

# THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

1ST QUARTER 2011

FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

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

# Are We Next?

The National Assault on Workers' Rights, and what You can do to Fight Back. See pages 7-10



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William R. Dougan

“May you live in interesting times” is an oft-quoted Chinese proverb and curse. While recent times may be characterized as “interesting” by some, for most federal employees and the unions that represent them, the ongoing attacks promulgated by the media, the public, and even some members of Congress have been anything but interesting. Characterizations of federal workers as overpaid and under-worked relative to their private-sector counterparts have laid the foundation for continuing debate about public sector compensation. On Capitol Hill some conservative members of Congress have taken up this war cry, resulting in a recent hearing on federal pay issues. Legislation has been introduced attempting to restrict or completely do away with official time for union officials and employees to administer collective bargaining agreements, to reduce federal pay and benefits, to furlough federal employees, and the list goes on and on.

The events in Wisconsin have exposed the deep divide between working men and women and a governor and state legislature out of touch with its constituents. Despite the willingness of state employee unions to go to the bargaining table to close the budget gap – and the growing public support for collective bargaining rights – the governor and Republican-led Senate moved to strip collective bargaining rights through an underhanded political maneuver. Weakening the ability of workers to collectively bargain has nothing to do with balancing a state budget or

dealing with budget deficits – it is simply a blatant attempt to weaken or break the unions that represent the workers.

Governors and legislators in other states are monitoring the events in Wisconsin with an eye toward busting public sector unions throughout the country. If the unions and workers are beaten down in Wisconsin, there will be a domino effect that ripples across our nation with attempts to take away the rights of workers and unions in other states. And I dare say that if that were to occur, it is not a large leap to imagine attempts to do the same to federal unions and federal employees.

Labor is at a crossroads: we can remain silent, hoping that hiding our heads in the sand will make all of this go away; or we can stand up, join forces with our brothers and sisters, and take responsibility for our future. Your union has chosen to take a stand – we have joined other federal unions to support a media campaign to tell the *real* story of federal employees and the services they contribute to our nation. You will see this campaign unfold in the coming weeks. We continue to work with Congress, lobbying against legislation that would weaken federal unions and harm the employees we represent.

The battle lines are being drawn. The fate of organized labor lies in the balance. Our critics and detractors are betting that we cannot or will not fight back. I am here to tell you they have underestimated us. Will you stand with us?

## FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

Anti-worker, anti-middle class legislation is spreading across America like wildfire. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's brazen attack on working families reminds us of what a mountain unions - including NFFE - have climbed to get even the most basic rights for working people. Labor unions have been at the forefront of improving the American workplace for over a century, successfully fighting for: the eight-hour workday, the weekend, safety standards, paid sick leave, paid family leave, family health care, and countless other standards of American work-life. Governor Walker wants to limit collective bargaining to wages only, disallowing workers to bargain on quality of life issues. If the right to bargain on issues like mandatory overtime, flexible work hours, family leave and paid sick days are taken away, it will set the bar at a new low.

Other states like Ohio, Indiana and Florida are considering similar legislation that, if enacted, will clearly destroy meaningful collective bargaining and hurt America's middle class families. What is worse, however, is the fact that it will not stop there. Governors across the country have their eyes on these states and are anxiously awaiting the outcome. The only thing holding them back is the fear that they could face massive public

uproar by implementing union-busting tactics. The public understands that unions have historically negotiated and fought for public policies for all workers, not just their own members. We understand that these attacks on unions seek to curtail, if not eliminate, the voice of all working people in America.

Now is the time to push back and fight to preserve a strong voice in the workplace through collective bargaining. Unless we can stop the outright assault on workers' rights, similar initiatives will keep coming. We have the public support to fight off these attacks, but membership in our union is the real ticket to success. We all need to be proactive and demand an economy that works for everyone; one where politicians are held accountable to working people instead of CEO's and large corporations; one where all of us, no matter where we come from, can find a good job, get health care, buy a home, and send our kids to good schools. NFFE is fighting to bring back the American Dream, and we need you to join us!

The bigger our voice, the louder we can demand pro-worker, pro-middle class, and pro-union legislation on Capitol Hill. The time to join NFFE and make your voices heard is now, before it is too late!



**William D. Fenaughty**

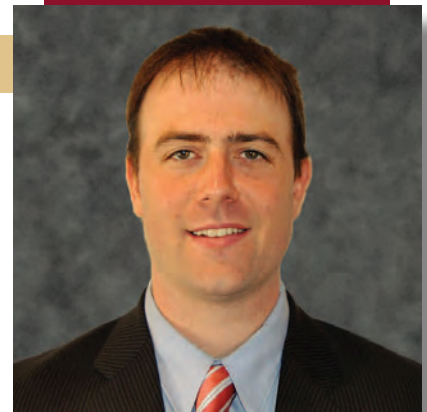
## FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

As you may know, there is a serious battle going on in Congress over the budget. A large part of the dispute relates to the funding of the federal government. It is very likely, due to the massive deficits our nation is facing, that such disputes will last many years. This issue is particularly acute given the polarization of the political parties in Congress. If Congress reaches an impasse and does not pass an appropriations bill, there could be a funding gap, which may lead to a partial government shutdown and furlough of federal employees.

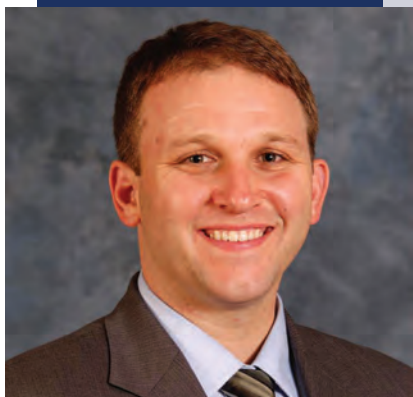
Recently, NFFE has issued guidance to Councils and Locals regarding 1) information requests over shutdown procedures; and 2) making proposals of procedures and appropriate arrangements that will be followed in the event of a shutdown. To date, it has been difficult to obtain information from federal agencies regarding any potential shutdown. NFFE National President Dougan recently addressed the lack of information at a National Partnership Council meeting.

