



# THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

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

WINTER 2009

## Economic Stimulus Package Passed; Much Needed Resources Headed to Federal Agencies

Throughout the long campaign for the Presidency and the subsequent transition to power, Barack Obama and Democrats in Congress called for a bold economic stimulus package: one that was large enough to bring the teetering economy back from the brink, yet targeted enough to deliver funds where they are needed most. In February, stimulus supporters delivered on their campaign promise as Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The legislation promises to create an estimated 3.5 million jobs while tackling many of the nation's highest priorities.

This early victory for the new administration did not come easily, however. The \$787 billion stimulus legislation that emerged was the result of over a year of planning and weeks of protracted debate. Immediately after its initial passage in the House, the bill ran into a huge roadblock in the Senate. After weeks of intense debate and negotiation among Congressional Republicans and their Democratic colleagues in Congress and the White House, the Democratic leadership managed to garner enough support to overcome the cloture threshold of 60 votes, and pass the historic package on February 13th.

In President Obama's remarks before signing the bill, he took on a cautiously optimistic tone about what to expect in the years to come. "None of this will be easy," he said. "The road to recovery will not be straight. We will

make progress, and there may be some slippage along the way." Still, he declared, "We have begun the essential work of keeping the American dream alive in our time."

In order to right the faltering economy, this bill will extend healthcare and unemployment benefits to millions of laid-off American workers. It will invest in clean energy

solutions and the future of our educational system. The bill will fund shovel-ready projects like building roads, bridges, and canals, and it will provide desperately needed relief to the states. Last, but not least, the stimulus package will invest over \$100 billion into a resource-starved federal government, still reeling from eight years of financial neglect.

"This economic crisis demanded bold action from our elected leaders, and they delivered," said NFFE National President Richard N. Brown. "This bill is going to put millions of people back to work, and the American people are going to have something tangible to show for their investment. And for many federal agencies where we have membership, this stimulus is nothing short of a life-line."

Indeed, the federal funding boost in the stimulus package represents a timely hand-up for agencies that have been facing ever-increasing workloads in spite of shrinking budgets and personnel. The funding delivered in this bill will have an immediate impact on addressing urgent

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President Obama signs the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

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agency priorities that have been put on the back burner for years. The stimulus funding may soon be making a difference at your workplace, as many NFFE agencies are in line for relief under the package.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is one of the largest beneficiaries of the increased funding, receiving a total of nearly \$13 billion in resources to combat the nation's daunting mortgage crisis. The spending will be targeted on forming neighborhood stabilization programs, providing homelessness prevention grants to laid-off workers, and bulking-up public housing capital and management expenses, among others.

Department of Defense (DoD) will also see substantial stimulus dollars headed its way: \$4.2 billion for modernizing and repairing facilities; \$1.3 billion for construction of medical facilities for service-people and their families; \$890 million to improve base housing; and \$300 million for research, development, testing, and evaluation at DoD facilities.

**“Though we are encouraged by the administration’s early efforts to fund federal agencies, we will work to ensure that this remains a priority throughout their tenure.”**

The U.S. Forest Service will also be given a sizeable amount for projects that have gone underfunded for years: \$650 million to improve and maintain Forest Service facilities and another \$500 million for wildfire management, of which \$250 million would be devoted to federal lands.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will be able to address many pressing needs as a result of the stimulus as well. The VA will receive: \$1 billion for maintenance and construction of medical facilities; \$150 million for new or remodeled nursing home facilities; \$150 million to hire and train claims processors; and \$50 million for energy projects and monument/memorial repairs.

Many other NFFE agencies stand to gain from the passage of the stimulus as well:

- \$4.6 billion to the Army Corps of Engineers for flood protection, hydropower, and navigation/infrastructure improvements.
- \$4.8 billion to the General Services Administration for making federal buildings and vehicles more energy efficient.
- \$500 million to the Indian Health Service for modernizing health clinics and hospitals.
- \$320 million to supplement current Bureau of Land Management projects.
- \$240 million for the Coast Guard to remove obstacles and improve navigation.
- \$140 million to upgrade U.S. Geological Survey facilities and equipment.
- \$90 million to improve domestic passport facilities and systems.

