

1ST QUARTER 2012

THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES
Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

Pension Raid



Congress robs \$15 billion from new federal workers' pensions to pay for tax cut. Why your nest egg may be next. See pages 7-8



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William R. Dougan

If you are like me, you are probably already getting tired of hearing candidates and political pundits refer to the November elections as “the most important in our lifetime.”

Over time, these sensationalized sound bites have numbed us all as we are continuously exposed to their empty redundancies. With an election cycle of two years for Congress and four years for the White House, it has become difficult to separate truth from fiction, and what is important from what is meaningless. It has become nearly impossible to figure out what political race truly ascends to the level of “most important” when compared with the rest of the contests.

Labor unions are often said to be among the most democratic organizations in existence. In theory there is a lot of truth in that statement, but the reality is that true democracy can only succeed in an environment that encourages participation. Democracy is not a spectator sport.

Within NFFE, this means that our members must show up at local meetings to make their concerns known, and to vote on approving the actions of the local executive board. This also means we must have members willing to serve as union officials, and requires each of us to ensure that elections are held regularly. That in turn allows for nominations and election of local officers entrusted with carrying out the will of the membership in conducting local business.

Similarly, the whole of NFFE’s membership has an opportunity once every four years to have a voice in determining our union’s nationally-elected leaders, as well as any changes to the NFFE Federal District 1 bylaws, which govern the action and responsibility of NFFE’s locals, councils, and elected officials. This opportunity occurs at the NFFE National Convention. The upcoming 49th National Convention – held this year – is where delegates from NFFE locals and councils will meet to elect the national leaders of this union for the next four years and consider changes to the union’s bylaws.

Just as in any other election, those who show up to Convention will have a voice in selecting the future leaders of NFFE. Those locals who do not select delegates to send to the Convention will not have a voice in determining the future of this union for the next four years.

I cannot promise you that the elections that take place at Convention will be “the most important in our lifetime,” but I can promise you that the results of these elections and changes to the NFFE FD-1 bylaws will determine the direction of our union for years to come.

Exercise your right and responsibility as a member to ensure that democracy stays strong within NFFE – make sure your local attends the NFFE National Convention this October.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William R. Dougan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

Summer is right around the corner, and so is the NFFE National Convention. The 49th National Convention will be held at the historic Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon, commencing on Monday, October 1st and ending Thursday, October 4th of this year.

By now your local should have received the Convention call information essential for your local's participation at this year's National Convention. If your local has not received the Convention call information, please contact my office directly for assistance. In my view, it is imperative that each NFFE local – through chosen delegates – attend Convention. Delegates from each local participate and vote on changes or alterations, through amendments and resolutions to the NFFE bylaws. Delegates also participate and vote for all national officers, which include national president, national secretary-treasurer, and the seven at-large national vice-presidents which make up the National

Executive Council (NEC). As you know, the NEC is the governing body of NFFE. Each NFFE local has a vested interest and obligation in voting for the national officers who will lead our great union for the next four years.

Elections aside, the NFFE National Office has also scheduled many guest speakers, social functions, and informative labor relations trainings during our time in Portland. All of the agenda information concerning the convention will be included in a separate mailing, coming soon. You can also find the latest Convention news and updates on our website, www.nffe.org.

Please follow the Convention call information regarding delegates, and plan on attending this important event. We owe it to our membership! Our finance director, Omar Arnold, and I hope to see each NFFE local represented at the National Convention.



William D. Fenaughty

FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

As you will no doubt hear a lot about in the next six months, NFFE is holding its quadrennial convention in Portland, Oregon this October. The NFFE National Convention is significant for several reasons. Aside from electing our national officers, Convention also gives locals the opportunity to decide how our union is run, and what rules it operates under. To do this, the convention body deliberates on two types of proposals: amendments and resolutions.

Amendments are governed by Article XV of the NFFE Federal District 1 bylaws. Pursuant to Article XV, proposed amendments must be submitted to the NFFE National Office 60 days prior to the Convention, which falls August 1, 2012. Proposed amendments that are not received by the August 1st deadline may still be considered with a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates at the Convention.

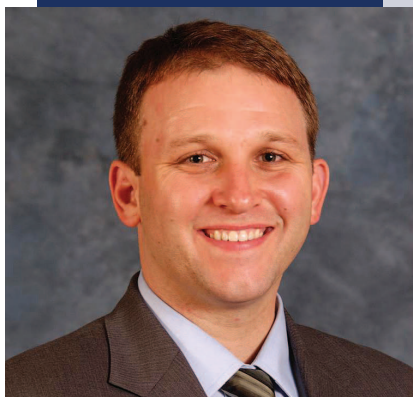
Amendments, by definition, change the wording of the NFFE FD-1 bylaws, and therefore can have a real impact on how

our union operates. For example, an amendment could propose to change Article VI to decrease or increase the number of national vice presidents that sit on the National Executive Council. Or an amendment could propose to alter Article IX, which governs how the Convention is conducted. I urge each NFFE-IAM member to review the NFFE FD-1 bylaws and bring up potential amendments they believe will improve the organization.

Resolutions, by contrast, do not change the bylaws. As a general matter, resolutions are typically used to show the organization's support for something, such as supporting a new NFFE initiative. Sometimes resolutions are used to show appreciation for a member or officer who is retiring. As with proposed amendments, proposed resolutions must also be submitted to the NFFE National Office by August 1st. Again, please check the NFFE website for all of the materials related to the NFFE National Convention, including instructions on the elections, amendments, and resolutions.



