

**AFGE
Local 3313
Spotlight**



American Federation of Government Employees Newsletter, Volume IV, Issue 9, February 2019

L3313 Supports National Silent Protest for Jobs



L-R, Milton Pool, Eugene Johnson (L3313 President), Gary Shoemaker (L3313 VP), with AFGE National President, J. David Cox.

Brothers and Sisters,

The collective actions of union members, labor allies, and some lawmakers averted a second government shutdown. Less than 48 hours before the government was scheduled to shut down, the House and Senate passed, and the President signed a bill funding a dozen agencies through Sep. 30, 2019. The bill also includes a 1.9% pay raise.

The protest included a vibrant chant of “Never Again” and a silent, raised clinch fist demonstration, lasting 35 minutes, or 1 minute for each day the government was shutdown. Consequently, Federal workers will receive the full pay and leave they earned during the 35 days they were furloughed, thanks to legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the president last month. President Cox offered a heartfelt *Thank you* to Sen. Ben Cardin of Maryland for introducing the legislation which also ensured that Federal workers would be paid in the result of a future government shutdown.



Local 3313 members have participated in several other rallies challenging the furlough. AFGE 3313 veterans of other rallies, not already mentioned, include: Bernadette Thomas (L3313 Human Rights and Youth Director), Leighton Christiansen (Leading Advocate for L3313), Tanya Hicks (OST Steward), Stacy Grey (PHMSA), and Deborah White (OST). Kudos to countless others who contributed by contacting their Senators and Congressman!

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 *Denotes Past President
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L-R, Eugene Kinnard (L3313 Sargent of Arms (FMCSA)), Eugene Johnson (L3313 President (FMCSA)), Gary Shoemaker (L3313 VP (FMCSA)), Milton Pool (FMCSA), Johnny Gibson (NHTSA Steward), and Derrell Lyles (NHTSA VP).

Feels Like a Pawn Sacrifice

AFGE National President J. David Cox shared this with local reporters: *“For nearly two months, 800,000 Federal employees and their families were used as pawns in a political battle that upended their lives, stunted local economies, and harmed everyone who depends on the services our Federal workers deliver.”*



I read that the pawns on a chess board represent the serfs or laborers of feudal days. Pawns were not really part of the feudal system but everything depended upon them growing food and providing a labor force for the lords. There are more pawns than any other piece on the chess board, and pawns are often sacrificed to save more important pieces, or to gain a territorial advantage.

The shutdown wreaked havoc on employees' finances, and killed morale. For 35 days, 800,000 Federal employees were being treated as pawns in a high-stakes political game. On Tuesday before the Friday vote, President Cox was joined by hundreds of union laborers who amassed at the Senate Office building to engage in a silent protest. Click the link to relive the moment: <https://www.fox5dc.com/news/389310161-video>



Milton Pool (FMCSA) and hundreds of others with uplifted hands and silent voices.

In chess, there are two types of sacrifices; real or sham. In a real sacrifice, the sacrificing player will have to play on with less material than his opponent for quite some time. So, in a real sense we were sacrificed for quite some time. In a sham sacrifice, the player offering the sacrifice will soon regain material of the same or greater value, or else force mate. In either case, the “pawn” is lost or sacrificed. It’s a *sham* to think that holding Federal workers hostage somehow would result in some greater good. No good came of contractors and businesses losing billions in sales, and individuals being denied crucial services. I believe the Federal employee must work more diligently than ever to shed any persona of limited value, and replace it with a more truthful visage of the valuable Knight that ensures the public safety or that of the rook/castle that provides protection to those that would otherwise be subject to the whims of the more powerful forces working against individuals in our

society. Gene Johnson, shown here being interviewed by a television reporter, shared his concern that the powers that be seemed unconcerned about holding 800,000 Federal Employees hostage, when their only crime was a genuine desire to make America better. He went on to say that Politicians made a myriad of moves, while seemingly giving little consideration to the impact that such moves were having on families, contractors, the economy, employee trust/self-worth, and most importantly the mission. Like the serfs of old, the Federal worker is crucial to ensure the food we eat is healthy, the roads/airways and seaways we operate on are safe, and energy is delivered through rails and pipelines without destroying the earth’s ecosystem. Let’s celebrate the public servant.



The Union is the only force working on your behalf to ensure you are not treated as pawns without recourse.



Jennifer and her Tibetan Mastiffs

A Champion and a Star Is Born

Two years ago, unbeknownst to most, a star Tibetan Mastiff, named Ralphie was born. Ralphie is the pride and joy of AFGE 3313's Vice President, Jennifer Rodes (pictured on the far end of the adjacent photo). Ralphie's official registered name is the Rocky Mountain Epic Icon. Ralphie is a black and tan Tibetan Mastiff and began his show career in August 2018.



After only five shows, Ralphie received his championship (a big deal) and is now working on his Grand championship (a bigger deal). He competed in the Royal Canin show this past December, which was held in Orlando. Ralphie was awarded ribbons every day to include Best of Winners, Best of Opposite, and Select Dog.



Ralphie and his professional handler at the Westminster Kennel Club

Jennifer's Ralphie, earned his place to compete in what might be called *the super bowl for dogs*; the vaunted *Westminster Kennel Club (WKC)* dog show, held on February 11, 2019. An unforeseen and immensely unfortunate mishap involving Ralphie's professional handler may have cost Ralphie the top award. Nevertheless, Ralphie received the *Award of Merit* which is given at the judge's discretion for outstanding entries not awarded best of breed or best in show. This is a fantastic accomplishment for a 2-year-old puppy participating for the first time at WKC.