Many agencies have responded to attempts to bargain by saying that there is nothing to bargain because no change has occurred and a shutdown is speculative. This typical agency response is nonsense. A change is not needed in order for the union to initiate bargaining on a matter not covered by the CBA. Moreover, unions always bargain over matters that are speculative. We do not bargain disciplinary procedures after the discipline is announced. We put the procedures in place beforehand so that both parties are aware of their responsibilities.

Regardless of the information that is out there, we highly encourage Councils and Locals to keep trying to bargain on this issue. Again, the union has the right to initiate bargaining over items that are not covered in the CBA. Most CBA's do not address funding gaps. In our shutdown guidance, we set forth the types of proposals that a Council or Local could make. This includes notification procedures and retroactive administrative leave once an appropriation is enacted. Such procedures and arrangements may be needed for many years to come given the current political divide.



**Stefan Sutich**



Randy Erwin

There is no way to sugarcoat it; the battle lines have been drawn and federal employees throughout the country are under attack in Washington.

We are just a few short months into the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and already there have been dozens of bills (and amendments to existing bills) introduced that are aimed at eliminating federal government jobs; gutting federal workers' pay, retirement, and health care; stripping federal workers of their right to have a union; and making draconian cuts to federal agencies that will cause layoffs and decimate the services provided to the American people.

Make no mistake, these attacks are purely political. Federal workers provide essential services at a tremendous value to the American taxpayer. Federal workers make an average of 24% less than private sector workers with the same jobs. But that fact has not stopped anti-federal worker lawmakers from literally making up and endlessly repeating lies about federal employee compensation.

Here's an example: At a March 9<sup>th</sup> hearing called "Are Federal Workers Underpaid?" in the House Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and Labor Policy, Subcommittee Chairman Dennis Ross (R-FL) said in his opening statement

## LEGISLATIVE

# Federal Workers, Unions Defeat Republican's Effort to Freeze Step Increases

Federal workers are being attacked from all angles on Capitol Hill. From pay, to health care, to retirement, lawmakers – particularly Republicans – are coming after federal employees. But in the first major showdown of the year – an attempt to eliminate within-grade step increases – federal workers came out on top.

With political conflict preventing the passage of fiscal year 2011 appropriations bills, the federal government has been funded by a string of short-term continuing resolutions (CR). These temporary stop-gap measures have crowded out much of the other business of Congress, as every couple of weeks lawmakers are forced to consider and pass a new short-term CR or face a government shutdown. The most recent CR (as of this printing) funds the federal government through April 8, 2011.

The first CR debate in this Congress, which took place in February, was extremely heated and partisan, and a number of anti-federal employee amendments were filed. The most significant anti-federal worker amendment that was voted on was offered by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), which would have prevented funds from being used for step increases for federal employees.

NFFE and other federal worker advocates argued that merit-based step increases are a critical tool to reward those who perform their jobs well in the federal government. Eliminating step increases would not only cause financial hardship, but would eliminate a key incentive to encourage high employee performance.

After heavy lobbying from NFFE and other federal worker unions, this amendment failed on a vote of 230-191. A House-Senate compromise CR was passed a few days later. No significant anti-federal worker provisions were included in the final measure.

"In this political dynamic, this was certainly a good win for federal employees," said NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin. "But I don't want NFFE-IAM members to think every vote is going to end so favorably. This Congress is going to get more and more aggressive about ramming through anti-federal worker legislation as we move through the session. We are going to have to fight very hard to win these kinds of battles going forward."

that “federal employees on average [earn] nearly four times more than the average private sector worker.” What in the world is Chairman Ross talking about? This lie is so outrageous it defies belief that he would ever state it publicly. It’s as if there is some contest in Washington to see who can make up the biggest lie about federal workers.

This same Congressman has been going on cable news channels saying that he plans to eliminate the pension portion of federal workers’ retirement. Unfortunately, as Chairman of the primary subcommittee with jurisdiction over legislation impacting the federal workforce, Rep. Ross is in a

prime position to move anti-federal worker legislation through Congress.

This is what federal workers are up against. The facts don’t matter. Members of Congress like Dennis Ross want to squeeze and punish federal employees simply because it scores political points.

Brothers and Sisters, we cannot allow these baseless attacks to go unanswered. We need every NFFE-IAM member to get involved and let their lawmakers know they cannot support anti-federal worker legislation without paying the consequences. If these attacks are not met head-on by the federal employees at whom they are tar-

geted, these same lawmakers will take more and more from federal workers until there is nothing left to take.

It is time to fight back! Get your Local legislative committee organized and start making it crystal clear to your lawmakers that federal workers will not tolerate being victims of these senseless partisan attacks.

The IAMAW Legislative Conference is a great opportunity to come to Washington, D.C. and meet face-to-face and share your views with members of Congress and their staff. Go to the “Legislative Action Center” on the NFFE website today and make your voice heard!

## Divisive Legislation to Eliminate Federal Pensions Introduced in Senate

In March, Senators Richard Burr (R-NC) and Tom Coburn (R-OK) introduced the Public-Private Employee Retirement Parity Act, S. 644, a bill to eliminate federal pensions for all new government hires starting in 2013. Under the deceptively named bill, new employees would no longer receive the pension portion of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Instead, workers would receive only the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) portion of FERS in addition to their Social Security. That is, until the same lawmakers take away the TSP as well.

In a statement released shortly after introducing the bill, Sen. Burr claimed that federal retirement benefits are excessive, and must be brought in line with those in the private sector. Unfortunately for Sen. Burr, the facts tell a very different story. When examined closely, it becomes clear that this bill has little to do with parity and much more to do with unfairly targeting federal employees.

