

1 **Article 17**

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3 **Monetary Awards**

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6 **Section 1. Purpose**

7
8 ~~Recognition of employees through monetary awards reflects the parties' efforts to~~
9 ~~promote quality service and to recognize employee contributions to Agency~~
10 ~~performance. Employee recognition is based on achievement and acknowledges the~~
11 ~~individual and collaborative accomplishments of employees to promote the success of~~
12 ~~the Agency mission, goals and objectives. Strong emphasis is placed on recognition of~~
13 ~~efforts to improve service to the public. The program recognizes the accomplishments~~
14 ~~of employees both as individuals and as members of groups or teams. Those who~~
15 ~~contribute to the success of their work unit, and thus, the Agency, deserve recognition~~
16 ~~of their accomplishments. Recognition of group accomplishments also promotes and~~
17 ~~acknowledges the value we place on working together.~~

18
19 ~~The program provides for various forms of recognition, enabling the award recipient to~~
20 ~~be recognized in a meaningful manner. It provides the flexibility necessary to adapt to a~~
21 ~~changing work environment and unanticipated circumstances. The intent of this~~
22 ~~program is that employees will be appropriately rewarded regardless of changes in the~~
23 ~~Agency's organizational structure, work processes or work initiatives.~~

24 **Recognition of employees through monetary and non-monetary awards reflects**
25 **the parties' efforts to promote continuous improvement in Agency performance;**
26 **the employee recognition program provides a positive indication of the parties'**
27 **commitment to providing quality public service. The employee recognition**
28 **program, as described in this Article, has the following characteristics:**

29
30 **a. It is an incentive program; that is, employee recognition is based on**
31 **achievement and improvement. Achievements are linked to the Agency**
32 **mission of providing high quality service to the public. Strong emphasis is**
33 **placed on recognition of efforts to improve service to the public. It is**
34 **intended to motivate employees to strive for excellence.**

35
36 **b. It recognizes the accomplishments of employees both as individuals and**
37 **as members of groups or teams. Because of the interrelationship of work**
38 **performed by employees, enhanced Agency performance is sought**
39 **through teamwork, not through competition among individuals. This**
40 **program is based on the concept that individual employees who support**
41 **the goals of their teams, their work units and, thus the Agency, through**
42 **personal efforts and accomplishments deserve recognition. It is also based**
43 **on the concept that groups or teams which improve agency performance**
44 **deserve recognition.**

45

46 **c. It recognizes that management, the Union and employees have**
47 **important roles in identifying and recognizing employees deserving of**
48 **awards and praise. The intent of this program is that awards are given in a**
49 **fair and equitable manner, that awards serve to promote a positive work**
50 **environment and that awards are truly linked to employee contributions**
51 **that enhance Agency performance.**

52
53 **d. It provides for various forms of recognition, enabling the award**
54 **recipient to be recognized in a meaningful manner.**

55
56 **e. It provides the flexibility necessary to adapt to a changing work**
57 **environment and unanticipated circumstances. The intent of this program**
58 **is that employees will be appropriately rewarded regardless of changes in**
59 **the Agency's organizational structure, work processes or work initiatives.**

60

61

62 **Section 2. Policy**

63

64 ~~A. Except for Recognition of Contribution Awards (ROC), there is no limit on the~~
65 ~~number of awards that an individual employee may receive or frequency with which~~
66 ~~he/she may receive awards during an appraisal period. The timing and frequency is~~
67 ~~determined by the type of award. No more than one Recognition of Contribution~~
68 ~~Award can be granted for an appraisal period. Executive Recognition Awards and~~

69 ~~Exemplary Contribution or Service Awards will normally be granted as close as~~
70 ~~possible to the event being recognized.~~

71
72 ~~B. When employees are eligible to be considered for an award, the relative significance~~
73 ~~and impact of their contributions will be considered in determining which type of~~
74 ~~award(s) would constitute appropriate recognition, and the amount of money to be~~
75 ~~awarded. Funding availability must also be considered in the granting of monetary~~
76 ~~awards.~~

