



Local # 171 ALERT

A.F.G.E Local 171 of Council of Prison Locals #33

FTC Oklahoma City & FCI El Reno, Oklahoma

Editors: B. Coker & J. Lepird

Master Agreement Update by J. Lepird

Newsletter
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The Master Agreement has been amended and the Agency and the Union have agreed to an unprecedented five-year term. Only two Councils were able to keep their Master Agreements intact, with only positive changes in this cycle of negotiations government wide. Specifically, us, the Council of Prison Locals, and the Border Patrol Council were able to keep our Master Agreements complete and add provisions to help our membership. All of the other Agencies lost massive amounts of their agreements, and will be fighting to get those rights back to their memberships.

One of the main losses for many of the Councils is the right to progressive discipline. It's a right we take for granted, and keeps the Agency from firing folks for small mistakes, such as being late to work or simply angering their manager who can make up charges to get rid of the individual in question. Progressive discipline is not protected by Law or Statue, but is protected by our contract in Article 30 section c, "The parties endorse the concept of progressive discipline designed primarily to correct and improve employee behavior, except that the parties recognize there are offenses so egregious as to warrant severe sanctions for the first offense up to and including removal." This provision ensures that people are treated fairly and equitably, and mistakes are not career ending. We all make mistakes, but without this provision a management official could use a small mistake to remove someone from their position. This is a regular occurrence in other Agencies that do not have a similar contract provision.

There were a few changes, specifically having to do with shift rotation and clothing allowance. Shift rotation was eliminated, so officers could remain on their preferred shift while bidding, which has not really affected us at the FCI and FTC, as it was almost unenforceable. If the Agency couldn't do it fairly, we didn't let them do it at all for a very long time. Clothing allowance went up to \$700 a year, effective after October 1st, 2021. There were some other minor changes, and when a New Master Agreement is issued specific language will be available. The Master Agreement was signed at the end of July, and remains in effect. We do not have a date when the updated agreement will be in print, as the Bureau is responsible for printing the new document. However, all provisions are in place, and for the most part nothing major has changed other than a few minor updates.

The Local would like to thank the National E-Board for their work, and we are very pleased that our Master Agreement remained intact while so many others were butchered. We will continue to hold the Agency accountable and ensure that the Bargaining Body is treated fairly and justly under our Master Agreement and Local Agreements. The Local E-Board would like to say thank you, and we will continue to represent and work for AFGE Local 171, your Union, with integrity and to the best of our abilities.

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Next Union Meeting:

Tuesday
September 14th 2021
5PM at the
FTC
Training Center

Meetings are held every other
month.

Interrogatory Questions by G. Brueggen

Interrogatories are written questions that are required to be answered to clarify issues. Staff may receive interrogatories in relation to their background investigation or EEO cases where they are a witness.

The Union and Agency both recognize that all staff have some embarrassing incidents in our past. How we deal with them says something about our integrity and character. If you have failed to disclose some of the

issues in your background investigation process, management urges you to do so now. There are many reasons why these omissions occur and many of them are justified. Sometimes people simply forgot about a previous incident or do not understand the question that is being asked.

The Union has a great deal of experience in responding to these questions. Responding truthfully and in the correct format is crucial

to getting your background cleared. Interrogatories have timelines that you must stay within when responding. The Union is here to help you through the process. Contact the Union immediately when you receive your questions.

If you would like assistance, contact G. Brueggen (in ERE) or S. O'Brien (in OKL) (phone number available through control) or any Union Steward.

National Elections by J. Lepird

During the Council of Prisons Locals National Convention in August, Council Officers were up for election. I am here to report to you, the membership, the results of those elections.

- Shane Fausey, Council President
- William Boseman, Vice President WFP
- Brandy Moore, Secretary-Treasurer
- Darrell Palmer, Northeast Regional Vice President
- Richard Heldreth, Mid-Atlantic Regional Vice President
- L.O. Davis, Southeast Regional Vice President
- Brian Richmond, Southcentral Regional Vice President

- John Kostelnik, Western Regional Vice President
 - Brian Mueller, Northcentral Regional Vice President
- Regionally, we retained Mr. Brian Richmond as the South-Central Regional Vice President.

The following were elected into regional positions. They will be overseeing operations in their respective areas.

Stephanie Griggs, Fair Practice Coordinator, SCR.

Joshua Lepird, Legislative Coordinator, SCR.

Sometimes we do not realize how much these elections can affect us on a Local level. Leadership is important, and these leaders will be working on National Policies, negotiations, and any

changes in working conditions for us that may come from Central Office. These folks represent us on a national level, and they have an important role in steering the Bureau as a whole, as well as communicating with Congress and the Administration to ensure that we are receiving what we need. It's a hard job, and I would like to thank each and every one of them for committing to this responsibility. These are your representatives, and we will continue to hold them accountable to you, the membership, for advancing your interests nationally.

Evals - Providing Input to Your Rater by K. Menz

Some staff simply show up to work with their boots on the correct feet and get all O's every evaluation. For most staff this is not the case. If you are not providing your rater input for your evaluation you are making a mistake. Simply relying on the integrity of the rater, reviewer, and CEO of the institution to do the right thing and recognize your merit and work ethic will only lead to heart ache and disappointment.

Every year when you sign for your rating elements and evaluation standards you should be getting a copy of the standard set used in your rating, if not they are available on sallyport. These standards are what qualify you for an outstanding rating in each element, you should take the time become familiar with the outstanding qualifications. Once you are familiar with the outstanding standards you will see how you can satisfy at least one

section of each element any given quarter. As you satisfy an outstanding requirement, keep a record of it to turn in to your rater when input is asked for. If you give specific examples of your outstanding performance, your rater should include it in the narrative of your performance log or give you specific reasons why it could not be used. The performance log is then used to document and substantiate the final ratings.

