

# THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

## Retirement Insecurity



**Federal retirement benefits on the chopping block as Congress looks to take a second trip to the federal employee well. See pages 7-8**



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William R. Dougan

The Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives continues its relentless attacks on federal workers. In recent weeks, we have seen the focus of their attacks shift from a campaign against the salaries and benefits of federal employees to one that seeks to cut hundreds of thousands of government jobs.

Under a misleading banner of “right-sizing the workforce” we have seen legislation introduced that would mandate arbitrary reductions in the number of federal employees. This would be accomplished through either totally freezing hiring across the federal government or only allowing a reduced number of jobs to be advertised and filled as they become vacant. This dismantling of agencies across the federal government has been sold as a solution to balancing the budget; in reality, it is nothing more than an ill-conceived political solution to a problem that cannot be solved by partisan politics.

In my recent testimony before the House Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service, and Labor Policy regarding “Right-Sizing the Federal Workforce,” I stressed that the size of government must be measured in dollars and cents rather than in numbers of federal workers. Reducing the number of federal workers doesn’t result in a smaller workforce. Without an adjustment in the work that agencies are expected to accomplish, the work simply shifts to contractors whose numbers don’t count against the reduced workforce size. The result is no cost sav-

ings for the taxpayers and no reduction in the size of the workforce – just a cost shift from federal employees to contractors.

There have been numerous attempts over the years to arbitrarily mandate workforce reductions upon federal departments and agencies. All have met with failure for a single common reason: without engaging the American people in a discussion of the services they expect from their government, there is little support to begin to arbitrarily hack away at the federal workforce. The resulting disruption and elimination or reduction of programs across agencies adversely impacts the very public the government is supposed to serve.

The public respects and values the work that you do, whether it is serving at the bedside of our wounded veterans, fighting wildfires that threaten our communities, ensuring we have safe drinking water and food, supporting our men and women in uniform, or the myriad of other services provided by federal workers each and every day. The public respects and values your contribution to making our nation great.

Are there opportunities to improve the efficiency of the government? Absolutely. But these attacks on the workforce are not about reducing the budget deficit or trying to improve the efficiency of the government; they are nothing more than solutions in search of a problem. Let us focus on defining the problem before we debate how to solve it.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

The fight for workers' rights continues in your nation's capital and across the country as new legislation to eliminate or severely diminish our rights continues to be a priority. Attacks on official time and dues deductions have been handed down from Capitol Hill recently in an effort to weaken our voice in the workplace and in Washington.

Labor Unions across the country, including NFFE, are banding together to stop this egregious assault on the rights of employees to collectively bargain for a better workplace. The need for Unions today is as great as it has ever been. As noted labor lawyer Clarence Darrow once put it, "with all their faults, trade unions have done more for humanity than any other organization of men and women that ever existed. They have done more for decency, for honesty, for education, for the betterment of the races, for the development of character in men and women than any other associations."

Labor Unions like NFFE make it possible for workers to have a real voice in the workplace and on Capitol Hill. With every new member we recruit, and every new unit we organize, your voice becomes

stronger and stronger. The importance of growing membership in NFFE has never been greater. Our National Organizing Coordinators Cassie Kerner Bond and Brittany Paull, in concert with National Business Representatives/Organizers John Griffin and Roosevelt Littlejohn, are planning membership drives in existing NFFE Locals while organizing new Locals across the country. More importantly, thanks to all of your efforts, our membership numbers are growing fast – even during these difficult times. The NFFE Organizing Strategic Plan and new member incentive have resulted in more membership growth and will continue to do so thanks to the hard work you all have done in recruiting new members. Keep up the good work!

The need for growing our membership is essential to our very existence. Further, if the voices of working men and women are silenced by anti-worker politicians, all that Unions have achieved over the last 100 years will be lost forever. The fight for workers' rights is not a thing of the past; it is happening right before our eyes. We cannot win without your continued efforts to grow our great Union. Thank you for all you do for our Union each day.



**William D. Fenaughty**

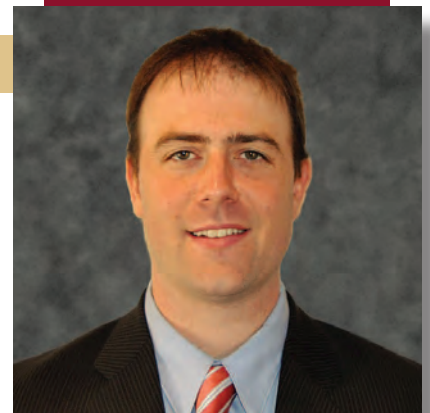
## FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

At the NFFE National Office, we are constantly trying to brainstorm new ways to support all of our hardworking Council and Local officers and stewards in the field. Obviously, the internet makes it much easier to disseminate guidance and advice.