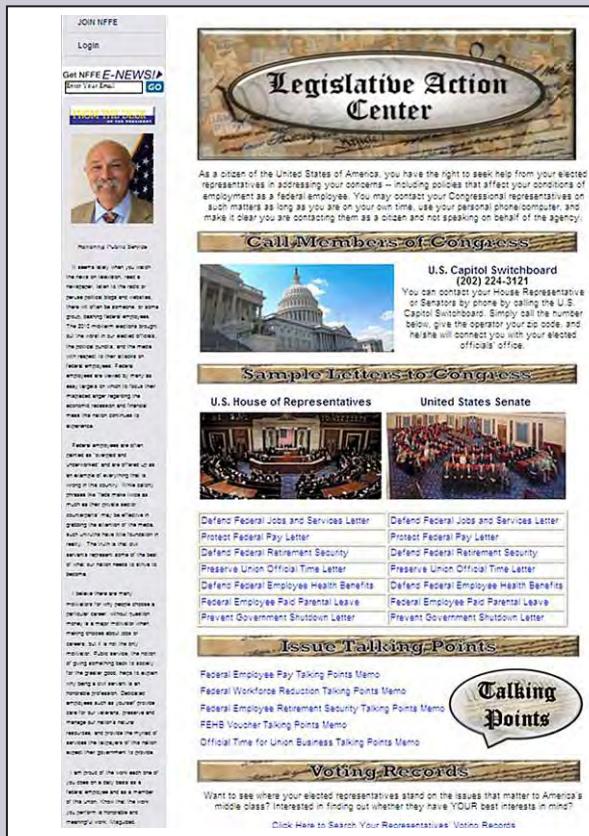
Claims that federal pension benefits are inflated are at best, wrong, and at worst, outright lies. In fact, federal workers’ pensions represent only a modest portion of the larger federal retirement picture. For example, a career federal employee who retires with a final salary of \$50,000 per year and 30 years of service will receive a pension of a mere \$15,000 per year – hardly an exorbitant figure by any measure.

The reason that federal pension benefits are so modest is because they were effectively cut in half in 1983, when the government moved from the old Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) to FERS. From then onward, new employees received the smaller pension benefit, in addition to the 401(k) style TSP account and Social Security. Often referred to as the “three-legged stool” of federal retirement, these three small pieces coalesce to create the modest retirement plan currently available to federal government employees.

The result of this legislation would be to destroy federal retirement security and severely impair 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 will make it much more difficult to recruit doctors, intelligence analysts, scientists, and other highly sought-after workers into the federal service.

“These Senators think they can pit young federal employees against the old,” said Randy Erwin, NFFE Legislative Director. “They want to drive a wedge in the federal workforce so that we will not rise up collectively and make them answer for their shameless attacks on federal employees. But we will not stand for that. An attack on one is an attack on all. We are going to make sure that this divisive piece of legislation goes down in flames.”

# NFFE rebuts 'Legislative Action Center,' a Critical Tool to Increase Member Advocacy



speaking to members of Congress, members' staff, the media, or fellow employees.

"This is an extremely useful tool that NFFE-IAM members need to fight back," said NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin. "The other side is coming after our livelihoods. They will not be happy until scores of federal government jobs are gone, federal employees' pay is slashed, retirement security is crippled, health care is stripped, and the right to have union representation is gone. What happened recently in Wisconsin is just a preview of what the federal workforce is going to see on Capitol Hill this year as the GOP targets federal workers and their unions. Please use the Legislative Action Center to make your voice heard. We must fight back, and this is the tool you and the members of your Local can use to do that."

In addition to the issue-based resources, there are also a number of tools available to research and contact members of Congress. At the very top are instructions for dialing the Capitol switchboard, detailing how to contact your member of Congress using only your zip code. There is also a link to AFL-CIO's voting records, which lay out how your elected officials have voted on a number of key issues impacting federal workers and working families. In the Legislative Action Center, you will also find a link to the 'NFFE Materials' page, where you can access more than a dozen different signs, brochures, and flyers to use for union bulletin boards, rallies, or organizing campaigns.

"Our goal with this project is to empower individual NFFE-IAM members and Locals to make positive change for federal employees," said NFFE Communications Director Cory Bythrow. "These tools are critical to growing our members' collective voice in public affairs and educating Congress on the invaluable services federal employees provide for our nation every day."

Keep in mind that you may only contact your Congressional representatives on your own time, on your personal phone or computer, and if you make it clear that you are contacting them as a citizen or union official, and not speaking on behalf of the agency.

For information on rules governing federal employees' legislative activity, visit [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org), and click "Hatch Act Guide" under the Legislative tab.

As a citizen of the United States of America, you have the right to seek help from your elected representatives in addressing your concerns – including policies that affect your conditions of employment as a federal employee. In a political climate where elected officials are targeting the federal workforce for deep cuts, it is essential for federal workers to speak up and defend their livelihoods.

In order to help you engage lawmakers on issues that impact the federal workforce, NFFE has developed the Legislative Action Center, an online toolkit that gives you the resources necessary to make your voice heard on Capitol Hill. With the Legislative Action Center you will have access to template letters on some of the most important federal employee issues today, such as workforce reductions, pay freezes, cuts to retirement benefits, and other critical issues impacting you and your family. You will also find corresponding sets of talking points that you may use to advocate on behalf of your issue when

# Sorry, We're Closed: Government Shutdowns and How They Impact Your Job

For the past several months, talks of a government shutdown have grown louder and louder as members of Congress and the Administration have battled it out over legislation to fund the government for the remainder of fiscal year 2011. Republicans insist on cutting tens of billions of dollars from already cash-strapped federal agencies while Democrats have largely stood against the opposition's draconian cuts. The result of this protracted debate has been a series of stop-gap spending measures to keep the government afloat while politicians bicker over the details.