Stefan Sutich



Randy Erwin

The last few months have been extremely frustrating in Washington. Attacks on federal employees are nothing new, but in years past, we have been able to win most of these battles based on the merits of the legislation in question. Let me give you a couple of examples:

When Congress tried to pay federal workers less than they deserved, your union (and our partner organizations) went to Capitol Hill and demonstrated that federal workers were already significantly underpaid compared with private sector workers doing the same jobs, and in the end, federal workers received the pay adjustments they deserved.

When the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) and the federal government's reckless "competitive sourcing" privatization initiative proved wasteful and ineffective, your union demonstrated this to Congress, and these unfair and ineffective programs were significantly scaled back or eliminated.

The idea was that in years past, if we could win the policy arguments based on objective

facts and good-government reasoning, we could have success protecting federal employees from legislation aimed at harming them.

Today, the dynamic on Capitol Hill is completely different. The federal budget deficits, and political constraints experienced by members of Congress, are crowding out rational thought from the policy-making process. Broad cuts are being made to all kinds of federal programs, regardless of their value to the American people. In addition, any bill proposing a new program or initiative that comes with a price tag (and at this level, most programs have price tags in the billions of dollars) must include a way to pay for the program or initiative.

This is where federal workers are really taking it on the chin. While there are thousands of new initiatives out there that members of Congress want to fund, there are very few places that they can go to pay for them. However, stripping federal workers' pay and benefits has been a reliable source of revenue that any member of Congress can tap to pay for their initiatives, and that is precisely what they are doing.

LEGISLATIVE

Dougan Joins President Obama in Oval Office for 'Flags for Feds' Bill Signing

Just before federal workers headed home for the holidays last year, National President William R. Dougan joined President Barack Obama in the Oval Office December 20th. There, President Dougan attended the official presidential signing of the Civil Service Recognition Act, a bill authorizing federal agencies to place a flag on the coffins of federal workers killed in the line of duty.

Introduced by Rep. Richard Hanna (R-NY), the law intends to honor the sacrifice made by federal employees who fall victim to crime, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters on the job. Since 1992 a total of 2,956 federal workers have died in the line of duty, with the overwhelming majority of them being in Iraq and Afghanistan. With thousands of federal workers still deployed in war zones abroad, it is only fitting that federal workers are honored for their sacrifices as well.

"This piece of legislation is a fitting tribute to those federal workers who have and will continue to make the ultimate sacrifice in service to their nation," said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. "On behalf of the National Federation of Federal Employees, I would like to thank the President and Rep. Hanna for their efforts in making this important legislation the new law of the land."

But why do they keep targeting federal employees? Why not look somewhere else? The problem is, for political reasons (remember we are dealing with politicians here), there aren't many places they can go to get the money.

A typical way to pay for new initiatives in the past was to create a small tax or close a tax loophole. A basic example is you might build a bridge and have a toll on the bridge to pay for it. The same basic idea was used all the time in Washington. However, today, so many members of Congress have signed pledges refusing to raise taxes of any kind that these options for funding programs are all but off the table.

That means that funding new programs in Congress today relies on cutting spending somewhere else. But members of Congress are very limited here as well. Two-thirds of government spending goes to Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Members of Congress generally would not think of targeting these accounts for funding programs. To do so would be akin

to stepping on the "third rail" during an election year.

The remaining one-third (roughly) of government spending goes to fund executive branch agencies where NFFE members work. While this is the general area of the federal budget where most members of Congress want to find funding for their pet projects, making cuts to specific programs is very difficult because the American people are generally very supportive of federal programs. Who in Congress wants to be responsible for cutting national defense, homeland security, care for veterans, border security, our national parks and forests, etc.? Most in Congress do not have the political will to make these cuts.

When you eliminate all these options for finding ways to pay for new programs, one main area members of Congress are left with to find funding is the federal workforce. Our opponents have labeled federal workers as lazy, overpaid, and under-worked, and these labels stick regardless of how patently false they are.

Cutting federal workers' pay and benefits is not only a reliable source of funding for pet projects, it also makes good politics. Even though federal workforce cuts are a drop in the bucket compared to the overall budget deficit, those who push these cuts talk about them as though they are actually doing something to address our budget woes. It is disingenuous, but it makes for good politics.

Brothers and sisters, this is why federal employees are being attacked so often and so viscerally on Capitol Hill these days. It is also why we need every federal employee involved in this fight in order to best defend ourselves. Members of Congress who are hostile to federal workers will keep making cuts on the backs of federal workers until we stand up and stop them. Please, join this fight today. And if you are already fighting, get your coworkers involved as well. We are all in this together, and together we will win these battles for our future.

Congress Targets Your Wallet with New Bills Freezing Step Increases, Reducing Workforce

Two bills targeting your pay and jobs were introduced recently, adding more measures to the litany of anti-federal worker bills already under consideration in this Congress. Many of these bills are simply dusted-off renditions of old anti-federal workers bills introduced in Congresses past. These new measures, however, take an even more draconian approach to slashing federal compensation.

On January 31st, Rep. Martha Roby (R-AL) introduced a bill, H.R. 3844, to freeze federal workers' in-grade step increases through 2012. If passed into law, the measure would reduce eligible workers' pay by hundreds or even thousands of dollars this year.

"Federal workers have already sacrificed enough," said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. "The current two-year pay freeze will save \$60 billion over the next

decade, in addition to billions more in agency budget cuts. Federal workers are doing more with less in the workplace and at home. If we are serious about reducing the deficit we need a shared sacrifice, not another pot-shot at federal employees."