In that vein, I would like to call attention to a new effort from the office of the General Counsel. On June 15, 2011, we introduced the "NFFE Legal Eagle." This is a short one or two page summary of notable cases involving labor and employment issues. I will review any cases coming out of the federal courts, as well as the FLRA, NLRB, and MSPB, that affect the employees we represent.

It is my hope that it will be a user-friendly way of helping educate our representatives in the field on established concepts as well as new developments in labor and employment law. We also plan to use the NFFE Legal Eagle to update our representatives on NFFE arbitrations and FLRA decisions.

Finally, I hope to include a tip of the month in each edition. The NFFE Legal Eagle will be issued to each NFFE officer and steward on or around the fifteenth of each month. I am also hoping to find time to update the website's Officers' Toolkit to provide additional resources on bargaining and the grievance process. I welcome any and all suggestions and feedback on how we can best support you across the country.



**Stefan Sutich**



Randy Erwin

## FROM THE DESK OF THE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The attacks on federal employees continue in Washington, D.C. In the first few months of this Congress we saw numerous anti-federal worker pieces of legislation introduced by lawmakers. As we move into summer, we are now seeing these same members of Congress try to build a case for passing these harmful bills.

What do these anti-federal worker bills aim to do? They aim to force layoffs at your agency, cut your pay,

cut your retirement, strip you of your right to have a Union, and replace your healthcare plan with a voucher.

What's worse is that these lawmakers have contrived and perpetuated lies about what federal employees earn to justify these draconian cuts which, if passed, would make it extremely difficult if not impossible for agencies to attract the talent needed to complete their critical missions.

### LEGISLATIVE

# House Committee Approves Bills to Double Federal Worker Probationary Period

The House Federal Workforce Subcommittee recently approved H.R. 1470, a bill that could have a significant impact on the federal workforce if passed into law. The legislation would double the probationary period for new federal hires to two years from the current one-year period.

If passed into law, new hires would have to endure an additional year of at-will employment, having little recourse in the event that their manager decides to let them go. According to the bill's sponsor, subcommittee chairman Dennis Ross (R-FL), the bill is intended to give federal managers more time to identify underperforming federal employees. NFFE National President William R. Dougan could not disagree more.

"This is just the latest in a series of attempts to weaken and disempower the rank-and-file federal employee," Dougan said. "If it supposedly takes a full two years for a supervisor to make a decision on an employee's performance, maybe it's the supervisor who needs to learn how to do their job."

In spite of the poor policy credentials of the bill, the version that ultimately passed through

committee was much more restrained than Ross's original legislation. Before being watered down by committee Democrats, the bill would also have placed federal employees who were promoted or transferred into a new position under mandatory two-year probation as well. This meant that all hardworking federal employees who moved up the ranks would be considered probationary employees for most of their career.

"Chairman Ross and those that supported his bill just want to strip employees of their protections in the workplace – that is what this bill is about," said NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin. "They have created this narrative that federal employees as a whole are poor performers, but there just isn't any evidence to suggest that is true. This bill is about intimidating federal employees, not weeding out poor performers. They want federal workers to be at-will employees who can be fired without cause. That way, federal workers will be less inclined to join the union, or file a grievance, or demand fairness in the workplace. We applaud Democrats on the committee for taking that provision out of the bill. We are going to fight hard to make sure that this legislation is never passed in law."

For example, they've attacked VA doctors for making more than \$90,000 per year. Let me tell you, doctors at the VA tend to make far less than they would if they chose to work elsewhere. VA doctors should be praised and honored for their selfless service to the American veteran. Yet, the politicians in Washington try to make their meager salaries an example of Washington's budget problems while pocketing over \$170,000 per year themselves.

Brothers and sisters, federal workers are not the cause of the budget problems our country is facing. High unemployment and an eroded tax base are to blame for the budget deficit. We need to let Congress know they cannot avoid making the tough choices by continuing to ask federal employees to sacrifice more and more at every turn – especially when politicians are defending billions and billions in wasteful pork barrel spending, pet projects, and corporate subsidies.

Call your members of Congress today and let them know where you stand. Federal employees didn't cause our nation's fiscal problems, and we can't be expected to shoulder the burden of fixing our nation's fiscal problems by giving up our health care and retirement security. Take a stand today.

## Anti-Union Congressmen Introduce Bill to Eliminate Deduction of Union Dues

In early June, South Carolina Republicans Sen. Jim DeMint and Rep. Tim Scott introduced the "Empower Employees Act" in both Houses of Congress. The bill seeks to deny federal employees their right to have union dues deducted from their paychecks. The Congressmen claim that their intent is to save taxpayer money by eliminating employees' choice to have their dues deducted automatically, but their true intentions are far more cynical.