“Though we are encouraged by the administration’s early efforts to fund federal agencies, we will work to ensure that this remains a priority throughout their tenure,” Brown said.

For more information on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, visit [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov).



## THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

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# FROM THE DESK

## OF THE PRESIDENT



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

**T**he times are rapidly changing here in Washington, D.C., and it is truly an exciting time to be in our nation's capitol. After weeks of intense debate and negotiation, President Obama and his allies in Congress were successful in passing a sound economic stimulus package, one we believe will put our country back on the road to prosperity.

As federal employees, we will be at the forefront of the new administration's effort to revive the ailing economy. Having set aside substantial stimulus funds for resource-starved federal agencies, Obama has proven that he is serious about making government work. This is a welcome departure from the last administration, where federal

National Secretary-Treasurer Dougan and I, along with the NFFE Executive Council, are also considering other changes in our communications and internal office management,

which we believe will better serve our members. These changes should be completed in the next several weeks. As always, we will keep you informed as these are implemented, so please be on the lookout for these updates in the coming weeks.

**"Now is the time to let the new administration and our other elected officials know that the treatment we received over the last eight years will no longer be endured. Federal employees are the backbone of this country, and we'll see to it that respect in the federal workplace is fully restored."**

employees were all too often seen as the low-hanging fruit come budget season. President Obama recognized that the country could no longer remain on this path, and has made a commitment that government will lead the way in getting Americans back to work again.

Here at the NFFE National Office, we are making some changes as well. In anticipation of a large hiring effort in the federal workforce, I have appointed my assistant, Cassie Kerner, as the new Director of our Organizing Department. As the Organizing Director, she will bring a vast amount of knowledge from our Washington office out into the field. For four years she has done an outstanding job in her capacity as Assistant to the President. I have no doubt that working alongside our national business representatives, Cassie will be successful in signing up scores of new NFFE members. We are currently in the process of formulating a new strategic plan that will grow our union and provide more resources for improvements in years to come.

Speaking of changes, I'd like to remind you that Lobby Week is being held here in Washington, D.C. from May 11th-14th. There are a number of critical federal employee issues being considered in Congress this session (see pages 8-9), and we need your help in making these concerns heard from the White House to Congress. Legislative Director Randy Erwin is currently compiling issue papers for our members; I encourage every member to read these documents, and every local to send a representative to lobby on its behalf. Now is the time to let the new administration and our other elected officials know that the treatment we received over the last eight years will no longer be endured. Federal employees are the backbone of this country, and we'll see to it that respect in the federal workplace is fully restored.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard N. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# FROM THE DESK

OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

I am happy to report that the backlog of entering and updating membership records in the VLM database has been eliminated. Membership Director Jai Atkins' efforts over the past many months have successfully eradicated the backlog and ensured that the database records are more accurate than at any time since our affiliation with the IAM. Please join me in thanking Jai and acknowledging him for his efforts in getting these records up to date. With respect to entering membership changes and new members into the database, this accomplishment will allow us to transition from backlog to maintenance mode.

As a result of a review of all NFFE locals which was accomplished nearly a year ago, we continue to review and update our financial database. We are cleaning up incomplete and inaccurate records for current NFFE locals, as well as ensuring that historical financial records are

retained. Financial Director Omar Arnold's efforts in this regard are helping us to continue to improve our financial health.

NFFE's 2009 budget was recently approved by the NEC, and I will be distributing information on the budget, as well as on our income and expense report for calendar year 2008, to locals and councils shortly.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding financial or membership matters, please do not hesitate to contact myself, Omar, or Jai.



Bill Dougan

# FROM THE DESK

OF THE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

We are just a couple of months into a new session of Congress and a new White House Administration, and serious changes impacting the federal workforce have already begun.