Just two days later, on Thursday, February 2nd, a handful of senior Republican Senators, led by Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ), introduced a separate bill, S. 2065, targeting federal jobs and pay. Co-sponsored by Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), John Cornyn (R-TX), John McCain (R-AZ), Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), and Marco Rubio (R-FL), the measure seeks to extend the federal pay freeze through 2014 and slash 100,000 federal jobs over the next decade through attrition. At a press conference announcing the legislation, Sen. McCain argued it was necessary for federal work-

ers to take an additional two years of frozen pay and job cuts in order to prevent sequestration cuts at the Department of Defense next year. The automatic cuts he references were the result of the Congressional Super Committee's failure to reach a deficit reduction deal during the debt-ceiling negotiations late last year.

"This is just another example of Congress trying to paper over its own failures by reaching into the pocket of federal employees," said Dougan. "Federal employees did not cause our deficit problem; they didn't prevent Congress from reaching a deal to lower the deficit last year; yet federal workers are being put forward as a sacrificial lamb once again. This has to stop now."



NFFE Will Not Let Congress Shortchange New Federal Workers

It's the common thing to do in Washington – when lawmakers are forced with making tough decisions, they tend to seek the most politically expedient solution, not the one that is best for our country or fairest to the people that their decisions impact. Too often that means throwing those incapable of defending themselves under the bus.

Let's be honest, there are not many groups easier to take advantage of than federal employees that haven't even been hired yet, or ones that have been on the job less than five years. For members of Congress who are hungry to look like they are doing something to address our federal budget deficit, there is no easier target than the next generation of federal workers.

As Congress is poised to roll out numerous proposals that will divide the federal workforce and treat new (or recent) hires differently than established federal workers with regard to pay and benefits, NFFE is committed to ensuring the next generation of federal workers do not get thrown under the bus.

The aim of many in Congress is to create a new tier of federal employees that is lower paid, entitled to fewer benefits, and has fewer rights than the current federal workforce. This would create a permanent lower class in the federal government, consisting

of workers who will be doing the same work as more tenured federal employees, but for less compensation. What will these younger feds get in return for this sacrifice? Absolutely nothing.

Those in the federal government are accustomed to seeing one generation of workers treated differently than another. We saw a transition from CSRS to FERS in the 1980's, which moved new federal hires into a different system than those hired previously. With this transition, the formula for calculating pensions changed significantly. However, when new hires would receive smaller government pensions, they became entitled to Social Security benefits and employer contributions to their TSP.

Not everyone was happy with this transition, but when new hires lost some benefits on one hand, they received new benefits on the other. Many employees enrolled in CSRS even moved into the newer FERS system voluntarily, because they preferred it. While employees in the two systems were treated differently, the change did not create a second-class of federal workers.

The same cannot be said this time around. As Congress seeks to fund various initiatives on the backs of federal employees, they are once again taking the politically expedient low road, and targeting the next generation of federal workers with the

most egregious cuts. As they seek to eliminate pensions for new federal employees, there is not even any pretense about what they are doing. They are aiming to take compensation away from new workers, and give nothing back in return. They are unabashedly aiming to create a new second class of federal workers.

Your union will do everything in its power to prevent this from happening. We are lobbying against these initiatives constantly in Washington. But we will have trouble winning these battles if we are not able to put a face on the young federal workers who are under attack. We need young federal workers to be engaged in this fight. Congress is always looking for politically expedient solutions, and when we are unable to show the young workers harmed by these proposals, lawmakers believe they will not be held accountable. We cannot allow this to happen.

This is a call to young federal workers throughout NFFE. We need you involved in this fight. Join NFFE. Get involved in your local. Consider becoming active in the union's young worker and lobbying initiatives. Your union will stand with you and never consent to treating new employees like second-class citizens, but we stand a significantly better chance of winning these fights with your involvement.

National President Dougan Blasts Federal Retirement Cuts in FY 2013 Budget

In February, the White House issued its Fiscal Year 2013 budget proposal, a sprawling document that lays out the Administration's vision of the coming year's spending priorities. Like many budgets past, there were both positives and negatives included for federal workers. This year, however, there are several key provisions that are cause for concern.

On the positive side, the President has requested a 0.5% across-the-board pay adjustment for federal workers, which if accepted by Congress would end the two-year pay freeze. Though this increase will do little to mitigate the damage caused by two years of frozen pay and rising living expenses, the end of the pay freeze is nonetheless a welcome change. After two years and \$60 billion in sacrifices endured by federal workers, it was hoped that Washington would recognize federal workers' contribution to deficit reduction. Unfortunately, it is unclear if that will be the case.

Also included in the FY 2013 budget are a 1.2% increase in federal employee pension contributions and the elimination of the FERS annuity supplement. The first proposal, which requires a 1.2% increase in the amount federal workers contribute to their pensions over three years, will have a serious impact on the retirement security federal employees were promised. Asking FERS employees to pay two and a half times more for their pensions in this strained economic environment could mean the difference between a federal employee keeping a roof over her head and going into foreclosure.

For example, a federal employee making \$50,000 in salary would have to pay an additional \$600 each year for their retirement, without any corresponding increase in benefits. In the wake of a two-year pay freeze, which effectively cut workers' pay by thousands after inflation, another \$600 bill to pay would be difficult to bear.

Even when factoring in the proposed 0.5% pay increase for 2013, the increased retirement contributions are a losing proposition for federal workers. For example, that same employee making \$50,000 per year would see a 0.4% increase in their retirement contribution along with a 0.5% increase in their pay. This results in a net 0.1% pay increase, amounting to a total of \$50 for the year, or \$4.16 each month. After adjusting for inflation, this turns into a third year of net pay loss for federal employees.