"The deceptively-named 'Empower Employees Act' is union busting in its purest form," said NFFE National President William R. Dougan in a statement following the bill's introduction. "The 'Bust Federal Workers' Rights Act,' as it should rightfully be called, seeks to deprive federal workers of their right to a union voice in the workplace by stripping them of the ability to have dues deducted from their paycheck."

Amazingly, the Congressmen also argue that this legislation will increase choice for federal workers, not take it away. According to a press release issued by Rep. Scott's office, "this legislation would increase employees' freedom by allowing them to choose to pay union dues rather than having them taken out of employees' paychecks before the workers even see the money." Again, the facts tell a much different story.

By law, all federal union membership is completely voluntary. No employee can pay union dues without proactively approaching the union and submitting an SF1187 form to their agency expressing their will to do so.

"It is laughable that the Congressmen would suggest that this bill increases federal employees' rights in the workplace," said Dougan. "Federal workers already choose whether

or not they want to join the union and have their dues deducted. Congressman Scott and his Republican colleagues know this, but they're not letting the truth get in the way of busting federal unions."

It is common for legislators to stretch the truth when advocating for certain policies, but the justification offered by Congressmen DeMint and Scott are outright lies. They are perpetrating these lies in order to deprive federal workers of their already limited rights to union representation in the workplace. When this type of narrow-minded, ideologically-driven partisan politics trump workers' rights, everybody loses.

"Let me be clear: the sole intent of this proposal is to make it as difficult as possible for federal workers to form or join a union," said Dougan. "This proposal is straight out of the Scott Walker union-busting handbook, and we will not stand for it."

# Key House Republicans Introduce Bill to Cut 200,000 Federal Jobs by 2015

Three high-ranking Republican members of the House of Representatives recently introduced the 2011 Reducing the Size of the Federal Government Through Attrition Act, a bill that would force agencies to hire only one new employee for every three who retire. Introduced by Darrell Issa (R-CA), Dennis Ross (R-FL), and Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), the proposed legislation would mandate a workforce reduction of 10 percent – or 200,000 employees – by the beginning of 2015.

Though this is not the first time members of the House majority have sought to cut the federal workforce, it appears to be the most serious. At a May congressional hearing, two Republican members of the House advocated for their bills to institute a government-wide hiring freeze, and a one-for-two attrition rate, respectively. NFFE National President William R. Dougan, who also testified at the hearing, urged Congress to reexamine its approach, emphasizing that the true measure of government's size is not the number of federal employees, as others at the hearing had claimed. The true measure of government's size is dollars and cents.

“Reducing an agency's workforce without a corresponding reduction in the agency's mandate actually increases the size of government,” said Dougan in his testimony. “In the end, there are generally no savings derived from arbitrary staff reductions; rather a cost-shift moves resources away from the federal workforce to contractors. This is a pointless exercise that reduces government efficiency, hurts the services that federal agencies provide, and sticks taxpayers with a bigger bill.”

This would have an incredibly damaging effect not just on federal workers and their families, but the American people. Implementing an arbitrary one-for-three replacement policy will reduce the quality and quantity of government services and result in a logistical nightmare for federal agencies and the public they serve.

“When it comes down to it, this proposal means hiring just one VA nurse to care for our veterans for every three lost, one border patrol agent fighting drug and human trafficking for every three lost, and one wildland firefighters saving homes and businesses for every three lost,” said Dougan. “These are the real results of this harmful proposal.”

In spite of the high costs and reduced services that come with the mass elimination of federal jobs, the House majority is nonetheless determined to institute a sweeping policy to abruptly slash the federal workforce. If their intent is to reduce the workforce, they have a responsibility to the American people to explain the consequences of their actions.

“Instead of making sweeping, non-strategic proposals to cut the workforce in huge swaths, Congressional Republicans need to take a step back and have an honest conversation with the American people about which services they want and which ones they don't,” said Dougan. “They haven't done that yet, and they likely will not, because they know that the American people understand the immense value that federal workers bring to our national security, our economy, and our American way of life.”



*President Dougan defended the scope and mission of the federal workforce before Congress at a May hearing on “Rightsizing the Federal Workforce.”*

The bill has yet to come up for formal consideration in the House, nor has it received a Senate counterpart, leaving an opportunity for NFFE and other federal unions to stop the legislation before it gains any traction.

“I don't think the members of Congress proposing this legislation realize what a devastating impact this proposal will have on the ability of federal agencies to deliver critical services,” said Randy Erwin, NFFE Legislative Director. “Federal agencies can't do the work they need to do without people. This proposal is not a genuine attempt to reduce the cost of government; it is a politically driven effort to appear as though they are reducing government while avoiding the tough decisions necessary to genuinely accomplish that end. In reality, this bill will simply shift costs to contractors and won't save the taxpayers a dime. We are going to fight this harmful legislation tooth and nail.”

