gotten out of control. Their solution (rapidly close old cases and increase production standards), is likened to throwing a glass of water to put out a bush fire. Maybe a twig or two gets put out, but the fire keeps burning. They have refused to collaborate with the union to address the root of the problem and possible solutions. Their answer is to increase your goals to eliminate the backlog. And, what about customer service? Our Chair states that she is committed to good customer service. Is it good customer service to have a charge for 300+ days without contacting the charging party (customer) only to give that customer 10 days (or even a phone call) to respond to why respondent states they have not discriminated against them and if they cannot, close it? Are not we, as employees, also customers? Yes, we are internal customers. Is it good customer service to increase the goals/numbers of the internal customers to an unattainable number, especially if you are committed to doing quality work? I asked the Chair if there was going to be any response to the union's intake proposal, whether it be no, yes, or we need to provide some changes. As I previously mentioned, I received no commitment from the Chair.

At the Local level, I have visited Atlanta, GA, conducted a meeting with the bargaining unit and increased our membership. Promotional issues were addressed and in most cases resolved. An employee who was seeking a transfer was given guidance and he is now being transferred. I had filed 3 ULP's, two in Birmingham regarding violation of an existing MOU and one in Nashville regarding their office move. The two ULP's in Birmingham resulted in one being settled and renegotiation of the MOU, and one pending issuance of a complaint against the agency. Nashville is still pending. With the local steward in Memphis, we were able to negotiate a positive settlement to an office-wide grievance that will provide opportunities to express interest in details through IDP's. We remain concerned about the turnover and lack of workplace flexibilities in our new Mobile office and I will be visiting that office in the near future. We are also continuing to fight on behalf of a union steward in one of our offices, where management has proposed removal, only three months after a highly effective evaluation. Everyday our stewards, backed by the Chief Steward and myself, help employees who have raised workplace concerns.

We are entering into the performance evaluation period. Please, take the time to complete your EAR's. A union prepared PowerPoint training piece to assist in preparing your EAR's is being posted on www.council216.org to help you. Also, make sure that you have listed some type of developmental training on your IDP. The priority for funding training will start with IDP's.

A quick update on EEOC's budget. The President requested an \$18M increase for EEOC for FY11. EEOC's House appropriations subcommittee has accepted the increase. The Senate subcommittee and full committee have accepted the increase. However, the rest of the process has not been completed. So now we are under a continuing resolution until December 3, 2010, which keeps funding at the FY10 level. The results of the election will determine how the rest of the budget process plays out.

Want more information? Local 3599 and the National Council provide continuous opportunities to keep you up to date on the goings on at the EEOC. Are you a Council 216 Facebook member? If not, go to www.facebook.com, take two minutes to sign up for a free account and then put "Council 216" in the search box to "friend" us. Please visit us at www.afge3599.org, www.council216.org, and www.afge.org, where you can get more in-depth information about how the union is working on your behalf. Also, expect the newest issue of *216 Works* to hit your desks later this month.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Proud to be a Member

Sharon D. Baker
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President, Local 3599