By far the biggest news of the new year is passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the stimulus bill, a bold action that is intended to revitalize the slumping economy and create millions of jobs for American workers. Signed by President Obama on February 17th, the bill addresses many of our nation's most pressing priorities, like extending healthcare and unemployment benefits to millions of unemployed American workers, investing in clean energy, and funding projects to build roads and bridges. The package also provides much-needed resources to numerous federal agencies to address backlogs in service and maintenance that built up during the

Bush Administration. For years, NFFE has been hearing from our members about problems associated with this backlog, and the hit that is taking on morale at their agencies. The stimulus bill is a much-needed step in the right direction to restoring the effectiveness of many federal agencies.

In Congress, lawmakers have been pumping out legislation that, if passed, will impact the federal workforce. Bills that would do the following have been introduced in the 111th Congress:

- Establish a paid parental leave benefit for federal workers caring for a newly born or adopted child.
- Establish an unused sick leave benefit at retirement for



Randy Erwin

# FROM THE DESK

## OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

**W**ith the inauguration of President Obama, NFFE moves into the next phase of transition. NFFE has briefed the White House on our highest priorities for the federal workforce in the coming years. In addition, we submitted agency specific policy papers to make our concerns known to the White House. We now look forward to our ideas and concerns being reflected in the new Administration's policies and regulations.

Meetings and discussions with the White House labor team representatives have resulted in the submission of names to replace Bush appointees to key positions impacting the federal workforce. We have recommended favorable candidates for positions within the FSIP, FLRA, and MSPB. In conjunction with other federal employee unions, NFFE has also mapped out our vision for labor-management partnership under President Obama.

Some of the key positions concerning the federal workforce have already been filled. For example, Carol Waller Pope has been designated FLRA Acting Chairperson. Throughout her more than eight years of service with the Federal Labor Relations Authority, Pope has proven herself

to be an infinitely capable and fair-minded public servant. I have the highest confidence that the federal workforce will be well-served with Ms. Pope at the helm.

Progress and change appear imminent with the issuance of the January 20, 2009 White House Memorandum mandating regulatory review of pending and proposed regulations. The issuance of this memorandum has already resulted in at least one significant postponement of regulations which promulgated under the previous administration with respect to financial filings by labor organizations.

We look forward to this year, which is filled with the promise that the past eight years lacked. 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

workers under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

- Restore meaningful collective bargaining rights for health care providers at the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Eliminate the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) under social security.
- Establish a fair system by which American workers organize unions.

Bills that would do the following are expected to be introduced shortly in the 111th Congress:

- Repeal the National Security Personnel System (NSPS).
- Overhaul the method by which agencies privatize federal civil service jobs.

These are just a few of the legislative priorities NFFE is fighting for in Congress. We will keep you informed as Congress introduces subsequent legislation impacting federal workers. Go to [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org) to take action and for the latest updates.

With all the changes that have, and continue to occur in government, 2009 is sure to be a transformative year for the federal workforce. Please do all you can this year to make your voice heard by writing letters, making phone calls, and visiting your elected officials. A good opportunity for you to participate is during Lobby Week, which will be held in Washington, D.C. May 11th-14th. Go to the NFFE website for details and registration information. We need your participation to accomplish our goals for the federal workforce this year. We hope to see you there.

## NFFE Executive Council Charts Course for 2009

**O**n February 9th and 10th, NFFE's National Executive Council (NEC) met in Washington, D.C. It was the first meeting of the NEC since elections were held during NFFE's national convention last October.

NFFE National President Richard N. Brown conducted the meeting. Also in attendance were National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Dougan and National Vice Presidents (NVPs) Jozef Drózdowski, Patricia La Sala, Kolleen McGrath, John Obst, Tim Ostrowski, Debbie Ransom, and Colin Walle. This was the first meeting for Ostrowski and Walle, who were elected to their first terms as NVP at the 2008 convention.

The NEC accomplished a great deal over the course of two busy days. They listened to reports from President Brown and Secretary-Treasurer Dougan, as well as an update on current legal issues by General Counsel Susan Grundmann, a legislative and public relations update by Legislative Director Randy Erwin, and an overview of recent improvements to NFFE's website by Cory Bythrow (see page

7). Each NEC member also discussed the work they had carried out in their capacity as NVP since the last meeting.