# Union Official Time Comes Under Fire at Congressional Hearing

At a recent House Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and Labor Policy hearing, chairman Dennis Ross (R-FL) and fellow Republican Phil Gingrey (R-GA) advocated for H.R. 122, a bill that would severely diminish Union official time.

The inappropriately titled “Federal Employee Accountability Act” is a misguided bill that would eliminate federal employees’ statutory rights to official time for collective bargaining. This would unnecessarily lead to an enormous waste of time and resources. NFFE strongly opposes H.R. 122.

Despite the huge costs that would be associated with a breakdown in federal labor-management relations, Rep. Gingrey and his colleagues seem determined to strike a blow at federal Unions nonetheless.

“What began as a noble goal to ensure healthy labor-management relations has been twisted into a one-sided scheme to perform Union representational functions in lieu of performing one’s official duties as a federal employee,” said Gingrey in his testimony. “Official time is not fair to the government or the taxpayer and works solely to the benefit of labor Unions and employees who serve as its representative or steward.”

Though Rep. Gingrey and his anti-Union colleagues would like to believe official time is time and money poorly spent, the fact is that they could not be more wrong. Official time for representational duties allows employee representatives to handle sensitive workplace issues faster than the normal bureaucratic process would allow, resolving issues more efficiently. Official time is used to represent employees in discrimination and merit principle proceedings, conflict resolution, and implementation of workplace policies. Unions also

use official time to participate in national and agency-level partnership councils which work to improve the delivery of government services to the American people.

All of these benefits promote efficiency, responsiveness, and strong morale at federal agencies, allowing them to provide better service to the American people. Strong employee-employer communication is a necessary precondition for good government. Official time is what allows us to do just that.

“Here is the bottom line: lawmakers that support this bill want to eliminate federal employees’ voice in the workplace,” said Randy Erwin, NFFE Legislative Director. “This is a thinly veiled attempt to bust federal employee Unions who fight for federal employees every day. Because the Union fights for hard-working federal workers, they want to destroy us. We are not going to let that happen.”

*President Dougan talks with Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) following the Congressman’s strong defense of union official time at a recent hearing.*



## Breaking the Bank: Washington's Attack on Your Retirement Security

"The federal retirement system we have today is secure. If you work hard for twenty, thirty, or forty years, you can earn enough to rely on. But it seems like members of Congress are forgetting about federal employees; they're forgetting about the little guys who are doing the work of the American people every day. If they try to take away our pensions or make big cuts to our benefits, a lot of people will find it hard to get by."

Rigley Jackson, President of NFFE Local 1887, said what has been on the minds of hundreds of thousands of federal employees who are planning to retire in the coming years. As it stands today, the federal retirement system is based solidly on the three-legged stool of the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) pension, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), and Social Security. Combined, the three

legs of the stool create something that is much more than the sum of its parts – a secure retirement.

However, recent debates playing out on Capitol Hill and in the media suggest that the three-legged stool of federal retirement is about to get very, very wobbly. As our elected officials search for ways to trim the nation's long-term debt, it appears that lawmakers will return to a familiar source to find the savings they need: the federal worker. Led by the new Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, scores of proposals to trim federal retirement benefits have been put forth in the past six months.

At the end of last year, the President's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform issued their highly anticipated report containing recom-

mendations for reducing the nation's debt burden. One recommendation advocated moving from a "high 3" annuity calculation to a "high 5" system. This "high 5" figure refers to the average pay earned over the five most highly paid years of government service. The net impact of this change would be a lower average salary figure when computing the value of your retirement annuity.

Here's how: In most cases, when the government calculates your annuity, it takes your "high 3" average salary figure, multiplies it by your years of service, then multiplies it by either 0.1 (FERS employees) or 0.2 (CSRS employees). The resulting figure represents your annual retirement annuity. By changing the average salary figure from "high 3" to "high 5," this amount is lowered, resulting in a smaller annuity payment for the rest of your life.



This proposal has yet to be formally introduced, making the risk of passage in the near future on the lower end of the scale. Nonetheless, there are many more proposals that have been introduced that look to take things a step further.

Another proposal, introduced by Senators Richard Burr (R-NC) and Tom Coburn (R-OK) in March, seeks to eliminate federal pensions all together. Starting in 2013, the deceptively named Public-Private Employee Retirement Parity Act, S. 644, would eliminate the pension portion of FERS for all new government hires. Instead, workers would receive only the TSP portion of FERS in addition to their Social Security.

