

3RD QUARTER 2010

# THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

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

## Targeted



Some in Congress are targeting federal worker compensation, benefits, as election year rhetoric heats up. See pages 7-9



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William R. Dougan

From September 12-17, NFFE's National Organizing Steering Committee, made up of the National Executive Council, NFFE Council Presidents, NFFE National Business Representatives, and a number of National Office staff, met at the IAM's training facility in Hollywood, MD. Our purpose was to review and amend NFFE's 2009 Organizing Strategic Plan. While the current plan was a good start to focusing on organizing and recruiting in a strategic manner, it didn't go far enough in making membership-building *the* top priority of our union.

My task here is to make the case for change. The 2010-2011 Organizing Strategic Plan, which is undergoing final revisions as of this writing, will do just that. It will lay out significant changes in staff assignments, considerably increasing our current organizing staff. It will also lay out the responsibilities for the leaders of this union relative to recruiting and organizing. Implementing these changes will allow us to grow our collective voice in the workplace through growing our membership.

The bottom line is this: building membership is about building *power*. Our collective power as a union is derived from our membership density. If we are to be successful in building membership, we must be able to overcome some of the barriers and limits we have placed on ourselves and our organization in the past. In many NFFE Councils and Locals, recruitment of new members was never internalized or given appropriate priority, resulting in a lack of time spent on planning strategically and carrying out recruiting efforts. In addition, the National Office has devoted a limited amount of resources to assist our Locals and Councils in developing plans and recruiting new members.

Over the years, our union has enabled many Locals to become dependent upon others for recruiting. Somehow we've allowed ourselves to believe that it is not our job to build membership, but someone else's. The reality is that our highest degree of success in recruiting new members will come from the efforts of Local members recruiting from within their Local; who better knows the employees and what issues are important to them? We must empower our Locals to build membership. Empowerment comes from having functional Locals whose leaders and members are capable of effectively recruiting and retaining new members. Empowerment comes from providing tools and training for Local recruiters and organizing committees. Empowerment comes from union brothers and sisters standing together and making the change that they wish to see in their union as well as their workplace.

Based on federal retirement projections, NFFE, along with other federal unions, faces a looming decline in membership numbers over the next several years. If we do nothing different from our current recruitment efforts, we will face a steady decline in members. We must make a change if we are to survive as a union.

The type of cultural changes I am describing will not occur overnight. It will take us years to complete. But we cannot let this challenge become another barrier to change. No change will occur unless we take *action*. The time for talk is over; we need to get busy ORGANIZING AND RECRUITING.

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

## FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

At our very core as a union, our goal is to empower federal workers to have a stronger say in the workplace. The principle of strength in numbers is crucial when bargaining conditions of employment with the federal government. Underlying this strength is the most important role a union officer, steward, or member has: organizing new members.

In my previous column, I discussed the importance of organizing and its relationship to the continued fiscal and representational success of our union. Due to the hard work of many NFFE-IAM members, officers, and staff in recent years, we are financially healthier today than any time in recent history. We ran a surplus in last year's budget and are likely to realize an even larger one this year. For this edition's column, I'd like to discuss some new ways that NFFE is using its growing financial resources to assist you in your organizing efforts.

During our recent Organizing Strategic Plan review at the Winpisinger Center, myself and

other NFFE leaders discussed new ways to use the budget surplus to improve overall organizing performance at the Local and national level. For many Locals, one of the major stumbling blocks in recruiting new members was the cost of organizing activities. To ease this strain on Local finances, NFFE National will now rebate Locals \$20 per new member recruited. This way, you do not have to sacrifice other key union functions in order to organize. At the National level, we intend to grow our full time organizing staff, and reorganize the department to best serve our Locals' organizing needs, pending approval by the National Executive Council. These changes will be discussed in full later in this newsletter, so I will withhold repeating.

The real take home idea here is that the more members your Local has, the more empowered you are to have their voices heard, plain and simple. I, and everyone else here at NFFE National, are committed to helping you do just that.



**William D. Fenaughty**

## FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

The campaign season for the mid-term congressional elections is already in full swing and will only get more active as we move toward November 2nd. There are also many state and municipal elections coming up. With that in mind, federal employees must be aware that their ability to express partisan support for candidates and engage in political activity is restricted via the Hatch Act. The Hatch Act, named after Senator Carl Hatch of New Mexico, was originally passed in 1939 as a way to combat the use of patronage in the civil service. The Hatch Act covers most executive branch employees.

Under the Hatch Act, employees are either designated as less restricted or more restricted. While most employees represented by NFFE fall into the less restricted category, employees should inquire to make sure they are properly categorized as such. Employees in the more restricted category tend to work at national security sensitive agencies such as the FBI and CIA and agencies that help protect the election process such as the Department of Justice and the Federal Election Commission.

The Hatch Act still restricts "less restricted" employees in some significant ways. First, they may not run for public office in a partisan political election. Employees may also not use their position in any way to affect an election. Furthermore, employees may not engage in

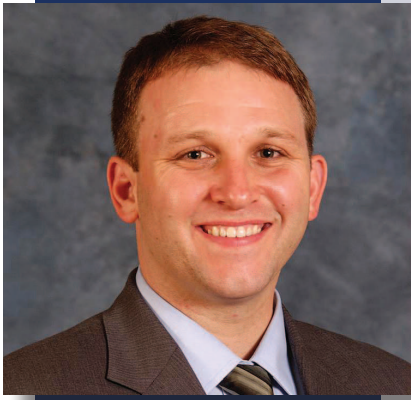
any partisan political activity while on duty, in a government office, wearing an official uniform, or using a government vehicle. This includes wearing political buttons, t-shirts and other items and displaying campaign materials or items. In this regard, employees should be careful not to forward emails from their government computers or government email accounts that contain partisan political messages.

