

# CHALLENGER

Wisconsin Ω Ohio Ω Michigan Ω Minnesota Ω Indiana Ω Illinois

August 2023

## AFGE Local 1395



### Attention AFGE Local 1395 MEMBERS!

Members will soon have the chance to Vote on whether you approve the awesome gains that AFGE has negotiated with the Agency. These gains are outlined in the National Agreement articles listed below:

- ◆ Article 3 Employee Rights
  - ◆ Article 16– Training and Career Development
  - ◆ Article 20– Child /Elder Care
  - ◆ Article 23 Disciplinary/Adverse Actions
  - ◆ Article 27 Details
  
  - ◆ Article 29 Union-Management Cooperation Councils
- And*
- ◆ Extension of the 2019 National Agreement and Telework Eligibility MOU to October 25,2029

Get ready to review the final contract language and cast your vote! You can expect to receive both in your email over the next few weeks.



Cheryl Bellamy-Bonner

### AFGE Local 1395:

#### A Story of Advocacy, Growth, and Resilience

**A** FGE Local 1395, initially established as Social Security Lodge 1395 in 1951, has evolved remarkably. Originally focused on representing SSA workers solely in the Chicago Payment Center, the union has expanded its presence to encompass a broader range of representation and rights. Join us as we delve into the inspiring journey of Local 1395, highlighting its unwavering commitment to advocating for all members.

#### The Founding Years: A Determined Pursuit for Collective Bargaining Rights

Local 1395 demonstrated unwavering support for its dues-paying members during its early days, even without collective bargaining rights. Their determination bore fruit in 1962 when President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10988, granting federal unions like Local 1395 meet and confer rights in addition to collective bargaining rights. This significant milestone paved the

way for increased organizational engagement and empowerment.

#### The Transformation to AFGE Local 1395: Expanding Beyond SSA Workers

Local 1395, now known as AFGE Local 1395, grew and evolved by seizing the opportunity to bargain union contracts. Under Walter Mitchum's and Donald Jones's leadership, the union expanded its representation to include members from other agencies. One notable achievement was organizing and representing all employees within Health and Human Services, which later faced changes in the AFGE's structure. Undeterred, AFGE Local 1395 continued to expand and adapt, taking the next steps by organizing and representing Field Offices and the Office of Hearing Operations. AFGE Local 1395 remained

[\(Continued on Page 3\)](#)

# AFGE Local 1395 Mission Statement

Local 1395 has voted to adopt the following as its mission statement:

“Our vision as a local is to build a strong organization that will address the needs of the bargaining unit in an effective and timely manner. To accomplish our goals we will strive for better communication and computer skills and build solidarity. We pledge to assist our representatives to meet goals and timeframes. Our local pledges to remain fiscally sound, to better organize our resources, manage information, and build up membership. Join with us for a better union and a better tomorrow.”

## Words From A Union Steward

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**AFGE Local 1395**

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AFGE website: [www.afge.org](http://www.afge.org)

TWITTER @AFGE1395

Facebook: AFGE Local 1395 (*members ONLY*)

Monthly **ZOOM** Membership Meetings:

2nd Wednesday –6pm (*Monthly*)

*Email for Link*



Dear members,

**W**elcome to our union newsletter - the place to stay informed and connected with fellow union members. We aim to create a forum that represents all members; for that, we need your input. If you have any ideas or issues you'd like addressed, please share them with us. We welcome and value your feedback. By reading articles, sharing news and personal experiences, and participating in discussion forums, we can strengthen our union and remember that we are not alone in this fight. This newsletter is vital to supporting and empowering all union members. Let's keep reading, sharing, and fighting for our cause. We will make our voices heard and protect our rights. Together, we can change the world.

Thank you for your continued involvement.

In solidarity,

Gregory Brown  
*Local 1395 Union Steward*

## AFGE Local 1395: A Story Of Advocacy, Growth, And Resilience *cont'd*



*Delegates@ AFGE National Convention– 2022*



***During its early days, Local 1395 demonstrated unwavering support for its***

resilient, committed, and focused on empowering its members throughout its growth.

### **Milestones in Union Rights: Executive Orders and Strengthening Bargaining Power**

In 1969, President Richard Nixon signed Executive Order 11491, bolstering the rights of federal unions. This order built upon the previous JFK order, granting unions like AFGE Local 1395 even more bargaining power. It also established the FLRC(A) and FSIP.

In 1976, Local 1395 took a courageous step by organizing and representing dedicated employees in the Office of Analytics Oversight and Review. Their actions embraced their rights, growth, and development.

