

Contract Update—September 13, 2010

“United We Serve?”

Volunteer...but do it on your own time.

That was the message from Social Security management officials this summer during contract bargaining with AFGE. This came a year after President Obama outlined “United We Serve,” which encouraged all Americans to engage in sustained and meaningful community service.

Union leaders have proposed that SSA bargaining unit employees be given up to 40 hours a year (less than an hour per week) to participate in this Presidential initiative. They would be released from their regular duties and not be charged leave or lose any pay.

The agency’s response came from Jack Leiby: “It’s just not something we’re interested in doing.”

“Management officials have again shown their disrespect for the President,” said Witold Skwierzynski, the Union’s Chief Negotiator for the AFGE/SSA contract talks. “They have refused to implement his Executive Order that calls for a better working relationship with the Union, and now they won’t give employees time off to serve their communities.”

“If other federal agencies are participating in this program, why can’t Social Security?” he asked.

During a bargaining session this summer, there was a verbal exchange between Skwierzynski and Leiby on the subject of volunteering.

“You are not willing to give any time for employees to engage in charitable activities. Period,” Skwierzynski said. “That’s what we will tell them. You are not interested.”

Leiby’s response: “Please do so.”

Skwierzynski also noted that SSA management officials across the United States are routinely given duty time throughout the year to work on the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and then receive large cash awards for the work they’ve done.

“This is hypocrisy at its worst,” Skwierzynski believes. “If management is paid to work on the CFC, why can’t bargaining unit members be given time to work on projects that benefit their communities?”

Contract bargaining resumes on Tuesday, September 14 and employees are encouraged to read updates that are posted at www.mycontract2009.org. More information is also provided in UNITY (the Council 220 newsletter) and through flyers.

Employees can contact SSA Commissioner Michael Astrue directly at his agency email address (Michael.J.Astrue@ssa.gov) to express their opinions about this subject and others that have come-up during negotiations. It’s asked that copies of those emails also be sent to Skwierzynski at witold1@attglobal.net.

Clarification of 8/30/10 Publication

Several AFGE Surveys will be released over the next few months. Your response to those surveys is extremely helpful to our contract negotiators. (ALL comments are reviewed!)

Please take the time to complete these surveys. **Practices may vary from office to office regarding your ability to complete the survey during duty time. If you are in doubt, you may contact your AFGE representative.** You may also forward the survey to your personal email account to complete at your own leisure.