In addition, federal employees may not solicit, accept or receive a political contribution from any person or invite people to political fundraisers. The exception to this rule, however, is that officers of labor organizations, such as NFFE, may accept contributions to a political action committee such as the Machinists Non-Partisan Political League (MNPL) in a non-work setting.

But, it should be made clear that federal employees have every right to vote in elections and to express support for candidates in a non-work setting. NFFE encourages its members to do so since these elections will have a major impact on federal employees. In addition, an employee is allowed to have a partisan bumper sticker on their personally owned vehicle even if they park on government property for work. This article is merely a summary. We highly encourage any employees with questions about their activity to look at the Office of Special Counsel website, [www.OSC.gov](http://www.OSC.gov).



**Stefan Sutich**



Randy Erwin

## FROM THE DESK OF THE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

Fall is upon us. Being an election year, that means Congress is winding down their business and getting ready to head home for the final stretches of their campaigns. Every seat in the U.S. House of Representatives and one third of the U.S. Senate is up for election on November 2, 2010. Please make sure you make your voice heard on Election Day.

Although 2010 is not a presidential election year, the stakes are arguably just as high this year as they were in the 2008 election. Two years ago, the American people made a decisive choice to take our country in a new direction. However, just two years later, it appears that many Americans are once again considering whether we should stay

the course or move the country back in the same direction we came from. If the makeup of Congress changes significantly, so will the agenda being moved, and that won't likely be a good thing for federal workers.

Who you vote for in November is your choice, but as your advocate on Capitol Hill, I have to be clear about what the outcome of this election really means for federal workers. On September 24<sup>th</sup>, the Republican Party released their "Pledge to America" outlining the direction they plan to steer our country. If they win majorities in Congress this November, they will have the ability to implement their agenda.

## LEGISLATIVE

# Expanded Collective Bargaining for VA Health Care Providers Moving Through Congress

In August, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee approved a bill (S. 3486) that would extend collective bargaining to Department of Veterans Affairs Title 38 health care providers over issues concerning compensation. The measure was approved, 10-6, by the Committee.

Under current statute, VA employees under Title 38, including registered nurses, physician assistants, doctors, dentists, and other health care providers, cannot collectively bargain or be assured of reaching resolution on grievances for issues related to employee compensation.

If passed into law, this bill would expand collective bargaining on compensation issues at the VA; however, rates of basic pay would still be off the bargaining table. This bill also would not impact existing bans on bargaining over issues concerning professional conduct or competence and peer review.

House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) has introduced a companion bill (H.R. 5543) that is currently gathering cosponsors. At the time of this printing, a hearing for this bill in the House Veterans' Affairs Committee is on the calendar.

"This is a very important bill for VA health care providers," said NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin. "We just cleared a few important hurdles, but we still have several more to clear before this bill becomes law. Right now the schedule is the biggest concern we have. Being an election year, there is not a lot of time left in this session of Congress. But we are trying to find a way to get this done this year."

While NFFE is aggressively pushing S.3486/H.R. 5543, the union is still committed to passing a related bill, S. 362/H.R. 949, which is broader in scope. This legislation would allow VA employees expanded rights to file grievances and arbitrate disputes over working conditions concerning or arising out of professional conduct or competence, peer review, and compensation. This legislation will be NFFE's top priority for VA-related legislation in the next session of Congress.

So what do they plan to do? They plan to institute a hiring freeze in the federal sector. They also plan to hold weekly votes on how to cut federal spending. The catch is, the GOP's best ideas for how to cut the federal budget are to cut federal workers' pay, reduce or eliminate federal pensions, eliminate the unions ability to represent you by eliminating official time for federal union officials, and outsource all the work federal employees do to contractors. If this kind of agenda is moved forward next year, federal workers will be in constant threat of seeing their pay and benefits slashed or their job eliminated.

That is why as federal employees it is very important that we participate fully in this

election. The livelihoods of federal employees and their families are more closely tied to the decisions made by lawmakers than any other major segment of the workforce. Congress has the ability to slash federal employees' pay and make numerous other decisions that impact federal workers' livelihoods. I urge you not to cast a vote this November for anyone that has your pay and benefits on the chopping block.

The scary thing is that threats to federal pay and pensions are a clear and present danger. There are currently numerous members of Congress that would love nothing more than to finance our country's deficit spending on the backs of federal workers. The votes on

measures to do just that have already begun, and more are sure to follow. Make sure you do your part on Election Day to keep anti-worker legislation from being passed.

Before you cast your vote on Election Day, I suggest you take a good, hard look at the voting records of those candidates you are considering voting for. If a candidate has been supportive of the federal workforce, then support them in their re-election. If they have been working against us, then don't support them. It's that simple.

Let's get it done between now and November 2<sup>nd</sup> to make Election Night 2010 one to celebrate.

## House Approves Telework Bill

On July 14, 2010, the House of Representatives passed federal telework legislation (H.R. 1744), setting the stage for an overdue potential expansion of telework programs in the federal government. This bipartisan piece of legislation is sponsored by Representatives John Sarbanes (D-MD), Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Gerald Connolly (D-VA).

The Senate approved similar legislation in May, which significantly increases the chances of this bill being passed by Congress and signed into law this year. As of this writing,

minor differences in the two bills are being reconciled. When that process is complete, the bill will be sent to both houses of Congress before heading to President Obama's desk for final enactment.

One significant hiccup regarding this bill appears to have been averted. The House-passed version of the bill included an amendment that would prohibit union officials from conducting union business while in a telework status. The Senate bill did not include a similar provision. Although the final version

of the bill has not been publicly released, the union has been given assurances that the harmful provision would not be included in the final version of the bill.

