

**AFGE DISTRICT 11 SUPPORTS UNION MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AS UNION  
REACHS QUARTER OF A MILLION MARK  
THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES: 250,000  
MEMBERS AND GROWING!**

AFGE National Vice President Gerald Swanke today congratulated members and activists in [AFGE's](#) 11th District for their role in helping the American Federation of Government Employees to exceed the quarter of million mark in dues paying members nationally. The 11<sup>th</sup> District represents Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Guam, Utah, and Wyoming. AFGE represents some 600,000 federal workers nationwide.

NVP Gerald Swanke called "inspiring" the work that has been done to reach this landmark. ["My locals belong to councils that are not a bargaining council it is the local officer donating their time and energy building relationships and expertise within our new members wanting them to make a change for the hard working men and women in the federal government,"](#) said Swanke.

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the nation's largest federal and D.C. employee union representing more than 600,000 government workers, and now declares a membership of a quarter of a million dues paying members. AFGE represents federal employees in 75 agencies including the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Social Security Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Homeland Security--including the Transportation Security Administration. AFGE also represents workers in 16 D.C. government agencies.

"AFGE is the leading and most influential federal and D.C. employees union in the United States. We're growing stronger every day. In the last four years alone, we've added a net increase of some 50,000 new members. This year we have achieved a long-pursued goal of 250,000 active members," said John Gage, AFGE national president.

"Many people thought that we would have to close our doors or merge with another public sector union to survive. In fact, the AFL-CIO and several of its affiliates put together 5 million in loans to help us stay afloat," said AFGE National Secretary-Treasurer J. David Cox. "Determined to weather the storm, the leadership of AFGE decided to develop a long-term strategic plan aimed at restoring the union to financial health and reviving its tarnished reputation as the premiere federal sector union in the U.S."

According to AFGE Membership and Organization Director Sharon Pinnock, AFGE's growth is the result of a shift that occurred in the early 1990s in way the union thought about organizing and recruitment. "At that time, our union was struggling to survive. With just 169,000 active members, we had no real organizing program and our finances were not in a good place," she said. "Throughout the past two decades, AFGE has engaged in several vision and strategic planning initiatives that have involved leaders,

members and staff at every level of the union. Shifting the culture of our organization from 'business model unionism' to 'activist unionism' was not a small feat. It took years of constant gardening and only now is AFGE beginning to reap the fruits of that labor."

Organizing workers remains an ongoing priority of the union's Locals and Councils. "Organizing is now as much a part of how we practice our unionism as is bargaining a contract or filing a grievance. AFGE is a success story if ever there was one—and we are as proud as we can be about what we have accomplished," said National Vice President/Women and Fair Practices Director Augusta Thomas.

"I joined AFGE to be the leader I was born to be," said AFGE Local 2425 President Sharon Williams, who has been a member for more than 20 years. "We are family at AFGE Local 2425 at VA New Jersey Healthcare System. Someone was there for me and what makes my day is to know that I have paved it forward helping others. I am and will always be AFGE! Nobody Does It Better," Williams said.