

## Contract Update – May 18, 2010

**Leave your glasses at the door.**

**That's what management officials with the Social Security Administration argued for today during negotiations with AFGE.**

**"They want a provision in the next contract where employees would have to give their glasses back to the agency when they leave or retire, if SSA paid for them through the Vision Program for VDT users," said Witold Skwierczynski, the Union's Chief Negotiator.**

**"I want to know what Social Security would do with all of those glasses?" he asked. SSA management included contact lenses in their proposal, and employees would *not* be reimbursed even if they helped to pay for the glasses or the contacts.**

**Skwierczynski also pointed out that management has refused to counter many of the Union's own proposals on a number of issues, including employee stress, indoor air quality, ventilation, and humidity.**

**"Employees indicated in a recent Union survey that stress, temperature levels and indoor air quality were their three top areas of concern," he said. "AFGE has offered extensive proposals in each of these three areas, but management has responded with no substantive counterproposals during negotiations.**

**"At the bargaining table, management's de facto chief negotiator, Ralph Patinella, asserted that SSA offices do not have problems in these areas and the agency is content to continue its current practices. Patinella also wants the Union to waive its bargaining rights and allow SSA to change numerous safety provisions unilaterally during the course of the contract without any negotiations with the Union."**

**Skwierczynski added, "In addition, SSA refuses to restore joint Union-management health and safety inspections. Management prefers unilateral inspections where they write the reports and findings and the employees have no input. The Union often isn't even invited or given a copy of such reports. Those reports rarely list any problems, but offices continue to be unsafe. AFGE will continue to insist on being an equal partner with management in all health and safety inspections so that employee concerns are reflected in the findings."**

**Another Union concern is domestic violence.**

**"We have a negotiated agreement dealing with domestic violence that was agreed to by both sides years ago," said Steve Kofahl, a member of the AFGE bargaining team. "It would protect employees in a number of ways if they are or have been in a violent situation. The Union wants that agreement put into the next contract, but so far, management hasn't acted on it at all."**

**To contact Ralph Patinella, the agency's de facto chief negotiator, you can email him at [Ralph.Patinella@ssa.gov](mailto:Ralph.Patinella@ssa.gov).**