"This is a really important bill for the federal workforce," said NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin. "Telework saves the government money while significantly improving the quality of life for those able to take advantage of the workplace flexibility. Increasing the use of telework will improve morale and make our government run more efficiently."

## 1.4 Percent Pay Adjustment Advances in Senate

Despite repeated attempts by certain members of Congress to freeze federal pay, in July the Senate Appropriations Committee upheld the 1.4 percent pay adjustment for civilian federal employees by approving the Fiscal Year 2011 Financial Services and General Government spending bill.

Originally introduced as part of President Obama's budget

request, the 1.4% civilian pay adjustment has received a great deal of action during its time on Capitol Hill. On two separate occasions, certain members of Congress attempted to freeze federal pay at current levels for an indefinite period of time. On another occasion, one lawmaker tried to cap the size of the federal workforce at current levels, in addition to freezing federal salaries.

In spite of these politically-driven attacks, federal unions have fought hard to maintain federal workers' modest 2011 adjustment.

"It's been a big fight for us on Capitol Hill these past few months," said NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin. "With the campaign season in full swing, and criticism of government scoring political points,

some in Congress are aggressively looking to cut federal workers' pay. But federal employees already make 26 percent less than those who do the same jobs in the private sector. We're here to make sure members of Congress remember that. Widening this pay gap further would be unfair to employees and dangerous to the functioning of federal agencies."

# Forest Service Temporary Workforce Issues Thrust into the Spotlight as Congress, Media Take Notice

Early this summer, in the halls of Capitol Hill and the pages of the Washington media, agency misuse of temporary hiring authority was thrust into the spotlight.

At a June 30<sup>th</sup> hearing before the House Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia, NFFE National President William R. Dougan testified on the rampant misuse of this authority in federal land management agencies.

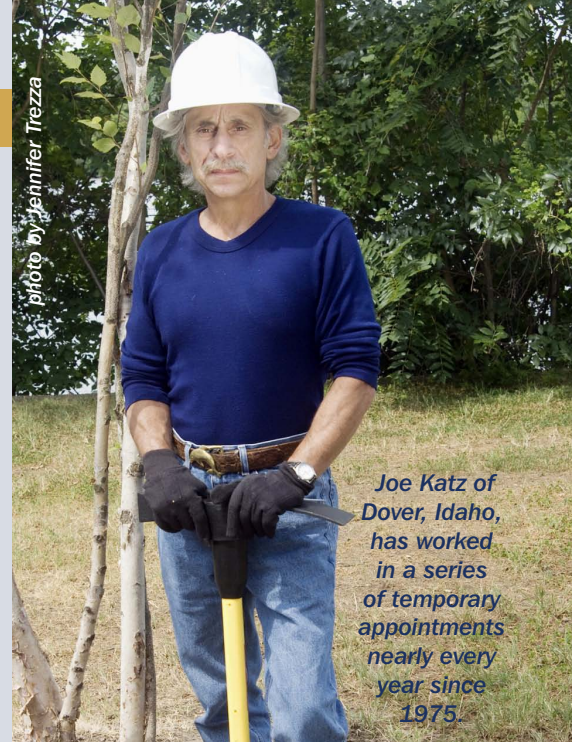
“How long does temporary last in the federal government?” asked Dougan before the Committee. “For some employees of the U.S. Forest Service, temporary has lasted more than thirty years. We all would like to think that the federal government is a model employer, as well it should be. But thousands of employees hired into temporary positions receive no health insurance benefits, no life insurance benefits, no retirement benefits, no step increases, and no competitive standing for internal placement into career jobs.”

Joining him in the committee room were Joe Katz and Lisa McKinney, both long-term temporary employees with the U.S. Forest Service. Katz has worked as a temporary employee of the Forest Service almost every year since 1975; however, he remains a temporary worker to this day. He has been hired and terminated each year under a string of temporary appointments. Katz is a Marine who served his country honorably in Vietnam. He has held his current position in trails and recreation for 21 of the past 22 seasons, yet he still has no career position or the benefits that come with it.

Lisa McKinney began working for the Forest Service as a firefighter in 1978, and has worked for the agency almost every season since then. She has performed the same regular and recurring work as a certified timber cruiser since 1995, yet she too has never received a career position.



*Joe Katz and Lisa McKinney, both long-term temporary workers with the U.S. Forest Service, joined NFFE National President William R. Dougan and Forest Service Council Legislative Chair Mark Davis at the hearing.*



*Joe Katz of Dover, Idaho, has worked in a series of temporary appointments nearly every year since 1975.*

Perhaps the most egregious part of this story is the fact that Katz and McKinney are not alone. Thousands of temporary workers are hired and terminated each year without receiving the benefits afforded to other federal employees. In fact, roughly 35-40% of the workforces of the Forest Service and National Park Service are hired as temporary employees each season.

After the hearing, Government Executive Magazine, a national publication which reports on the federal government, included a featured story in its August edition highlighting the temporary worker abuse issue. Among others, the story got the attention of House Federal Workforce Subcommittee Chairman Stephen Lynch (D-MA):

“As we explore existing temporary hiring authorities and current regulations, I believe it is important that we consider whether a path to permanency can be established for our temporary workers... Additionally, we need to look at how we can harness the sizeable talent and information acquired by the temporary employees.”

NFFE National and the Forest Service Council (FSC) will continue to work with members of Congress and the media to bring justice to the thousands of temporary employees serving our nation every day.

Special thanks go out to FSC President Ron Thatcher, FSC Legislative Committee Chair Mark Davis, and National Legislative Director Randy Erwin, as well as Joe Katz and Lisa McKinney, for their months of hard work leading up to this hearing.

# Local 125 Makes a Comeback through Effective Communications, Organizing

For this edition of the Local Spotlight we check in with NFFE Local 125, representing employees at the Region Four Intermountain Regional Office of the U.S. Forest Service in Ogden, UT and elsewhere throughout the region.

