



# American Federation of Government Employees

## Local 476

*Affiliated with AFL-CIO*

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### **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, March 16, 2017

Brooke Mondale Auditorium

The following members of the Executive Board were present: Ashaki Robinson Johns (President), Monique Love (Treasurer), Kirk Mensah (Secretary), and Eddie Eitches (1<sup>st</sup> Vice President). The position of 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President is vacant.

Ashaki called the meeting to order at 12:10pm. A quorum of 25+ members was reached for today's business. Ashaki welcomed new members and then asked members to think about any issues they would like to talk about regarding changes going on in the Federal Government. Ashaki asked if there were any questions about the meeting minutes from the January meeting. No questions were asked so Ashaki asked for a motion to accept the meeting minutes from the January 19, 2017 meeting. A motion was properly moved and seconded to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was passed without objection.

**Treasurer's Report** – Monique presented and opened discussion for the Treasurer's Report, dated January 1 - March 10, 2017. A request was made for a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. A motion was properly moved and seconded to accept the Treasurer's report as presented. The motion was passed without objection and the Treasurer's report was accepted.

**Steward's Report** – Ashaki stated that the stewards have been busy filing grievances and responding to removal proposals. Ashaki informed members that some of the disciplinary proposals can be avoided. Government travel card misuse/abuse is one of them. Ashaki stated that prior to the involvement of BFS, if credit cards were paid timely, management was not aware of any misuse. However, since BFS, if the travel card is not used in conjunction with official travel, management is notified almost immediately and employees are being disciplined. Ashaki reminded members to notify the Union immediately if they encounter problems with BFS processing reimbursements or any other type of issues related to BFS. In addition, telework is another issue that members are routinely bringing to the Union. Kirk stated that to avoid any issues with telework, it is best to telework per your agreed upon telework agreement and not use that opportunity to run errands outside of your lunch hour without taking leave.

### **DEPARTMENTAL/MEMBERSHIP UPDATES**

**CPD REORGANIZATION** – (Moving the Technical Assistance Division from the Office of Administration within CPD to the Office of Community Renewal). Ashaki stated that negotiations that were scheduled for January 2017, was postponed as management wanted to wait for the Secretary Carson and his team to come onboard prior to negotiating. Ashaki stated she believes all proposed reorganizations are currently on pause due to the Reorganization Plan Executive Order issued by President Trump.

**RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES and UNION FAIR** – Recruitment incentives of \$100 per new member and \$100 for the recruiter are being given. The promotion has been extended through June 2017. From December 2016 through February 2017, Local 476 has recruited over 70 new members, including managers. Members are encouraged to bring as many new members as possible.

**HOUSING OPERATIONS REORGANIZATION** – Ashaki informed the members that she believes all proposed reorganizations are currently on pause due to the Reorganization Plan Executive Order issued by President Trump.

## **COMMITTEE REPORT(S)**

**Legislative Committee** – Thaddeus Wincek (Chair)

Thaddeus informed the members of its purpose and meeting schedule. The LPC meets every other Thursday during lunch (around noon). The LPC's goal is to discuss legislations that are proposed in Congress and how members can take some coordinated action to address the legislation including mobilizing and contacting our designated Congress person. He advised interested members to contact him or Ashaki. Thaddeus advised members to sign up for text alerts to their personal phones for real-time action alerts/notifications. He also advised members to visit [AFGE.ORG/WIN](http://AFGE.ORG/WIN) for action members can take immediately to get involved. Thaddeus briefly discussed important legislative items including the 2018 Budget (40.7 Billion) and the proposed 13.2% reduction over the previous fiscal year. It Eliminates CDBG funding, reductions in HOME/CHOICE/SHOP programs, and a \$35 million-dollar elimination in Section 4 housing. Thaddeus also went over some bills that are being discussed on the Hill currently and four specific bills that are in committee that will directly impact Unions. The four bills are as follows:

### **H.R. 1259 – Veterans Affairs Targeted Bill**

Highlights include:

Prohibits the use of the grievance and arbitration procedure in our contracts for demotion, suspension and termination;

Makes it easy for the VA to fire, demote, suspend, or discipline employees for alleged misconduct or poor performance;

Drastically shorten time periods for going to the MSPB to appeal demotions, suspensions, or firing (from 30 days to 7 days);

Prohibit the MSPB ALJ from reducing the penalty that the VA wants, even if they judge it to be too harsh (e.g. they cannot reduce a termination to a suspension); and

Allows the VA to take back retirement benefits and bonuses of any VA employee convicted of a felony that the agency claims are related to the job (this is never allowed in the private sector).

#### **H.R. 1364 – Targeted at all Federal Agencies (OFFICIAL TIME BILL)**

Highlights include:

Attempts to rob federal employees of union representation by taking away retirement benefits from shop stewards and others who use official time;

Caps official time on a per person, per day, and per lifetime basis. Anyone who exceeds the caps lose retirement credits;

Prohibits lobbying lawmakers, meaning that no employee in an official capacity could testify before Congress and limits the ability to tell lawmakers about agency waste, fraud, and abuse;

Makes it impossible for the union to carry out its legal obligation to represent everybody in the bargaining unit—members and non-members alike. It removes the most effective checks on agency mismanagement; and

Makes it unreasonable for federal employees to volunteer to represent their co-workers if it means losing retirement benefits.

#### **H.R. 1461 - Veterans Affairs Targeted Bill**

Highlights include:

Attempts to deprive deferral employees of union representation by severely restricting official time by imposing limits on who can service as a union shop steward or officer, how much time they are permitted to spend on these official duties, and what they are permitted to do;

Depriving the union of resources and stability by inviting employees to drop union membership at any time;

Capping the use of official time at 50%, a 25% cap for those involved in patient care and/or GS-13 and above, and ZERO official time for doctors, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, and chiropractors – regardless of what the agency agrees to in the contract;

Prohibits lobbying lawmakers, meaning that no employee in an official capacity could testify before Congress and limits the ability to tell lawmakers about agency waste, fraud, and abuse;

Extends the “at-will” probationary period when employees can be fired for any reason or no reason from 12 to 18 months.

#### **H.R. Senate Bill 160 – HUD Inspection Process and Enforcement Reform Act**

Highlights include:

Allows HUD to remove certain HUD employees from civil service or to reduce their grade or pay for misconduct or performance.

HUD employees may challenge a removal or reduction in grade or pay by filing an appeal with the Merit Systems Protection Board.

This bill amends the United States Housing Act of 1937 to require an entity receiving section 8 housing assistance payments under a payment contract to: (1) maintain decent, safe, and sanitary conditions for dwelling units covered under such payment contract; and (2) comply with any standards under applicable state or local laws, rules, ordinances, or regulations relating to the physical condition of the dwelling units. HUD must, under certain conditions, take enforcement actions for violations of dwelling-unit physical condition standards.

Ashaki urged members to get involved either by sending emails, getting involved with the political action committee, calling their representative, etc. because Congress is coming after Unions, through official time and expeditious firings, and without Unions many employee safeguards will be taken away. She continued that if we do not stand up, speak up now, and hold our Congress accountable now, the opportunity may not be there later. A member asked about RIFs and the best way to prepare for it if it happens. Ashaki stated that if RIFs occur, the Union will advise per the CBA and AFGE National guidance. She also stated that HUD Locals will be trained on how to best advise members on how to prepare and Locals will send out pertinent information as they are known. In addition, Ashaki advised that members may log onto AFGE.ORG for more information.

**The March 16, 2017 meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kirk Mensah  
Secretary  
AFGE Local 476