

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

**IMPORTANT:** You may view this email using your home email on your personal computer, smart phone, or other electronic device when not on government property. BUT, this information should not be downloaded using government equipment, read during duty time, or sent to others using government equipment, because it involves taking an election related action and could be a violation of the Hatch Act. **Do not forward this email to government or home email addresses as it contains AFGE member information specific to you.**



I want to extend to each and every member of the AFGE family my best wishes for a happy and healthy new year. I like to celebrate the new year by reflecting on the year that has passed. I do this not only as a means of taking stock and recognizing our many blessings and accomplishments, but also as a way of trying to learn from any missteps so that they won't be repeated in the coming year.

There is so much to be proud of when looking back at AFGE's accomplishments in 2019. In spite of the most hostile and challenging political environment we've ever faced, we racked up so many wins, large and small, and each deserves to be acknowledged.



First and foremost, for 2020, we won the largest pay raise in ten years, 3.1% on average nationwide. The 2.6% across-the-board plus an additional half percent devoted to locality pay was much needed, but extremely difficult to obtain. The president wanted a pay freeze, as did many lawmakers. Relentless lobbying – at the local level and on Capitol Hill – did the trick. You may recall that President Trump also wanted a freeze for 2019, and when the year dawned and we were in the midst of the longest government shutdown in modern history, the administration’s pay freeze plan was firmly in place. But AFGE didn’t give up, and when the deal that ended the shutdown was signed, not only did we get backpay for everyone, but we got a 1.9% pay raise plus a promise of backpay for all future shutdowns. This was a phenomenal accomplishment that was only realized because of AFGE’s firm and continuous advocacy.

One of the little-appreciated but hugely important elements of these pay adjustments AFGE has won from congress has to do with blue collar pay. When congress and presidents talk about federal pay adjustments, they mean for white collar or General Schedule (GS) employees. Blue collar or hourly federal workers are under an entirely separate pay system, a so-called “prevailing rate” system that, like the locality pay system, is never fully funded. Each year, AFGE has to press hard for the GS pay raise to be extended to blue collar pay. It is not automatic! So, we must appreciate that AFGE won, for both 2019 and 2020, pay raises for blue collar workers that were the same as for white collar workers.

AFGE also pushed for and won a new GS pay locality for Des Moines, Iowa and got Imperial County, California added to the Los Angeles pay locality. In both cases, the raises showed up in the first pay period of 2020, even though the work to extend the boundaries was done last year.



After the pay raises, the most noteworthy AFGE accomplishment of 2019 was a new law passed to guarantee 12 weeks of paid parental leave for federal employees after the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child. There is no way to overstate the immensity of this. Those of us who created our families before this fantastic benefit can tell you how difficult it is when you have an infant who is not yet ready for daycare but you have to leave him or her anyway because you absolutely must have that paycheck in order to keep a roof over your head and food on the table. It is a terrible “choice” that no one should ever have to make. Trying to cobble together sick leave and annual leave and loans and help from friends and relatives – that’s how many of us struggled through, but just as many didn’t have any leave or anyone to help them out and had to quit their job or put their child in a less-than-ideal situation. My most heartfelt congratulations to all the AFGE members, leaders, and staff who lobbied and pushed and worked for this over many, many years. AFGE never lost sight of the goal of paid parental leave, and we persevered for years and years and years until finally, in 2019, we won. And generations to come will thank AFGE for our persistence and our hard work. Opponents fought us until the final vote was counted, arguing that it was too expensive and too generous. But AFGE stood strong and right carried the day. It is my opinion that this will lay the groundwork for all American workers to have the guarantee of paid parental leave, and we will certainly carry on that fight. Congratulations to all of us!



We had some defensive wins on benefits this year too. Defending what we have never seems like much of a victory, but sometimes these victories are even harder to achieve than gaining new ground. The administration, with the support of many lawmakers, tried and failed to replace our pay system with an NSPS-style “pay for performance” discriminatory pay system, and we fought them back. (In particular, they wanted this type of pay system for the new Space

Force in DoD, but thanks to AFGE, they didn't get it). They wanted to force us to pay an additional 6% of our salary for the FERS defined benefit, eliminate the FERS supplement, eliminate FERS COLAs, and eliminate FERS annuities altogether for new hires. But AFGE said "NO" and none of it happened.

And of course, AFGE successfully blocked passage of a bill that would have eliminated official time and cut union representatives' retirement credit accrual for any time spent representing our members.