President Jimmy Carter transformed the federal landscape two years later with the

historic Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. This monumental act codified all aspects of labor relations in the federal government, securing the foundation for unions like ours.

Throughout our rich history, Local 1395 has relentlessly pursued expansion, improvement, and growth, shaping a brighter legacy and future for its members.

### **Perseverance, Unity, and a Bright Future for AFGE Local 1395**

AFGE Local 1395's journey is an empowering story of dedication, progress, and growth. The union's unwavering advocacy for its members has led to significant achievements. Through unity and resilience, the organization has overcome challenges and embraced structural changes to provide comprehensive representation and

bargaining power.

The story of AFGE Local 1395 serves as a triumphant reminder of the power of perseverance, advocacy, and unity. It sets the stage for a bright, promising future for the union's members.

We are immensely grateful for your membership, which fuels our strength and continues our success. Your unwavering support encourages us to keep fighting and impacting the lives of each member, nurturing a vibrant and thriving union community.

Together, let us uphold the cherished values and triumphs of Local 1395, empowering one another and striving for excellence in all we do. As we embark on the next chapter of our remarkable story, let us continue to inspire and make a difference.



## Car Rental

# **Labor Day** is your day— **To get away!**

Labor Day is YOUR holiday weekend, so make the most of it with travel plans that save you big bucks. Book an Avis or Budget car rental and get up to 35%\* off base rates. Plus, stack coupons for bigger savings.



Stack Avis Deals:

**AWD Code B723742 + Coupon #UUGA037**

For a Free upgrade\*

Stack Budget Deals:

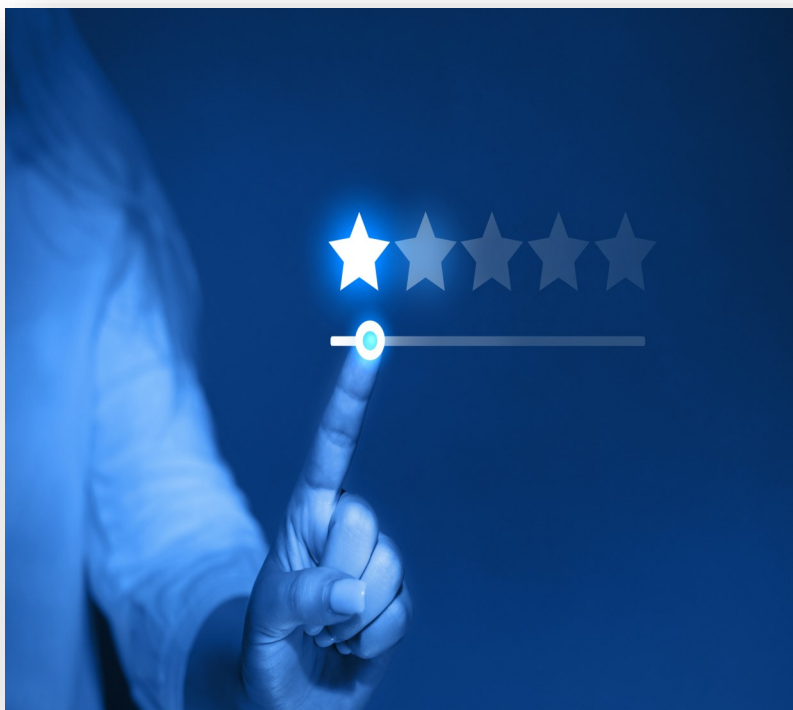
**BCD Code V816142 + Coupon #UUGAZ039**

For a Free upgrade\*

[Log in to AFGE.org](https://www.afge.org) to see all car rental discounts



*if you have evidence of management violations of Articles 2, 3, 18, and/or 21. An AFGE Local 1395 representative can help ...*



## Preparing for the PACS Appraisal

By H. Justine James

As I look forward to my favorite Midwestern season with fall festivals and milder weather, I'm getting ready for the end of another appraisal period when I'll be exercising my rights and responsibilities as a partner in the performance assessment process. In this article, I'll be sharing some tactics for maximizing Performance Assessment Communications System (PACS) experiences and outcomes.

As a participant in the two-way PACS system, I'll want to prepare a self-assessment for my appraisal. Our National Contract and the federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM) encourage consideration by management of employee feedback in the Appraisal discussion.

- ◆ Article 21, Section 6D of our Contract stipulates that: "...employees should provide feedback about their performance to their rating official" in order to "ensure that all performance-related activities are identified and documented."
- ◆ Article 21, Section 6G guarantees each bargaining-unit employee a reasonable amount of time to write a self-assessment and requires

management to upload the document to the employee's electronic SSA-7B Extension File.