"Though we applaud the President for proposing an end to the two-year federal pay freeze, we strongly oppose all budget provisions undermining federal retirement security," said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. "Furthermore, a pay adjustment of just 0.5% will do very little offset the ballooning cost of living. After two years of frozen pay resulting in \$60 billion in savings, it is unfair to ask federal workers to pony up yet again for deficit reduction. This is no way to thank federal workers who have already taken on additional hardship to pay for Washington's mistakes."

The bill also calls for an end to the FERS annuity supplement for new hires, which provides a critical bridge between federal workers' retirement date and the day they become eligible for Social Security.

"We should not be punishing federal workers who often dedicate 30 years or more to public service by taking away this critical lifeline," said Dougan. "NFFE will adamantly oppose any legislation that treats new employees any different than their predecessors."

In addition to savings drawn from federal workers, the budget seeks to raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans.

"Asking the wealthiest among us to pay their fair share would yield far more in savings than squeezing middle class federal workers once again," said Dougan. "Going forward it is critical that we, and all federal employees, ensure that all those in Washington understand that principle."



Congress Takes First Swipe at Federal Pensions

In the 4th quarter 2011 edition of the *Federal Employee*, NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin warned NFFE-IAM members about serious attacks on pay and benefits coming from Congress. He warned a two-year pay freeze would not be enough to satiate the hunger of lawmakers looking for deeper cuts to federal workforce pay and benefits. “Get geared up for a fight,” said Erwin. “Those in Congress who are targeting federal workers will never be satisfied no matter how much they take from dedicated federal employees.”

Those words proved prophetic in the early months of 2012. With Congress unwilling to make any real sacrifices to ease the burden of our national debt, lawmakers have continually targeted federal employees – through pay freezes and pension cuts – to pay for short-term priorities.

While NFFE, IAM, and other federal employee unions have been beating back these attacks for years, in February, lawmakers who are hostile to federal employ-

ees were able get a significant anti-federal worker bill passed: legislation that will significantly increase the amount new hires must pay for their pensions.

This ill-conceived and fundamentally unfair change will mean federal employees hired after December 31, 2012 will receive significantly less take home pay compared to current federal workers in the same grade and step level. New hires will be forced to pay four times as much as current federal employees for the same pension benefit. As a result, even the lowest paid new hires will take home hundreds of dollars less in a given year. For example, a worker that makes \$50,000/yr would be forced to pay an additional \$1,150 toward their retirement without any corresponding increase in benefits. Higher-graded employees will suffer a decrease of a couple thousand dollars or more to their take home pay.

Treating new federal workers differently from current employees is a very disturbing precedent. For the first time in roughly 25 years, new hires in the federal government will be treated differently than current workers. As new federal employees enter the federal government, this change will certainly harbor resentment from newer employees that will be doing the same jobs as more tenured employees, but for less compensation. Any way you look at it, new federal workers will be compensated as second-class employees.

“This is completely unfair to new federal employees,” said William R. Dougan, National President of the National Federation of Federal Employees. “We now have a precedent of treating new hires differently than the existing federal workforce. Congress threw the next generation of federal workers under the bus. This is a despicable way to get legislation passed.”

This legislation reducing pensions for new hires will save the federal government \$15 billion over the next 10 years. Add that to the \$60 billion federal workers saved taxpayers by accepting a two-year pay freeze, and you get \$75 billion that federal workers have sacrificed to ease the burden of our national debt. Since both the pay freeze and retirement changes have a permanent impact on federal compensation, these two measures will amount to billions more in sacrifice over time. When you divide the \$75 billion figure by the number of FTEs in the federal government (approximately two million), you get \$37,500. That means the average federal employee will sacrifice \$37,500 to ease the burden of our debt over the next decade.

There is no other group of Americans out there that has made anywhere near this large of a sacrifice to reduce to deficit. While Congress protects all the special interests and refuses to budge on the incredibly low effective tax-rates of billionaires, they have absolutely no qualms about heaping more and more of our country's budget deficit burden on mostly middle class federal employees.

That is why within days of pushing through the legislation that would cut pensions for new hires, Congress was back at it targeting federal employees once again. In this next round of attacks – which is still playing out on Capitol Hill at the time of this printing – Congress is pushing for higher pension contributions for current federal employees and a federal pay freeze in 2013, which would make it the third consecutive year of frozen pay for civilian federal workers.

“It never ceases to amaze me how Congress doesn't bat an eye when slashing the pay and retirement benefits millions of middle class federal workers rely on, but threatens to shut down the government over asking millionaires to contribute a little more,” said Dougan. “Why is Washington asking vulnerable federal workers to sacrifice time and time again while the rich and interest groups go untouched? It's time for Congress to get its priorities in order.”

With these relentless attacks, it makes you wonder, when is this going to stop? When will Congress finally realize that federal employees have sacrificed enough?

The sad truth is members of Congress who dislike the federal workforce will never stop coming after federal workers. There is no point at which anti-federal-employee lawmakers would say, “You know what, those federal workers have sacrificed enough. We should find someplace else to make cuts.” Those in Congress who attack federal workers do it because it works for them politically, and they will continue to attack and attack until federal employees stand up and say firmly, “No more cuts. You aren't taking any more of my pension. You aren't taking any more of my children's college funds. You aren't taking away the ability of my spouse and I to retire with dignity. It stops right here!”

