



THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES
AFFILIATED WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MACHINISTS AND AEROSPACE WORKERS, AFL-CIO

2ND QUARTER 2009

NFFE Revitalizing Efforts To Build Membership

There is little dispute that building membership is a key component of any successful labor organization. As you have hopefully seen, NFFE has had some success in terms of organizing in recent years. Some Locals have tremendously effective organizing plans in place and consistently sign up new members. Our business representatives assist with membership recruitment when they visit Locals, and periodically help with organizing drives. According to the membership forms received at the NFFE National Office, we have signed up increasingly more members each year over the last four years. However, due to natural attrition, much of this gain has been offset.

Fortunately, thanks to a number of factors, NFFE is facing one of the best opportunities in years in terms of organizing. The federal workforce is expected to grow substantially over the coming months due to increased funding for federal agencies, consequently increasing our pool of eligible members. A more labor-friendly environment is also already being seen under the Obama Administration, which should make it easier both to sign up new members, and to represent their interests at the national level.

Plans are well underway to enable NFFE to capitalize on these new opportunities. Cassie Kerner, formerly the Special Assistant to NFFE National President Richard N.

Brown, was named NFFE's Organizing Director this spring. As Organizing Director, Kerner will be responsible for drafting, implementing and overseeing a new, comprehensive organizing plan for the organization.

While the finished product is still being formulated, a great deal of work has already taken place regarding the organizing strategic plan. Kerner quickly determined that a survey of NFFE Locals was necessary in order to assess what organizing tools and strategies were already being utilized and where, and with what results. A committee, Members Now!, was appointed by Brown to help Kerner gather information from the Locals. Members Now!, which consisted of Kerner, NFFE National Vice



Organizing Steering Committee convenes in Washington, D.C. to formulate NFFE's new Organizing Strategic Plan.

President John Obst, NFFE Business Representative Jim Davis, and NFFE Local 1998 Chief Steward Karen Proctor-Adams, helped draft and promote the organizing survey which went out to every NFFE Local.

Thanks to the hard work of the committee and NFFE's business representatives, the NFFE National Office received an overwhelming response from Locals. The surveys came from a broad cross-section of Locals which represent members in a variety of agencies, positions, and regions of the country. Equally important, the survey responses were submitted by Locals with varying degrees of organizing

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NFFE Organizing Steering Committee hammers out the details with new Director Kerner.

conducted a conference call on May 1 to give Local officers another avenue for sharing their ideas and feedback about organizing. A number of representatives from NFFE Locals participated in the call, and provided additional valuable feedback.

On May 14 and 15, at the conclusion of Lobby Week, NFFE's National Executive Council, council presidents, business representatives, and other key staff members met in Washington, D.C. to discuss the information gathered from the survey and conference call. Kerner led a productive meeting, during which the participants laid the groundwork for NFFE's future organizing strategy.

The meeting participants (NFFE's NEC, council presidents or their designees, business representatives, key staff members) make up NFFE's new Organizing Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will be making recommendations on the organizing plan, and will help evaluate it and revise it as necessary through quarterly conference calls and an annual meeting.

A subsection of the Steering Committee will also sit on a smaller subcommittee. The subcommittee will be more heavily involved in the development, implementation and assessment of the organizing plan. The group will be responsible for surveying and evaluating what organizing materials and tools are already being utilized, and developing new ones. The subcommittee will also assist with identifying which Locals are strong targets for organizing, and will help with organizing drives as appropriate.

The details of the plan are still being developed, but a number of suggestions were made by the Steering Committee, including creating a tier system to help Locals track their organizing efforts and to recognize those which are making progress. Ultimately, the National Office would like every Local to have an organizing contact (and committee as necessary), have a quantifiable organizing goal, and have a plan in place to contact every potential member on a regular basis. The full plan will be shared with all NFFE Locals this summer once it is finalized.

"I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in this process so far," said Kerner. "There is still a lot of work to be done, but together we have laid the groundwork to develop and implement a great plan. This is an exciting time for NFFE, and I know our redoubled efforts in organizing will pay off. Please be on the lookout for more information in the coming months, and I'm looking forward to working with all of you to grow our great union."

success. The variety of responses received provided a valuable overview of NFFE's organizing efforts. Every survey was read thoroughly, and all responses were catalogued in a detailed summary. Having this information will be invaluable as we work toward formulating a new organizing plan.