77
78 ~~C. Awards will be processed in a timely and expeditious manner.~~

79
80 ~~D. The Agency will provide an award recipient with documentation of the award~~
81 ~~received which may include a certificate. For awards other than ROCs, the~~
82 ~~acknowledgment will include a justification statement.~~

83
84 ~~E. The Administration will make reasonable efforts to allot awards funding in proportion~~
85 ~~to the number of bargaining unit employees within each component.~~

86
87 **A. Except for Recognition of Contribution awards, there is no limit on the number**
88 **of awards that an individual employee may receive or the frequency with which**
89 **he/she may receive awards.**

90

91 **B. When employees are considered for awards, the relative significance and**
92 **impact of their contributions will be considered in determining which type of**
93 **awards would constitute appropriate recognition and, for monetary awards, in**
94 **determining the amount of money to be granted. Funding availability must also**
95 **be considered in the granting of monetary awards.**

96

97 **C. Awards will be processed in a timely and expeditious manner.**

98

99 **D. The Agency will provide an award recipient with written documentation that**
100 **clearly articulates the specific reason(s) that the employee received the award.**
101 **Employees are encouraged to relate this information to specific evaluation**
102 **criteria when completing applications for merit promotion.**

103

104 **E. The Administration will make reasonable efforts to allot awards' funding in**
105 **proportion to the number of bargaining unit employees within each component.**

106

107 **F. To encourage transparency, all employee awards will be presented in staff**
108 **meetings. The Union and employees will be notified in advance.**

109

110

111 **Section 3. Eligibility Requirements**

112

113 ~~To be eligible for an award an employee must be in good standing and have a rating of~~
114 ~~record with an Element Average of at least 4.0 for ROCs, and an Element Average at~~
115 ~~least 3.0 for all other awards.~~

116
117 ~~An employee is in good standing when he/she has a rating of record (an appraisal) of at~~
118 ~~least summary Level 3 and his/her current performance is at least successful.~~

119
120 ~~Element Average is a computation summary derived in the performance evaluation~~
121 ~~process. Each performance element in the employee's appraisal is assigned a rating of~~
122 ~~1, 3, or 5. The individual performance element ratings are added together and the total~~
123 ~~is divided by the number of performance elements and the resulting number is the~~
124 ~~Element Average. An Element Average is not computed for those employees with a~~
125 ~~Level 1 rating because they are not eligible for awards.~~

126

127 **Section 3. Responsibilities**

128

129 **A. National Awards Committee**

130

131 **The National Awards Committee will provide timely guidelines and oversight to**
132 **award panels, including consideration of any funding constraints and**
133 **budgetary limitations.**

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135 **B. Award Panels**

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Each DC-level component will establish awards panels at the lowest organizational level practicable, consisting of management and bargaining unit employees. The composition and membership of each panel will be decided jointly by union and management. The union will designate the bargaining unit panel members. Decisions will be made by consensus. Award panels will be formed at the beginning of the assessment period. Panels will perform the following functions in a fair and equitable manner, maintaining the strictest confidentiality and avoiding even the appearance of conflicts of interest:

1. Establish criteria for monetary awards. Criteria will be based on broad organizational goals and accomplishments, as opposed to individual performance.

2. Operate within parameters of guidelines provided by the National Awards Committee.

3. Decide on recipients and amounts to be awarded for Commendable Act or Service Awards and On-The-Spot Awards.

4. Grant Time-Off awards of 8 hours or less and recommend to management awards of more than 8 hours.

159 **C. Second-Level Panels**

160
161 **Second-level panels will develop and administer a post award review process**
162 **for decisions made by lower level panels to ensure fairness and equity.**

163
164 **The second level panels will make decisions and/or recommendations, as**
165 **described in part B above, for awards to employees who served on the lower**
166 **level panels.**