“It never ceases to amaze me how Congress doesn't bat an eye when slashing the pay and retirement benefits millions of middle class federal workers rely on, but threatens to shut down the government over asking millionaires to contribute a little more. Why is Washington asking vulnerable federal workers to sacrifice time and time again while the rich and interest groups go untouched? It's time for Congress to get its priorities in order.”

Becoming a NFFE-IAM member and participating in your union is the way you stand up to these attacks. You union fights for you on the airwaves, in the newspapers, at the workplace, and especially in the halls of power in Washington, D.C. We cannot win these fights without you. We need you to join our union, and become an active member today.

For more information on what your union is doing to defend federal workers from these attacks, go to www.nffe.org and sign up for NFFE e-news. Also, please click on the 'Legislative Action Center' button featured on the homepage to find what you can do to fight back against these unfair attacks.

Let's make our voices heard and make sure Congress is held accountable for their attacks against federal employees.



Survey Says: NFFE Members Support Young Worker Initiative

NFFE and its dedicated network of unionists throughout the country have never rested contentedly on the achievements of its past. For nearly 100 years our union has led the fight to improve the lives of federal employees, and we are not stopping any time soon. NFFE-IAM members past have achieved a 40-hour work week, overtime pay, collective bargaining rights, and the resounding defeat of the NSPS system.

For some, this would be enough to sit back and rest on our laurels. But not us. Rather, NFFE is committed to investing in a new generation of union members who, with adequate education, mentorship, and leadership opportunities, will be poised to lead our union in exciting new directions.

To empower a new generation of labor activists, NFFE has made it a priority to identify key issues to young workers and empower them to succeed within our union and their workplaces. Working closely with the IAM Strategic Resources Department, NFFE surveyed our members to do just that before embarking in earnest on its design of the Young Federal Leaders initiative.

With over 400 members responding to the Young Federal Leaders survey released this February, it is clear our union feels strongly about moving forward with a program designed to reinvigorate our efforts to protect federal employees with fresh faces and new ideas.

NFFE's many engaged young members utilized the survey to communicate their interest in taking on even greater responsibility for building a stronger, more vibrant union. In fact, 84 percent of respondents under the age of forty support the creation of a young workers program and over two-thirds are inclined to participate in the design and implementation of such an initiative.

"We are thrilled to see such a strong response from young leaders throughout our union," said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. "Their time to step up and take leadership roles in NFFE is now, and it is up to each and every

NFFE-IAM member to support them on this journey. They are our future, and we could not be more confident in their ability to shape it for the better."

Moving forward, a Young Federal Leaders design team will consider the issues our survey indicated are of greatest importance to young federal employees – like upward mobility, work-life issues, and retirement benefits. Together we will aim to create a program designed to address their need for greater education and mentorship opportunities, among others.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about NFFE's Young Federal Leaders initiative, please visit our Facebook and Twitter pages, or stop by the YFL page located under the 'Resources' tab at www.nffe.org. Young members should also be on the lookout for YFL events offered at the 2012 IAM Legislative Conference this May.





House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) rallied delegates with a rousing speech at last year's Legislative Conference.

Five Locals Win Free Trips to Washington, D.C. for Legislative Conference with 2011 Recruitment Awards

The NFFE National Organizing Department is proud to recognize the winners of the 2011 NFFE Legislative Conference trips, an annual competition honoring our union's most dedicated and successful recruiters. Locals were selected for awards in two categories: most new members recruited (as indicated by total 1187's submitted), and highest membership density increase (based on remittance reports and bargaining unit lists).

The winners of this year's competition are:

- ◆ Local 2189, Red River Army Depot in Texarkana, TX, with 95 new members recruited.
- ◆ Local 273, Fort Sill Army Post in Lawton, OK, with 77 new members recruited.
- ◆ Local 2081, Inyo National Forest in Bishop, CA, with an 18% density increase.
- ◆ Local 1697, Western Civilian Conservation Corps Centers, with a 15% density increase.
- ◆ Local 181, Walla Walla VA Medical Center in Walla Walla, WA, with a 10% density increase.

Congratulations to these locals for their tremendous success and continued dedication to building the future of NFFE.

"Being a member is the most important position in the union," said NFFE National Organizing Coordinator Brittany Paull. "You are the voice in your workplace, the boots on the ground, and the presence on Capitol Hill. You have the ability to speak for all of the other unorganized workers in the United States. You truly make a difference in helping the federal workforce and our country."

The winners of this year's contest will receive paid flight and hotel accommodations for a delegate to attend the annual IAM Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., in May. The conference gives NFFE-IAM members from across the country the opportunity to engage hundreds of their fellow unionists and bring federal workers' issues directly to lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

"I'm so proud of this year's trip winners," said NFFE National Organizing Coordinator, Cassie Kerner Bond. "We saw a number of locals really step up their recruitment efforts in 2011, and their hard work paid off. 2011 was our best year for internal recruiting in well over a decade. These locals showed that whether your bargaining unit is large or small, there is ample room for growth in every NFFE local."

For those locals that did not qualify for this year's trip, there are still a number of opportunities to gain recognition for your recruitment efforts. NFFE's monthly recruitment awards honor locals with the highest number of new members recruited each and every month, with winners receiving a certificate and recognition email shared with every NFFE local. At Legislative Conference NFFE National will also recognize locals based on their density. Locals that have at least 35 members and a membership density of 80% or greater, and locals that have at least 100 members and a membership density of 50% or greater, will automatically receive recognition for ongoing excellence in organizing. Locals can also submit a brief story about your local's recruitment success to appear in a future issue of this newsletter. To share your recruitment success stories (no more than two paragraphs), simply email them to intern@nffe.org.

