



# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers



## NFFE News Story

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# NFFE TAKES ON THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE IN COURT OVER FOIA PRACTICES

As NFFE-IAM members know all too well, dealing with federal agencies to acquire necessary information can be a time-consuming, and often frustrating experience. One agency, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), has such a poor reputation in the government transparency community that it received the Society of Professional Journalists' 2014 "Black Hole Award." – an award used to "highlight the most heinous violations of the public's right to know."



*The Forest Service Council Master Agreement Negotiating Committee*

Despite the notorious USFS public information practices, NFFE has made numerous requests for information under the Freedom of Information

Act (FOIA) on issues ranging from agency expenses incurred during contract negotiations to simple position descriptions for employees in the Cherokee National Forest. Over the years, these countless requests have been routinely ignored by the agency other than the most basic acknowledgment receipt. But enough is enough.

On July 29, 2016, NFFE filed a lawsuit in federal court over the USFS's blatant disregard for laws surrounding NFFE's legal right to request pertinent information from the agency both through FOIA and Section 7114 of the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Act. The most effective agencies are those that have strong labor-management partnerships. The workplace functions best when Union and Agency officials are able to resolve workplace conflicts. But when the Agency refuses to act in good-faith cooperation, a meaningful partnership is impossible. This lawsuit is a last resort effort for NFFE-IAM members, but the Agency has refused to cooperate in any meaningful way and left USFS employees no other option.

"We have exhausted every option to work with the Forest Service in a constructive manner to get the information we are legally-entitled to," said NFFE National Business Representative Dave Stamey. "The Forest Service's repeated denial of employee rights is unacceptable, so we will have our day in court. We look forward to getting beyond these petty tactics the Forest Service has employed and getting back to improving the lives of Forest Service employees."