Chartered by the National Federation of Federal Employees in 1919 - just two years after the national union's founding - Local 125 is one of the oldest NFFE Locals still in existence today.

There have been many ups and downs throughout the Local's long history, but time and time again the union lived to fight another day. Just a few short years ago, however, Local 125 was in a state of decline. With an executive board boasting more vacant seats than filled, and a membership of only 4 dues-payers, few thought the historic union would survive to see its ninetieth birthday.

Today, however, there is a much different story coming out of Local 125. For the past year, the Local has been undergoing a renaissance of sorts. Thanks to the tireless efforts of President Bryan Clonts, Forest Service Council Region Four VP David Chevalier, and others, the Local is now holding regular meetings, recruiting new members, and publishing a monthly newsletter. In little more than a year, in fact, they have nearly sextupled their membership, growing from just four dues payers to 23. Utilizing effective communication and recruitment strategies, Local officers have managed to breathe life back into the once troubled union.

Starting with the basics, Chevalier and Clonts organized a meet and greet with the Regional Forester and Deputy Forester, and invited the bargaining unit to join them. At the event they recruited a number of new members, many of whom are now serving as Local officers. Building on this success, they then asked every member to play their part in growing the Local.



*Local 125 President Bryan Clonts and past presidents George Christopher (center) and David Chevalier (right), framed their original charter in celebration of the Local's 90th anniversary earlier this year.*

“We challenged every member with a simple task – that they, within the year, bring in just one bargaining unit employee to join the Local,” said Chevalier. “The message I was trying to convey was that if we are to be of any worth, to make any meaningful impact on our members’ work lives, everyone needed to show their bearing by bringing in more members to the cause.”

Accompanying this new organizing strategy was an equally aggressive approach toward communications. Publishing the first edition of their newsletter, the *Local 125 Communicator*, in January of 2010, they have since published nine more editions. Keeping members and nonmembers informed of Local accomplishments, workplace issues, union benefits and more, the *Communicator* has been a crucial element of the Local's recent success.

“Our local newsletter has become the primary conduit by which we spread information not only to our members, but throughout Region Four,” said Chevalier. “Union members gain value from learning about the shared interests that are local, national and even international. I can't emphasize enough how important communications have become for our local... for any local!”

With a clear strategy in place, the sky is the limit for Local 125. Their story shows that setting achievable goals and encouraging members to get involved can bring even the most endangered Local back from the brink.

“At this point it feels like the Local has taken on a life of its own,” said Clonts. “Having more members involved has allowed us to accomplish our goals as a team. The more people you have involved, the stronger the foundation of the Local becomes. It reflects well on NFFE and the Local, and other employees are taking notice that good things are happening in the union.”



# Targeted – Attacks on the Federal Workforce Mount as Elections Near

**T**he federal workforce is under attack. To the greatest extent seen in decades, certain members of Congress have been introducing and pushing legislation aimed directly at slashing the pay, earned benefits, and workplace rights of federal employees.

In just the last three months, we have seen proposals to freeze or cut federal pay, reduce the value of federal employees' pensions, eliminate official time for federal employee union officials, freeze federal sector hiring, and impose furloughs on the federal workforce. All of these proposals are being offered in the guise of federal deficit reduction, but in reality these assaults are politically driven. They fit an anti-government theme that some Congressional candidates hope will earn them victory in elections this November.

The most recent example is a great illustration of the unjustifiable attacks to which federal employees are being subjected by some lawmakers. On Septem-

ber 20<sup>th</sup>, Representative Mike Coffman (R-CO) introduced a bill, H.R. 6134, that would make federal civil service employees subject to a two-week furlough in 2011. If you are a federal employee, that means that for two weeks next year, you simply will not get a paycheck (if the legislation passes). It also means that the work you do for the American people simply will not get done.

This piece of legislation and others like it demonstrate a serious misunderstanding about the way the federal government works. Some seem to think they can force a temporary layoff on federal employees and the work they do every day will miraculously get done, but that notion is false. Humvees get armor plating put on them because Defense employees show up to work and get the job done. Veterans get the care they need because federally employed VA nurses show up to work and provide those veterans with care. Wildland forest fires get extinguished because U.S. Forest Service workers show up and

put the fires out. These things don't get done if federal workers are senselessly directed to stay home.

This legislation also shows a shocking lack of compassion for federal employees who are struggling just like everyone else in this economy. Federal employees have seen their savings eroded, they have seen their property values plummet, and they have spouses and family members out of work just like everybody else. The truth is there are numerous causes for the economic woes in this country, many of which continue to go unaddressed because of the political conflict in Washington. Federal workers, who number just about 1 in every 150 Americans, do not deserve to pay the price for debt incurred by *all* Americans through the choices of their elected officials.

The attacks on the federal workforce are not random pieces of legislation being introduced in Congress; rather, they are part of a systematic campaign to mislead the



public about the pay and earned benefits of federal workers. Most of the attacks are stemming from a campaign being orchestrated by leaders in the House minority party. House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA) has launched a website called YouCut (<http://republicanwhip.house.gov/YouCut/>). On this website, the whip's office has held a vote each week on five different proposals to cut federal spending. The "winning" proposal is offered in a House vote soon afterward. Almost every week, a significant cut to federal workers' pay and/or benefits has been proposed.

Members of Congress offering legislation attacking federal workers' pay and earned benefits are relying on misleading reports by ultra-conservative think tanks to justify their proposals. Groups like the Heritage Foundation and CATO Institute have periodically issued apples-to-oranges comparisons of the federal and private sectors. They claim federal workers are overpaid, but fail to compare the federal workforce with those in the private sector doing the same jobs at the same skill level. When you compare the same exact jobs (i.e. a nurse in the private sector vs. a nurse at the VA, a lawyer in the private

sector vs. a lawyer at the Department of Justice), federal workers make an average of 26% less.

