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2012 Strategic Plan



For nearly 100 years, our network of dedicated unionists have fought tirelessly to ensure our members' voices remain loud and clear, both at the negotiation table and on Capitol Hill. NFFE has never been content to rest on the achievements of its past – faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, our union has risen to confront the many challenges facing the labor movement by developing innovative methods of organizing and representation. With the resounding defeat of NSPS, the successful campaign to ward off attacks on union official time, and most recently, a hard-fought victory securing health insurance for seasonal firefighters, we are now set to approach what will be one of the most strenuous trials we have ever faced.

With over a quarter of the federal workforce eligible to retire and public sector union membership rates continuing to fall steadily, it has become clear our union must act swiftly to ensure our nation's civil servants continue to receive the representation they deserve. While NFFE's creative strategies have seen our union grow, even in the face of unprecedented decline throughout most of the labor movement, there remain opportunities to strengthen our great union further still.

A study by the Cornell University's International Labor Relations School illustrates an astounding disconnect between young people and the labor movement. Evidence can be seen simply by asking a young person if he or she supports labor unions. A vast majority of young people under the age of 35 who were surveyed did not respond with a definitive "yes" or "no." Rather, most said, "I don't know" or "I'm not sure." This may come as a jarring shock to those union members who have been actively engaged in the decades-long struggle to defend our nation's middle class from relentless attacks, but it is a reality we must acknowledge if our union is to continue gaining strength and momentum.

Our union cannot and will not stand by the wayside as this generation fails to understand, appreciate, or become engaged in a movement that has established and defended every right the American worker enjoys today. Each and every one of NFFE's members, regardless of age or length of membership, is

A 2011 study by the Partnership for Public Service found only 6 percent of college students surveyed plan to work in government at the local, state, or federal level upon graduating.

responsible for squarely confronting this problem.



With this resolute commitment to what will become the legacy of the labor movement, NFFE is proud to announce the creation of its Young Federal Leaders (YFL) initiative. YFL seeks first and foremost to provide educational opportunities for our young members, illustrating the necessity of unions in today's incredibly competitive job market and increasingly hostile political climate. Secondly, YFL will facilitate mentorship relationships for our union's young workers and seek to understand the unique personal and professional issues they face. Lastly, the Young

Federal Leaders initiative will identify passionate and committed young workers and help them seek out leadership and advisory positions.

The strategic plan that follows seeks both to communicate the scope and aim of the Young Federal Leaders initiative as well as provide guidance and instruction for union leaders and young workers who are eager to cultivate this new program at the local level. NFFE National cannot ensure the success of this program alone; it will take the commitment and hard work of every member, every local, every council, and every union leader. Together we will take responsibility for our union's success by actively shaping the young workers who will lead it into an uncharted but exciting future.

SURVEY

The need to engage young workers in our union has been abundantly clear for quite some time. However, NFFE could not move forward to create this program without the clear support of our membership. To gauge interest, identify potential participants, and better understand the needs of our members, NFFE partnered with the IAM's Strategic Resources Department to design a survey.

Conducted in February 2012, NFFE's young worker survey returned results that were both heartening and impossible to ignore. With nearly 500 participants and almost 90 percent supporting the creation of a young worker initiative, we knew we had to move forward, and quickly, with a program designed to recruit, engage, and empower our union's young leaders.

NFFE's young worker survey not only illustrated our members' interest, it also shed light on our young members' unique needs and concerns. Of those respondents under the age of 40, only 12 percent held a local lodge position and half were struggling to balance their roles as parents, professionals, and union members. Unlike some older or long-time union members, young workers are facing work-life issues that often hinder their ability to become actively engaged in the union early in their careers.

Evidence of the complex dynamic young workers forge between their personal and professional lives was illustrated even further when our survey asked, “What issues are most important to you as a federal employee?” Over 50 percent confirmed our assumptions and chose “balancing work-life issues” with another 45 percent choosing “achieving upward professional mobility.”