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, Congress has passed six short-term spending bills to fund the government. These bills are known as Continuing Resolutions, or "CR's", for short. CR's are temporary funding measures used by Congress to finance federal government obligations in the absence of the standard appropriations process. The amount and duration of these CR's is the issue at the center of the spending debate on Capitol Hill.

The most recent CR (as of this writing), passed by Congress on March 17<sup>th</sup> and signed into law by President Obama a day later, funds the government for a mere three weeks, kicking the can down the road once again. Once the CR expires on April 8<sup>th</sup>, Congress must pass another CR to keep federal agencies running or allow the government to shutdown.

With Republicans digging in their heels and refusing to compromise, the possibility of a government shutdown is now more likely than it has been in decades. What is being lost in the partisan struggle, however, is just how serious government shutdowns are and what impact one would have on federal employees, their families, and their neighbors.

By law, when the federal government does not receive funding from Congress to carry out its obligations, it must cease all "non-essential" operations. In doing so, all non-essential federal employees must be furloughed without pay until funding is restored. Employees designated as "essential" are those who perform emergency work involving the safety of human life or the protection of property, those involved in the orderly suspension of agency operations, and those performing other functions deemed "excepted" from a furlough in an agency's shutdown plan. Some examples of essential employees are doctors and nurses, national security personnel, and border patrol agents. If your agency or office is funded outside of the normal appropriations process, operations should continue as normal, to the extent that they do not rely on revenue from other federal agencies which may be furloughed.

Thus far, federal agencies have been less than forthcoming with their shutdown plans, that detail which employees are deemed essential and which are deemed nonessential. At the March 16<sup>th</sup> National Partnership Council meeting, NFFE National President Dougan asked that Council Co-chairman Jeffrey Zients explain the lack of cooperation on behalf of the agencies. Though Zients did not have a complete answer, NFFE and other federal unions are keeping pressure on the government to release the plans.

NFFE General Counsel Stefan Sutich has issued bargaining guidance for Locals to use in preparation for a shutdown. This can be located on the NFFE website, [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org), in the 'Important Documents' section of the Stewards' Toolkit. Also, in the website's new Legislative Action Center, you can find sample letters and other useful information to contact your members of Congress. Now is the time to tell them to quit playing politics with your job by preventing a government shutdown.



# Wisconsin, U.S.A.: The National Assault on Workers' Rights and What You Can Do to Fight Back



The earth has shifted in Madison, Wisconsin. Renowned as the state capital, the home of the University of Wisconsin, and a great place to live and work, Madison has become the epicenter of the fight for the rights and the dignity of the American worker.

In mid-February, newly-seated Republican Governor Scott Walker offered a thinly-veiled proposal to close the state's budget gap. Almost immediately, this bill was exposed as a direct assault on the collective bargaining rights of public employees, launching what has become the greatest labor struggle in decades. After weeks of dramatic political wrangling, pitched protests, and inflexible grandstanding, state Senate Republicans, late on the night of March 9, 2011, cast aside the democratic process, using an obscure parliamentary trick to wrest the basic human right to bargain collectively from 175,000 of their own citizens.

These events in Wisconsin have been a disorienting experience for everyone who has been touched by the labor movement. Many have been left asking how it came to this? What does this mean for the labor movement and all workers? And more importantly, what can we do to stop it from happening again?

On a cold and wintry February 11<sup>th</sup>, Governor Walker proposed a budget repair bill to close the state's \$137 million budget deficit. His proposals for doing so required public employees to contribute substantially more to the costs of their health and retirement benefits, moves that would cost Wisconsin's civil servants thousands of dollars per year. As the day progressed, and the people were able to look deeper into the legislation, a cynical, almost unbelievable power-grab emerged. Within this budget repair bill were provisions to not only increase the benefit costs to public employees, but also to deprive them of their basic right to bargain collectively. With the exception of police and firefighters, every one of the 175,000 remaining public employees would be disenfranchised in the workplace.

Under the legislation, public employees would only be able to bargain over wages, provided that those wages grow no faster than the Consumer Price Index. All other forms of bargaining would be thrown out the window. Worse yet, the bill also prohibits dues-withholding from union members' paychecks, forcing the union to pass the hat around every pay period in order to fund their representational duties. The final, most cynical provision stipulates that public unions will be forced to undergo an annual decertification vote, whether the state's employees ask for one or not.

Outraged by the blatant assault on workers' rights, tens of thousands of public employees took to the State Capitol

grounds, peaceably protesting the Governor's union-busting proposals. On the first day of protests, scores of Wisconsinites swelled through the halls of the Capitol, overflowing in vast crowds across the square surrounding the historic structure. In the ensuing days, their union brothers and sisters from police and fire departments across the state joined them in protest, despite being shielded from harm in the Governor's proposal. Marching through the streets and Capitol building itself, bagpipes playing, the arrival of these public safety workers brought with them a feeling of solidarity unlike any the throngs of protestors had experienced.

Soon after, private sector union members, non-union supporters – including small business owners, and university and high school





*Local firemen joined the protests in solidarity with their fellow public employees.*

“A year ago, our common enemy was Wall Street greed, and now, all of a sudden, teachers and other public servants are the problem,” said McKenzie. “Friends and neighbors have been turned against one another on the issue of collective bargaining. It’s clear that a great moral battle is being waged, and we didn’t want to miss it.”