NEC members took a number of actions during last month's meeting which will ensure that NFFE continues to function efficiently. They reviewed the income and expense reports for 2008 and approved the 2009 budget. In compliance with the bylaws, they also elected three trustees from within the NEC: National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Dougan, and National Vice Presidents Debbie Ransom and Kolleen McGrath.

IAM General Vice President Rich Michalski also addressed the group, and discussed the new Obama Administration, the Employee Free Choice Act, and the importance of building our membership.

"This was a very productive and successful meeting," said Brown. "We are all fortunate to have such a dedicated and involved Executive Board. These men and women bring a great deal of insight and experience to our union, and I am grateful for their hard work on behalf of their union brothers and sisters."

### Support the Employee Free Choice Act

The most important fight that labor unions will have in Congress this year will be the Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 1409), a bill that would enable working people to bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions by restoring workers' freedom to choose for themselves whether to join a union. The legislation accomplishes this by: Establishing stronger penalties for violation of employee rights during organizing campaigns; providing mediation and arbitration for first-contract disputes; and allowing employees to form unions by signing cards authorizing union representation. For news, updates, and information on EFCA, go to [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org) and click Support the Employee Free Choice Act! Please make certain that all of your elected officials know where you stand on this important issue.



# The Numbers are in: Website Sees Traffic Rise Nearly Two-fold

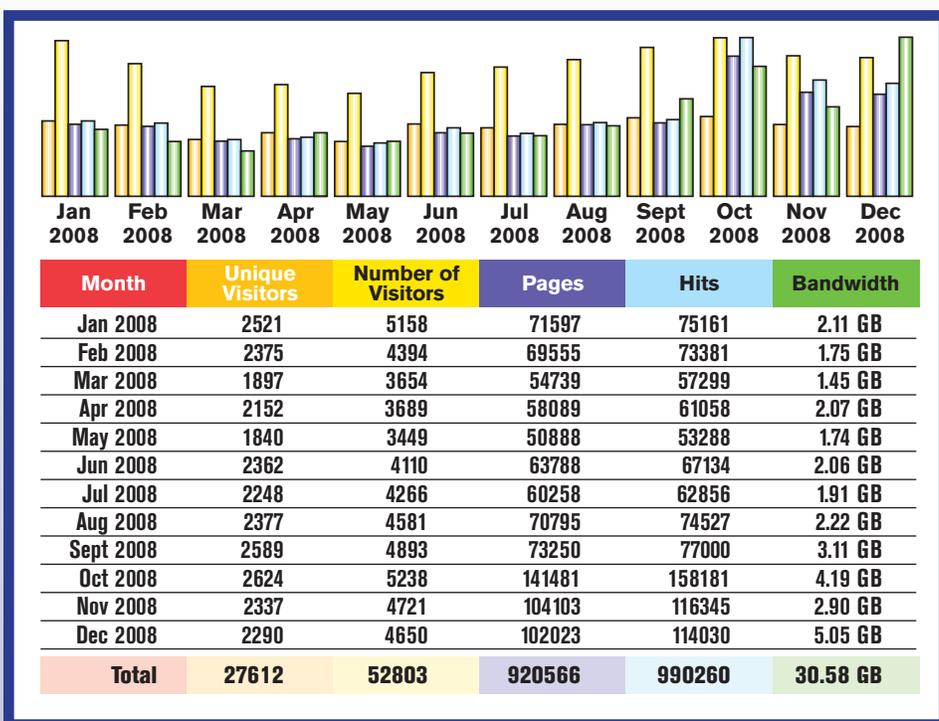
This past year has been one of great change and growth for our website. Both functionally and aesthetically, the website is gradually taking center stage as the nerve center of NFFE National's communications with its councils and locals throughout the country. With the addition of the Members Only Area, NFFE members may now consume, create, and share privileged information with one another like never before. The recent addition of flash video and the development of in-house filming capabilities offer yet another avenue of communication with the membership. Looking forward, we intend to build on this progress and provide an ever more seamless connection to the members we represent, and those we hope to organize.