According to Sen. Burr, your retirement benefits are excessive. Unfortunately for the Senator, the facts tell a much different tale. When examined closely, it becomes clear that this bill has little to do with cost and much more to do with unfairly targeting federal employees. The truth is that federal workers' pensions represent only a modest portion of the larger federal retirement picture. For example, a career federal employee who retires with a final salary of \$50,000 per year and 30 years of service will receive a pension of merely \$15,000 per year – hardly the stuff of which millionaires are made.

Though the vast majority of federal retirement plans are demonstrably modest, it appears that calls to scale back benefits

are gaining traction even outside of the Republican House. In late May, details began to emerge from White House and congressional negotiators with regards to the shape of a long-term deficit reduction plan; a plan that will coincide with the raising of the national debt ceiling. After weeks of negotiations, it appears that lawmakers are ready to accept yet another trip to the federal employee well for cutbacks.

Administration officials have reportedly agreed to Republican demands for federal workers to contribute more to their pensions. Though a definitive number has yet to be chosen, Republican negotiators are pressing for FERS employees to contribute a full six percent of their salary toward their pensions – more than seven times the 0.8 percent they contribute today. If the full six percent pension contribution is enacted, federal workers would see their pay automatically reduced by five percent. Coming on the heels of a two-year pay freeze, this proposal would serve as a de facto extension of the wildly unpopular policy.

“Instead of making any serious effort to address the deficit, Washington politicians have decided to take a second drink at the federal employees' well,” said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. “Federal workers have already accepted a serious pay reduction, and now our elected officials are asking for five percent more. Where does it stop?”

The result of the aforementioned proposals would be to destroy federal retirement security and severely hamstringing the government's efforts to recruit the next generation of federal workers. With a retirement wave expected to hit the workforce in the coming years, slashing retirement benefits today will make it much more difficult to recruit doctors, intelligence analysts, scientists, and other highly sought after workers into the federal service. Even more, it will de-value the service of the hard working federal employees that make America the greatest nation in the world.

NFFE remains starkly opposed to any proposal that would reduce federal employees' retirement security, a position that we and our fellow Unions have expressed to Congress and the Administration countless times. NFFE and our allies will continue to oppose legislation that unfairly targets the retirement security that federal employees have earned through years of dedicated public service, but we can't do it alone.

Go to [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org) and visit the NFFE Legislative Action Center to see how you can get involved in the fight. There, you can find letters, position papers, talking points, and contact information for elected officials. With these tools, you can make your voice heard in Washington. If we all do our part, we can stop the attacks on our retirement security.



Cable television personality Ed Schultz spoke about the importance of countering anti-union politicians and media outlets at the 2011 NFFE-IAM Legislative Conference.



## 2011 NFFE-IAM Legislative Conference a Major Success: Members Bring Their Stories to Capitol Hill

The 2011 NFFE-IAM Legislative Conference was a huge hit for NFFE-IAM members. The weeklong conference saw NFFE-IAM members bring the voice of our nation's federal workers to the city of Washington, D.C. and to the halls of Congress. The conference was held at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill, just blocks from the home of America's seat of government. Throughout the week, members listened to several speakers, attended rallies, receptions, and of course, met with members of Congress. NFFE-IAM members also had the opportunity to network with their brothers and sisters from across the country, as one, in solidarity. The main message that members brought with them was that federal workers are not the enemy.

The first day, Monday May 9, consisted of three speakers. The speakers were IAM General Vice President, Richard P. Michalski, International President R. Thomas Buffenbarger, and Timothy Keating, Senior Vice President for Public Policy at the Boeing Company. Michalski and Buffenbarger spoke about the importance for union members to become involved in legislation and lobbying. Buffenbarger said that in 2006 and 2008 we had major victories across America, but in 2010 we suffered major defeats. Now, we have state and federal lawmakers launching unwarranted political attacks against organized labor. He continued by saying that these attacks come in the form of paycheck deception bills, federal labor union official time elimination legislation, and education vouchers, which hurt the integrity of our public school systems and the teachers who work for them.

On the second day we heard a wide variety of speeches. The speakers for the day were Gregory Dahlberg, Senior Vice President Washington Operations, Lockheed Martin Corporation, Rep. Steven LaTourette (R-OH), Ed Schultz from the Ed Schultz Show, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), and Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA). LaTourette discussed some of the crucial points of the FAA re-authorization bill as well as the recent developments of the National Mediation Board. Mr. Schultz harped that Republicans in Congress are practicing union busting techniques. He also made the point that organized labor no longer has a "Ted Kennedy" in the Senate and he now finds it hard to name five Senators that will genuinely stand with organized labor. Sen. Gillibrand explained that organized labor has a partner in defeating unbalanced free trade agreements, which will ruin the American middle class.