167
168 **~~Section 4. Types of Awards~~**

169
170 ~~A. Recognition of Contribution (ROC) — ROC recognizes employees who have~~
171 ~~maintained high quality performance. It may be awarded in the form of a Quality~~
172 ~~Step Increase (QSI) or cash award. To be eligible for a cash ROC an employee~~
173 ~~must have a rating of record with an Element Average of at least 4.0. To be eligible~~
174 ~~for a QSI an employee must have a rating of record with an Element Average of 5.~~
175 ~~Employees with an Element Average of 5.0 will be considered for a ROC and~~
176 ~~employees with an Element Average of 4.0 or greater but less than 5.0 may be~~
177 ~~considered for a ROC. The following are ROC restrictions:~~

- 178
179 ~~• Probationary employees are not eligible;~~
180
181 ~~• Employees with an Element Average of less than 4.0 are not eligible;~~

182

183 • ~~Employees may not be granted more than one ROC for an appraisal period;~~

184

185 • ~~Employees may not be granted more than one QSI within a 52 week period;~~

186 ~~and,~~

187

188 • ~~Employees may not be serving on a temporary promotion when a QSI is to~~
189 ~~take effect.~~

190

191 ~~Recognition of Contribution Awards will be granted after all appraisals have been~~
192 ~~distributed. Recognition of Contribution Award amounts for employees with an~~
193 ~~Element Average of 5.0 will be greater than the amount for employees with lower~~
194 ~~Element Averages at the same grade level in the same component.~~

195

196 ~~B. Executive Recognition Award (ERA) — An ERA is a cash award in which an~~
197 ~~executive recognizes as exceptional or outstanding a team or group achievement~~
198 ~~and/or contribution to the Agency and component objectives. ERAs are intended to~~
199 ~~recognize exceptional or outstanding group contributions to public service. To be~~
200 ~~eligible for an ERA each group/team member must have made a substantial~~
201 ~~contribution to the group/team's success and each member must have an Element~~
202 ~~Average of at least 3.0. Whenever possible, distribution of ERAs will be timed as~~
203 ~~close as possible to the contribution being recognized. Each employee within a~~

204 ~~group receiving an ERA will receive the same amount of money, irrespective of~~
205 ~~grade level or Element Average.~~

206
207 ~~C. Exemplary Contribution or Service Award (ECSA) — An ECSA is a cash award which~~
208 ~~recognizes individual contributions to group achievement and performance that have~~
209 ~~promoted the mission of the Agency or extraordinary acts performed while on duty.~~
210 ~~Award amounts should be linked to the significance and impact of the~~
211 ~~accomplishment or contribution. The minimum amount to be awarded for an ECSA~~
212 ~~is two hundred dollars. To be eligible for an ECSA an employee must perform an~~
213 ~~extraordinary service or act in connection with or related to official duty, or~~
214 ~~demonstrate exemplary contributions to group performance. ECSAs may be~~
215 ~~granted and distributed throughout the appraisal period and as close to the~~
216 ~~contribution or extraordinary service or act as possible.~~

217
218 ~~NOTE: A group or team is defined as two or more individuals working together toward a~~
219 ~~common purpose or goal. Examples include work groups within Field Offices, modules~~
220 ~~in Program Service Centers, branches in Headquarters, inter-component teams and~~
221 ~~special workgroups formed to develop or execute a specific activity.~~

222
223 ~~D. Suggestion Award~~

224
225 ~~1. The administration will encourage employees to submit suggestion awards,~~
226 ~~using the SSA Suggestion Program. Suggestion awards will be appropriate~~

227 ~~for tangible and intangible suggestions as defined in the SSA Suggestion~~
228 ~~Program and the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Changes in the~~
229 ~~SSA Suggestion Program dated January 25, 2002.~~

230

231 ~~2. Employees will normally receive a final decision regarding a suggestion~~
232 ~~award within 90 days after receipt by the central suggestion staff.~~

233

234 ~~3. If the decision is “not adopt” the evaluation report will provide the basis for the~~
235 ~~decision.~~

236

237 ~~4. If the idea set forth in a rejected suggestion is later adopted, the appropriate~~
238 ~~suggestion coordinator will, if the matter is brought to his/her attention within~~
239 ~~the 2 year period after the rejection notice, reopen the case for award~~
240 ~~consideration.~~