As rallies swelled both within and outside of the Capitol, the 14 state Senate Democrats, appalled by the anti-union legislation, courageously left the state in order to deny Republicans the ability to reach a quorum and hold a vote on the bill. For over two weeks, they retreated to undisclosed locations in neighboring Illinois as the political situation heated up back in Madison. Affectionately dubbed the “Fabulous 14,” they refused to allow the Senate to rubberstamp legislation that would negate the rights of their constituents. Union leaders meanwhile agreed to the Governor’s demands for financial concessions. Stubbornly, the Governor would not relent. With financial concessions already

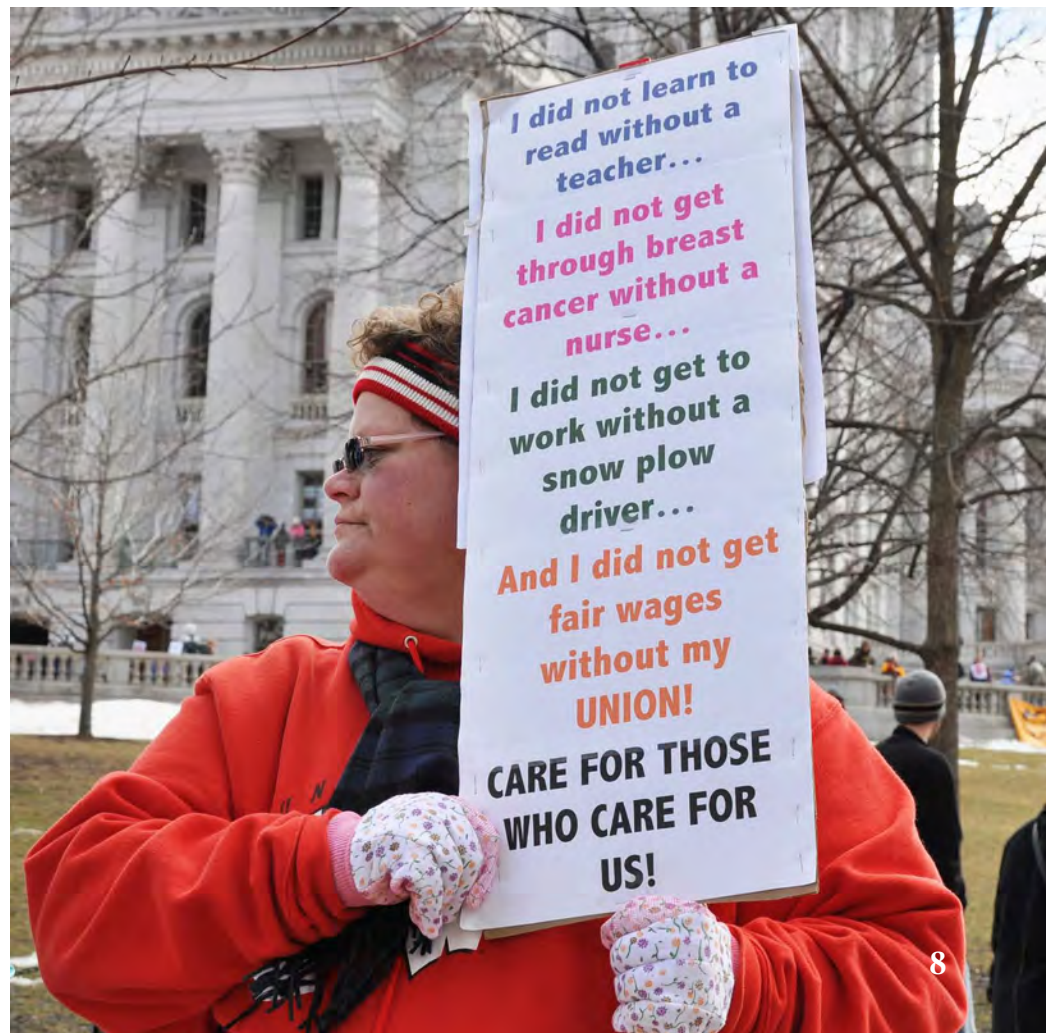
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students – joined the passionate protesters, swelling crowds at the Capitol to upwards of 100,000. Holding signs that read “Don’t Take My Rights Away – I’m Not Done with Them Yet!” and “United We Bargain, Divided We Beg,” the throngs of protestors spoke with one voice, in solidarity, against Governor Walker’s power-grab. Of the tens of thousands of protestors, hundreds held a 24/7 vigil within the Capitol, sleeping for weeks on end in the Capitol rotunda.

Not alone in their protest, Local 276 members were joined by Tim McKenzie of NFFE Local 2165, who works at the Superior National Forest in Ely, Minnesota. Traveling nearly 450 miles to reach Madison, McKenzie immediately took up the fight he had been itching to join since Governor Walker first unveiled his union-busting scheme.

Among the masses fighting for workers’ rights were members of NFFE Local 276, who work at the U.S. Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory a short distance from the Capitol building. Shoulder to shoulder with union brothers and sisters, members chanted “What’s Disgusting? Union Busting!” and joined in the singing of the labor anthem, “Solidarity Forever.” NFFE National Vice President and Local 276 member John Obst, who took part in the rallies since their outset, described the mood with strong emotion:

“It was an unbelievably beautiful experience to look at the throng of protesters and see participation from such diverse unions as the Teamsters, Sheet Metal Workers, Steamfitters, American Federation of Teachers, Union Pipe Trades, SEIU, AFSCME, Graduate Students Association, United Steel Workers, and many others. It makes me so proud to be union.” Adding, “When state Republicans attack Wisconsin’s public sector unions they attack all unions. NFFE’s motto of ‘all for one, and one for all’ was vigorously put into practice by Local 276 members.”



agreed to, it became abundantly clear that this bill had nothing to do with the state's budget deficit – it was meant to break the backs of public employees and their unions.