In light of these recent successes, NFFE National is

proud to say that the numbers are in, and the website renovations are paying off in abundance. Overall, [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org) received nearly a million hits last year, closing out 2008 with a total of 990,260 hits. As shown in the graph below, NFFE's web traffic had increased by an average of 94 percent since renovations went underway in October. During the first nine months of the year, the website averaged 66,856 hits per month. Over the last three months, this figure shot up to an average of 129,519 hits per month — no small jump by any measure.

One seemingly anomalous trend you may see in the data is that the number of individual visitors and visits remained more or less the same throughout the year. Though these statistics remained relatively stable, the vast increase in hits and page hits suggests that those visitors are staying longer and viewing more content. This gives us great confidence that NFFE's mission and message are getting across stronger than ever as we make it easier to locate and consume important information.

In the first month of this new year, NFFE's website received just under 120,000 hits, in spite of the fact that many of us were on holiday leave for some of that time. At this rate, the website is projected to receive a whopping 1.44 million hits in 2009, clearly suggesting that the positive trend is here to stay. Come by and see what all of the hype is about. See you at [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org)!



## Get in the Know: Issues Im

**W**ith a White House that respects the federal civil service and favorable political majorities in both houses of Congress, the stage is set for a very productive year in terms of legislative and regulatory change impacting federal workers. But it will not happen without the dedicated effort of NFFE-IAM members 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. Each and every NFFE 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](http://www.nffe.org) and look under "Issues." There you will find talking points, 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.

### Employee Free Choice Act

The current system for forming a union is outdated and ineffective, placing too much power in the hands of the employer and leaving workers virtually powerless. For too long, employers have exploited and abused the deficiencies in federal labor law in their efforts to maintain power in the workplace. Often times these employees are harassed—even fired—simply because they want to come together and bargain on behalf of their fellow employees. The Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 1409), recently reintroduced in the 111th Congress, will enact stiffer penalties for employers who violate workers' rights in elections, it will allow employees to choose whether or not they want representation without being subject to intimidation or harassment by management, and it will ensure that a

mutually agreeable contract is reached in a timely manner. NFFE-IAM strongly supports EFCA.

### National Security Personnel System

The National Security Personnel System (NSPS) is a failed plan that has been fundamentally flawed since its inception. NSPS was never intended to be a modern, good government personnel system. It was intended to eliminate federal employee unions and suppress pay for Department of Defense (DoD) workers. Even after much of DoD's authority to create a new personnel system was revoked in the FY08 Defense Authorization Bill, the Department has continued to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in implementing this ill-conceived plan. Pay and promotion systems under NSPS are unfair, and have severely diminished morale within DoD. NFFE-IAM supports full repeal of NSPS in the fiscal year 2010 Defense Authorization bill.

### FERS Sick Leave Equity Act

Currently, federal employees under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) receive no credit for unused sick time upon retirement, whereas their counterparts in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) do. This discrepancy is unfair to many federal workers and it gives incentive for FERS employees to use up their sick time as retirement approaches, costing the government millions of dollars in lost efficiency. Congress should

# Impacting You in 2009

address this growing problem by passing the FERS Sick Leave Equity Act (H.R. 958), a bill that would provide federal employees enrolled under FERS a modest increase to their pension benefit for unused sick leave at retirement. NFFE-IAM strongly supports the FERS Sick Leave Equity Act.

## Locality Pay For Alaska, Hawaii, and U.S. Territories

The passage of the Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act of 1990 (FEPCA) was intended to close the large pay gap between federal employees and private sector employees doing similar work. FEPCA established locality pay in the 48 contiguous states, but excluded Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories, that would instead receive yearly COLA payments. Whereas locality pay accumulates over the course of a career and factors toward one's retirement annuity, COLA payments do not and are thus excluded when calculating retirement annuity. The Non-Foreign Area Retirement Equity Assurance Act (H.R. 1266-S. 507 Non-Foreign AREA Act), would move these areas under the locality pay system, thereby establishing retirement equity to federal employees stationed in the non-contiguous states and territories. NFFE-IAM strongly supports the Non-Foreign AREA Act.

## Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act

The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009 (FEPPLA) would grant federal employees four weeks of paid parental leave when caring for a newly born or adopted child. Currently, federal employees are not given any paid leave during this time. Under current law, new parent(s) are only allowed up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave and may use their annual and sick leave to supplement the lost wages. NFFE-IAM supports FEPPLA (H.R. 6262/S. 354), because federal employees should not have to choose between bringing home a paycheck and caring for their newly born or adopted child.