Members Now! also



THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

There is a significant change in the air here in Washington, D.C., one of openness and respect from the Obama Administration. Since entering office just a few short months ago, President Obama has already appointed several key people that we as a federal employee union will be working with on a regular basis. Thus far, his choices have been nothing short of exceptional, nominating candidates who are not only competent, but understanding of the issues that matter to federal employees.

Carol Waller Pope, appointed by the President to chair the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), is just such a person. I have known Carol Pope for almost 10 years,

favor of partnership between labor and management, he wants reform of the A-76 regulations, and he supports the re-evaluation of NSPS.

Most notably, Director Berry understands what is important to the federal workforce - both labor and management. I told Director Berry of NFFE's longtime relationship with the Federal Managers Association, and how we have worked in tandem to address issues that are important to all federal employ-

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and I can say without a doubt that there could not be a more fair or experienced person to lead the Authority than her. Shortly after her appointment as Chairperson, Ms. Pope visited our national office to share with us her vision of the FLRA under her direction. After a lengthy discussion about our past experiences with the Authority, I felt confident that NFFE's relationship with the FLRA will be one of openness and fair play. She and I also agreed to an open door policy, one in which the concerns of federal workers are shared on a personal, not just procedural, level.

Another quality Obama appointee that deserves our recognition is Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry. Just days after his nomination by President Obama, Berry came to NFFE Headquarters to introduce himself and learn about our issues. After a nearly two-hour meeting, I came to see that President Obama had hit it out of the park with this selection. Berry is deeply in

ees. Whereas the previous administration saw the federal workforce as low-hanging fruit, Berry acknowledges the contributions made by federal employees and managers every day in service of our country. He and I both agreed to work together in collaboration with management to address the many issues we feel are key to making the federal government a better place to work.

Looking forward, NFFE will continue to meet and confer with key officials in the agencies that impact your workplace. As of this writing, the Obama Administration remains in the process of appointing many of them. This is by no means a fast nor simple process, but as they become vetted and assume their duties, rest assured our union will be knocking on their door with your message.

Faternally,



FROM THE DESK

OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

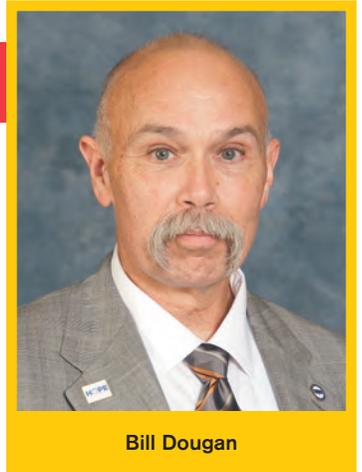
There is a lot of work to do in the coming months and years. Unions, and the working men and women who make up their membership, will play a critical role in the rebuilding of America's rattled economy. Our leaders are once again looking toward our brothers and sisters to provide the skills and sweat needed to accomplish the daunting tasks in front of us today.

If we are to be a strong voice in determining America's future, then we need to ensure that we are working toward building capacity through increasing our membership. 'Strength in numbers' is more than a catchy phrase; it is a truism. The recent meeting held at NFFE National Office to retool our recruitment and organizing strategy illustrates our commitment to grow our union. I firmly believe there is no more important duty we have as unionists and as union members—without members, nothing else we do matters.

Here in Washington D.C., as the Obama Administration moves to fill the hundreds of cabinet and sub-cabinet level positions in federal agencies, there is a renewed sense of hope and optimism in the air. Where doors were once shut and lines of communication with federal unions severed during the Bush Administration, we are now beginning to see agency leadership reach out to NFFE. There is recognition that our union and those we represent are a valuable asset to the restoration of the federal

government and this nation. Our opinions are now sought after on issues important to our members and those we represent.

We are cautiously optimistic that President Obama will soon sign an Executive Order restoring labor-management partnership. While the specific language of such an Executive Order is not yet known, what is known is that with all of the positive signals of meaningful change we are seeing, labor must, and will, take the initiative. We must look for opportunities to open a dialogue with agency managers at the National, Council, and Local levels and encourage both agency and union leaders to engage in true labor-management partnership. Partnerships forged through mutual respect and the willingness to work together to identify issues and solve problems offer a powerful tool for making the voice of labor heard. A seat at the partnership table may open up the ability to reach decisions with management on topics that would otherwise be "off the table" during formal negotiations. Take advantage of this unique opportunity should it come your way.



Bill Dougan

FROM THE DESK

OF THE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

The first session of the 111th Congress continues to shape up as a good one for federal employees, as numerous pieces of favorable legislation are working their way through the legislative process.

