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Date: Tue, 1 Sep 2009 17:38:23 -0400

Subject: SSA Failure to Communicate With AFGE Regarding Employee Satisfaction Issues

Ms. Mazzi:

Attached is a letter that I sent to Reginald Wells, SSA Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources, regarding SSA's failure to communicate with AFGE regarding the OPM Employee Satisfaction Planning initiative that OPM began on June 19, 2009. OPM has sent 2 guidance memoranda to Agencies urging them to meet with labor organizations that represent employees as part of an effort to improve employee satisfaction.

AFGE represents over 95% of the bargaining unit work force in SSA. Other unions represent less than 5% of the re[presented] employees. SSA has not even bothered to contact AFGE regarding this matter. The deadline that OPM set for responding to OPM Director John Barry's June 18, 2009 memorandum is September 14, 2009.

AFGE is unaware of any focus groups that have been established which include AFGE represented employees. AFGE is also unaware of any town hall meetings that have been conducted regarding improving employee satisfaction in a meaningful and sustainable way. Union engagement, establishment of focus groups, and town hall meetings were all listed as methodologies to utilize in order to meet employee satisfaction requirements in the Director's June 18, 2009 memorandum. It appears that SSA Commissioner Astrue is refusing to comply with the OPM requirements on this matter.

AFGE is not surprised. Since becoming SSA Commissioner, Mr. Astrue has cut off communications with AFGE despite the fact that AFGE represents the vast majority of SSA workers. We have had no meetings with him since February, 2008. After the election of President Obama, AFGE approached SSA leaders and requested resumption of meetings at all levels. SSA responded with an extremely limited meeting proposal.

Mr. Astrue has not dealt with a number of issues brought to his attention by AFGE ranging from compensation for SSA employee hurricane victims, merit promotion opportunities for current SSA employees, use of stimulus funds to conduct unnecessary management conferences at luxury resorts, closing SSA offices, hiring policies that are rife with nepotism and cronyism, removing the long time Employee Activity Association from SSA, refusing to implement increased transit subsidies for employees outside of Washington DC which was part of the stimulus legislation, increasing bloated management staffing at the expense of bargaining unit production jobs, failing to solve the problem of backlogged disability cases, engaging in gross misuse of employee awards money, continuing discriminatory practices in the Agency merit promotion system, implementation of an automated benefits application system which has resulted in millions of SSA claimants choosing Making disadvantageous choices regarding their retirement benefits, eliminating verification requirements which will lead to fraud and abuse, tolerating management engaging in unethical and illegal practices in order to meet Agency goal and objectives.etc.

Just last week at the AFGE convention in Reno NV, a resolution was passed to urge President Obama to ask for Commissioner Astrue's resignation and if he refuses to resign to fire Commissioner Astrue for malfeasance. A similar resolution was enacted in March, 2009 by the AFL-CIO Executive Board. Many state and central AFL-CIO labor organizations have passed similar resolutions.

In this instance, the anti-union Commissioner Astrue has again failed to even contact AFGE in contravention of the desires of OPM regarding the Employee Satisfaction initiative. I request your intervention in this matter to insure that SSA follows the OPM guidance to all Agencies. To have effective input would require OPM to grant SSA an extension regarding time of compliance so they can communicate properly with AFGE.

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