## Restore Collective Bargaining for VA Health Care Providers

Over the last several years, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care professionals have seen their collective bargaining rights diminish appreciably. Agency management's improperly broad interpretation of a certain provision in federal labor law has allowed them to circumvent the bargaining process on numerous critical issues, and the effect is taking its toll on the morale of VA health care providers. It is time for Congress to do what is right for VA workers and the veterans for whom they provide care by passing S. 362/H.R. 949, which will eliminate the collective bargaining exceptions under Sec. 7422 of Title 38.

## NFFE Elected to Represent Professional Employees at Forest Service Regional Office

Last month, professional employees at the U.S. Forest Service's Eastern Region Regional Office, located in Milwaukee, WI, chose NFFE as their exclusive bargaining representative. The non-professional employees working from the office were already represented by NFFE Local 2165 prior to the election process, but the local now represents both the professional and non-professional employees who work in that office and at remote locations.

The inclusion of the professional employees added 43 potential new members to the bargaining unit. Professional employees at the local hold a wide variety of positions within the Forest Service, including soil scientists, engineers, foresters, hydrologists, and fire management officials.

The unit now also includes employees on the Technical Services Team. This team of civil engineers, scattered throughout the northeastern United States, furnishes in-house architectural and engineering services to national forests in the region. The Technical Services Team was created as a means of reducing contracting costs after NFFE discovered that nearly \$2 million per year was being spent on architectural and engineering service contracts in the region.

The successful expansion of Local 2165 resulted from more than a year of hard work and collaboration. Art Johnson, Chief Steward on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, took a job in the Milwaukee Regional Office, and began circulation of a petition for representation among its professional employees in November of 2007. Johnson, whose duty station is in Duluth, MN, collected signatures as he traveled around the region. In June of 2008, after being contacted by NFFE National Vice President John Obst, Regional Office Steward Dick Hart and local member Leon Laveign diligently collected the rest of the necessary signatures in Milwaukee, where the majority of the professional employees work. The signatures were turned over to



NFFE Local 2165 member Leon Laveign and Steward Richard Hart played key roles in the successful campaign to organize workers at the Eastern Region Regional Office of the U.S. Forest Service.

NFFE Business Representative Gary Johanson, and the election petition was promptly submitted to the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) in October, 2008, while NFFE's National Convention was taking place nearby in Milwaukee. Forest Service management officials disputed the size of the bargaining unit with the FLRA, which oversees representational elections, but due to the diligence of several union representatives including NFFE National Vice President Jozef Drozdowski, NFFE prevailed in holding the unit size at 43.

A number of individuals deserve credit for bringing union representation to the professional employees at Local 2165. This election would not have been possible without the dedication of Local 2165 Chief Steward Art Johnson, Steward Richard Hart, member Leon Laveign, Forest Service Council Region 9 Vice President and NFFE National Vice President Jozef Drozdowski, NFFE National Vice President John Obst, and NFFE Business Representative Gary Johanson. Thank you for your hard work, and congratulations on a successful campaign!

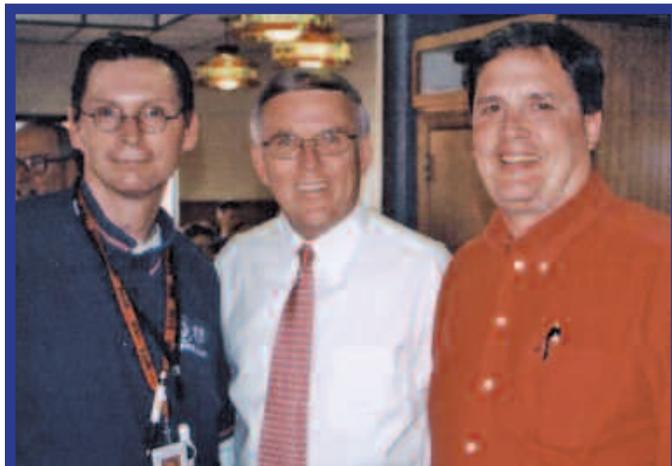
# EVENTS

## Excitement Builds for 2009 Lobby Week

The annual Legislative Conference, better known to NFFE members as Lobby Week, is one of the high points of the year for NFFE-IAM members. It brings together union brothers and sisters from around the country, and allows us to work together to advance the interests of working men and women. With the new presidential administration, this year's conference promises even greater potential for bringing about change.