For the Governor and state Senate Republicans, the situation in Madison grew increasingly tense. Constantly criticized by tens of thousands of outraged Wisconsinites, they began to employ deplorable tactics to force the Fabulous 14 back to the Capitol so that they could ram through the anti-union bill. The Governor ordered State Police to find Senate Democrats and return them to the Capitol, deploying law enforcement to their homes and offices. When this didn't work, the state Senate passed a resolution fining Democrats \$100 for every day they remained out of state. They also restricted the rights of Democratic staff to use copy machines and parking spaces on the Capitol grounds. In spite of all this, state Senate Democrats and the throngs of Wisconsinites supporting them stood their ground.

To frustrate the protestors, the Governor (through the Department of Administration) ordered access to the Capitol limited. Unions filed for an injunction to reopen the Capitol, and it was granted by the court as the state constitution requires citizen access when the legislature is in session. The Dane County Sheriff stated that his officers would not perform "door duty" as he did not want them acting as a "palace guard." The judge did rule that protestors could not remain in the Capitol overnight. This created a potential powder keg situation, but just as throughout the protests, order prevailed, protestors left the building and no arrests were made. Regardless, the Governor's trickery did not stop here.

With all of their efforts to suppress the voice of the people coming to naught, Governor Walker held a closed door meeting with Republican members of the state Senate to plot their next move. No one knew what was said until the following evening when the



**NFFE Local 2165 member Tim McKenzie travelled nearly 450 miles from Ely, MN to protest Governor Walkers' union-busting bill.**



most egregious, anti-democratic move to date was set in motion. Senate Republicans, hamstrung for weeks by Senate rules requiring a quorum to vote on legislation with fiscal outcomes, removed all fiscal provisions from the bill. Late on the night of March 9<sup>th</sup>, they swiftly passed the union-busting bill without a single Democratic Senator present. Soon after, the bill was rubberstamped by the Republican-dominated State Assembly and signed into law by Walker.

Finally, after weeks of struggle, Republican efforts to drive a stake through the heart of the labor movement in the state of Wisconsin had come to bear – their greatest political opponent had been left disenfranchised, demoralized, and disempowered. 175,000 public workers had been stripped of their voice, leaving them vulnerable to the whims of the Governor.

Or so they thought.

In order for the new law to take effect, it had to be published with the Legislative Reference Bureau by the Secretary of State. However, Secretary of State Douglas LaFollette, a Democrat, refused to publish it immediately, delaying publication for as long as he had authority to

*Thousands gathered for a rally in Washington, D.C. to show their support for Wisconsin workers.*

do so – 10 days. He did this because of allegations that the Senate Republicans' vote was nullified by the fact that the meeting was unlawful under the state's open meetings law. Dane County officials filed a lawsuit arguing that the passage of the law was illegal and unconstitutional. Given this delay, on March 18<sup>th</sup>, a Dane County Circuit Judge said that the Republican attempt to push through the anti-union bill was an illegal "closed session," and issued a temporary ban on publishing the law. The judge scheduled a hearing to begin on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

If the passage of the law is found to be illegal, the Republican Senators could simply open another session and vote again to pass the law banning collective bargaining for public employees. These delays provide an opportunity for Republican Senators to listen to the thousands upon thousands of voices calling for a halt to this attack on workers. If the past several weeks have been any indication, this is not likely to happen.

## Where Do We Go from Here?

Throughout this protracted political conflict, something has changed in this country. In Wisconsin, both before and after the bill had been rammed through the Statehouse, more and more protestors came, and more and more workers stood up for their rights. More than this, workers in states like Michigan, Indiana, Tennessee, and Florida facing similar anti-union battles with Republican Governors, came together to fight for their right to bargain collectively. Even in states where such legislation was not proposed, hundreds of thousands of workers – union and non-union – staged solidarity rallies in support of the embattled public employees.

The result of these high-profile struggles have put the eyes of the nation on the battle against workers' rights that has been waged silently for more than thirty years. Everyone knew that unions were fading as a political force in recent decades, but few knew why. Many assumed it was caused by passive forces like global competition, the changing nature of our economy, or the perception that unions were no longer necessary. Today, however, this perception is changing. Conservative politicians, and the anti-union corporate interests that support them, have been exposed to the public



as individuals who would rather run their governments and businesses through decree, than in partnership with their employees.

The struggle of organized workers to keep their most basic rights in the workplace has not occupied the public conscience so pervasively in decades. A short time ago, when asked about collective bargaining rights, many Americans had little idea that they had a right to unionize – to bargain with their employer and secure a better future for themselves and their families. Today, when asked if public employees should be stripped of their collective bargaining rights, a full 62% of Americans oppose it, with a mere 32% supporting it. Some of these Americans may not approve of unions, and they may have different ideas about the role of government, but it is abundantly clear that they stand for the right of workers to bargain collectively.

Private sector workers, bludgeoned for years by the same anti-worker tactics employed by Governor Walker, are more aware than ever that this does not have to be their future; that they are indeed entitled to form or join a union and stand up for their right to something better.

Brothers and Sisters, this is our moment to fight for everything we have lost in recent years. Americans who work hard and play by the rules deserve adequate health insurance, a modest pension, and enough wages to feed their families and put a roof over their heads. They can do this through unions.

"We find what he (Governor Walker) has done morally wrong and we cannot sit by and let it happen without a fight," said NFFE Local 276 Chief Steward Jill Gaskell. "This campaign has been used as a wedge between public and private sector workers, but the reality is that the private sector could see benefits from unionizing, too."

Though public employees may have absorbed a serious blow in Wisconsin, the labor movement and the American people are more engaged than ever. This is our opportunity, as union members and citizens, to re-organize, expand, and educate the entire nation on the role of the labor movement. We are the movement that brought America the weekend, the forty-hour work week, health and safety standards, social security, and civil rights. We are the movement that built a middle class in this country that became the envy of the world.

As union members, citizens, and neighbors, it is our duty to educate our fellow Americans on their right to unionize. If we do not stand together today, we are all doomed to fall apart tomorrow. After all, we are not done with our rights just yet.

