

CHALLENGER

Wisconsin Ω Ohio Ω Michigan Ω Minnesota Ω Indiana Ω Illinois

JUNE 2023

AFGE Local 1395

AFGE LOCAL 1395 2022 ELECTION RESULTS

Cheryl Bellamy-Bonner-*President*

Sean Shideler- *Executive Vice President**

Deborah Flynn- *Treasurer*

Abigail Jones- *Sergeant-At-Arms*

Secretary

Monwella Foster- Financial

Toya Trent- Recording*

Administrative Director

Jill Hornick- FO

Gregory Senden- ODAR

Earl Tucker- OQP

Monica Harris- PC

Vice President, FO

Patricia Washington

Patricia Hayes

Kourtney Craigmiles

Vice President, ODAR

Yolonda Thomas

Frank Cavanagh

Barbara Fairall

Vice President, PSC

Jerome Jones

Vice President, At-Large

H. Justine James

Angela Barnhart

Executive Board Member

Kimberly Ponder-Chism- FO**

Elissa Oats- ODAR

Catherine Mulligan- PSC

Council Delegate, FO

Patricia Hayes

Jill Hornick

Council Delegate, ODAR

Barbara Fairall

Patrick Hayes

Council Delegate, OQP

Earl Tucker

Council Delegate, PSC

Cheryl Bellamy-Bonner***

Angela Barnhart

Delegate & Alternate To the National Convention & 7th District Caucus

Cheryl Bellamy-Bonner***

Earl Tucker***

Jill Hornick***

David Tatum

Patricia Hayes

Kimberly Ponder-Chism**

Cassandra Green

H. Justine James & Angela Barnhart

Sherry Hadley-Evans

Yolonda Thomas

*Resigned **Promoted out of the bargaining unit ***Automatic delegate by virtue of position

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.”

The Challenger

VOL. II

JUNE 2023

The Challenger is the official membership publication of:

AFGE Local 1395

P.O. Box 804730

Chicago, IL 60680-4108

Call/Text: 833-575-1395 (press “0” to leave a message)

Secured Fax: 312-277-7598

Email: afge1395@global.net

Local 1395 website: www.afge1395.org

AFGE website: www.afge.org

TWITTER @AFGE1395

Facebook: AFGE Local 1395 (*members ONLY*)

Monthly **ZOOM** Membership Meetings:

2nd Wednesday –6pm (*Monthly*)

Email for Link

Visit the AFGE Table on

6/20 and 6/21

In The *HWSSC Lobby*

600 West Madison Ave.

Chicago, IL 60661



NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION: JUNE 21, 2023

Are you an SSA Employee and have you signed this petition yet?

Sign AFGE's petition and stand with your fellow workers. **Fight to protect your rights!** AFGE sees a bright future, one where each of us is valued, listened to, and rightly compensated for our hard work on behalf of the American people.

<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/ssa-wants-to-take-back-its-employees-rights-dont-let-them>

How can your friends and family support SSA workers?

Ask them to sign a second petition [here](#). We need the public's support now more than ever. Americans rely on Social Security, and we need to provide help they can count on.

<https://chng.it/PR4W8fYQFT>

SSA employees and community members:

CALL

(315) 817-5437...

to be connected with your lawmakers. Tell them that SSA is in a state of emergency and needs to be funded to serve the American people.

- Attend the AFGE SSA rally in DC. See flyer attached [here](#).
- Wear **red** and post selfies to social media with #supportssaworkers #redforfeds and tag [National Council of SSA Field Operations Locals](#) and [AFGE](#).

**CAN'T
COME TO
THE RALLY?**

**LIVE
STREAM
HERE**

<https://www.facebook.com/afgeunion>



Stay Connected

Get email and text updates sent to your phone.

- Text 'AFGE' to 59129 to start receiving text alerts.
- Visit afge.org/update to sign up for email alerts!

THE AIR COMMISSION



CONTENTS

Government Workers: Your Job, Your Union	6
Representational (Weingarten) Rights	7
Individual Grievance– Filing Deadline.....	8
Uncovering AI’s Impact On Union Workers.....	9
Local 1395 Members: Working In A Toxic Environment	11
Less Than 1% Of Union Members File Grievances Each Year. Here’s Why You Should Join Them	12
Recent Surveys.....	15

From The President's Desk



Greetings Local 1395 Members,

We “Have Come A Long Way Baby, and, while we have not Seen the Mountain Top, we do see some light in the tunnel --

We ended 2019 with a contract heavily influenced by the Executive Orders aimed at reducing Federal Employee Rights.

