

## **Contract Update – June 16, 2010**

**Annual leave requests for full weeks, and for days around holidays (when not all requests can be honored), was one of the issues discussed today as contract bargaining continued between AFGE and the Social Security Administration.**

**The Union has proposed rotating leave rosters for most SSA components, with seniority-based approval for other components/subcomponents, but the agency is rejecting that idea without providing any real explanation. They simply say they want “uniformity” without saying why.**

**“We are responding to the interests of the employees at the many components we represent,” said Steve Kofahl, a member of the Union’s negotiating team, “but the agency has not provided any countervailing arguments.”**

**In addition, AFGE has proposed contract language that employees would be guaranteed the right to give blood on agency time at the employee’s request. The current contract allows SSA to deny employee requests to give blood for work-related reasons. Union Chief Negotiator Witold Skwierczynski informed SSA negotiators it is disappointing that Social Security feels work is more important than the societal value of giving blood to save lives.**

**SSA chief negotiator Ralph Patinella defended the agency’s position that allows Social Security to deny donors time to give blood when SSA feels it is more important for them to do agency work.**

**AFGE also hopes to increase the maximum amount of paid duty time employees are allowed to donate blood. The Union wants to go from three hours to four, but SSA management apparently feels employees would abuse the policy and claim more time than is actually needed to complete questionnaires and interviews with nurses, to be tested to ensure that blood can be safely drawn and donated, to donate, and to recover. The agency, however, offered no evidence of abuse.**

**In other discussions, management continues to insist on language that would allow them nearly complete discretion to deny leave requests because there is work that needs to be done. “They keep talking about workload priorities,” said Skwierczynski, “but that’s a vague term meant to justify leave denials and interfere with employee use of their earned benefits.”**