To further round out our understanding of the young NFFE-IAM member, our survey sought to understand how NFFE could better support the young worker who is attempting to juggle these responsibilities and challenges. We asked, “Which service would you most like a young worker program to provide?” Respondents consistently chose (1) mentorship from seasoned federal employees/union members; 2) education and training related to union and/or federal employee issues; and 3) opportunities to serve in leadership positions.

With this information we are able to understand the issues our young workers are confronting both in the workplace and at home and become better equipped to craft a program with their unique needs in mind.

VISION & MISSION

Armed with more information about our young members than ever before, NFFE established its Young Federal Leaders initiative to provide the services they requested with the components necessary to ensure the steady strengthening and growth of our union over time.



YFL’s vision statement clearly defines the initiative’s scope, goals, and plans for both the immediate and distant future. It reads:

NFFE’s Young Federal Leaders initiative is more than an effort to recruit new young members – it is a movement aimed at transforming our union forever. YFL seeks to recognize and challenge young leaders in the federal government by offering education, mentorship, and leadership opportunities for its members. By connecting our network of experienced union brothers and sisters with a new generation of enthusiastic young workers, NFFE will become an even stronger advocate for our nation’s civil servants. Together, we will ensure our union’s future by striving to become a more agile and creative presence within the labor movement.

To put it more plainly: YFL is a program to **recruit, engage,** and **empower** young workers in our union.

Working from this premise and utilizing the information we collected from our survey, the remainder of this strategic plan will be devoted to outlining the specific and quantifiable goals set forth by the Young Federal Leaders initiative. It is our hope that this plan will provide a clear

path forward for both local leaders and young workers who seek to become better educated, more engaged, and increasingly empowered unionists.

EDUCATION

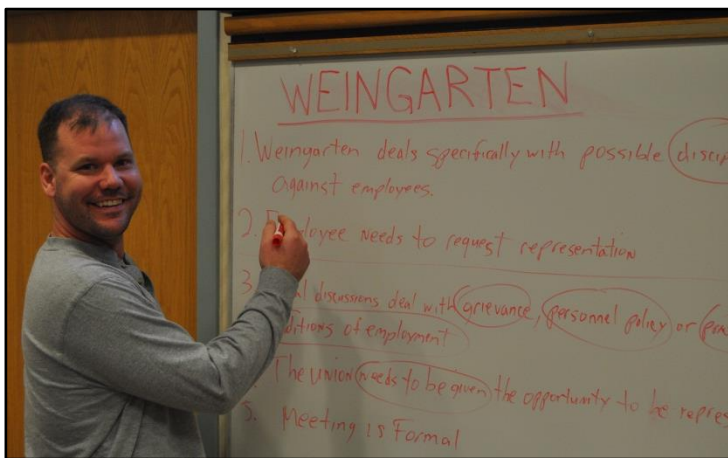
Our young union members possess a tremendous amount of skill and breadth of knowledge that, if harnessed, could strengthen the labor movement in a myriad of untold ways. They are adept at navigating current technologies, excel in communication endeavors, and offer a fresh perspective in matters relating to activism and advocacy. Unfortunately, many young workers fail to realize their professional goals within the union structure because they lack a labor-specific education and the guidance of a mentor.

NFFE is extremely fortunate to utilize the vast educational opportunities offered at the IAM's William W. Winpisinger Education and Technology Center. There, unionists from beginners to experts, gather together in a classroom setting to receive education on labor issues from teachers who have spent most of their careers in the union trenches. They know this business better than anyone, and all of the instructors are passionate about sharing their knowledge with their students.

Each year the Center hosts a variety of courses offering instruction on topics ranging from how to file a grievance, recruit new members, represent employees in EEO complaints or MSPB appeals, and serve as effective local leaders. We have found the classes work best when at least two members from a local lodge attend together. The following courses should be taken by all of our members as they provide a comprehensive labor education that will assist each of us in our journeys to become more effective unionists:

**"When you
know better,
you do better."
– Maya
Angelou**

Federal Employees' Basic, Federal Employees' Advanced, Leadership I-III, Federal Employees' Collective Bargaining, and Arbitration.