On January 22, 2021 President Biden signed Executive Order 14403, Protecting the Federal Workforce [here](#). This Executive Order opened the door for restoration of Federal Employee Rights. While the door did not open easily at SSA, AFGE continued to beat and kick on the door until it cracked opened, we have stuck our foot in and we are not taking it out.

In 2022 AFGE and SSA agreed to reopen the following six (6) Contract Articles:

- ◆ Article 3 Employee Rights
- ◆ Article 16 Training and Career Development
- ◆ Article 23 Discipline and Adverse Actions
- ◆ Article 27 Details
- ◆ Article 29 Union-Management Meetings

Also, AFGE has reached an agreement on the following.

- ◆ Expanding Article 41, to expand the eligibility of employees to participate in Telework.
- ◆ Expanding Article 13, by increasing Transit Subsidies up to \$125 effective 10/1/2022 & up to \$135 effective 10/01/2023.
- ◆ Expanding Article 30, by increasing AFGE representation availability to pre-2019 contract levels
- ◆ Parental Bereavement Leave Agreement, which includes up to two (2) weeks of administrative leave for the death of a minor or disabled child.

AFGE has released multiple surveys to gain insight from our members. AFGE values the input of our members.

SSA employees have made their opinions heard loud and clear by completing the 2022 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) [here](#).

SSA took LAST place in the best places to work. This survey helps AFGE push the door open a little more to discuss with the Agency ways to improve employee satisfaction.

You have an opportunity to weigh in with the 2023 Federal Viewpoint Survey from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) until June 30, 2023. Check your ssa.gov email for the link. It takes about 30 minutes and can be completed on duty time. Include it on your Daily Accomplishment Sheet (DAR). Survey participation is voluntary and confidential. Remember only the squeaky wheel gets oil.

AFGE is taking SSA employees message to the Hill. During the week of June 19, 2023, AFGE representatives will meet with your congressional leaders to share SSA employee concerns and garner support for employees.

AFGE calls for your SUPPORT in the AFGE NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION on Wednesday June 21 by wearing **RED**. Wear red and post selfies to social media with [#supportssaworkers](#) [#redforfeds](#) and tag National Council of SSA Field Operations Locals and AFGE.

In Solidarity,

Cheryl Bellamy-Bonner

President- AFGE Local 1395

GOVERNMENT WORKS: YOUR JOB, YOUR UNION

Gregory Brown

When you become a government worker, you join a proud tradition of public service. You also join a union that has fought for the rights of government workers for more than a century. Your union is your advocate, protector, and voice on the job. It is there to negotiate for better working conditions, defend you against unfair treatment, and help you get the training and education you need to do your job. When you join the union, you join a team of dedicated professionals committed to ensuring that government workers have a voice on the job. Get involved in your union today, and ensure your voice is heard.

As a worker, you have rights that are protected by law. But what good are these

rights if you don't know about them or don't know how to assert them? This is where your union comes in. By joining forces, workers are much more likely to be successful in their negotiations than if they tried to go it alone.

But unions can only be effective if workers are actively involved in them. That's why it's so important to get involved with your union. Attend meetings, vote in elections, and participate in campaigns. The more involved you are, the stronger your union will be, and the more effective it will protect your rights. So don't sit on the sidelines—get involved today!



UNION
YES

REPRESENTATIONAL RIGHTS

H. Justine James

All federal, bargaining-unit employees need to be aware of representational (Weingarten) rights in the workplace that are afforded by the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (FSLMRS), Section, Section 7114 . This law affords representational rights during meetings with federal employees: for formal, group meetings about personnel policies, practices, or general working conditions (i.e., Think Twice First, FEVS promotion) and for individual, investigatory examinations leading to possible discipline.

Obtaining representation during an investigatory meeting has often been called exercising Weingarten rights in recognition of a Supreme Court decision concerning the Statue's applicability in the private-sector case, NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc. For AFGE bargaining unit employees at Social Security Administration, the FSLMRS statutory protection of union representation at formal and investigatory meetings is addressed in the National AFGE-SSA National Agreement, Article 3.

The Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), the federal agency that interprets and enforces the Statute, has decided that representation rights do not extend to formal discussions regarding performance problems. The editor(s) at FEDSMILL (<https://fedsmill.com/>) -- along with some Union representatives and bargaining unit employees -- disagree with this FLRA position that representation at a performance-problem discussion is not



protected under Statute. Nonetheless, you may consult with AFGE to request assistance after such a discussion.

So how and when does a Social Security employee avail themselves of representational (Weingarten) rights for an investigatory examination for non-performance topics?

If a manager should call you in (or up) for questioning, request the topic of the investigation. You have a right to that information. You also may ask whether discipline may be proposed, if you are unsure. If you obtain enough information to reasonably believe that a disciplinary action might result from the exam, you'll want to consider exercising your right to request representation. No special language is needed to make your request. You only need to communicate your interest in obtaining union representation. Once you have asserted your representational right, contact AFGE Local 1395. Management questioning should be

postponed until you obtain representation.

After you contact AFGE Local 1395, a knowledgeable union representative will be designated to assist you before, during, and after the investigatory exam. A designated AFGE representative can prepare you for questioning, assist in guiding the investigation in a fair and professional manner, request relevant information from the investigator, and intervene as needed to avert belligerent conduct and disciplinary action. A representative is not simply a passive witness at a meeting. After the meeting, the representative can discuss next steps with you.

Claiming your representational rights protects both your interest and the interest of the entire bargaining unit. Representation at meetings is an important collective bargaining right. Make sure you exercise your rights!



Article 24, Section 9 of our National Agreement provides that a grievance be submitted in writing within 15 working days of the action or date that the employee became aware of the act or occurrence. Day 1 counts as the day after the action or date. National Holidays and weekends are not counted. Contact Local 1395 AFGE when you know of a possible contract violation.

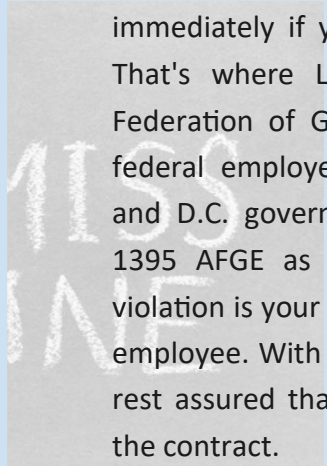
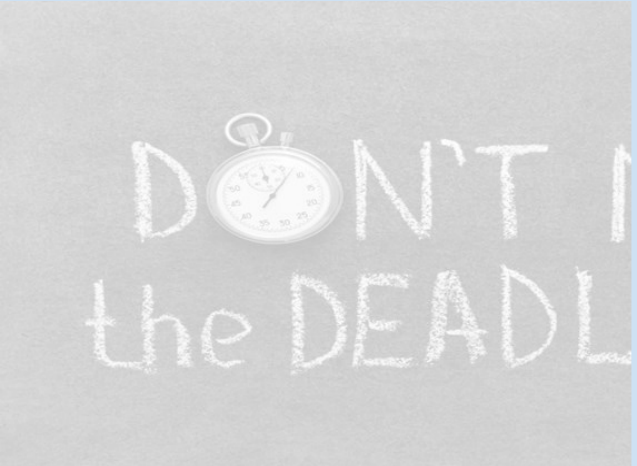
Do you have a timeframe for submitting grievances under our National Agreement? Article 24, Section 9 states that you must submit a written grievance within 15 working days of the action or occurrence. But don't worry, weekends and National Holidays don't count! So, if an incident happens on a Friday, you still have 15 working days to file your grievance.

If you need extra time to prepare and file a written statement, try requesting an extension from management. If they refuse, you can refer to our National Agreement and proceed with filing a grievance immediately. Workplace discrimination or mistreatment is unacceptable, so it's crucial to report any wrongdoing as soon as possible. This will help protect you from potential repercussions and ensure justice is served.

As a federal employee, the contract between you and your agency is crucial to your job security and livelihood. You must know your rights and responsibilities as outlined in the contract. However, you must notify the proper authority immediately if you notice any possible agreement violation. That's where Local 1395 AFGE comes in. The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is the largest federal employee Union representing over 700,000 federal and D.C. government workers nationwide. Contacting Local 1395 AFGE as soon as you become aware of a possible violation is your first step to protecting your rights as a federal employee. With the AFGE's experience and expertise, you can rest assured that they will fight to uphold your rights under the contract.

