

April 24, 2003

MEMORANDUM TO: Vickers B. Meadows, Assistant Secretary for Administration

FROM: Eddie Eitches, President, Local 476, AFGE

SUBJECT: 6:00 a.m. Start Time

Many AFGE members have expressed interest in a 6:00 a.m. starting time. Work schedules are just another example of how HUD employees are treated worse than contractors. While HUD employees are not permitted to begin their workday before 7:00 a.m., **employees of contractors working for HUD can begin at 6:00 a.m.** and are performing work here at HUD unsupervised by HUD employees.

Employees at other Federal agencies – ones which also serve the public - are allowed to start their workday at 6:00 a.m. Local 476 has contacted other agencies represented by AFGE and learned the following:

- **Since 1980, the Department of Labor has permitted employees to start as early as 6:00 a.m. and work as late as 8:00 p.m.**
- Employees at the Office of Personnel Management have a 6:00 a.m. start time which is utilized by employees on alternative work schedules, such as 5/4/9 or 10/4
- At the Federal Aviation Administration, employees may begin their “official” workday at 6:30, but management has agreed to allow employees arriving earlier to earn one-half of a credit hour between 6:00 and 6:30
- Many employees of the Department of Homeland Security (in particular, former INS employees) begin their workdays at 6:00 a.m.
- Employees of the NIH (a division of HHS) are permitted to start at 6:00.
- The Consumer Products Safety Commission allows employees on a 5/4/9 or 4/10 schedule to begin work at 6:00 a.m.
- Department of Defense employees at the Military Traffic Management Command have a 6:30 start time in their contract.

We found only one agency that restricted start time to 6 a.m.

More importantly, **OTHER HUD EMPLOYEES** are allowed to begin work at 6:00 a.m. An MOU executed between HUD and NFFE 1450 (representing the San Francisco office and the bulk of the Los Angeles office) guaranteed HUD NFFE members a six a.m. start to earn credit hours. Significantly, management tried to change this arrangement in bargaining from 1995 to 1999, and the issue went to the Federal Service Impasse Panel. Management argued there was a

need to change NFFE to a 7:00 a.m. start to create uniformity with AFGE employees. Then Federal Service Impasse Panel rejected this argument, **finding that management had failed to show either loss of efficiency with the different starting times, or any practical value to uniformity.**

A number of HUD employees are already here at 6:00 a.m., due to the extraordinary difficulties surrounding the commute into Washington, D.C. Many employees are in car pools that arrive at 5:45, so that HOV lanes can be utilized. Other employees ride buses that run only every few hours, necessitating early arrivals. Employees also come in early just to avoid the stress that travel during peak Metro D.C. commuting hours involves.

Employees tell us that much of their work – like the work of the contractors who arrive at 6:00 a.m. - does NOT involve direct service to the public. Research, analysis and routine paperwork can best be accomplished early in the morning when the office is quiet and there are fewer telephone calls and other interruptions. In fact, HUD employees are already doing work before 7:00 – without earning credit hours!

Management's argument that employees should only be allowed to work during traditional business hours is outdated and inconsistent with current practices at HUD. Employees on flexible schedules are currently permitted to work until 7:30 p.m., so long as they are present during the core hours of 9:30 to 3:00.

For many working mothers, a 6:00 a.m. start time would allow them to take care of their children after school, without the need for expensive after-school care or babysitting. Other employees would like to complete their workday earlier in order to attend classes to complete their education, so that they can become more valuable employees. Still other employees have family, church, community or other personal obligations that need to be met.

In these tight budgetary times, management should be looking for new ways to improve morale and make HUD a better place to work. This is a quality of life issue that costs management nothing. Many other Federal agencies have used the 6:00 a.m. start time as an incentive to boost morale.

The bottom line is – management trusts contractors more than Federal employees. The clear message employees are getting is that they are worth less than contractor employees, who are paid better and treated with more respect than HUD employees. This must change.

We are proposing that a six-month pilot be instituted at Headquarters and in the D.C. Field Office. These are the employees who are most in need of

relief from the commuting nightmare of Washington D.C. Management cannot have any good-faith basis to reject this proposal.