# Stop the Attacks: Join us for Lobby Week 2011

This May 9-12, NFFE-IAM members from around the nation will gather in Washington, D.C. for the IAMAW's Legislative Conference. Once each year, members come together for a week of rousing speeches by key leaders in Congress and labor, to discuss legislative strategies, and spend time on Capitol Hill lobbying their elected officials. Over the years, thousands of NFFE representatives, from Alaska to Puerto Rico and everywhere in between, have made the trip to the nation's capital to talk about issues face-to-face with their representatives in Congress.

As the nation watches Wisconsin's workers fight to stop Governor Walker's anti-union law, federal workers continue to be unfairly targeted by numerous misguided attempts to reduce the deficit. When asked about the likelihood that Republicans' proposed federal budget cuts would cause the loss of thousands of federal jobs, House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) brushed the concerns aside by simply saying "so be it." Weeks later House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) registered support for that idea.

Federal workers cannot afford to wait until a full-fledged attack on workers' rights spreads to the U.S. Capitol. It is more critical than ever for NFFE-IAM members to participate in this year's Legislative Conference. Legislation targeting federal employee pay, benefits, and job security are already being considered in the 112th Congress, and we need your help to stop it.

Lobbying elected officials is crucial in our efforts to improve the lives of federal workers across the country. With powerful voices lobbying politicians to target federal workers, it is essential for federal employees to stand up and participate in the political process and fight for their rights. This year, we ask that you do your part to make a difference. Join us in Washington, D.C. for Lobby Week! For more information, click 'Lobby Week 2011' under the Legislative tab on the NFFE National website, [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org).



*GSA Council President Jack Hanley and National Organizing Coordinator Cassie Kerner Bond joined Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) and dozens of lawmakers at last year's Congressional Reception.*

## Dates and Location for NFFE's 49th National Convention Now Available!

The National Executive Council is proud to announce that the 49th NFFE National Convention will be held next year in the city of Portland, Oregon. Scheduled for October 1-4, 2012, the union's quadrennial Convention will take place at the historic Benson Hotel in downtown Portland.

The NFFE National Convention is an excellent opportunity for delegates from every one of NFFE's nearly 200 Locals to come together and conduct the business of our union. Convention participants elect our national officers, make changes to the union's bylaws, and participate in discussions with some of the leading voices in labor and government.

Though Convention is still a long way away, it is never too early to start thinking about how many delegates you would like to send and making the appropriate financial arrangements. Information on room rates, activities, and the week's agenda will be made available as the Convention draws nearer.

For the latest news and updates regarding NFFE's 49th National Convention, visit our website at [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org).

# NFFE's Top Organizers to Carry Their Message to Capitol Hill

Locals throughout the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) put a great deal of effort into increasing Local awareness and building membership in 2010. NFFE's Organizing Department has chosen to recognize five of the Locals that increased their membership density the most last year. After a successful Legislative Conference reception last year, NFFE once again rewarded a handful of Locals with a free trip to Washington, D.C.

"Last year's Lobby Week trips were a tremendous success," said National Organizing Coordinator Cassie Kerner Bond. "We are thrilled to recognize a new group of Locals for their recruiting efforts and results, and to bring them to Washington, D.C. where they can share their success stories and learn from their fellow union members."

One member from each of the winning Locals will travel to our nation's capital this May to participate in the IAMAW's Legislative Conference. The travelers will have the opportunity to listen to a number of inspiring speakers throughout the week, network with their NFFE-IAM brothers and sisters, and lobby their elected representatives on the issues impacting their respective Locals and fellow union members. The National Office will pay for each representative's travel expenses, lodging, and per diem for the week.

This year's trip winners come from a variety of agencies and parts of the country. Winners include: 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.

These Locals were selected from a list of NFFE bargaining units that showed the greatest gains in membership density during 2010.

"So many of our NFFE Locals are standing up and renewing their commitment to membership building, and all of their efforts are noted and appreciated," said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. "But these folks really accepted the challenge to build up their Locals, and made significant progress in increasing their membership last year."

"Collective bargaining is the best vehicle for the preservation and creation of good jobs and a quality workforce," said Local 405 President Frank Catalano, one of this year's trip recipients. "Local 405 is proud to participate in Lobby Week this year and carry that message to Capitol Hill."

Congratulations to this year's trip winners, and thank you to each and every one of you for your ongoing efforts to grow your Locals.

If you would like assistance in building membership at your Local in 2011, please contact your National Organizing Coordinator. Detailed contact information can be found on the 'Organizing Central' page of our website, [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org).



Members of NFFE Local 1, pictured here at last year's award ceremony, will be honored with the NFFE Award for Sustained Excellence in Recruitment – the highest honor a Local can receive for organizing.

# Educational Opportunities for Federal Workers at the Winpisinger Center

Access to education is a key component in building a strong union. NFFE-IAM members have access to an array of classes and opportunities at the IAMAW's William W. Winpisinger Education & Technology Center. The Center, located in Placid Harbor, Hollywood, Maryland, is a place where unionists from around the country can learn to hone the skills necessary to become good leaders. For 30 years the school has been giving members, officers, and staff educational opportunities that cannot be found elsewhere.

The Winpisinger Center has enrolled more than 60,000 students since it opened its doors in 1981. The Center now teaches over 70 programs and offers a bachelors degree program where members can earn their degree in labor studies in conjunction with the National Labor College. The Center employs seven full-time educational representatives and forty-five staff members to ensure that every member is thoroughly trained and accommodated during their visit. The environment is comfortable and designed to make learning easy and fun.

For our newer members, the Federal Employees Basic Program is a week-long class that covers the essentials of union advocacy and labor relations. The class's topics include legislative advocacy, grievance procedures, arbitrations, workers' compensation, and ULP charges. The instructors take many approaches toward teaching, using discussion, role playing, and presentations from NFFE national officers and staff to facilitate learning. This basic program is held three times a year and can accommodate up to 100 students.