INDIVIDUAL GRIEVANCE-FILING DEADLINE

Gregory Brown





UNCOVERING AI'S IMPACT ON UNION WORKERS

Gregory Brown

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the way we live and work, and its impact is being felt in every industry. It has revolutionized areas like manufacturing, healthcare, finance, transportation, and many more. But it's also had a profound effect on labor Unions.

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is one of the largest federal employee Unions in the US. It represents 700,000 workers across all branches of government including military personnel, postal workers, border patrol agents and civilian employees from executive agencies like NASA and the Department of Defense. They are now facing a new challenge with the rise in AI technology: how can they help their members adapt to rapid changes in technology?

Department of Defense has already begun exploring ways to better prepare its members for a changing job market that will be increasingly powered by AI. For example, they have conducted workshops on emerging trends in automation as well as providing guidance on how to transition into other industries or career paths where AI might be used more heavily than others. The Union also encourages employers to use ethical practices when incorporating any form of artificial intelligence into their workplace operations.

In addition to helping its members adjust to these changes through training and education initiatives, the AFGE is also advocating for strong regulations governing AI-based systems used by employers or government agencies that employ its members. This includes

lobbying for laws that protect worker rights such as ensuring workers have input regarding decisions made by AI-based systems at work or when deciding whether or not to accept certain job assignments dictated by automated processes.

AI is revolutionizing the labor market in unprecedented ways—including those involving Unionized labor—and Unions like AFGE are doing their best to protect their members' interests while navigating this new terrain. As companies continue to implement more sophisticated forms of artificial intelligence into their operations, AFGE will remain committed to ensuring that its members remain protected and informed during these times of rapid change caused by technological advancement.

LOCAL 1395 MEMBERS: WORKING IN A



TOXIC ENVIRONMENT

Gregory Brown

Imagine, coming to work every day feeling like someone was going to victimize, intimidate or underestimate you. Sometimes the signs are subtle like constantly stressed or having difficulty concentrating. Other times, the signs are more obvious, such as witnessing or experiencing sexual harassment or being subjected to unreasonable demands. This is a universal experience that many Local 1395 Union members are having every day.

Toxic work environments can take a toll on employees both mentally and physically. But what could you do about it? If you find yourself in one of these situations, you must know that you are not alone. The Union can provide the necessary support to help you combat a toxic work environment. You can take collective action to improve your situation by joining forces with other employees. You can access resources and information through the Union to help you stand up to your employer and demand better working conditions. Knowing that you are not alone in this fight can also find strength in numbers. It's essential to



take steps to protect yourself and your well-being. This may mean setting boundaries with your boss or colleagues, seeking counseling or therapy. Remember, your safety and well-being are always more important than any job.

It is important to have allies in any fight against a toxic work environment. The Union can be a valuable ally when you are up against a toxic work environment or toxic professional relationship with your manager or supervisor. The American Federation of Government Employees is the largest Union for government workers, representing over 700,000 employees across the country. If you are a government employee, chances are Local 1395 can help you with whatever issue you are facing. If you are experiencing such things as

discrimination or any kind of harassment at work, Local 1395 can provide support and advocacy on your behalf. Remember, the Union is an organization of workers that advocates for better working conditions. They also have the power to negotiate with employers on behalf of their members. If you are facing a difficult situation at work, the Union can help you by filing grievances and organizing protests.

The Union can be a powerful ally when you are fighting for your rights. So, if you are a government employee needing assistance, don't hesitate to contact your Local 1395 Union representative. As a government employee, you may feel like you have little need for a Union. After all, you have a steady job with good benefits and job security. However, there are many ways in which the Union can protect you. The Union can help ensure that your working conditions are safe and fair. So, while you may not need the Union right now, it is important to remember that it is there to protect you and strength comes in numbers.

Less than 1% of Union Members File Grievances Each Year. Here's Why You Should Join Them.