241

242 ~~5. An employee who informally submits a suggestion (i.e., orally gives his/her~~
243 ~~idea to a staff or management person) that is adopted, must submit the~~
244 ~~suggestion in writing within 1 year of the date the suggestion is placed in~~
245 ~~effect, in order for the suggester to be considered for a suggestion award.~~

246

247 ~~6. Suggestion award amounts will be in accordance with government-wide rule~~
248 ~~and regulation, and agency guidelines.~~

249

250 **Section 4. Honorary Awards**

251

252 **The parties agree that awards for other than service will not be applied toward**
253 **promotions or details.**

254

255 ~~**Section 5. Award Information**~~

256

257 ~~The administration will provide the union with an electronic annual report on the awards~~
258 ~~program for bargaining unit employees. This report will show the distribution of cash~~
259 ~~awards and QSIs by grade and organization for headquarters, OHA central office, and~~
260 ~~regions by components, DOC and PSCs.~~

261

262 **Section 5. Monetary Awards**

263

264 **A. Recognition of Contribution (ROC)**

265

266 **The ROC is a performance award that recognizes employees who have**
267 **maintained high quality performance. ROC awards will be paid in the range of**
268 **\$1200 - \$2000.**

269

270 **At the end of each assessment cycle, the awards panels will forward**
271 **recommendations to management for ROC awards.**

272

273 **Management may grant ROC awards to employees either as lump sum**
274 **payments or as Quality Step Increases. Only one ROC award may be granted**
275 **to an employee within a fiscal year. An employee's individual circumstances**
276 **should be considered when determining the appropriateness of a QSI or a**
277 **lump sum cash award.**

278
279 **To be eligible for a ROC, an employee must be in good standing. New**
280 **employees to the Agency must have 120 days of service to be eligible for**
281 **consideration.**

282
283 **By consensus, award panels may develop the method for dispensing ROC**
284 **awards, e.g., standard dollar amounts, standard percentages, based on**
285 **percentage of salary, based on grade ranges, etc.**

286
287 **B. Commendable Act or Service Award (CASA)**

288
289 **The CASA is a special act or service award, which recognizes individuals or**
290 **groups for major accomplishments, or contributions that have promoted the**
291 **mission of the organization. Award amounts should be linked to the**
292 **significance and impact of the accomplishment or contribution. The minimum**
293 **amount to be awarded for a CASA is \$200. Employees who are not in good**
294 **standing are ineligible for a CASA award. A CASA award may be made to an**
295 **individual employee or to a group. A group may consist of individuals from a**

296 **single organization or multiple components/office/units. The panel may**
297 **empower the group to determine the distribution of the award money among**
298 **the members.**

299
300 **Award panels will develop the criteria for CASAs and make the final decisions**
301 **regarding the individuals and groups who will receive an award and the**
302 **amount of money to be awarded.**

303

304 **C. On-The-Spot (OTS) Award**

305

306 **An OTS award, a form of special act or service award, is a cash payment to an**
307 **individual employee that recognizes noteworthy contributions or**
308 **accomplishments in the public interest, which are connected with or related**
309 **to the recipient's official employment. The distinction between a CASA and an**
310 **OTS award rests in the relative significance of the contribution or**
311 **accomplishment.**

312

313 **Employees who are not in good standing are not eligible to receive an OTS**
314 **award. The minimum amount of an OTS award is \$50 and the maximum**
315 **amount is \$200.**

316

317 **The OTS award allocation for bargaining unit employees will be split equally**

318 **between management and the award panels. OTS awards may be granted by**
319 **either the panels or management.**

320

321 **D. Suggestion Award**

322

323 **1. The Administration will encourage employees to file suggestions under the**
324 **SSA Suggestion Program. Suggestions will be considered in a fair and**
325 **equitable manner. Suggestion awards will be appropriate for tangible**
326 **suggestions, intangible suggestions, and problem identification, as defined in**
327 **the SSA Suggestion System.**