Congress appears resolved to uphold the principle of pay parity for civilian and military federal employees. The President's initial Fiscal Year 2010 budget proposal called for a civilian pay adjustment that was 0.9 percent less than that offered for military personnel. However, the budget passed by Congress called for the long-standing principle of pay parity to be restored. Appropriators will determine what the pay adjustment rate will be later on in the budget process.

A bill that would establish a retirement benefit for federal employees enrolled under FERS who retire with unused sick leave has been passed by the House of Representatives.

This benefit would be modeled after the one CSRS employees get for their unused leave at retirement. This legislation is currently working its way through the Senate.

The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act, a bill



Randy Erwin

FROM THE DESK

OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

As we pass the 100 day mark of the new administration, we are starting to see the change we have been promised. Already, agencies are backing off on controversial rules rushed through during the last days of the previous regime, such as revocation of the rule eliminating time-in-grade restrictions for GS employees, as well as the Department of Labor's overhaul of labor reporting rules. Newly appointed agency heads have been meeting with NFFE's leadership, with the goal of building bridges and opening doors for communication and collaboration lost during the last eight years.

While these connections renew our faith that the federal employee will be viewed as a real asset to the government, we do not idly wait for change to present itself. NFFE is presently active on a number of workgroups to shape the new order. Such groups include a redefinition of partnership and comprehensive change in civil service rules.

While change approaches, business continues at our NFFE Locals. FLSA and various other cases from the

Forest Service, Veterans' Administration, Passport Agency and other NFFE agencies, continue to move to hearing. If you have questions on this process or need assistance in initiating a grievance, please contact the National Office. We have hope for the future as the Forest Service Council returns to the bargaining table for its new contract just as the VA Council wraps up its lengthy contract negotiations. We wish both councils success at the table and in the implementation of their agreements.

Our faith renewed, we look forward to this year, which promises to be productive on a scale not seen in the past eight years. And through this transition, we, as always, remain vigilant to your issues and seek more opportunities to serve and protect your legal rights.



Susan Tsui Grundmann

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that would grant federal employees four weeks of paid parental leave when caring for a newly born or adopted child, has moved successfully through the House of

Representatives, passing by a substantial margin. Currently, federal employees are not given any paid leave following the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child.

I want to thank everyone who made it to Washington, D.C. in May for Lobby Week. It is so important for us to meet with our elected officials and tell them, face to face, why we need their support on legislation. We had a very productive week, as NFFE-IAM members met with hundreds of Congressional offices, making our positions on the issues known. We greatly appreciate the efforts made by all during Lobby Week.

EVENTS

NFFE-IAM Members Pro Agenda on Capitol Hill at

This May, NFFE-IAM members from across the nation packed into the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. for four days of networking, speeches, and political activism.

Throughout the conference, NFFE-IAM members heard speeches from key figures in Congress and the labor movement, and lobbied their elected officials on the issues that affect them as federal employees.

In his keynote address, IAMAW International President R. Thomas Buffenbarger struck an optimistic tone, focusing on the opportunity for positive change presented by the Presidential and Congressional elections last November.

“What a difference a year makes,” said Buffenbarger. “You are here with a President that wants to lead you forward, not backward.”

Indeed, in the face of one of the most favorable political climates in years, NFFE-IAM members were ready and eager to speak up for their fellow federal employees. Stressing the importance of holding worker-friendly majorities in both houses of Congress and the White House, NFFE National President Richard N. Brown urged members to make the most of their time in Washington by getting their message out at every opportunity.

“This is your chance to tell Congress how your issues make a difference in your daily life,” said Brown. “We put our elected officials in office to serve us, and over the course of this week it’s our job to hold them accountable.”

NFFE National Vice President and Local 1998 President Colin Walle travelled across the country from Washington state to participate in this year’s events.

“This was my first Lobby Week, and it was a memorable experience,” said Walle. “I enjoyed hearing directly



House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) speaks before hundreds of IAMAW members at Lobby Week 2009.



NFFE Local 60 Trustee Bob Beckley meets with Labor Secretary Hilda Solis at the Lobby Week congressional reception.

from members of Congress at the conference, but even more rewarding was the opportunity to go to Capitol Hill and express our views and concerns face-to-face.”

Provoke Federal Employee Lobby Week 2009



NFFE-IAM members gather for a federal employees reception during Lobby Week.



Local 2189 representatives with IAMAW International President R. Thomas Buffenbarger following a rally on Capitol Hill.