After the speakers, we had the federal employees' legislative briefing, where delegates heard from NFFE National President William R. Dougan, Legislative Director Randy Erwin, and Communications Director Cory Bythrow. Dougan discussed a meeting he had with the White House on Monday, May 9 regarding the importance of defending federal retirement security. Erwin discussed legislation that we are currently fighting for

and legislation we are against. During this harsh political climate in Washington, Erwin explained, we are forced to play more defense than offense on Capitol Hill. Some of the legislation that we are fighting against includes an elimination of official time, downsizing of the federal workforce, and ending federal workers pensions.

The third day consisted of more speakers, lobbying, and the IAM Congressional Reception. The speakers of the day included Joseph C. Szabo, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administrator; Randy Mayhew, National Membership Coordinator, Union Sportsmen's Alliance; Arlene Holt-Baker, Executive Vice President, AFL-CIO; Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO); Transportation Secretary, Raymond LaHood; and Rep. Bruce Braley (D-IA). Secretary LaHood was one of the most dynamic speakers heard all week. He strongly emphasized the need for continued infrastructure improvements. He said that not only does road, rail, and other infrastructure improvements supply more jobs, but they better our ability to move goods across America. That night, at the Congressional Reception, we were fortunate to have a wide array of attendees. Some of the members of Congress that participated include Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH). Also, making a surprise appearance, was Labor Secretary



*House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) spoke about the essential role that unions play in the survival of America's middle class.*

Hilda L. Solis. Overall, the reception was a huge hit.

The final day, Thursday May 12, the delegation heard only one speaker, Rep. Gene Green (D-TX), but NFFE, with the help of the Machinists, organized a major rally in support of the Downtown SAMs workers. The rally was held outside of the office of their employer, the Business Improvement District (BID), who refuses to sit down with the Union to negotiate a contract for the workers. The rally was a major success and it was a great way to end Lobby Week.

The IAM Legislative Conference went off without a flaw. It was filled with important Congressional speakers, lobbying, receptions, and the passionate exclamation of the ever so unifying saying, "Right!" Members in attendance had a great time, and the event could not have been planned any better. Hopefully next year, Locals that could not attend will join us here in Washington to participate in our lobbying efforts. With your help we can accomplish even more, and make sure that the federal workforce is protected from harmful legislation.

*NFFE delegates to the 2011 Legislative Conference gathered for an evening of networking with their fellow federal workers.*



# NFFE Seeing Substantial Gains in Membership as New Locals Step Up to the Plate

The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) is poised to see another year of significant organizing success in 2011. This is due to hard work at every level of our Union.

NFFE has seen steady Local growth since 2004. Annually, NFFE has experienced at least a 10 percent gross growth rate. The greatest percentage change in membership occurred from 2009-2010 with over 44 percent gross increase in new members.

So far this year, we have seen more than double the amount of Locals participating in organizing and gaining large numbers of new members. From September 2010 through May 2011, the period of time during which our revised Organizing Strategic Plan has been in effect, over 50 percent of our Locals have received substantial reimbursements for recruiting new members. This reimbursement comes straight from the NFFE National Office. For every new member that your Local signs up, NFFE National will reimburse \$100. This \$100 can be used in countless ways to benefit your Local such as staging a recruiting drive, holding a membership cookout, buying Local t-shirts, and other Union-building activities. It is up to the Local's Executive Board to decide what to do with the reimbursement.



*NFFE Local 1 representatives Patti La Sala, Denise Tiggs, and Kym Valadez accepted the first-ever Sustained Excellence in Organizing Award.*

“We are proud to offer this incentive as a way to get members engaged and excited about organizing,” said National Organizing Coordinator Cassie Kerner Bond. “NFFE members see the value of having a voice in the workplace and on Capitol Hill – even during tough economic times. That is why this incentive program is more important than ever.”

Recruiting drives are being planned at a number of NFFE Locals for late summer and fall. In July, a small group of NFFE staff members will be traveling to Texarkana, TX to assist with training and membership building at NFFE’s largest unit, Local 2189, Red River Army Depot. Several Locals have plans to conduct their own recruiting activities as well.



## Winners

*Pictured with National Organizing Coordinators Cassie Kerner Bond and Brittany Paull.*



*Deborah Ransom representing NFFE Local 1642*

*Maxine Davis representing NFFE Local 1953*



Recruiting within our existing Locals is necessary for NFFE's success, but equally important is seeing growth through organizing new units. In the federal sector, NFFE organized two new units in Pensacola, FL this spring. A group of Air Force fighter pilot instructors elected representation by NFFE and is currently working on their first contract. A related group of mechanics that service these jets also became a part of our Union this summer.