Students do not necessarily need to take these courses in the order they are listed, but we recommend our members start with the Federal Employees' Basic class before moving on to higher level courses, as the Basic course provides a broad, introductory overview of federal employee issues.

As local leaders prepare to send members to the Winpisinger Center, please consider sending a new young member with another more experienced member. In recent

years we have seen a significant increase in young members attending classes, and we hope that we will see this trend continue with the deliberate support of our local officials.

YFL not only advocates frequent and regular attendance at the Winpisinger Center for our young members, it is also working with the IAM to develop a course specifically for the young worker which will be offered in addition to the other classes already available. It's our hope that within the next year the Winpisinger Center will begin offering a comprehensive curriculum designed to educate young union members about labor history, union organizing, and professional development. YFL will continue to update our membership about course offerings as this initiative progresses.

MENTORSHIP

Our union is extremely fortunate to have some of the most experienced and dedicated representatives in the labor movement. As the workforce ages and a new generation of leaders takes the reins, however, we risk losing the decades of institutional knowledge that has helped make our union great.

NFFE's YFL initiative is working to connect our network of experienced union brothers and sisters with a new generation of enthusiastic young workers. To keep our union strong, we are asking our skilled and knowledgeable members, stewards, and local officers to help guide young members as they assume leadership roles within our union.

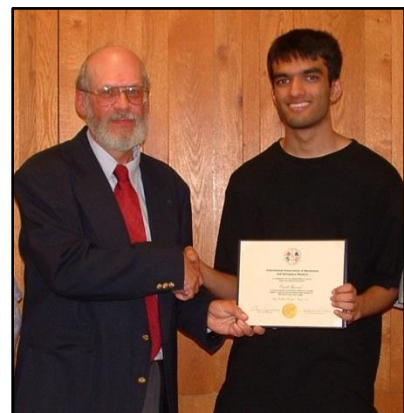
"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." – Benjamin Franklin

Mentors can work with their mentees in whatever fashion they choose: over the phone, via email, or in person. It's certainly not our intention to burden anyone with regular calls or meetings, but rather to have the best and brightest ready and willing to dispense quick advice when needed.

Once members have communicated their interest in serving as mentors, we will add their names and contact information to the YFL Mentorship Bank. As we receive requests from our young members, we'll do our best to match them with one of more of our volunteer mentors who share similar positions, agencies, locals, councils, and/or geographic proximity.

In the meantime, we are relying on our local leaders to reach out to young people in the workforce, both members and non-members alike, sharing with them the benefits of union membership and all of the ways our union is working to engage young federal leaders.

For more information on a YFL mentor's role, please see Appendix A or go online at www.nff.org/YFL.



LEADERSHIP

NFFE values the voices and ideas of its young members. We believe our union will be best served by trying to understand and incorporate all of the diverse perspectives of our membership, regardless of age or tenure. We all bring something different to the table, and YFL firmly believes there is a place for everyone to utilize their unique skills and knowledge within our union.

Nearly a third of the young members who responded to NFFE's young worker survey said that they would most like the initiative to offer its participants leadership opportunities.