Breaking in the afternoons to lobby Congress, NFFE-IAM members eagerly took the federal employee message to Capitol Hill, discussing issues such as NSPS, pay parity, and paid parental leave, among others. Some attending

as many as ten separate appointments per day, our brothers and sisters lobbied scores of Congressional representatives throughout the conference.

“Going beyond the call of duty to stand up for your brothers and sisters is what the labor movement is all about,” said Brown. “Thank you to everyone who took time away from their jobs and families to participate in Lobby Week this year.”

Attending this years legislative conference were key political leaders such as Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), House Majority Leader Steny

“What a difference a year makes. You are here with a President that wants to lead you forward, not backward.”

—IAMAW International
President R. Thomas Buffenbarger

Hoyer (D-MD), Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA), Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA), and Rep. George Miller (D-CA), among others. Also in attendance were AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka and nationally syndicated radio talk show host Bill Press.



Time to Weigh In: Let Us Know Where You Stand

This year is shaping up to be very productive in terms of legislative and regulatory change impacting federal workers. We have already seen movement on several pieces of legislation that will benefit federal workers, but our work is far from finished. We need every NFFE-IAM member to continue keeping their elected officials informed about where they stand on important legislation. The following are a number of NFFE's top legislative priorities for 2009 that were not included in the Winter 2009 edition

of the *Federal Employee*. Every NFFE-IAM member is

encouraged to become familiar with these legislative issues and weigh in with their lawmakers on these bills. To take action on these issues and others impacting federal workers, go to www.nffe.org and click on "Issues." There you will find talking points, latest news, and action alerts, which will be useful when contacting your elected officials. Let each of us do our part to make 2009 a great year for the advancement of the federal workforce.

CLEAN UP Act

From 2001-2008, the proliferation of private companies working under federal contract exploded in size at great cost to taxpayers. During this time period, federal spending on contracting out increased by almost 140%, from \$222 billion

Let Congress Stand on the Issues

to \$532 billion. The Correction of Longstanding Errors in Agencies Unsustainable Procurements (CLEAN UP) Act of 2009 (H.R. 2736/S. 924) would reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in government contracting by bringing much needed reform to the federal procurement process. NFFE-IAM strongly supports S. 924, which would clean up the mess caused by excessive contracting out of federal service.

Social Security Fairness Act (Repeal the GPO and WEP)

The Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) are amendments to Title II of the Social Security Act that negatively impact the retirement security of federal employees and their spouses. The essential effect of these provisions is to penalize government retirees who are drawing government pensions and still qualify for social security. The bipartisan Social Security Fairness Act of 2009, H.R. 235/S. 484, will eliminate both the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision to ensure that federal employees and their survivors are rightfully compensated for their contributions to the social security system.

FLAME Act

Wildland fire management is the most daunting challenge the Forest Service faces today. Because suppression costs associated with catastrophic wildland fires are trending steeply upward, suppression comes at the expense of other resource and program areas. These unplanned cuts are seriously undermining the ability of the Forest Service to fulfill other mission obligations. FLAME Act (S. 561/H.R. 1404), which would establish an independent emergency funding source for catastrophic wildland fire suppression activities on federal lands. It would also man-

date development of a cohesive wildland fire management strategy and provide incentives for local communities to improve their fire readiness.

Pay Parity for Civilian Federal Employees

For decades, pay parity between civilian and military federal employees has been the rule rather than the exception. In its Fiscal Year 2010 budget, however, the White House overlooked this trend, offering civilian federal employees a pay adjustment that is 0.9 percent less than that proposed for military personnel. This inequitable proposal fails to recognize the fact that many civilian federal employees work side-by-side with our men and women in uniform, both at home and at military installations around the world. In addition, the pay gap between the federal and private sectors remains large despite statutory attempts to close it. Congress has consistently upheld the principle of pay parity, and we strongly support this important standard being observed. In their 2010 budget resolution, Congress included language calling for pay parity. As always, NFFE-IAM strongly supports pay parity between military and civilian federal employees in Fiscal Year 2010.

Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act

Under current law, domestic partners of federal employees are not eligible to receive insurance, family leave, survivor annuities, and other benefits for which spouses are eligible. Since benefits comprise a great deal of federal employee compensation, this disparity effectively denies federal employees with domestic partners equal pay for equal work. The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act (H.R. 2517/S. 1102) would make same sex domestic partners eligible for these benefits. Similar domestic partner benefits are already being offered by numerous state and local governments and in many workplaces in the private sector.