328

329 **a. In the event of a decision regarding adoption or non-adoption of a**
330 **suggestion not being made within 120 days of submission, the employee,**
331 **upon request, will be given a written or oral status report.**

332

333 **b. Non-adoption of employee suggestions is to be written and contain**
334 **specific reasons for non-adoption.**

335

336 **c. If the idea set forth in a rejected suggestion is later adopted, the**
337 **appropriate suggestion coordinator will, if the matter is brought to his/her**
338 **attention within the 2 year period after the date of the rejection notice,**
339 **reopen the case for award consideration.**

340

341 **d. An employee who informally submits a suggestion (i.e., orally gives**
342 **his/her idea to a staff or management person) that is adopted, must submit**
343 **it in writing within 1 year of the date the suggestion is placed in effect.**
344 **Otherwise, the suggester will not be considered for a cash award.**

345
346 **2. The amount of suggestion awards approved or recommended will be in**
347 **accordance with OPM guidelines set forth in FPM Chapter 451.**

348
349 **The parties agree to incorporate the SSA Suggestion Program MOU.**

350
351 **3. There will be an Agency wide marketing initiative to publicize the**
352 **Suggestion Program and to keep all employees informed of program changes**
353 **as they occur. Publicity may include but is not limited to distribution of**
354 **revised pamphlets, articles in SSA publications, Intranet and posters on**
355 **bulletin boards. Through a variety of electronic and printed materials, the**
356 **Agency will educate employees on the use of the automated system. At the**
357 **request of the employee, the Agency should provide reasonable assistance on**
358 **the use of the automated system and the Suggestion Program process.**

359
360 **4. Employees will receive reasonable duty time to submit, research**
361 **and prepare suggestions.**

362

363 **5. If the agency wants to publicize the names of employees who receive**
364 **suggestion awards the employees must authorize disclosure.**

365
366 **6. The needs of employees with disabilities will be accommodated in**
367 **accordance with existing regulations, government-wide rules and regulations,**
368 **the SSA/AFGE National Agreement, and any applicable MOUs. Training and**
369 **any modifications to systems for the Suggestion Program will be provided to**
370 **employees with disabilities at essentially the same time as other employees.**

371
372 **7. SSA agrees to continue to share information every 6 months with the**
373 **Spokesperson of the General Committee, or their designee, relating to the**
374 **automation of the Suggestion Program. It is understood that the Union has**
375 **not waived any of its rights to bargain in accordance with Article 4 of this**
376 **Agreement.**

377

378 **E. Time Off Awards**

379

380 **A Time Off Award is an incentive award granted to an individual that allows an**
381 **excused absence without charge to leave or loss of pay. This award is in**
382 **recognition of contributions to the quality, efficiency or economy of operations.**

383

384 **Workloads and operational considerations, in terms of meeting public service,**
385 **should be factored into decisions as to the extent to which this award should be**
386 **used.**

387
388 **Employees with a certification of "Successful" are eligible for consideration to**
389 **receive a Time Off Award. It may be granted in addition to an honor award,**
390 **Commendable Act or Service Award or On-The-Spot Award.**

391
392 **The amount of time off awarded for a single contribution should be**
393 **commensurate with the contribution. Time off may be awarded in increments of 1**
394 **hour up to 40 hours for a single contribution (or, in the case of a part-time**
395 **employee or an employee with an uncommon tour of duty, one-half the average**
396 **number of hours of work in the employee's bi-weekly scheduled tour of duty). An**
397 **employee may be granted up to 80 hours of time off during a leave year (or, in the**
398 **case of a part-time employee or an employee with an uncommon tour of duty, the**
399 **average number of hours of work in the employee's bi-weekly scheduled tour of**
400 **duty).**

401
402 **The Parties recognize that some Time Off awards will not have measurable**
403 **budgetary cost; however, the costs of Time Off awards, as agreed to by the NPC,**
404 **will be deducted from the appropriate budget.**

405

406 **Awards panels may grant Time Off awards of 8 hours or less and recommend to**
407 **management awards of more than 8 hours. Awards panels may establish the**
408 **nomination process for Time Off Awards.**