AFGE L3313 salutes Jennifer and Ralphie. Anyone interested in watching the entire show may do so by clicking the link: <https://www.westminsterkennelclub.org/breed-results?id=tbtm&season=2019>

Furlough Stories:

Weathering A Furlough:

Thanks to Derrell Lyles, NHTSA VP, we can enclose a YouTube presentation entitled “How to Financially Weather a Government Shutdown.” Although we avoided a second shutdown, we hope this information is helpful <https://youtu.be/JfuyKNG04UA> . Similar information may be found at the Affordable Benefits Solutions website. <https://yourabsolutionsinc.com/financial-fed-friday/> .

Your Union Dues:

Around February 26, 2019, management in concert with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Interior Business Center (IBC) will be paying to the union dues deductions that were not collected during the government shutdown. Specifically, union dues allotments for PP 01 will be deducted in PP 04, and union dues allotments for PP 02 will be deducted in PP 05. Member dues were not withheld during the shutdown.

OST:

387 of OST’s 486 bargaining Unit Employees (BUE’s) were furloughed. The OST VP stayed in communication with OST membership and the employee relations office throughout the shutdown. OST VP, Jennifer Rodes sent emails out every several days urging employees to be pro-active with their creditors and seek out food banks and churches whenever the need arose. Furloughed employees were informed of the unemployment compensation processes and the availability of low interest loans.

FTA:

- FTA-VP, Cynthia Cox Grollman aggressively challenged management to share guidance and direction on the furlough, back-pay, treatment of employee hardships, and uncollected union dues.
- Of 558 employees, only 50 were not furloughed. FTA management failed to distribute timely furlough information, leaving many employees confused, and reliant on the media and AFGE communications.
- During the shutdown, the HR Director received 247 questions and expressed empathy for the individual hardships employees endured.
- Unfortunately, not all managers took the initiative to contact their staff for wellness checks.
- According to news reports, FTA failed to pay grantees, and consequently, some grant recipients from rural areas considered bankruptcy. Fortunately, upon return, dedicated bargaining unit employees heroically paid the grantees in record time.
- Most disturbing was the fact that one FTA employee/union member did not return to work following the furlough, and to date is still listed as missing. Please keep her in your prayers.

PHMSA:

Kay McIver, PHMSA VP was notified by employees, shortly after returning from the furlough, that management unilaterally modified work schedules, and reduced telework days purportedly to address work load accumulated over the furlough period. The Union initially filed a cease and desist order with management, which was not acted upon. The Union followed this by submitting an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) with the Federal Labor Relations Agency, which cited the Agency’s action as a violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). The CBA requires management to notify the Union whenever it desires a change in employee conditions of work. The ULP also cites the fact that the Agency failed to provide the Union with the opportunity to bargain changes to the recent Hours of Work agreement. The Union supports meeting mission needs that may have accumulated during the furlough, however, management failed to propose any logical backlog correcting remedies like overtime, compensatory time, or details. Restricting telework and approved work schedules does nothing to address a backlog problem, and adversely impacts the employee’s work-life balance.

Things You Should Know About Back Pay

Department of the Interior Employees Q & A for Back Pay During Lapse of Appropriations - January 28, 2019

Question 1: Will I receive Leave and Earning Statements in Employee Express for the two missed pay periods (December 23, 2018 through January 19, 2019)?

Answer: No. Payment will go directly to your financial institution so you should regularly monitor your bank account. You will receive a Leave and Earning Statement (LES) for PP03, which will reconcile any remaining deductions or allotments that were omitted.

Question 2: Will my back pay received for the two missed pay periods (December 23, 2018 through January 19, 2019) be the same amount as my normal paycheck?

Answer: No, but it should be close. Employees will receive “interim off-cycle payments” calculated slightly differently than normal payroll payments. Expect to receive payment for the hours that you normally would have worked, minus deductions for taxes, retirement, health benefits, etc. There will be additional pay corrections processed in the following pay periods as needed.

Question 3: When can I expect my full and reconciled back-pay payment?

Answer: If all timecard amendments were inputted timely for the PP03 processing, your payment will include your regular pay for non-lapsed days within PP03, plus any remaining back pay due to you for the lapse period.

Question 4: Will the back pay affect my 2018 wages for tax purposes (e.g., W-2)?

Answer: No. Wages are calculated based on when an employee is paid, not when the wages are earned. You will be paid in calendar year/tax year 2019 and back pay will be included in your 2019 taxable wages. You can access your 2018 W-2 in www.employeeexpress.gov now.

Question 5: Why were court-ordered payments or allotments, such as union dues, not taken out of the back pay?

Answer: Prior pay period re-computations include only Retirement (CSRS and FERS), Social Security Tax, Medicare Tax, Federal Income Tax, Basic Health Insurance Premium, Basic Life Insure (FEGLI), State and local Income, and Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Contributions.

For other deductions, it depends on the type of deduction as to how retroactive payments will be made. In general, voluntary allotments such as Combined Federal Campaign and allotments to financial institutions will not be deducted from back pay. Another example is court-ordered payments, which may have required employees to continue to make payments via personal checks while in non-pay status. As more information becomes available, we will continue to share it. Direct specific questions about other allotments to the Customer Support Center at 888-367-1622 or via email at Payroll_Helpdesk@ios.doi.gov.



Additional information on pay matters can be found in the U.S. Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) Fact Sheet at: <https://chcoc.gov/content/fact-sheet-pay-and-benefits-information-employees-affected-lapse-appropriations>

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