Gregory Brown



Government workers are the backbone of our society. They work tirelessly to keep our infrastructure running and protect our citizens. However, they are often undervalued and mistreated. When facing unfair working conditions or treatment, government workers have few places to turn. That's why it's so important that we speak up and file a grievance when necessary. Less than 1% of government workers file grievances yearly, but that doesn't mean the other 99% don't face difficult working conditions. When government workers come forward and demand better treatment, it helps to improve the working conditions for everyone. So if you're a government worker, don't be afraid to speak up and join the less than 1% who file grievances yearly. You could be the one who helps to make a difference for all government workers.

By filing grievances, we hold the agency accountable for ensuring a fair and equitable

work environment, providing adequate training and resources, and respecting our right to a safe and healthy workplace. We need to be the voice of our membership and hold the agency accountable for its actions. We must work together to ensure that our Union is a force for good in our workplace. When we speak up and demand better treatment, we set the standard for how we should be treated as employees. And when we band together and fight for our rights, there's nothing we can't achieve.

As Union members, we are responsible for standing up for our rights and helping ensure that our Union is strong. Only by working together can we hope to achieve our goals. Remember, the Union is only as strong as its membership. So let's all do our part to ensure our Union is strong and effective. Together, we can make a difference. So don't be afraid to speak up and stand up for yourself - it's your right and worth fighting for.

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@sbcglobal.net

Attention: Challenger

RECENT SURVEYS

Gregory Brown



Congratulations, AFGE Local 1395 members! Your remarkable participation and enthusiasm in response to our recent survey have been noteworthy. Your voices are powerful, and we assure you that the management acknowledges your feedback as they work towards improving employee working conditions and terms of employment. Thank you for taking an active role in shaping the future of this Union; together, we can create a better workplace for all. Let us persist in speaking out to strengthen ourselves and each other.

We genuinely appreciate your continued engagement and support. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have anything else to share. We are always here to listen and assist our members in any way possible.

Your involvement is tremendously valued, making AFGE Local 1395 the best!

Know Your Contract!

Article 24, Grievance Procedure

15 **workdays** to file grievance

- ◆ *Excludes Holidays/Weekends*

45 **calendar days** to file EEO complaint

- ◆ *Includes Holidays/Weekends*



Have you updated your personal email and mailing address?

AFGE has hundreds of opportunities for you to get involved and act to strengthen our government work-force-but to do that, we need to have your most current email address!

Go to www.afge.org/update and make sure to update your contact information, so you can be the first to know what actions you can take in your community to stand up for federal workers.

Have you signed up for text alerts?

Want to stay in touch on-the-go? Text AFGE to “59129” from your personal phone so we can keep you up to date on news and opportunities. *(Never text from your government issued phone!)*



Propane Discounts!

AFGE members, now you can save on your propane bills with an exclusive Union Plus Propane Pro membership! Propane expenses add up quickly – between fuel, tank rental fees, and delivery fees, it’s no wonder propane bills can be so expensive. But AFGE Union Plus is here to help. With union plus propane Pro membership you will enjoy the benefits of pre-negotiated prices on your propane fuel that will save you an average of 25-40 cents per gallon! Plus all those pesky fees are gone for good - no more tank rental costs or delivery fees - and you receive a \$50 credit for free propane and \$100 for the purchase of a new propane tank from your approved supplier.

With this amazing deal, not only will you get preferential pricing on our quality service, but you won’t have to worry about settling for substandard products or services, as we pre-screen all suppliers before approving them into the program. You can also rest assured knowing that our program offers 100% satisfaction guarantee or your money back and over 23 reviews from other satisfied customers. Lastly we offer a special \$10 off discount for everyone as part of the program's first year membership – so don’t wait any longer and sign up today!

This amazing offer isn't just available in some states either - it is offered in all states except: Alaska, Hawaii, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina and North Dakota! So what are you waiting for? Sign up now with Union Plus Propane Pro and start saving on all your propane costs today!

See your local AFGE representative, visit the Member Benefits section of www.afge.org or call the Benefits Line at 1-888-844-AFGE (2343)

Article Submission Policy

We welcome articles and success stories that contribute positively to the welfare of the Local 1395 Union and all of its members.

Submissions may be edited for layout and design. Articles indicating authorship reflect the views of the author, and not necessarily those of the Challenger staff or Local 1395.

Articles from any source are considered for publication by the Challenger staff.

We look forward to hearing from you.

All submissions must be signed and should be sent to the following address:

afge1395@sbcglobal.net

Attention: **Challenger**

****Note: Do not use government time or equipment for submissions.**