The notion that federal employees are significantly overpaid, as the misleading reports contend, is a farfetched concept considering U.S. Presidents from both sides of the aisle have consistently certified that federal workers are significantly underpaid compared to the private sector. President George W. Bush, through his Federal Pay Agent, certified that federal employees were in fact underpaid by more than 20 percent in the majority of his years in office. Claims that federal workers are overpaid are simply politically motivated and not based in fact.

Unfortunately, these kinds of attacks on the federal workforce are not expected to stop anytime soon. While they have become more prevalent in the lead up to elections this November, they are sure to resurface late in this session of Congress and early in 2011. The federal deficit problem is very real, and Congress will be forced to make some tough decisions while we lumber through this economic recovery. Federal employees already have targets on their backs, and that vulner-

ability will grow if pro-worker members of Congress are voted out and replaced with lawmakers who have open contempt for the federal government and the employees who work for it. Unfortunately, such a change in the makeup of Congress is a real possibility this November.

An unfavorable change in the makeup of Congress would mean an increased likelihood of Congress passing highly adverse legislation impacting the federal workforce – legislation like the Reduce and Cap the Federal Workforce Act (S. 3747), introduced by Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) in August, which would require agencies to significantly reduce the size of their workforces. Placing an arbitrary cap on the federal workforce in this manner is just bad policy, plain and simple. Not only will it shortchange the American people on the vital services they receive from experienced federal workers every day, it will shift that work to contractors who have proven to be more expensive and operate with less transparency. This bill would cut services, raise costs, and force the American taxpayer to foot the bill.

It would also mean a better chance of Congress passing the Federal Employee

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*continued on page 9*



Accountability Act of 2009 (H.R. 3251), introduced by Representative Phil Gingrey (R-GA), which would repeal two sections of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 to eliminate the use of official time for federal employee union officials to collectively bargain, handle employee grievances, and conduct other representational duties on behalf of the workers they represent. This could eliminate any meaningful voice employees have in the federal workplace.

Finally, an unfavorable change in the makeup of Congress would mean an increased chance of Congress passing H.R. 5382, a bill introduced by Representative Michele Bachmann (R-MN) that would freeze federal employees' pay at the fiscal year 2010 level. With this legislation, federal workers would not receive any annual pay adjustment to account for cost of living increases.

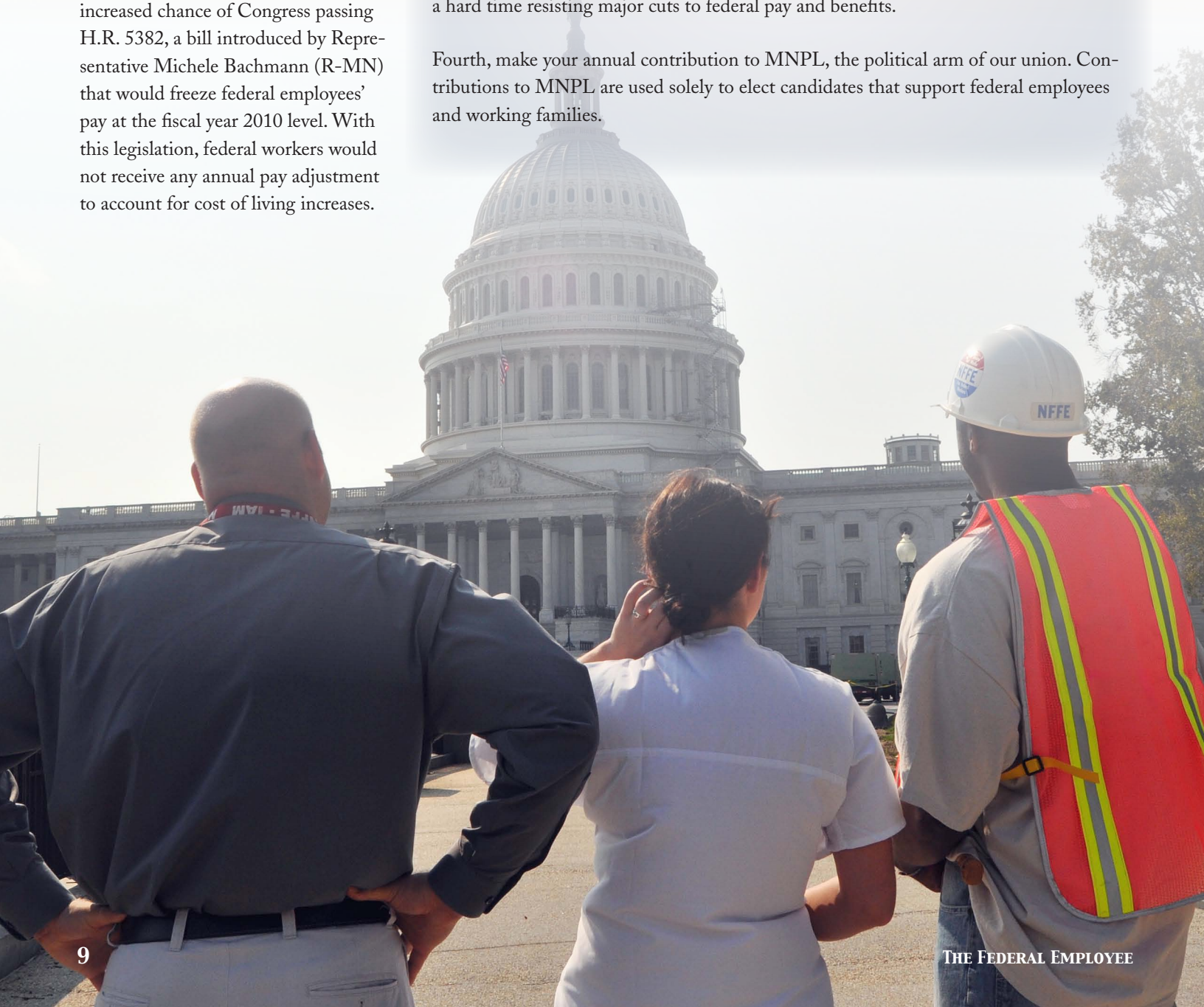
## Wondering What You Can Do?