President Brown Submits Testimony To House Committee Urging Repeal of NSPS; OPM and Pentagon to Review Controversial Personnel Plan

In April, NFFE National President Richard N. Brown submitted testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Readiness, regarding the future of the controversial National Security Personnel System



(NSPS). The hearing was held in the wake of growing criticism of the system from NFFE, other federal employee representatives, and high-ranking members of Congress.

“NSPS is a failed plan that has been fundamentally flawed since its inception,” said Brown in his testimony. “NSPS was never intended to be a modern, good government personnel system. It was intended to eliminate federal employee unions and suppress pay for the majority of DoD workers.”

In his testimony, President Brown argued that NSPS should be repealed for the following reasons:

- NSPS will not truly reward high performance with pay incentives as advertised
- NSPS is not a fair, credible, and transparent personnel system
- NSPS will depress pay for rank-and-file Defense workers
- NSPS is not well-liked among those already under the system
- Multiple personnel systems within the same agency is wasteful and inefficient
- Getting NSPS right, if that is possible, will cost billions of dollars to accomplish
- NSPS becomes harder to unravel with every passing day

President Brown’s full testimony can be found at www.nffe.org.

In May, the Pentagon released details concerning a planned review of NSPS. Assistant Secretary of Defense William Lynn called on the Defense Business

Board, an independent advisory body to the DoD Secretary on management issues, to assemble a task group to review the system. The review board will be chaired by Rudy de Leon, the senior vice president of National Security and International Policy at the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C. The other members of the group will be Michael Bayer, chairman of the Defense Business Board, and Robert Tobias, a professor at American University and director for the Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation.

“We praise Director Berry and Deputy Secretary Lynn for taking swift action to assess the National Security Personnel System,” said Brown. “Once it is exposed for the anti-union, anti-worker personnel system that it is, they will come to agree with us that a complete repeal is the only way to move forward.”

The task group is scheduled to report their findings later this summer.

“We applaud DoD for taking the time to review the personnel system, but this is by no means the end,” said Brown. “We will continue to voice our members’ concerns about this fundamentally flawed system until it is wiped clear from the books. We will accept nothing short of a complete repeal of NSPS.”

NFFE Testifies About Eroded Morale in Federal Lands Workforce

In March, NFFE Forest Service Council President Ron Thatcher along with Elaine Downing of NFFE Local 2152, California Bureau of Land Management (BML), gave testimony before the House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, concerning how to turn around low employee morale in federal agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management.

Thatcher and Downing argued that employee morale had been eroded during the Bush Administration because federal land management agencies tended to act unilaterally on major initiatives, failing to solicit input—and therefore buy-in—from agency workers.

“How did we get to this point?” Thatcher asked rhetorically in his oral testimony. “In every case, we hear the same thing: leadership didn’t ask the field. We believe it is time for a new way. It is self-evident that front-line employees are the ones who know the best way to get their jobs done. We need to tap into this collective wisdom. To make the best decisions, the agency needs to engage employees as advisors, even as collaborators.”

Even as agency workers vented to members of the Subcommittee, they left lawmakers with a sense that morale in land management agencies might soon be on the mend.

“I want to leave you with the genuine sense of opti-



NFFE Forest Service Council President Ron Thatcher along with Elaine Downing of NFFE Local 2152, testify before House Subcommittee.

mism I feel going forward,” proclaimed Downing. “I, and many other employees at BLM, have a strong belief that our work environment will soon improve. We strongly support the efforts of President Obama and Secretary Salazar to bring fairness, integrity and accountability back into the Department of Interior.”

“We can’t thank Ron and Elaine enough for educating Congress on how morale has been hurt in our land management agencies,” said NFFE National President Richard N. Brown. “Now we are going to make sure something is done about it.”

Thatcher and Downing’s full testimony can be found at www.nffe.org.

“It is self-evident that front-line employees are the ones who know the best way to get their jobs done. We need to tap into this collective wisdom.”