Most young members would appreciate the opportunity to become more involved in their union, but because they're not familiar with the local lodge structure or have not been asked to actively participate, they continue to pay their dues without ever becoming a part of our vibrant community. There are countless ways for a young member to become active in our union, and we hope our locals will get creative in engaging young workers at their locals. Here are just a few ideas from YFL about how to turn a young worker into a union leader:

- 1) *Local leaders should ensure all lodge leadership positions are occupied, ideally with at least one young member:* Many NFFE locals have one or more positions vacant. Utilize young members who want to become more involved by appointing them as your local's Communicator, Educator, or Trustee. The following positions constitute a full executive board: *President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Secretary-Treasurer, Conductor-Sentinel, Communicator, and Educator.*
- 2) *For the young member who has demonstrated sustained commitment to the local or who is specifically interested in working with your lodge's young workers, start a Young Federal Leaders local chapter:* Identify young workers in your bargaining unit. Solicit young members to join your YFL local chapter and work together to recruit more young workers at your local lodge. Once you have identified a sizable group of



young workers within your bargaining unit, start hosting social gatherings to get to know one another and build solidarity.

- 3) *YFL's National Committee provides another great opportunity for emerging young leaders to get involved in our union:* Currently comprised of young members who serve in government agencies throughout the country, YFL's National Committee is always looking for passionate, committed young members to serve as liaisons between our locals in the field and the NFFE National Office. Committee members are responsible for disseminating information about YFL to other NFFE lodges, mobilizing young workers at their home locals, and providing guidance and advice to other young members who want to become more involved.

Local leaders and young members should not wait for one another to offer their services or present opportunities – each party must pro-actively communicate their needs and expectations. Local leaders: dispense guidance and offer your expertise generously. Young members: pledge your knowledge and skills to strengthen your local lodge today!

GETTING STARTED

Now you're ready to take the next steps to get involved in the YFL initiative. Check out the guidance below:

- 1) Request YFL brochures and signs from the NFFE National Office to bring attention to your local's commitment to engaging young workers. Also request copies of the strategic plan and disseminate them among your executive board and membership. All supplies are free of charge and can be shipped to your local lodge. YFL materials can also be accessed online at www.nffe.org/YFL.
- 2) Review your local's bargaining unit list to determine how many young workers are eligible to become members. Create a list of young members you plan to approach and establish a timeframe in which to do it. If you have 20 eligible young members, make it your goal to contact four of them per week for the next five weeks. Once you've reached out to some of them, word will begin to spread and young members will likely begin approaching you!
- 3) Appoint a young member or members to serve as your local's welcoming committee for new young employees. Young workers are more likely to join the union if they are approached by a knowledgeable young member who can answer their questions and provide personal testimony about the many benefits of membership.

- 4) Ensure your local's young members have the opportunity to attend classes regularly at the Winpisinger Center. Upon their return, ensure the young members share what they have learned with other members and encourage them to apply their new knowledge and skills at your local. Make a pledge to send at least



two young members from your local lodge to the Winpisinger Center each year. If all of NFFE's locals keep this pledge, our union will see over 400 young members trained each year. Imagine how this could transform our union and the labor movement!

- 5) Once you have identified a group of young workers from your local's bargaining unit, start planning activities to get to know one another better, establish a young worker community, and build solidarity. Organizing offsite get-togethers, service projects, or fundraisers are excellent ways to get started.
- 6) Contact the NFFE National Office and request a YFL mentor or inquire about serving as one. We will happily assist you in identifying an appropriate match to facilitate a mutual exchange of helpful information and ideas.
- 7) Get in touch with a YFL National Committee member who can provide information about how to get your local chapter up and running. Each of their emails are located on YFL's page on the NFFE website: www.nffe.org/YFL.
- 8) Check out Appendix B for step-by-step instructions that further illustrate how to recruit, engage, and empower young workers in our union.
- 9) Reach out to Amy Burns, Special Assistant to the President, with any questions or concerns. She can be reached at aburns@nffe.org or (202) 216-4420 and would love to hear your ideas and insights.

CONCLUSION

NFFE's Young Federal Leaders initiative presents an unprecedented opportunity for young workers to pay respect to the dedicated unionists of our past and present by taking responsibility for labor's future. By taking action now, young federal employees can protect the rights for which our union brothers and sisters fought so vigilantly, and in doing so become leaders of a movement to protect and defend hard-working Americans everywhere.