Delegate registration will be held from 9am until 12:30 pm on Monday, May 11th, and again from 8 – 9am on Tuesday, May 12th. The general session will begin at 1:30pm on Monday, May 11th and at 9am on the remaining days, and will feature speeches by several key political and union figures. The general session will conclude by noon on Tuesday and Wednesday, leaving afternoons free for lobbying on Capitol Hill. Thursday morning's session will be spent reviewing the Conference and delegates' lobbying efforts. A number of social events will also be held throughout the week, including a Congressional reception at the Hyatt on Wednesday evening.

A block of rooms is being held at the Hyatt at a rate of \$247/night for single or double occupancy. The cutoff date for the room rate at the Hyatt is April 2nd. To make reservations, call the Hyatt Regency Washington at (202) 737-1234 and indicate that you are with the International



VA Council President Bob Redding (left) and Scott Barry (right) of NFFE Local 225 meet with Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-ND).

Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. It is not uncommon for the block of rooms to sell out, so we encourage anyone interested in attending to make their arrangements as soon as possible.

You can find more information on Lobby Week as well as a conference registration form at [www.nffe.org](http://www.nffe.org) under the button "Lobby Week."

"Lobby Week is always a great event for NFFE, and we know that 2009 will be no exception," said NFFE National President Richard N. Brown. "It is a wonderful opportunity for members to unite and bring the issues that matter to them to the attention of their Congressional representatives. We look forward to seeing as many NFFE representatives as possible in Washington for Lobby Week."

**"With the new presidential administration, this year's conference promises even greater potential for bringing about change."**



The Hyatt Regency Washington, location of the 2009 IAMAW Legislative Conference.

# ORGANIZING

## NFFE Local 1450 Revitalized Through Effective Communication and Representation

Over the past few years, NFFE Local 1450 has demonstrated the change that is possible through the perseverance and commitment of a few dedicated union members.

Local 1450 represents employees in 10 field offices throughout Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico. Local members hold a wide variety of positions and help carry out the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) mission of increasing home ownership, increasing access to affordable housing free from discrimination, and supporting community development.

While Local 1450 is now thriving, that has not always been the case. A lack of effective communication and a long-standing adversarial relationship with management had dissuaded many potential members from joining NFFE. Fortunately, some local members recognized the potential to turn the local around, and were willing to step up and take action.

Liz McDargh and Ricardo Miranda were instrumental in the revitalization of Local 1450. Recognizing the need for change, they conducted surveys of members and non-members alike, to find out how the local could be improved and what was preventing non-members from signing up. The common theme they encountered was a call for increased transparency and communication.

McDargh and Miranda made increasing communication with the local membership a priority, and effective communication is now one of the local's strengths. They got a website for the local up and running, and put together an email list to keep members informed of changes in laws impacting them, as well as grievance and arbitration cases affecting the bargaining unit. While communication



NFFE Local 1450 President Ricardo Miranda, Vice President Liz McDargh, Business Representative Jan Thompson, and Trustee Ken Einbinder work on Local 1450's labor-management agreement.

was once one of the local's weaknesses, the email list is now a valuable resource in recruiting members.

The local officers have also worked hard over the past few years to provide local members with more effective representation. They put regular local meetings on the calendar again, updated the local's bylaws, and made sure there were stewards in place in every office. They have also studied the contract extensively, to ensure that they understand members' rights and can hold management accountable. After filing many grievances and EEO complaints, and going to a number of arbitrations, management officials have finally begun to realize that it is not advantageous to have a constant, adversarial relationship with the union, and labor-management relations are improving.

NFFE Local 1450 now has 191 members, with a bargaining unit of approximately 500.