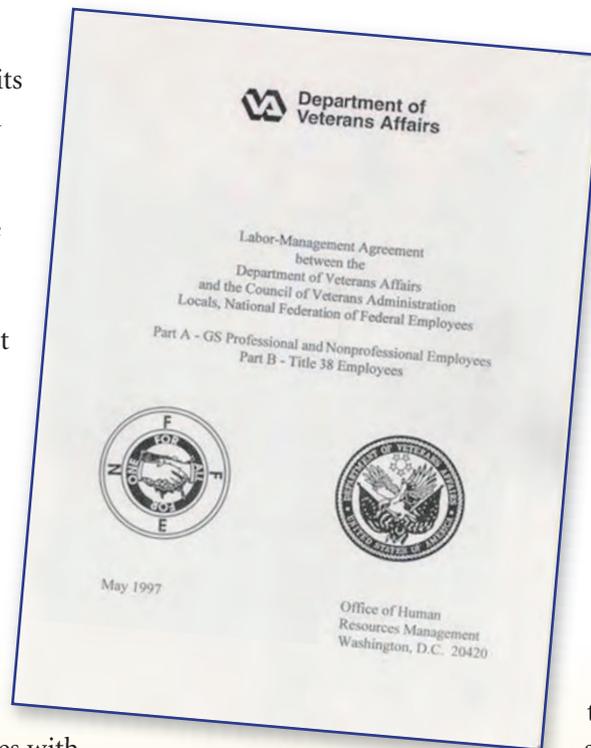
VA Contract Team Wins One For Health Professionals

Recently, the NFFE Veterans' Affairs Council concluded its long contract renegotiation journey. Beginning in 1999, the ground rules were negotiated as NFFE and management started the renegotiation process of the NFFE VA Council 1997 Management Agreement. Given that this contract was bargained under the most openly hostile administration towards labor in modern history, the agreement was a significant accomplishment.

The past eight years of the Bush Administration proved to be both difficult and detrimental to the livelihood of unions and their functionality. In regards to the VA specifically, a variety of issues with the Merit Systems Protections Board and Federal Services Impasses Panel, for example, have greatly diminished the ability to arbitrate fairly and justly. Contract negotiations to improve on outdated mandates were taxing to say the least.

In order to better address the need to fix a flawed and obsolete deal, the NFFE VA Council Contract Team was assembled. Comprised of many talented union members who were well-versed in VA workings, the team toiled tirelessly for eight long years to come up with a mutually beneficial agreement for all parties involved. The time and dedication spent by these unionists should not go without praise.

Previously, the VA Council contract was representative of a majority of members who were Title V employees. The new collective bargaining agreement merges Part A and Part B from the old 1997 pact, and focuses heavily on the Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 members who now make



up the majority of the VA Council membership. The professional employees section deals with areas unique to this constituency. Issues such as reimbursement for physicians, H1-B pay provisions, unique ethical problems, and provisions for mid-term bargaining are among areas that are now addressed under the new contract. The VA Council contract team also added a national position with allocated official time, which represents a definite improvement over the 1997 Labor-Management Agreement.

With the implementation of this new deal, gains will be seen by some member locations in regards to official time almost immediately.

In order to capitalize on this positive turn of events, a centralized training on the new contract will be held later this year in Washington, D.C. The VA Council will be in contact with each of its locals to arrange for one participant to travel to Washington to participate in this new training. In addition, a training CD was requested as an aid to train local officers and stewards on how to continue servicing their respective locals effectively under these new changes.

Since contract negotiation never ends, the NFFE VA Council Contract Team is already hard at work preparing for the next renegotiation coming up in three years. Under the new Administration and with the recognition by the VA that unions are partners, we look forward to bargaining even more favorable terms for the local bargaining unit member.

Local 1998 Fights For Integrity of Passports

A United States Passport is a ticket to the world. It is the single most trusted and effective document with which to prove one's citizenship. NFFE National, along with members of Local 1998, has fought diligently for years to maintain the integrity of the U.S. Passport.

The summer 2008 edition of the *Federal Employee* called attention to the issue of outsourcing the issuance of U.S. Passports to private companies whose employees are bound by neither oath nor creed, seriously endangering the reliability of U.S. Passports and vastly increasing the potential for fraud. NFFE Local 1998 President Colin Walle, who represents passport employees nationwide, expressed grave concern last summer about contracting out these jobs and the possibility of dangerous criminals, even terrorists, being able to obtain passports. Walle's fears were not unfounded. Since his statement, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released an undercover test that revealed significant vulnerabilities in the Department of State's (DoS) passport issuance process.

The findings were shocking. GAO's investigation found that in four separate cases using varying counterfeit documents, their investigators were able to obtain fraudulent passports. The undercover GAO investigator used basic counterfeiting skills to create fake social security numbers and birth certificates. The GAO investigator was also able to purchase a plane ticket and use the passport as proof of identity to check into his flight.