Your Union had a great deal of success organizing service contract units, too. Delegates at NFFE's 48th National Convention voted to allow government contractors to be a part of NFFE, and we have consequently started reaching out to potential groups of these employees.

A group of employees working for Sodexo in Silver Spring, MD, voted to join NFFE in May. These employees perform a variety of maintenance and custodial duties at the Food and Drug Administration building in the area. Earlier this year, a group of Apex/Treco custodians at Red River Army Depot also elected to join NFFE. A number of other small units are in the process of being organized, and the NFFE National Office is evaluating larger targets to begin pursuing in late summer or early fall.

"These new brothers and sisters will strengthen our union, and send a strong message to anti-union legislators and companies that we are not going to stop fighting for workers' rights across the country," said National Organizing Coordinator Brittany Paull. "Everyone deserves a voice in the workplace."

Please let your National Organizing Coordinator know if you need assistance planning a recruiting drive at your Local this year. Cassie Kerner Bond covers Locals west of the Mississippi, and can be reached at [ckerner@nffe.org](mailto:ckerner@nffe.org) or (703) 303-2047. Brittany Paull covers Locals to the east, plus Idaho, Texas and Utah. She can be reached at [bpaul@nffe.org](mailto:bpaul@nffe.org) or (202) 216-4425.

Also, be on the lookout for information about our updated new member kits. We are in the process of overhauling our kits to make them more useful and appealing for new members. New member kits are on back-order while we wait for our new supplies to come in, but our new and improved kits will be available soon.

Thank you all for your continued efforts in building membership. Please know that your hard work is appreciated and assistance is just a phone call away.

## Six NFFE Locals Honored for Organizing Success

During Lobby Week, the top five Locals that increased their membership density the most last year were awarded with a free trip to Washington, D.C. Each Local was able to choose one person to represent the Local during the NFFE-IAM Legislative Conference. Local 1, representing employees at the San Francisco VA Medical Center, has consistently seen a high level of growth in membership density over the past several years. Their hard work and dedication lead them to be chosen for the first-ever Sustained Excellence in Organizing Award. Other award winners included Local 405, St. Louis, MO, Army Corps of Engineers; Local 1642, Arlington, VA, General Services Administration; Local 1840, Puxico, MO, Forest Service, Job Corps; Local 1904, New Orleans, LA, Department of Veterans Affairs; and Local 1953, Shreveport, LA, Barksdale Air Force Base.

"It was a great honor to present the top five organizing awards and the award for sustained excellence in organizing to the Local representatives that were able to attend Lobby Week." said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. "I look forward to celebrating even greater success next year."



Lance Hamann representing  
NFFE Local 1840

Louis Jasmine representing  
NFFE Local 1904



Frank Catalano representing  
NFFE Local 405

# NFFE Members Take the Spotlight as Federal Worker Issues Go Mainstream



**NFFE Local 1 President and National Vice President Patricia La Sala was profiled in the *Washington Post* for her efforts lobbying a number of anti-federal worker politicians.**

Federal workers have become a target in this 112th Congress. Barraged by vigorous and unfair attacks, the diligent work our members and all public service employees' perform to make our nation stronger and safer is being largely ignored or discredited. NFFE has squarely confronted these misguided, politically driven attempts to undermine the federal workforce by shining a spotlight on our Union brothers and sisters' vital service to our country.

Recent articles published in the *Washington Post* and on CNN.com featuring our members have provided a face and a name to the millions of federal employees who care for our veterans, secure our borders and protect our communities. Patricia La Sala and Ron Thatcher are just two civil servants and NFFE-IAM members who refuse to stand idly by in the face of erroneous persecution. Their personal stories about the work they do and the people they serve provide compelling and convincing testimony in the unrelenting case against our nation's public servants.

At the height of the government shutdown frenzy, CNN sought to portray an unrepresented image of the average federal em-

ployee. Ron Thatcher, an engineer who works for the Forest Service, has never lived in the Washington, D.C. Beltway. He does not sit at a computer all day, and he certainly does not make a six-figure income. He does, however, inspect bridge installations and oversees road construction projects in the small town of Libby, Montana. Classified as a "non-essential" employee, Thatcher could not return to work if the government shut down, nor would he collect a paycheck. CNN's coverage of Thatcher's tenuous position as a non-essential employee illustrates just how painful and threatening lawmakers' vitriolic attacks on the federal workforce can be.

La Sala, a NFFE Local president who also sits on the National Executive Council, has attended the NFFE-IAM Legislative Conference for years. This year, however, her determination to convince unfriendly members of Congress to halt their attacks on the federal workforce garnered the attention of *Washington Post* columnist Joe Davidson. Her tenacious lobbying efforts on behalf of public workers facing pay cuts, furloughs, and layoffs not only softened many lawmakers' perspective on public employees, it also brought national attention to the admirable work she and thousands like her perform each day.