To get in the running for NFFE's Legislative Conference trips and learn what resources we can offer to aid your recruitment efforts, contact your national organizing coordinator or visit the 'Organizers Toolkit' at our national website, www.nffe.org.

Congratulations again to this year's winners, and thanks to all of you who helped make 2011 such a successful year for our union!

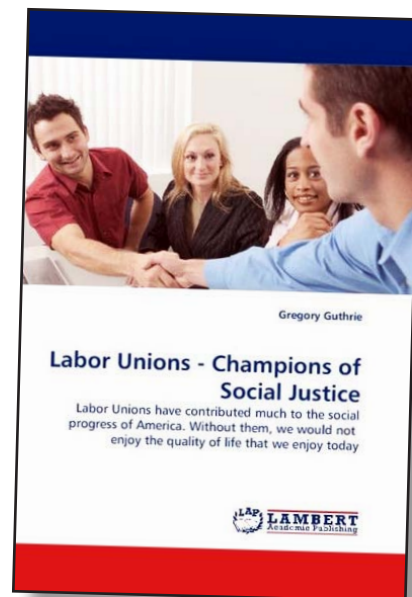
NFFE Locals Share Proudest Moments of 2011

NFFE's locals have worked long and hard to make our union successful. Locals across the country have been doing outstanding work and have enjoyed myriad accomplishments. Recently, the 50th anniversary of collective bargaining was commemorated, a fitting reminder of all that our locals have done to enhance quality of life for the federal workforce.

This winter, we asked our local leaders what made them most proud about their local in the past year. Here is what a few of them had to say:

NFFE Local 1450, representing employees at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), was able to negotiate increased benefits such as MAXIFLEX for their bargaining unit. They were able to remove the sign-in requirement for teleworkers, implement domestic partnership fairness (in leave and all contract rights), and allow use of administrative leave to volunteer within the community. Furthermore, the local settled a grievance concerning employees who were affected by HUD's pay freeze and promotion prevention. As a result of the settled grievance, employees were given their respective promotions in addition to pay and interest for the time period of non-processing. Working in concert with NFFE National President Dougan and the Office of Personnel Management, the local was successful in gaining the approval of HUD leadership, leading to the settlement.

NFFE Local 125, representing U.S. Forest Service employees, handled a case this year involving management intimidation of a bargaining unit employee. The intimidation was so bad that the employee experienced serious medical and personal issues due to the intolerable conditions. The emotional abuse culminated in the employee being fired without proper cause. The union stepped in to investigate the issue, collecting interviews and sworn statements by employees who had witnessed this mistreatment, and presented its case before the Merit Systems Protection Board. The case concluded with a determination that the employee was wrongly terminated, and ordered her reinstated. The employee was placed under different management and received back pay for the ordeal. The case remains under investigation by the Office of Special Counsel, and discussion of an adequate punishment for the abusive manager is underway within the agency.



NFFE Local 1627, representing employees at the National Technical Information Service, was proud to see the thesis of member Gregory Guthrie published as a book this year. The book, "Labor Unions: Champions of Social Justice," states that labor unions are the driving force behind the creation of the America we have come to know and love. The labor movement has given Americans better employment opportunities, benefits, and equality among all workers. Union membership has decreased recently due to the misleading attitude that labor unions are no longer necessary, but Guthrie sees things differently. He argues that labor unions are just as important as they have ever been, and people need to become more passionate about fighting for their rights and their benefits.

These locals, and hundreds more throughout the country, continue to create opportunities for their members and make changes for the better. The hard work and dedication of each local enables us to work as a cohesive unit. We want to thank you for being the core of our great union, and the heart of American values.

Reminder: 2012 IAM Legislative Conference Just Around the Corner

As federal workers continue to be unfairly targeted by numerous misguided attempts to reduce the deficit, it is more critical than ever for NFFE members to participate in this year's Legislative Conference. Legislation targeting federal employee pay, benefits, and job security have been proposed by dozens of member of the 112th Congress, and we need your help to stop it.

The annual conference will be held from Monday, May 14 until its adjournment at 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 17 at the Hyatt Regency Washington, in Washington, DC. If your local is sending a delegate to this year's Legislative Conference, don't forget to complete the delegate questionnaire form, found on the 'Lobby Week 2012' page on our national website, www.nffe.org.

NFFE Reaches Agreement on New VA Contract, Works Toward Training and Implementation

After years of preparation and deliberation, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the NFFE VA Council reached a consensus on a new master agreement. The contract was originally set to become effective on July 1, 2011. However, recognizing the importance of adequate training on the master agreement and the time required to develop and provide this training, both parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding extending the implementation date of the new contract until July 1, 2012.

Per the contract, union and management trainers will provide joint master agreement training. This training will clarify the intent and meaning of the language in the new master agreement to avoid any misinterpretation or misapplication of the contract by NFFE or the agency. The training's focus will be two-fold: highlighting changes in the new master agreement, and clarifying areas of misunderstanding.

The new agreement, which deals specifically with Title 38, Title 5, and Title 38 hybrid employees, is an ever-evolving document.

"We are not resting on our laurels, and have already started developing proposals for mid-term bargaining," stated VA Council President Robert Redding. "A collective bargaining agreement is not a static process, and we are always prepared to enhance our agreement with the VA."

Developing a strong and informative training program for the new contract is a high priority for the NFFE VA Council, since approximately 6,700 NFFE bargaining unit employees will take some type of master agreement training.