409
410 **The time off must be scheduled and used in accordance with Article 31 and taken**
411 **within 1 year after the date the award is approved. It may not be converted to a**
412 **cash payment.**

413

414 **Section 6--Award Nomination Procedures**

415

416 **Employees and management officials are encouraged to identify individual**
417 **employees who they believe should be recognized for high quality**
418 **accomplishments or contributions.**

419

420 **Nominations of individual employee should be submitted, in writing, to the**
421 **appropriate manager or awards panel. The nominations should include a**
422 **description of the accomplishments or contributions of the nominee(s) and an**
423 **explanation of their significance, as well as the name and telephone number of**
424 **the employee submitting the nomination. Nominations should not include**
425 **suggestions for the type of award or the amount of money to be granted.**
426 **Information provided in the nominations will be considered in determining**
427 **appropriate recognition.**

428

429 **Section 7--Awards Information**

430

431 **A. The Administration will provide the Union with seven (7) copies of an annual**
432 **report on the awards program. This report will show distribution of cash awards,**
433 **and Quality Step Increases by grade and organization for Headquarters, ODAR**
434 **Central Office and ODAR Field, Regions by components, DOC and PSC's.**

435

436 **B. An award website will be established to collect all information regarding**
437 **agency award recipients, including name of recipient, type and amount of award,**
438 **position and duty station, divided by region and component. All employees and**
439 **the Union will have access to the website. The site will be updated monthly. The**
440 **agency will provide such information directly to the Union, upon request.**

441

442 **Section 8. Teamwork**

443

444 **Whereas the parties have yet to negotiate over subject matter dealing with:**

445 **Teamwork;**

446 **Teams;**

447 **Teamwork environment;**

448 **Team or group goals or objectives; and evolution of the supervisor's role**
449 **to team leader and coach, the parties agree that the use of this and other**
450 **related terminology in Article 17 does not constitute a waiver on the part**

451 **of the Union to enter into full and complete negotiations with the**
452 **Administration over such subject matter.**

453

454 **Section 9. Honorary Award Ceremonies**

455

456 **All recipients of honorary awards will be provided with travel and per diem to**
457 **attend honorary award ceremonies. Employee 40 years and above honorary**
458 **length of service award recipients will be provided travel and per diem and**
459 **administrative time to attend the Commissioner’s honorary award ceremony in**
460 **Baltimore, Md.**

461

462 **In addition, the Union will be provided the opportunity to attend this ceremony**
463 **in recognition of the award recipients and allowed to make a statement of**
464 **recognition to the awardees.**

465

466 **All 40 and above length of service honorees who did not have an opportunity**
467 **to travel to Baltimore for recognition of their honorary length of service award,**
468 **will be entitled to attend the first such Commissioner’s award ceremony after**
469 **the effective date of this contract.**

470

471 **The Union will be provided advance notice and the opportunity to attend and**
472 **speak at any award ceremonies at the DC, RC or Regional Chief ALJ**
473 **level. The Agency will pay all travel and per diem for the Union participants.**

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Section 10. Award Budget Allocations

1. Beginning with Fiscal Year 2012, the Agency will allocate an additional .02% of Agency payroll beyond the percentage amount allocated to the employee awards program for each year of the SSA-AFGE National Agreement. Based on this additional allocation, the following pools and percentage amounts will apply to determine the awards budget for the corresponding fiscal year:

- a. FY10 – pool/percentage, processes and procedures to be negotiated between SSA and the AFGE General Committee**
- b. FY11 - the greater of \$50 million or 1.25% of payroll**
- c. FY12 - the greater of \$52 million or 1.27% of payroll**
- d. FY13 - the greater of \$54 million or 1.29% of payroll**

2. Beginning with Fiscal Year 2010 and throughout the life of this SSA-AFGE National Agreement, the awards budget for AFGE bargaining unit employees will be allocated to individual awards types as follows:

- a. Performance Awards - 60%**
- b. Employee Contribution or Service Award - 40%**