"Rather than sit back and let conservative politicians take cheap shots at them and their fellow federal employees, Ron and Patti decided to hit back," said NFFE National Communications Director Cory Bythrow. "All too often the public doesn't hear your side of the story. We can't allow that to happen anymore. Your Union is doing everything it can to make sure that your voice is never ignored."



**Former Forest Service Council President Ron Thatcher was profiled by CNN on how federal furloughs could impact small communities and families.**

# On the Road with Jan Thompson



As a young employee at the Post Office, Jan Thompson paid Union dues but did not yet grasp the magnitude of her contribution to the labor movement. “At that point, I didn’t really understand why unions were important to rank and file working people,” she remarked. It was not until she left the Post Office and joined the Forest Service that she became aware just how critical union participation can be to unrepresented employees facing unfair, oppressive working conditions.

Utilizing her degree from Humboldt State University, Thompson served as a Range Conversationalist, managing federal land and ensuring adequate grazing space for cattle and sheep. While she performed her duties in this capacity, Thompson became increasingly familiar with the issues she and many of her colleagues confronted in the workplace. Recognizing a desperate need for union representation, she enthusiastically organized a Local and served as its first president. As a leader within her Local, Thompson says, “I finally understood and appreciated the rich union heritage we enjoy because workers before us struggled and sacrificed.”

Thompson left the Forest Service and her position as president of her Local in 1987 when she accepted an opportunity to become a NFFE National Business Representative in Tulsa Oklahoma, servicing Western Locals. Although she was initially daunted at the prospect of leaving the life she built in Southern California, Thompson quickly warmed to the great NFFE unionists she met and the challenges her position presented.

Thompson’s favorite aspect of her work as a Business Representative is just how varied her responsibilities are: “The work I do each day is different on every level. One day, I’m working with VA nurses. The next, I’m working with wild land fire fighters. I absolutely love getting to experience different places, meet different people, and try to solve different representational and organizing problems every day!”

In coordination with NFFE’s recent push to build membership and increase Local organizing, Thompson has been concentrating on helping the Locals she services build union density and promote efficient communication. Noticing a remarkable correlation between a strong union presence and a sense of solidarity in the workplace, she asserted, “It’s really inspiring when a Local has most of its bargaining unit as dues paying members and those members feel like they are a part of something important and relevant.”

As the labor climate continues to rapidly change, Thompson is excited about the challenges she and her Locals will undoubtedly encounter. She concludes, “NFFE gives its employees a lot of room to develop and be creative. I’m looking forward to finding unique solutions to the obstacles we encounter each day and creating a way to turn them into opportunities for our members and this union.”

*Jan Thompson (center right) meets with members of NFFE Local 1450’s contract negotiating team, Ricardo Miranda (left), Elizabeth McDargh (center-left), and Ken Einbinder (right).*



# Tell Us Your Story with the 'I am a Federal Employee' Blog!

To counter the recent attacks levied against federal employees by members of Congress and the media, the staff at the NFFE National Office has created a new blog, [www.iamafederalemmployee.org](http://www.iamafederalemmployee.org).

This blog highlights the importance of federal employees to our nation and the sacrifices they make in the name of public service. America's hard-working and dedicated federal employees don't get nearly the credit they deserve, and we need to let our leaders know on Capitol Hill and get the public involved.

Federal employees are nurses and doctors caring for veterans. They are border patrol agents. They are men and women who support our military and maintain our military readiness. They are the people who maintain our national parks and forests. They are firemen, scientists, machinists, engineers, and workers in countless other trades and professions. Many people wrongly believe that federal workers are overpaid, underworked, and centralized in the Washington, D.C. area. This blog was created to educate the public that federal employees work tirelessly all throughout this country to keep our nation great; and they often do it for much less than their private sector counterparts.

This blog was created so that the workers could share their stories. These are real stories written by real federal employees in agencies all over the country. These employees struggle to make ends meet just like everyone else. Here at NFFE, we would like to honor these dedicated men and women by allowing them to tell their stories in their own words. We want to hear about those who are working hard in order to make a difference with the work they do. This blog gives outstanding federal employees a voice and an avenue to share their experiences and their struggles.

If you would like to have your story heard, please feel free to submit it to [iamafederalemmployee@gmail.com](mailto:iamafederalemmployee@gmail.com). We would love to hear and share your story so our leaders here on Capitol Hill and the public can really understand what it means to be a federal worker. Remember, you may be strong on your own, but we can be stronger if we work together, in solidarity.

Thank you for the work you do for America every day!



*NFFE Local 1753 member Morgan Thomsen, a Forest Service firefighter at the Payette National Forest, shared his story of public service.*

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