- ◆ Article 21, Section 6G sets the end of the appraisal period as the due date for a self-assessment.
- ◆ OPM identifies a self-assessment as a "necessary tool" for supervisors to review when assessing performance [\[Supervisor's Checklist for Preparing for Employee Performance Reviews \(opm.gov\)\]](#).

For my self-assessment, I'll first gather my records for the appraisal period. Next, I'll review those records in light of the Information Resources and performance examples in my PACS Expectations discussion. If I participated in a workgroup, special project or detail, I'll check my e7B Extension File for any feedback. If information is not available in my records, I'll ask my immediate supervisor. When making the request, I'll cite Article 21, Section 16 which stipulates that management will timely disclose to each employee, sources of performance data, and relevant records.

My self-assessment also prepares me to engage in candid, two-way discussions with my supervisor so that my oral statements are captured in the PACS documentation. If unexpected feedback is delivered by my immediate supervisor, I will exercise a right provided for in Article 21 and ask for timely disclosure of relevant records. Employees have the right to respond to data used to assess performance.

You may find, as I have, disagreement with specific PACS feedback. Article 21, Section 6B allows an employee to prepare a written rebuttal which management is to upload to the e7B Extension File. You also may decide to contact AFGE Local 1395 to ask for a review for a potential grievance, particularly if you have evidence of management violations of Articles 2, 3, 18, and/or 21. An AFGE Local 1395 representative can help you evaluate the evidence and assess the merits of a grievance or other remedial action. Earlier this year, AFGE Local 1395 helped a grievant get objectionable PACS feedback removed. In the past, the Union has helped a grievant obtain higher ratings on all elements and, in one case, the offer of a priority promotional consideration.



*To this day, the AFGE remains firmly committed to protecting the rights of its members and ensuring they are respected.*



## Background and Organizational Structure of the AFE General Committee

By Earl Tucker

As a member of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), you should understand your union's history, purpose, and organizational structure. Established over 80 years ago in 1932, the AFGE has become one of the largest federal employee unions in the United States--representing over 670,000 current and retired public employees on both the state and federal levels. This article will provide an overview of this vital union's background and its governing components, such as National Councils, Local Unions, Departments, Conferences & Conventions, and other committees that form together to shape effective policies for equitable treatment for all our members.

Founded in 1932, AFGE is a powerful advocate for federal employees' pay and benefits. Our organization represents about 650,000 workers worldwide, including those in the Social Security Administration (SSA).

AFGE has nearly 300,000 members in various federal agencies, with our Headquarters Office in Washington, D.C., and 12 District Offices in different cities. We consist of approximately 1100 Locals, around 33 Bargaining Councils, and several

Area Councils of Local and agency-wide Regional Councils. The AFGE General Committee is a Consolidation of six of these units.

While the number of Locals in SSA has reduced over the years due to mergers, AFGE currently has approximately 50 Locals, about five Bargaining Councils, and one Headquarters Local within the SSA.

Each Local in SSA obtained recognition and coverage through secret ballot or representation elections, prevailing against other unions. The purpose of the consolidation was to establish higher levels of recognition, eventually reaching the highest level within the SSA.

It's important to note that AFGE Local 1923 held the highest recognition and coverage with the Commissioner of SSA before the consolidation.

We are dedicated to serving our members and striving for the betterment of federal employees in SSA and beyond. The AFGE General Committee, as the Bargaining Agent, is responsible for bargaining the National

Agreement for about 40K AFGE bargaining unit employees in SSA.

This information has provided you with a better understanding of your Local, your Council, your General Committee, and AFGE. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us.

The influence of an organized labor force in a democracy should not be underestimated. To this day, the AFGE remains firmly committed to protecting the rights of its members and ensuring they are respected. As a part of this valued association, each member is responsible for staying informed about recent developments and remaining active within their respective Local Union. Beyond attending meetings and voting for leadership positions, every AFGE member should work to engage others in their union and educate public servants about the importance of collective bargaining. With AFGE support and unified action, we can bring about positive change and grow our local and national powerful voice. Let us unite as a united front for better pay, protections, working conditions, job safety, job security, and much more—for ourselves first—so that collectively we can help build stronger American communities for generations to come. So get involved with your Local 1395 today!

## Meet your Local 1395 Union Leadership: Executive Vice President Monica Harris



*Seeing how the union is fighting hard for your rights without you understanding the importance of your voice.*



**M**onica Harris' journey to the top of AFGE Local 1395 is proof that anything is possible with hard work and dedication. Following a personal call to public service, she worked her way up from an entry-level role as a steward of local 1395 to Executive Vice President in just ten short years. Today, we're thrilled to share Monica's inspirational story through this exclusive interview for the Challenger newsletter! Read on as Monica shares her journey and offers words of wisdom on how you too can succeed within Local 1395.