First, if you haven't already become engaged in the elections taking place on November 2nd, in which all of the U.S. House of Representatives, one third of U.S. Senate, and numerous other state and local candidates will be up for election, get involved immediately. The outcomes of the elections this November are every bit as important as the elections held in 2008. If we don't elect candidates that respect the federal workforce and the work we do for the American people, we are going to suffer immense losses.

Second, if your Local does not have an active legislative committee, form one as soon as possible. The attacks are coming, and we need to be prepared.

Third, start forming relationships with the elected officials in your area. Regardless of their political affiliation, we need to form relationships with all lawmakers that serve our members. If we are not in those offices building relationships, we are going to have a hard time resisting major cuts to federal pay and benefits.

Fourth, make your annual contribution to MNPL, the political arm of our union. Contributions to MNPL are used solely to elect candidates that support federal employees and working families.





*Local 1998 President Rob Arnold was appointed as National Vice President to succeed outgoing National Vice President Colin Walle.*

## **Local 1998 President Rob Arnold Appointed to Succeed Colin Walle as NFFE National Vice President**

NFFE is proud to announce the selection of Rob Arnold as NFFE's newest National Vice President (NVP). He will succeed Colin Walle, who has served as an NVP since his election at the 2008 NFFE National Convention. Walle recently left the Seattle Passport Agency for work in the Minneapolis Passport office to be closer to his family, a job which is outside of the NFFE bargaining unit.

Born in Florida but raised primarily in Alaska, Arnold currently resides in the Seattle, WA area where he works as a Passport Specialist at the Seattle Passport Agency. For nearly 15 years he has been an active member of NFFE Local 1998, a national Local representing over 1200 Passport Service employees in 22 offices across the country.

As a member, Arnold has played a major role in the consistent organizing success that has made Local 1998 one of NFFE's largest. As a Senior Steward, Secretary-Treasurer, and later, Vice President, Arnold helped the Local grow from less than 100 members all the way to 450 members today. Always modest and quick to credit others for a job well done, Arnold attributes the Local's success to the dedicated officers, representatives and members around him:

"I've been incredibly fortunate to have Colin Walle and as a mentor throughout my union career," said Arnold. "I was fortunate to follow in the footsteps of a [Local] Vice President, Mike Garafano, who was extremely organized and resourceful. Also, the bargaining unit we are a part of is tremendously active and sharp, so I've simply benefitted from swimming with the right school of fish."

Though he will never boast about it, Arnold has been a big part of the Local's success in recent years. He was a key figure in renegotiating the Passport Service's National Agreement; he has advocated for employees in successful arbitrations, resolved numerous ULP's, and lobbied Congressional leaders on issues impacting Passport Service employees nationwide.

This September, in his new role as National Vice President, he traveled across the country to take part in the union's Organizing Strategic Plan review session at the William W. Winpisinger Center in Hollywood, MD. Drawing from his experience organizing widespread passport offices with Local 1998, Arnold left his mark on the plan, offering useful insights that were ultimately incorporated into the amended document.

"Rob is a great addition to the NFFE leadership team," said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. "I am fully confident that he will serve all NFFE-IAM members with the same diligence and vigor that made Local 1998 so successful."

Adding:

"I would also like to thank Colin for his service to the union," Dougan said. "He has dedicated so much of his time and energy over the years to making NFFE the best it can be. On behalf of myself and the National Executive Council, I wish him the best in his new home and position."

# NFFE Sees Great Gains with 2009 Organizing Plan; Charts a New Way Forward

Early this summer, a team of representatives from the NFFE National Office traveled to Texarkana, TX and conducted an organizing drive at NFFE Local 2189, Red River Army Depot. Over the course of a very busy four days, the team worked with Local officers and talked to prospective members throughout the facility.

Employees at the 18,000-acre facility in northeast Texas overhaul and remanufacture combat systems and tactical vehicles. They work hard every day to protect the men and women serving in our armed forces.

The recent organizing drive at Local 2189 was a result of the Local's selection as one of NFFE's three main organizing targets for 2010. The Local was chosen by the National Organizing Steering Committee based on the Local's membership and bargaining unit size, the geographical concentration of the membership, and the Local's participation in NFFE's Organizing Strategic Plan.

The team that was sent to Red River, which included National Organizing Director Cassie Kerner, National Business Representatives John Griffin, Gary Johanson, and David Stamey, National Vice President Tim Ostrowski, and National Office Manager Brittany Paull, brought a variety of experience types to the drive.

By having organizers on hand who understand Department of Defense (DoD) installations, for example, or who could explain what NFFE is doing for members at the National level, the organizing team was able to address a wide variety of concerns.

In the evenings, Ostrowski presented one-hour training sessions on DoD's job application system, Resumix. This is a practice that is utilized with great success at Ostrowski's home Local (NFFE Local 2109 at Watervliet Arsenal), and it was extremely well-received at Local 2189 as well.

Local officers and members played an integral role in the recruiting drive as well. Local officers walked the shop floors with NFFE's National representatives, talking to potential members; existing members helped spread the word about the union and educated their co-workers about the Resumix training. It was this collaboration between National and Local representatives that made the week's organizing activities so effective.