In the wake of these revelations, on April 13, 2009 a letter with their findings was sent from GAO to Congress. DoS officials claimed that "human error" led to the issuance of the four passports because passport specialists did not wait for the results of a required Social Security



Local 1998 members meet with Subcommittee Chairman Ben Cardin (D-MD) in May.

Administration database check before approving the four GAO applications.

"I need to set the record straight because the [DoS] comments are inaccurate," said Walle. "Passport employees were instructed to move forward with the processing of passport applications and not to wait for certain checks that would slow the adjudication process. The agency made that decision, and they are responsible. They should not be blaming the employees."

On May 5, 2009, Walle submitted written testimony to the Senate Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee, Chaired by Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD), regarding the problems with passport security and fraud. Walle outlined the complicated approach toward fixing the vulnerabilities in the system and gave implementation ideas across the board. Walle's testimony continues the debate over what needs to be done about this critical issue.

"For years, NFFE has been warning the Passport Agency about passport vulnerabilities due to rushed applications," said NFFE National President Richard N. Brown. "These inexcusable vulnerabilities in the DoS's passport issuance process need to be expansively dealt with. Action needs to be taken, by DoS or Congress, to address these concerns. The cost of not addressing this issue is incalculable to our national security."

NFFE Leadership Meets with Washington's New Key Players

The past few months have been a time of sweeping and historic change in our nation's capitol. With the inauguration of a new president and a considerable number of new faces in Congress and at the top levels of agency management, the Washington of today is looking very different from that of just a year ago. To make the most of these opportunities, NFFE's leadership has been making its way around town discussing the most important of federal employee issues with the men and women who will be shaping them in the coming years.

Earlier this year, President Brown held a meeting at the NFFE National Office with recently-appointed Chairperson of the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), Carol Waller Pope. A long-time member of the FLRA and friend of NFFE, Pope made a commitment to protect the rights of federal employees in the workplace, and ensure that the government operates in a fair and judicious manner.

In early April, Brown met with Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn at The Pentagon to discuss the uncertain future of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). Along with our partners in labor, he urged Secretary Lynn to avoid obstructing a potential repeal of the anti-worker, anti-union personnel system, which is now under review by a committee authorized by the Department of Defense and Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

"We appreciate your decision to review the system, however our position on NSPS has not changed – we will support nothing less than a complete repeal," Brown said.

Just one week later, NFFE's National Office hosted then recently-confirmed OPM Director John Berry to discuss the future of government personnel management. Throughout the meeting, Brown and National Secretary-Treasurer Dougan engaged Berry on some of the members' highest priorities, sharing our thoughts on restoring labor-manage-



OPM Director John Berry meets with President Brown at the NFFE National Office in April.

ment partnerships, privatization of federal jobs, and the public-private pay gap, among others. Berry promised he would always put the welfare of federal employees first, offering an "open door" policy with NFFE and all federal employees.

"Our meeting was truly a breath of fresh air," said Brown. "Director Berry is one hundred percent committed to enhancing the work environment for federal employees. He showed a genuine interest in our issues, and I have the fullest confidence that he will be a staunch advocate of the federal employee as Director of OPM."

On May 22nd, Brown, along with National Secretary-Treasurer Dougan, National VP Timothy Ostrowski and members of the national staff, visited the office of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand. The group thanked her for years of fighting on behalf of federal employees. Himself a life-long resident of New York, Brown has witnessed firsthand her commitment to the federal workforce and the hardworking women and men who comprise it. It is encounters like this that bring federal employee issues before the halls of power, and NFFE's leadership is up to the task.



NFFE National Staff and National Vice President Timothy Ostrowski meet with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY).

AT THE NATIONAL OFFICE

Exciting Personnel Changes Underway at NFFE National Office

We are excited to announce a number of personnel changes that are currently taking place at the NFFE National Office. NFFE recently hired one new employee, and three other staff members have accepted promotions to new positions within the organization.

As announced in the last issue of the *Federal Employee*, Cassie Kerner has been named NFFE's new Organizing Director. Under Kerner's direction, designing and implementing a comprehensive new organizing plan will enable us to capitalize on a number of new membership recruitment opportunities. Kerner has worked for NFFE for the past six years, most recently as Special Assistant to NFFE National President Richard N. Brown. Kerner graduated from Drake University in Des Moines, IA in 2003.

Membership Director Jai Atkins will be taking Kerner's previous position as Special Assistant to the President. Atkins has been on the NFFE staff for seven years and has worked diligently to keep NFFE's membership records up-to-date during his tenure. He will no doubt be successful in his new capacity. Atkins attended Ohio University.