### **How did you prepare for the responsibilities of Executive Vice President?**

*From steward to vice president of grievance, my journey has been fueled by dedication and perseverance. Now, I am setting my sights on the role of executive vice president, confident in my ability to bring immense value to the table. With over ten years of experience in the union, I have firsthand knowledge of the impact it can have. Furthermore, my four years of military service in the United States Air Force have equipped me with the skills and mindset necessary to handle the additional responsibilities of this role. As a disabled veteran, I also bring a unique perspective on the transformative power of public service for specific groups and populations.*

*This journey has only deepened my passion for making a difference, and I am ready to take on new challenges and create positive change.*

### **What strategies do you think are effective in managing negotiations with management?**

*Negotiations are delicate; each party involved should remain open and listen. Each side has pros and cons. Management may not always know what it takes for the employees to accomplish these goal(s), the anxiety. Management may take it upon themselves and think a phone call should take little time. But there are so many scam artists in this world that speaking to a beneficiary to get them to answer a call may take 20 minutes. You must attempt the procedure continuously when you need the document(s) to support their information.*

### **What are some of the biggest challenges you have encountered as Executive Vice President?**

*The biggest challenge is for members to seek union representative assistance. Your coworker needs help with discipline issues. Your supervisor suggests that you are abusing your leave and you have to come into the building, no longer able to telework. Well, have you ever been warned about your leave? Can you obtain documents from your doctor for FMLA or reasonable accommodation? But how would you know if you kept talking to your coworkers?*

### **What have been some of the most rewarding aspects of your role in this position so far?**

*Seeing how the union is fighting hard for your rights without you understanding the importance of your voice. The more people who join the union, the more strength you will have to get what you need to succeed. Your union won parental leave because you spoke up. Keep speaking up for your rights. But the union will not be able to if you continue to talk to your coworker only. Did you know that even when you retire, the union still fights for you? Your pension, medical care, and COLA are important, and you should want someone to help you with the process. Let AFGE be your voice.*

Monica is a strong example of what one person can do when they take the time to understand the value of unions. It's not about politics or ideologies – it's about taking control and gaining power for those who truly need it most. AFGE has been a major force in combating inequality, with countless employees now having equal access to important services such as paid leave and healthcare benefits. Nonetheless, we must never forget that the strength of the union lies within us and our collective voices. In unity lies power – let us continue to speak up and reap the benefits that come from being part of this incredible union!



# Debt Settlement Program

Are you burdened by debt? We have a solution for you – the Debt Settlement Program.

With over 180 million Americans struggling financially, it's time to make a change. Our program is designed to help you eliminate debt faster and regain financial freedom.

Here's what our program offers:

- Free debt evaluation and tailored options
- *Ability to settle debt for less than what you owe*
- Flexibility with low monthly payments
- Freedom from debt in just 24 to 48 months



We understand that life can sometimes throw unexpected hardships your way, whether it's a medical emergency, job loss, or a major life event. That's why we're here to guide you through this journey and provide assistance when you need it.

Our team of Certified Debt Consultants is available seven days a week to answer all your questions and support you throughout the program.

But that's not all! As a member, you'll receive up to a \$500 contribution towards your first settlement. We're here to make your debt-free journey even more rewarding.

If the Debt Settlement Program isn't the right fit for you, don't worry. We'll refer you to another Union Plus provider to ensure you receive the best possible support for your financial situation.

It's time to take charge of your finances and start living a debt-free life. Join AFGE today and let us guide you every step of the way.

This benefit is only available to members of AFGE. If you are a member of AFGE, please login to the

[Members Only section.](#)

Not a member?

Join AFGE today to unlock exclusive benefits like the Debt Settlement Program. It's time to take control of your financial life and say goodbye to debt by visiting the [Join AFGE](#) section.





# YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS ARE AT RISK.

THIS LABOR DAY GRILL YOUR CONGRESSPERSON ABOUT THE BUDGET.



**Call**

**(315) 817-5437**

and tell your Congressperson that Americans deserve a fully funded SSA.

**To provide effective public service**

**To return to 2010 staffing levels**



**SSA NEEDS...**

**\$17.4B in funding**

[AFGEC220.ORG](http://AFGEC220.ORG)

[AFGE GENERAL COMMITTEE](#)

[AFGE.ORG](http://AFGE.ORG)



Working hard for union  
families since 1986



# Coming this Labor Day!

Our **Unions Power America Labor Day Event** will be coming to you live on September 4<sup>th</sup> at 6pm ET!