Thanks to everyone's efforts, the membership at Local 2189 increased by more than 10% during the organizing drive. As word continues to spread about the Local's efforts and successes, membership is certain to grow even higher.

"I'm very grateful to everyone who participated in the organizing drive at Red River, both from the National and Local levels," said Kerner. "There is no doubt that putting boots on the ground, and getting out and interacting with people, is the best way to organize. Our recent results reinforce that. We had a great week, but we couldn't have done it without the hard work and cooperation of many devoted union brothers and sisters."

Membership drives at the two other Locals targeted for 2010, Local 178 in Aberdeen, MD and Local 1124 in New Orleans, LA, will take place in October.

## A New Way Forward

In September, NFFE's leadership met at the William W. Winpisinger Education & Technology Center in Hollywood, MD. Just over one year after NFFE's new Organizing Strategic Plan was implemented, the group came back together to evaluate the past year's progress.

The meeting was led by NFFE National President William R. Dougan and National Secretary-Treasurer William D. Fenaughty, with support from the instructors at the training facility.

*National Vice President Timothy Ostrowski hosted training sessions on Resumix, the Department of Defense's job application system, for Local 2189 members at the Red River Army Depot.*





*The National Organizing Steering Committee met at the William W. Winpisinger Center this September to discuss a new way forward for NFFE's organizing efforts.*

The participants, which included the majority of NFFE's National Vice Presidents, presidents or designees from most NFFE Councils, NFFE's National Business Representatives, and many National Office staff, were given an overview of NFFE's recruitment efforts and net growth during recent years. The group also discussed NFFE's budget, income and expenses, what resources had been devoted to organizing in recent years, and what resources could be allocated for membership building in the future.

Dougan and Fenaughty clearly demonstrated that NFFE has made significant progress in organizing in recent years. The union has had a positive, net increase in membership for the past three years, and will almost certainly see a net increase in 2010 as well. Along with that, we are continually organizing new units. It is apparent that everyone, from the Local to the National level, is working hard.

However, they also demonstrated that we need to do more as an organization. While we are signing up more new mem-

bers than at any time in recent history, we're not signing up enough to offset the wave of members who are retiring or leaving NFFE bargaining units. For every four members we are signing up, we are only actually seeing a net increase of one member.

Based on all of the information presented, the meeting participants were in agreement that last year's Organizing Strategic Plan was a good start, but that we need to make organizing more of a priority at every level of our organization if our union is going to not only survive, but thrive, in the coming years.

The group approved a number of changes to NFFE's organizing methods and strategy. The biggest modifications to the current plan involve staffing and incentives. In terms of personnel, NFFE will soon have two National Organizing Coordinators and two National Business Representative/Organizers who are devoted full-time to organizing, instead of just one National Organizing Director. On the incentives side, the NFFE National

Office will begin offering a \$20 rebate to Locals for each new member they sign up, in order to help offset recruitment costs.

Pending budgetary approval by the NEC, these changes, and other minor modifications, are being incorporated in NFFE's revised Organizing Strategic Plan. The updated plan, and more details about the major changes within it, will be available soon.

"I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the review of our Organizing Strategic Plan, and the staff at the Winpisinger Center for hosting us and facilitating the meeting," said Dougan. "We made a good start last year, but it was clear that we needed to develop a more concrete, aggressive strategy in order to continue our growth as an organization. Organizing is at the core of everything we do as a union, and we need to allocate our resources accordingly. With the development and implementation of the updated plan, I think we have laid the groundwork to flourish in the coming months and years."

# NFFE National Forum on Individuals with Disabilities Formed; First Meeting a Success

This summer, NFFE announced the formation of the new NFFE National Forum on Individuals with Disabilities, a working group of union representatives tasked with identifying and promoting ideas to help improve the quality of employment for disabled members of the federal workforce.

Its membership, some disabled and some not, was originally limited to ten individuals, but was later expanded to 12 due to an overwhelming number of excellent nominations. The following individuals were chosen:

Chair Linda Aase, Local 1642; Gerry Berry, Local 1340; Victoria Bouchee, Local 1450; Bryan Clonts, Local 125; David Dimond, Local 2192; Daniel Ganoza, Local 1; Randy Gonzales, Local 2197; Michael Gropman, Local 1627; Marilyn Hudson, Local 1487; Janine Juhasz, Local 1; Patricia LaSala, Local 1; and Charles Shipley, Local 1953.

The Forum is chaired by Linda Aase of NFFE Local 1642, who originally requested that NFFE form an advisory group to deal with disability issues. Members of the new forum come from a wide variety of departments and agencies including the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Forest Service, Air Force, Federal Aviation Administration, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, General Services Administration, National Park Service, and the Department of Commerce.

Their mission is to work with these agencies and others to discuss new ideas for improving the working conditions for disabled federal employees government-wide. Members will also promote these issues in the media and on Capitol Hill in an effort to raise awareness about the struggles disabled workers face every day.

“[T]his Forum will be instrumental in identifying barriers and coming up with innovative solutions to break those barriers,” said NFFE National President William R. Dougan in his letter to members of the Forum. “I want this Forum to become a laboratory for designing best practices for reasonable accommodation in the workplace. It will be critical for this group to develop methods for sharing ideas and collaborating with federal agencies to move these best practices from ideas to reality.”

Holding its first meeting this summer, the group set out to identify the most important workplace issues disabled employees face, and develop a strategy for confronting them. After much discussion, it was determined that the fundamental issue was a lack of education on reasonable accommodations on part of frontline supervisors. Though law entitles disabled workers to reasonable accommodations, many managers either don't know or understand this duty.

The solution to much of these issues, the group determined, was education; educating supervisors on the responsibilities to disabled employees, and educating disabled employees on their rights to reasonable accommodations. In the coming months, Forum members will work to develop recommendations for federal agencies to improve awareness of disability issues and statute.