Former Staff Assistant Cory Bythrow has been named NFFE's Communications Director. During his tenure with NFFE, Bythrow has proven to be a valuable asset to the organization. He deserves credit for much of the updating and modification to our website, www.nffe.org, during the past year. NFFE's visibility has increased a great deal over the past few years, but with Bythrow focusing on communications, NFFE's presence at the



From left to right: Brittany Paull, Office Manager; Cory Bythrow, Communications Director; Jai Atkins, Assistant to the President; Cassie Kerner, Organizing Director.

local and national level will continue to grow. Bythrow graduated from Syracuse University.

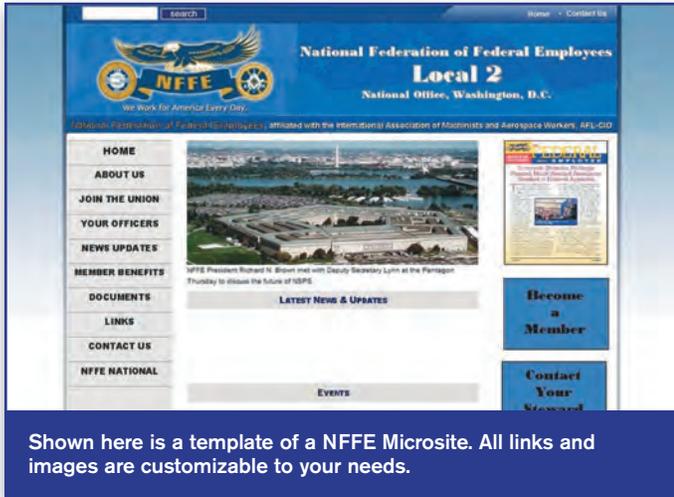
Finally, NFFE recently hired Office Manager Brittany Paull. Paull handles NFFE's receptionist duties, general office administration, and assists with special projects in a variety of departments. Paull graduated from Westminster College in Salt Lake City, UT in 2008. Prior to joining the NFFE team, Paull interned with the Department of Justice and the office of former Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY).

"I am excited about the staff we have assembled," said NFFE National President Richard N. Brown. "Our membership is fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated team working on their behalf. With these personnel changes, we will be able to provide even greater service to the men and women this union represents."

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AT THE NATIONAL OFFICE

NFFE Microsites Now Available!



WITH NFFE MICROSITES YOU GET:

Simplicity of Use:

- NFFE Microsites are designed to be user-friendly, empowering even the least experienced web-surfers to update and maintain their site with ease.
- If your Local already has a website, you can keep your domain name.

Up to the Minute News from NFFE National:

- All microsites will be linked to www.nffe.org, allowing for instantaneous news updates from our site, to yours.
- Whenever an article or press release is posted on www.nffe.org, it will appear under 'News and Updates' on your microsite.

Customizable Links, Tabs, and Pictures:

- All links, tabs, and pictures (excluding the template) on the website can be customized to fit your Local's wants and needs.
- Before your site is launched, NFFE Headquarters will work with you to get the substance and style you're looking for.

Document and Image Library:

- Upload and share Local documents/pictures with your membership through the website.

Free Training and Support:

- Training and support will be available 24/7 from NFFE Communications Director Cory Bythrow.

HOW TO GET A MICROSITE:

NFFE Microsites are provided through NFFE's web-host, Orchid Suites, and will be available for a one-time setup fee of \$300. From that point forward, you will be charged a monthly subscription fee of just \$15. NFFE Headquarters will work with you to build and upload content onto your microsite. Training and technical support are free of charge. For more information, call Cory Bythrow at (202) 216-4420, or email him at cbythrow@nffe.org. (Note: All fees are derived from, and paid to, Orchid Suites and not the National Federation of Federal Employees.)

Why Get a NFFE Microsite?

- 1. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER:** Easily share Local information, events, and photos with current and future members. Get your message out and keep your members engaged.
- 2. SIMPLIFY MEMBER SERVICE:** Each site will be equipped with point-and-click 'Contact your Steward, President, etc.' functions, and many other useful tools.
- 3. VISIBILITY & RECRUITMENT:** You can't join a Local that you do not know exists. Each microsite will tell people not only about your Local, but how and why to join.
- 4. THE FUTURE IS NOW:** With a huge federal retirement wave expected in the coming years, NFFE must be on the cutting edge to attract young, web-savvy new members.