"This is obviously a small percentage of our total membership, and therefore it is the duty of these select members to learn the material and return to the Local to train others," said Instructor Henry Bagwell, who assists in the week-long training.

## May:

- Basic Web Development 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

## June:

- Federal Employees Advanced Program 19<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>
- Federal Employees Collective Bargaining Program 26<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup>

## August:

- Federal Employees MSPB Program 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>
- Federal Employees Basic Program 14<sup>th</sup>- 19<sup>th</sup>

## September:

- National Labor College – Gen Ed 18<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>

## October:

- Communicators Class, 9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>
- Collective Bargaining, 23<sup>rd</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>

## November:

- Organizing II Program 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>

## December:

- Arbitration 4<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>

This commitment to membership training is fundamental to NFFE's survival in the 21st century. From the basic Federal Employees Seminar to more complex classes such as Advanced Arbitration, NFFE-IAM members are given the tools to succeed.

If you would like to participate in or learn more about the William W. Winpisinger Education & Technology Center, visit their website, [www.winpisinger.iam.org](http://www.winpisinger.iam.org).

*NFFE-IAM members from across the country gathered for the Federal Employees' Basic Program in March of this year.*



# On the Road with Gary Johanson



The story of Business Representative Gary Johanson's union activism started long before he was born. Gary's mother, Bertha, grew up poor and without a father after he perished in a fire at a non-union steel mill. Appreciating the importance of unionism from an early age, she became a union steelworker in Pittsburgh during World War II. Bertha found her match in a like-minded carpenter named Otto, who she met at a union picnic in Los Angeles.

"Growing up in L.A., I heard plenty of stories about hardships endured by family members in the Great Depression," said Gary Johanson. "I was taught the importance of unions and their vital role in improving living conditions for working men and women."

After high school, Johanson worked at the Post Office to pay for college. "The Post Office was an open shop, but you had better belong to the union," said Johanson, who served as a steward for the Mail Handlers Union. "The employees stuck together and the few employees who did not join the union were considered oddities. The union had the clout. Almost all the managers were former union members."

After serving an enlistment in the Army and graduating from San Francisco State University, Johanson went on to work as a reporter at five different California newspapers. While the work was dynamic and gratifying, the pay and benefits left plenty to be desired. None of the newspapers were unionized. Johanson soon left the newspaper trade and returned to the federal sector, serving as an employee and union officer in the Department of Veterans Affairs and later in the Bureau of Land Management. He was hired as a NFFE Business Representative in 2006.

Based in St. Louis, Johanson's work takes him all over the country's ample midsection, sending him to the Northern forests of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, South to Louisiana's Cajun country, East to the Appalachian foothills and West to New Mexico.

"I am fascinated by the diversity and rich cultures of our union members," said Johanson. "One week I am working a training session with a Forest Service union officer whose non-union duties include wintertime forest patrols on a dogsled, and the following week I am handling an arbitration at the New Orleans VA hospital and bunking down in the French Quarter."

Although work locations, duties, and Agency names change, the core representational issues for union members seldom do. "Union members want to be treated with dignity and respect," said Johanson. "They demand due process. They expect management and the public to acknowledge the value of their work. Union members expect and deserve fair pay for their work."

With recent attacks on union members throughout the country weighing heavily on his mind, Johanson encourages federal employees to defend their jobs by joining the union. "Who else speaks for the workers? Does your manager advocate for your job in Washington? At a time when pay is frozen and nearly every form of compensation for federal workers is under attack, workers need a union advocate in Washington."



*Johanson joined the tens of thousands of protestors in Madison, WI recently to fight for workers' right to bargain collectively.*

# Enter Your Local Publications for the Annual IAMAW Newsletter and Website Contest!

It is time once again for the IAMAW's annual Newsletter and Website Contest. Entries for the 2011 contest will be accepted until May 13, 2011 by the IAMAW Communications Department. The contest recognizes General Excellence, Best Layout & Design, and Best Feature for newsletters, and General Excellence and Best Layout & Design for websites.

General Excellence in newsletters recognizes the Local or District lodge that demonstrates the highest effectiveness of content, appearance, consistency, and writing and editing for two consecutive newsletter publications. The application for this award must include two consecutive issues and the appropriate newsletter entry form. General Excellence in websites will be judged on overall effectiveness, technical expertise, appearance, and content. Be sure to include the website address when submitting the appropriate website entry form.

Best Layout & Design in newsletters recognizes the Local or District lodge with the best overall appearance, adherence to standards of readability and impact regardless of the format of the publication – whether it is tabloid, newsletter size, etc. – for two consecutive newsletter publications. As with the General Excellence award, please be sure to use the appropriate newsletter entry form and include two consecutive issues. This award for websites will be judged by how well your website presents the message of trade unionism.

Best Feature in newsletters recognizes the Local or District lodge with the best piece that does not fall into routine news reporting, such as investigative reports, one-on-one interviews, original satire, humor, editorial cartoons, or a series of reports. All entries must include a complete set and use the appropriate newsletter entry form.

Last October, when IAMAW announced the winners of its annual Newsletter and Website Contest, NFFE Locals consistently populated the names of the winners. Overall, NFFE Locals and the National Office won a combined nine awards from five different categories: the National Office won five awards, and NFFE Locals 1998 and 2109 each won two. Add your Local to the award-winning list this year by creating a newsletter or website of your own!

All official membership publications created by IAMAW Local or District lodges in good standing – dated April 2010 through April 2011 – are eligible to apply. Entry forms for all contests can be found on our website, [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org), under the 'Resources tab'. If you have questions about joining the contest, or starting up your own newsletter or website, please do not hesitate to contact NFFE National Communications Director Cory Bythrow by calling 202-216-4458, or by e-mail at [cbythrow@nffe.org](mailto:cbythrow@nffe.org).

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