Recognizing the importance of creating and providing this training, local officers, business representatives, and impacted managers will meet for face-to-face training sessions later this year. The VA also retained a private company, SRA International, to help develop and deliver Master Agreement training to the council and the agency. Together, SRA, NFFE, and the VA will develop a two-day VA/NFFE Master Agreement instructor-led training course and a four-day 'train-the-trainer' course in order to prepare the instructors.

The instructor-led training courses will be taught by two-person teams of VA labor relations employees and NFFE union representatives, all of whom will have completed the four-day train-the-trainer course. VA Master Agreement Negotiating Team members Robert Redding, Jeffrey Shapiro, and Patricia La Sala have been selected by the VA Council to present at the instructor-led training courses. VA local presidents will also play an integral part in the training process.

"While the NFFE negotiating team is proud of many of the provisions negotiated in the new master agreement and eager for it to take effect, I'm happy that we are spending the time to develop and provide the necessary education on it first," said National Secretary-Treasurer William Fenaughty, who served as chief negotiator for the contract team. "A contract needs to be enforced to have real value, and that can't happen until our bargaining unit members and the agency understand their rights and responsibilities under the contract."

Leaders of the NFFE Veterans' Affairs Council, along with NFFE National President Dougan and National Secretary-Treasurer Fenaughty, join VA Secretary Eric Shinseki for the contract's signing ceremony.



NFFE Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Collective Bargaining in the Federal Sector

Collective bargaining has provided key protections for the rights and dignity of federal employees for longer than most of us can remember. However, it was not until fifty years ago that federal workers truly enjoyed the benefits of this fundamental right.

Executive Order 10988, issued by President John F. Kennedy on January 17, 1962, provided the foundation of everything that federal unions can do for their members today. The importance of this order cannot be overstated; it has led to greater equality for employees in the workplace, the implementation of fair promotion systems, adjustment of grueling work schedules, drastic improvements in health and safety conditions at work, and much more.



As John F. Kennedy stated in the Order: “WHEREAS subject to law and the paramount requirements of the public service, employee-management relations within the Federal service should be improved by providing employees an opportunity for greater participation in the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures affecting the conditions of their employment.” With this Order, Kennedy endowed federal workers with the power to shape their own destiny.

The week of January 17, 2012 marked the 50th anniversary of Executive Order 10988. In a statement, NFFE National President William R. Dougan affirmed the revolutionary importance of this Order:

“Recognizing the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy’s Executive Order is a powerful moment for us in labor and indeed all federal employees who seek fairness and dignity in the workplace.

To think that many federal employees proudly serving our nation today had once lived in a time where they did not have the basic right to bargain collectively is unimaginable.”

The true legacy of President Kennedy’s Order is this: When employees have a voice in their future, the future is always brighter than today. Employees are happier, healthier, and more effective when given the rights and the benefits they deserve. With the political tides shifting against government workers in recent years, it is now more important than ever that federal employees join together, as one, to fight for the dignified work-life their predecessors secured for them.

NFFE will continue to fight the good fight for workers’ rights, and protect the hard-won pay, benefits, and protections earned throughout our proud history.

Calling All NFFE Retirees! We Want YOU to Join the New Retiree Program!

As you may have heard, NFFE is looking to start a new program engaging our retired members in some good old-fashioned union activism. A NFFE retiree program would be a great development for our union because many retired members want to remain connected with the organization, but currently lack opportunities to stay as engaged as they would like to be. With more and more federal workers retiring every day, it is clear that now is the time – if ever – to put this program in place.

Our recent retiree survey revealed a strong interest in creating this program, but we need more brothers and sisters to help get it off the ground. If you are interested in becoming an active, founding member of the new NFFE retirees program, contact NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin at rerwin@nffe.org to be added to our list. We look forward to hearing from you!



On the Road

with Liz Pittaluga



The newest addition to NFFE's team of national business representatives, Liz Pittaluga joined the fight to represent federal employees in September of 2011. She brings with her an impressive thirty years of union experience, and perhaps more importantly, an indomitable commitment to strengthening our members' voices both on Capitol Hill and at the negotiation table.

Pittaluga learned the importance of unionism very early on when her father was badly injured in an industrial accident and subsequently fired after over twenty years of service, leaving her family with no source of income or health benefits. Years later, this dire situation was thrown into stark contrast when both her mother and father became union members working for Pratt and Whitney Aircraft, where they were able to earn comfortable salaries and pensions upon their retirement.

"I'm union through and through. As a kid raised by two union members, my siblings and I were taught the importance of sticking together when times got tough. I carried this spirit with me throughout my career, and I can tell you, I've seen some amazing things happen when employees band together and speak with one voice – it's incredibly powerful!"