Join us for a chance to win prizes and celebrate union members.



# Labor Day: Celebrating the Power of Unions

By Gregory Brown

Labor Day is a special time to reflect on the incredible impact of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and all labor unions. It is a day to honor the hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment to social justice that union members have shown throughout history.

Since its establishment in 1894, Labor Day has stood as a reminder of the remarkable progress that labor unions have achieved in protecting workers' rights. Moreover, the AFGE's roots trace back to 1932, when it was founded as the National Federation of Federal Employees.

From the very beginning, AFGE has been at the forefront of advocating for fair wages and benefits for federal employees. They have fought for better working conditions, improved healthcare coverage, job security protections, and more through tireless efforts.

In the 1970s, AFGE was pivotal in passing

groundbreaking labor legislation, such as the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931 and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. These laws ensured fair wages and set a national minimum wage for all workers, significantly enhancing working conditions and providing vital protections.

In recent times, AFGE has taken the lead in securing fair salaries and benefits for federal employees during economic hardships, like the recent pandemic-induced recession. They tirelessly advocated for hazard pay bonuses for essential personnel, tax relief measures, and long-term economic stimulus programs to support workers affected by the pandemic.

Labor Day is a crucial day to appreciate the tremendous accomplishments of unions. It reminds us of the strides made in improving working conditions,

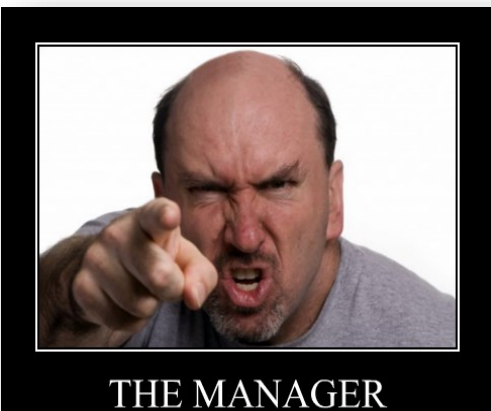


fair wages, and protecting employee rights. While there is still work to be done, Labor Day provides an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the hard work and dedication of those who fight tirelessly for labor rights.

This Labor Day, let us take a moment to honor the AFGE and all unionized workers. From ensuring workplace safety to fighting for better pay and benefits, unions provide job security and economic stability for working people. Let us express gratitude for their unwavering commitment and acknowledge their impact on our communities, workplaces, and beyond. Happy Labor Day! Together, we can make a difference.

# Oh You Got Jokes!: Yall know who I'm Talking About!

By Gregory Brown



Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there was a manager who was about as capable as a goldfish on dry land. Rumor has it that he only got the job because he knew someone in HR, and boy did that person make a mistake!

This manager was so overbearing, he made even the most confident employees feel like they were walking on eggshells. He

would walk around the office with a clipboard, ticking boxes and asking pointless questions that had nothing to do with work. Everyone dreaded the sound of his voice, like nails on a chalkboard.

To make matters worse, this manager had a nasty habit of discriminating against certain employees. It was like a game of "who can he pick on next?"

Women, people of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and those with disabilities were all on his hit list. He would make snide comments and undermine their abilities, all while pretending he was just trying to help them improve. What a joke!

When it came to actual work, this manager was about as useful as a chocolate teapot. He would delegate tasks to people who had no idea what they were doing, and then take credit

for their good work. He would also avoid making decisions at all costs, passing the buck to those beneath him and taking no responsibility for any mishaps that occurred.

In short, nobody liked this manager. But despite multiple complaints from the union, he somehow managed to cling onto his job for years. It was like the management team was trying to see how much they could get away with before the whole system collapsed. Who knows, maybe they thought it was all some big joke.

But the employees knew better. They knew that this manager was a calamity in waiting, and that it was only a matter of time before he showed his true colors. They just hoped he wouldn't be around for long!



# CHALLENGER

Get involved with the AFGE Local 1395 Challenger Newsletter! We're looking for passionate members of our local community who want to create something meaningful. Whether you have graphic design skills, reporting experience, or just love writing, we want your help in creating an informative newsletter that truly reflects our unique culture.

Help us add new life to the newsletter by expressing your voice and contributing in any way you can – start as a writer , graphic designer, or photographer today! With the help of each dedicated individual member, we will build a powerful piece of content that proudly showcases everything about what makes this union amazing.

If you're interested in becoming part of this exciting venture with us at the Challenger Newsletter then don't hesitate - send us a message today! Together we can create something historic and inspiring.

All inquiries should be sent to the following email address:

*[afge1395@afge1395.org](mailto:afge1395@afge1395.org)*

Attention: Challenger