“I am excited about the work of this group and the possibilities of making real progress on behalf of employees with disabilities,” said Dougan.

Through this process, all NFFE-IAM members are encouraged to share their ideas and concerns regarding the Forum's agenda. To do so, please contact Chair Linda Aase at [linda.aase@gsa.gov](mailto:linda.aase@gsa.gov). With your help, the NFFE National Forum on Individuals with Disabilities is sure to make a difference for thousands of our fellow federal employees.



# On the Road with Jim Davis

NFFE National's Assistant Directing Business Representative (ADBR) Jim Davis, has spent over 25 years with NFFE.

Davis was born and raised in Chester, PA. His first experience with labor unions came at a very young age, when he was still attending Saint James High School. At 17, Davis saw the unfair labor practices of a national grocery store chain, and helped orchestrate a picket line against the injustices that were occurring in the stores. He describes this event as "lighting the fire in his belly." After high school, Davis attended West Chester State University where he earned his undergraduate degree in Education; he later attended the University of Maryland and received his Master's degree in Information Service. After the completion of his Master's degree he found union work in the public sector.

In 1985, Davis became a Business Representative for NFFE. At the time, he represented 24 Locals in Arizona, which mostly consisted of Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 1987, due to expansion, Davis became the Business Representative of 36 Locals located in Arizona and Colorado. A few years later, Davis transferred from the Southwest to the Northeast, where he served until he was promoted to ADBR in August 2009.

Davis has served in many different positions during his tenure at NFFE. In 2007 he was the acting Secretary-Treasurer for a short time, and for a period of six months in 2001 he served as the Acting ADBR. Davis has also represented NFFE at the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee and Federal Salary Council meetings. Currently, he represents 17 different Locals in Washington, D.C., Virginia, and West Virginia. He provides NFFE's response for National Consulting Rights (NCR) when specific issues with government agencies exist. He is the first line supervisor for NFFE's National



Business Representatives across the United States. When challenged to rise up in the ranks, Davis took the opportunity to the fullest extent and performed to the best of his ability.

Davis enjoys many aspects of the union, but when asked what he loves the most he responds, "I enjoy negotiations best, especially the dynamics of the negotiation sessions." He also enjoys internal organizing within the workplace. One of his most memorable moments with the union happened just a few years ago. In 2006, with the help of Legislative Director Randy Erwin, Davis saved the jobs of about 500 employees of the Coast Guard Civil Engineering Corps. "It was by far the most memorable occasion. With the help of Randy, we did not just save the jobs of those people in our area, but also the jobs of workers from all over the country." Two other accomplishments that can be accredited to Davis' hard work are the organizing of the Watervliet Arsenal and Red River Army Depot, now two of the largest NFFE Locals.

For Davis this is not just a job; he cares deeply and passionately about every member and Local that he visits. "With the strength of our union ever growing, I cannot begin to imagine the wonderful things NFFE will accomplish in the next 25 years."



*Jim Davis, along with National President William R. Dougan and then-Local 1998 Vice President Rob Arnold, joined members at the Washington, DC passport office earlier this year.*

## AT THE NATIONAL OFFICE

Today, NFFE would like to congratulate Bryanna Gordon of Hamilton, MT and Rachel McFalls of Brandon, MS on winning the first annual Richard N. Brown Memorial Scholarships. Each was awarded \$1,000 toward furthering their collegiate education this school year.

Gordon, the daughter of NFFE Local 60 member and Lolo National Forest Budget Analyst Patricia Gordon, will be studying at the University of Great Falls in Great Falls, MT. Beginning her freshman studies this fall, she has chosen to major in Biology. After college she would like to pursue dentistry, a career that has fascinated her since sixth grade.

"I am honored to have received the Richard N. Brown Memorial Scholarship award," said Gordon. "My academic goals are to complete a Bachelor of Science degree, attend dental school, and become a professional dentist. I have already begun taking classes to prepare myself for dental school. This scholarship will undoubtedly help me on my journey to achieve my goals."

Our other winner, Rachel McFalls, is the daughter of Local 589 member Janice McFalls, an accountant at the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery VA Medical Center in Jackson, MS. She recently began her sophomore year at Mississippi State University, where she majors in Aerospace Engineering. After graduation she would like to work as an engineer at NASA, or as a pilot in the U.S. Air Force.



*Bryanna Gordon*



*Rachel McFalls*

# Congratulations to Bryanna Gordon and Rachel McFalls on Winning Richard N. Brown Memorial Scholarships!

"We are pleased to award the Richard N. Brown Scholarships to these very qualified young women," said NFFE National President William R. Dougan. "Their commitment to scholarship and hard work today will give them the tools they need for a lifetime of success. Rick would be proud of what they have accomplished."

The scholarships, named for late NFFE National President Richard N. Brown, are awarded once each year to qualified NFFE members or children of NFFE members. Applications for the 2011 scholarship competition will be available for download in January.

If you wish to contribute to the Richard N. Brown Memorial Scholarship Fund, visit our website, [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org), and click "Richard N. Brown Memorial Scholarship" under the Resources tab. Your contributions will ensure that Rick's legacy of selfless stewardship of federal employees will continue for years to come.

## THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE



**William D. Fenaughty**  
National  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Writers/Editors**  
Jai Atkins  
Cory Bythrow  
Randy Erwin  
Cassie Kerner  
Brittany Paull

**William R. Dougan**  
National President

**National Vice Presidents**

Rob Arnold  
Jozef Drozdowski  
Patricia La Sala  
Kolleen McGrath  
John R. Obst  
Tim Ostrowski  
Debbie Ransom

**James N. Davis**  
Assistant Directing  
Business Representative



**National Federation of  
Federal Employees**  
805 15th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-216-4420  
202-898-1861 Fax