As they do every year, pro-privatization lawmakers tried to lift the AFGE-authored moratorium on the use of A-76. But the moratorium is firmly in place for another year, thanks to your lobbying. We also worked with a broad coalition to stop the privatization of the busiest airport in the nation, Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

One of the administration's biggest priorities from the President's Management Agenda was to abolish the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and divide up the pieces among OMB, DoD and GSA. We shut that down hard, not only to save the jobs of our members at the agency, but also because it was a blatant effort to politicize all aspects of the civil service by putting employment policy under the White House in OMB. Again, it was a combination of a mobilized AFGE local and skillful and strategic lobbying that won the day.



On the organizing front, AFGE won several new unit elections. Scientists at two USDA research agencies, ERS and NIFA, voted overwhelmingly to join AFGE as the administration forced employees to move out of the Washington, DC area. AFGE also won elections at:

- Michigan Air National Guard, the Navy SE child development centers at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida

- Navy Gateway Inn & Suites in Pensacola, Florida
- Navy Military Sealift Command (Worldwide), the VA Readjustment Counseling Service, Atlanta Vet Centers
- non-professional employees at the SSA Houma/Morgan City, Louisiana facility.

Not bad for a year when the Trump administration was trying to run us out of business! AFGE – the name of the organization and our members, leaders, and staff – was in the news almost constantly in 2019 as the unrivaled, number one source for information about the shutdown, the administration’s attacks on collective bargaining, scientific integrity, and political independence for the civil service. We reached more than 200 million people. Our webpage had 3.6 million views as well, and that is because its content is reliable and consistently useful and accurate, updated daily, and very easy to access.



I am very proud to let you know that for the first time since 2014, our union’s *operational* bottom line improved by over \$6,000,000 as of the end of the third quarter of 2019. Although we expect this positive trend to continue to the end of the year, this number doesn’t include year-end actuarial evaluations which can be substantial.

*How did we do it?* First, we adopted a balanced budget for 2019 with \$2.5 million set aside for reserves, employee pensions, and retiree healthcare. We also reduced staff, provided much smaller dues rebates for new members, got new tenants for 80 F Street, renegotiated most vendor contracts, authorized less travel, digitalized the Government Standard, stopped printing and sending triannual membership cards, froze remaining 2018 unspent budgets, and more. We also instituted a hiring freeze immediately after the convention, and we abolished

the positions of those who took VSIPs (although a couple of crucial positions were re-established).



Unfortunately, we weren't able to cross the finish line on getting full Title 5 rights for Transportation Security Officers. We came close, but ultimately did not succeed, in getting language in the final spending bill that would have prohibited the administration's practice of imposing phony "collective bargaining agreements" that weren't negotiated or agreed to by the union. So of course, we have our work cut out for us in 2020.

Brothers and sisters, this is a record we should all be so proud of. I thank every one of you who made a call, attended a rally, spoke to a lawmaker or to the media, who attended a local meeting or improved your skills by attending an AFGE training. I thank you for your perseverance through the horrible experience of the shutdown, when I believe AFGE showed all of America our mettle, our devotion to our agencies' missions, and our work ethic.

I will remember 2019 as a year of struggle and a year of tremendous accomplishment. It was a year when our AFGE solidarity truly delivered an abundance of good for all federal and D.C. government workers. We had some big challenges, but as the old saying goes, the harder the challenge, the sweeter the victory. If anyone thought AFGE would be frightened into paralysis by the cursed executive orders, they were wrong.

As we move forward in 2020, I am absolutely certain that we will reach new heights in organizing new members, mobilizing for victory in November, improving our pay and benefits, and providing ourselves with the very best in union representation.

I believe this because I see AFGE as a union of over 325,000 active and retired members united in spirit and passion for the welfare of our members and potential members, for the work we do in each and every agency on behalf of the American people and our country. Since our

union was founded 88 years ago in 1932, our union, our AFGE, has had more than its share of challenges. Sometimes the challenges were from outside the union and sometimes those challenges have been internal to our union family. No period of time has been totally smooth sailing, and I don't expect it will ever be so.

Let me assure you that today our union is as strong as it has ever been. We face very significant challenges today, but we have broad shoulders, built to bear any contest. We will fight together and win together, just as we did in 2019.

Yours in solidarity,



Everett Kelley  
AFGE National Secretary-Treasurer

**For the latest AFGE news and information, follow us on:**



---

Sent via [ActionNetwork.org](https://ActionNetwork.org). To update your email address, change your name or address, or to stop receiving emails from AFGE Main E-activist Group, please [click here](#).