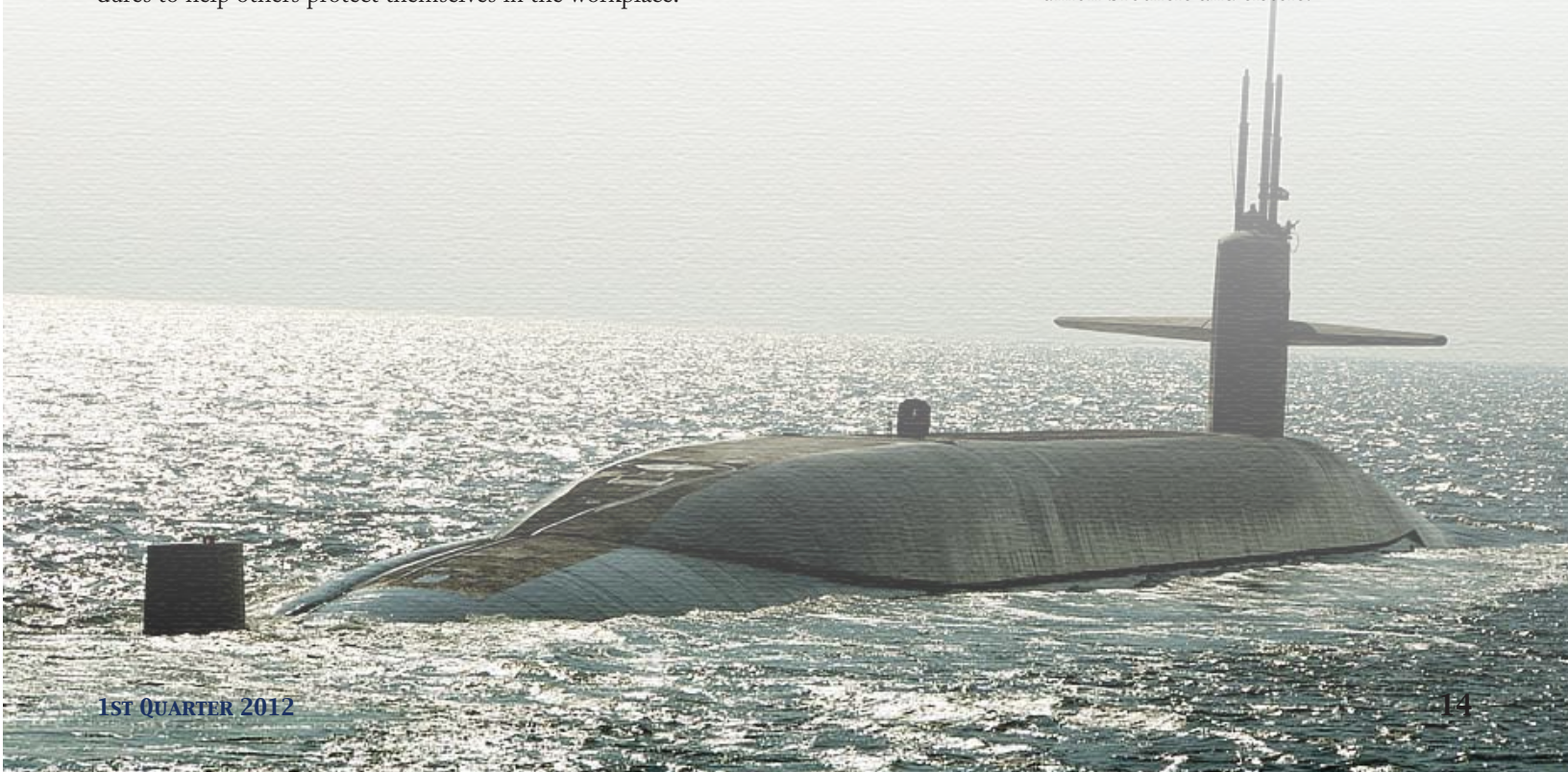
Pittaluga joined the civil service in 1982 as a Marine Machinery Mechanic Apprentice at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Since then she has spent the last thirty years serving first as a steward, then as a chief steward, and finally as the vice president of IAM Local 2783 at the Naval Submarine Base in Kings Bay, Georgia.

Although Pittaluga was introduced to her union while working through her own ultimately unsuccessful grievance process, she knew she could utilize the same union procedures to help others protect themselves in the workplace.

"Every day I meet good, hard-working people who are facing a lot of tough obstacles at their jobs. There's nothing more rewarding than helping them through what I know, from personal experience, can be a complex and overwhelming process."

As NFFE continues the fight to protect federal employees, Pittaluga stands as one of our most formidable allies. She concludes:

"My goal is to empower our members to squarely confront the many obstacles our nation's civil servants are facing today. If we're going to lead the fight to protect our livelihoods and our families, now is the time to demonstrate our solidarity as union brothers and sisters."



49th NFFE National Convention Call Officially Released

NFFE National Secretary-Treasurer William D. Fenaughty officially released the 49th NFFE National Convention call, requesting that delegates join us in Portland, Oregon this fall.

Mailed to every NFFE local on February 13, 2012, the Convention call packet includes credential instructions, instructions for submitting amendments and resolutions, national elections rules, and the official Convention call letter.



Delegates to the 49th National Convention will be awarded based upon the number of members listed in each local's remittance reports as of the last full pay period of April 2012. Locals and councils will be mailed the appropriate number of delegate credentials for each authorized delegate no later than August 1, 2012. Credentials must be returned to the NFFE National Office by no later than August 15, 2012, or delegates will not be seated for that local.

Once credentialed and registered at the Convention, delegates will be able to nominate and elect the next national president, national secretary-treasurer, and seven at-large national vice presidents. They can also introduce, debate, and vote on resolutions and amendments to NFFE's national bylaws, and in doing so, make their mark on how our union is run.

The 49th National Convention will be held at the historic Benson Hotel in downtown Portland from October 1-4, 2012. Aside from the business of the union, Convention is an excellent opportunity for delegates from every one of NFFE's nearly 200 locals to come together and exchange ideas and best practices. Delegates also have the opportunity to hear speeches, receive training, and participate in discussions with some of the leading voices in labor and government.

Do not miss this wonderful opportunity to shape your union's future. If your local did not receive a mailed hard copy of the Convention call, please notify NFFE Assistant to the President Jai Atkins at jatkins@nffe.org. You can also access the Convention call packet – and a wealth of other Convention-related information – on the NFFE National Convention page on our website, www.nffe.org.

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