

## Contract Update - February 1, 2010

### SSA: Not So Safe or Healthy?

High-ranking officials in the Social Security Administration have shown they are good at wasting taxpayer money on their pet projects (remember last summer's "Management Tango," which cost more than \$675,000?)

However, when it comes to bargaining unit employees, the agency suddenly gets very tight-fisted. During recent contract negotiations, SSA put forth a number of proposals that could have a detrimental affect on employees while they're in travel status. For example, the agency wants to:

- Restrict the amount of reimbursement an employee could receive if they have unforeseen expenses while traveling on agency business.
- Eliminate reimbursement for personal phone calls.
- Curtail an employee's entitlement to receive travel advances before leaving on SSA business.
- Restrict contract language that absolves an employee from responsibility for loss or theft of agency documents while in travel status.

You can let SSA management know how you feel about their shortsighted proposals by contacting Ken Powell, Social Security's Chief Negotiator. His agency email address is [Ken.Powell@ssa.gov](mailto:Ken.Powell@ssa.gov).

Social Security also wants to make drastic changes in the area of health and safety. It has proposed:

- Restricting the definition of what is a "communicable disease."

Do we really want management officials at SSA making that kind of decision? Their only concern is having the bargaining unit crank-out more work (whether an employee is dangerously sick or not).

- Limiting an employee's right to be tested if they are exposed to serious communicable diseases.
- Limiting the right of employees to obtain TB screening tests, even if the employee was exposed to this very serious illness during work hours.
- Restricting who the Union can designate to perform a health-and-safety inspection.

"These are very dangerous ideas," said Witold Skwierczynski, the Union's Chief Negotiator. "We should depend on health experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to tell us what constitutes a 'communicable disease,' not bureaucrats in Central Office, Regional Office or even at the Local level. If this change went through, most management officials would have even their sickest employees showing up for work."

