

Contract Update—May 11, 2010

Temporary, Probationary, Part-time Employees

The Social Security Administration wants to radically change those parts of the National Contract that deal with temporary, probationary, part-time and seasonal workers – but the Union is working very hard to extend employee rights and not reduce them.

Witold Skwierczynski, the Chief Negotiator for AFGE, has called the agency's proposals "egregious." Earl Tucker is also a Union negotiator and he believes SSA "doesn't want any teeth whatsoever in Article 33."

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Probationary employees could suffer the most under the agency plan. During a recent bargaining session, SSA management acknowledged they want the right to fire an employee just one minute before that person's shift ends – with no other warning given to the worker or the Union.

The agency does not think it should give probationary hires two weeks notice (as the contract now requires).

"Their proposal shows management to be heartless," said AFGE negotiator Dana Duggins. "They're just ruthless. These are very difficult economic times – the worst we've seen in 80 years. If an employee is going to be terminated, they should receive as much advance notice as possible so they'll have time to look for another job."

Social Security wants to eliminate other key provisions of the current agreement as well:

- That probationary employees be considered for re-assignment to other jobs commensurate with their skill levels;
- Probationary employees would lose their right to Union representation, even though that proposal appears to be illegal;
- The Union would no longer be told when SSA appoints or fires temporary workers. That would prevent them from receiving information from AFGE concerning their rights;
- Part-time employees would no longer have first consideration for full-time positions;
- The agency would not have to respond in writing to an employee who wants to convert from full-time to part-time status (or vice versa).

"The Union will continue to fight these proposals," Skwierczynski promised, "but we need every member of the bargaining unit to get involved in the contract negotiation process. It doesn't require a lot of time. One email to the agency's bargaining team will show SSA management that employees are tired of being treated like second-class citizens while they're expected to give 150% every day they're on the job."

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