As NFFE President William R. Dougan asserted, "Our Young Federal Leaders will be the ones to ensure our union remains a force to be reckoned with in the fight to protect our nation's civil servants. We must educate and mentor them today to ensure they are prepared to be the labor leaders of tomorrow."

You are the leaders of our union's future, and we need your help today!

Appendix A

ROLE OF A NFFE MENTOR

Our union is lucky to have some of the most dedicated and experienced representatives in the labor movement today. However, as the workforce ages and a new generation of leaders take the reins, we risk losing the decades of institutional knowledge that have helped make our union great. To keep our union strong, we are asking that our most skilled and knowledgeable members, stewards, and officers join our new mentorship program! Mentors can work with their mentees in whatever fashion they choose: over the phone, via email, or in person.

This program will be critical in passing the torch to the next generation of NFFE leaders, and keeping the flame burning for years to come. Contact NFFE Special Assistant to the President Amy Burns at (202) 216-4420 if you are interested in learning more.

1. Be available to answer questions via phone or email during hours set by you. Even as little as 1-2 hours a week could make a huge difference for a young leader.
2. Counsel as many mentees as you see fit.
3. Get to know your mentee. Evaluate and make suggestions to improve their:
 - Local union structure
 - Relationship with management
 - Representational effectiveness
 - Leadership abilities
 - Union visibility
 - Communications with bargaining unit
 - Recruitment strategy
 - Professional aspirations, either in the union or agency
4. Advise mentee(s) on balancing work and family life with union participation.
5. Encourage sustained involvement and advancement within the local union's leadership.
6. Encourage participation in William W. Winpisinger Center classes such as the Federal Employees Basic, Federal Employees Advanced, Leadership I and II, and others.
7. Share your personal stories and experiences as a union leader and what legacy you wish to leave within your union.
8. Direct mentees to national resources to assist them in their local duties: National Business Representatives, NFFE National Office staff, councils, etc.
9. Encourage understanding of the union's guiding documents: the IAM Constitution, the NFFE National Bylaws, their local contract, and local bylaws.
10. Have fun with it!

NFFE's Young Federal Leaders

Vision Statement: *NFFE's Young Federal Leaders initiative is more than an effort to recruit new young workers – it is a movement aimed at transforming our union forever. YFL seeks to recognize and challenge young leaders in the federal government by offering education, mentorship, and leadership opportunities for its members. By connecting our network of experienced union brothers and sisters with a new generation of enthusiastic young workers, NFFE will become an even stronger advocate for our nation's civil servants. Together, we will ensure our union's future by striving to become a more agile and creative presence within the labor movement.*

YFL is a program to **recruit, engage, and empower** young workers in our union.

EDUCATION

- ◆ Welcome Committee
- ◆ Union/YFL talking points
- ◆ Recruitment kit
- ◆ Ask them to join
- ◆ Invitation to monthly local meeting

Prospective Member

- ◆ Sign up for Winpisinger Center courses
- ◆ Keep the new member updated on local issues and cases; illustrate opportunities for learning
- ◆ Encourage them to fill executive board vacancies or connect them with local elected officials who can teach them about union work

MENTORSHIP

- ◆ Open the lines of communication; initial approach by appropriate young member
- ◆ Be proactive: continual check-ups on prospective new members
- ◆ Introduce union representatives, give Weingarten card

LEADERSHIP

- ◆ Discuss union structure, duties, and goals
- ◆ Identify and communicate potential leadership positions
- ◆ Talk about their interests and skills and how they could fit into the union structure

- ◆ Work to establish personal relationships between experienced union members and new members by connecting like-minded unionists
- ◆ If no mentorship opportunities exist at the local level, contact the National Office to be connected with a mentor
- ◆ Ensure all elected and appointed local leadership positions are filled, ideally with at least one young member
- ◆ Start a local YFL Chapter and serve as its coordinator
- ◆ Join NFFE's Young Federal Leaders National Council

Engaged Member