From this point you should leave the rater no option but to rate your performance at the outstanding level for the quarter. The overall evaluation to determine the final rating by your rater, reviewer, and CEO will already be locked in due to the majority of the performance log entries at the outstanding level. The Union is here and happy to help if you are not getting the evaluation you feel like you deserve. However, taking the time

to send your rater things that qualify you for an outstanding rating will provide the evidence and background to make your case very strong in moving forward with a grievance if the Agency is unwilling to correct the issue. Without evidence and your participation in the process this becomes very difficult.



The Next Step in Workers Comp by B. Coker

When a staff member is hurt at work, they have a right to fill out a CA-1 or a CA-2. Even if you don't need to see a Doctor for medical treatment immediately. Filling out the CA-1 protects you in the case that you later need medical treatment for a work-related injury. If you need immediate treatment then by all means request a CA-16 and go to the emergency room. After receiving treatment, you then have a choice to make. The staff member not the Agency, determines who they want to use as their Primary Care Physician.

While you get to pick your Doctor, not all Doctors are willing to take on a Federal Workers Compensation Case. This is normally due to all the forms and reports that are required as part of the process. Using a Doctor that is not familiar and well versed in the process can result in your case being denied. When your case is denied, you could be required to pay back all the Continuation of Pay (COP) time that you used. Also, you could be on the hook for Doctors bills.

The Union has several Doctors that we recommend to ensure that all the required forms and reports are submitted to get your case approved. Workers Comp is already complicated enough without having a Doctor that doesn't understand the process.

Contact the Union for assistance with filing a CA-1 or a CA-2 so we can help you thru the process and recommend a Doctor to address your injury.

Paid Parental Leave – Frequently Asked Questions

After many years of organizing, lobbying, and mobilizing our members, AFGE finally won 12 weeks of paid parental leave for federal employees. The Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act (FEPPLA) was passed in 2019 and begins to provide benefits as of Oct. 1, 2020. Here are some frequently asked questions about paid parental leave for federal employees:

1. Who is eligible for 12 weeks of paid parental leave?

Answer: Permanent employees and term employees whose term is at least one year are eligible. Employees must be scheduled to work at least 1,250 hours per calendar year and have had their current federal job for at least one year in order to be eligible. If you are eligible for 12 weeks of unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act, you're eligible for 12 weeks of paid leave under the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act.

2. Is this benefit retroactive for those whose child was born or adopted prior to Oct. 1, 2020?

Answer: No. Even if your baby was born on Sept. 30, 2020 at 11:59 p.m., you're not eligible. The baby has to be born or adopted on or after Oct. 1, 2020.

3. When can paid parental leave be taken? Is it only for the birth or adoption of infants?

Answer: Paid leave is only available to federal employees within the first year after the child's birth or adoption. If the leave is taken months after the child is born, the leave must be taken in order to provide care for the child, i.e. there is no paid parental leave if the child is already in daycare.

4. Is paid parental leave available upon adoption of a child, regardless of the age of the adopted child?

Answer: Yes. Paid parental leave may be taken upon the adoption of a child of any age as long as it is within one year of when the adoption takes place.

5. Is paid parental leave for federal employees available to employees of any gender?

Answer: Yes. All parents, regardless of gender, who otherwise meet eligibility criteria are permitted to receive paid parental leave.

6. What kind of documentation is required in order to get approval for paid parental leave?

Answer: Birth certificate, official documents that show the federal employee is the legal parent of the child (adoption placement documents), immigration visas from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, or other legal documents showing that the federal employee is either the birth mother or legal parent of the child.

7. Does the program impose a return-to-work requirement for those who receive paid parental leave?

Answer: Yes. Federal employees must sign a document that guarantees that they will return to work at their federal job for at least 12 weeks following the receipt of paid parental leave. The 12-week post-leave obligation is the same no matter whether the employee uses all 12 weeks of paid parental leave or some smaller amount of leave.

If you do not fulfill this return-to-work requirement, you must repay the agency the entire amount of the salary paid during the leave. Agencies can decide whether to require repayment of the government's contribution to your health insurance under the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) from the paid leave period if you fail to return for

the post-leave 12 weeks.

8. Are employees able to treat the birth or adoption of multiples as discrete births or adoptions and thus take 12 weeks of paid leave for each twin (or triplet, etc.)?

Answer: No. Each birth or adoption "event" is treated as one birth or adoption for purposes of the paid leave benefit. However, if a person gives birth more than once in a 12-month period or adopts children more than one time in a 12-month period, the employee can receive a full 12 weeks of paid parental leave for each birth or adoption, provided that no unpaid FMLA leave has been taken in the previous 12 months. If FMLA leave has been taken in the 12 months prior to the birth or adoption, the paid leave entitlement will be reduced by the amount of unpaid FMLA leave taken in the previous 12 months.



AFGE has always been a champion of a family-friendly workplace. Whether it's flexible work schedules, job-protecting family and medical leave, or COVID-19 emergency paid sick leave, AFGE has played a role in making the federal government a better place to work.

On Oct. 1, another benefit we had worked towards for years is taking effect: paid parental leave. The law provides 12 weeks of paid leave for federal workers who are new parents – both men and women – to care for a newborn or an adopted child. Finally, new parents don't have to choose between their jobs and their families. This is the same benefit service members have received since 2016 under a separate military policy.

The United States is the only developed country with no federal law mandating any paid parental leave for new parents. In Germany, all new mothers receive 43 weeks of paid parental leave. New Swedish moms receive 35 weeks of paid leave. Norwegian mothers are entitled to 45 weeks of paid leave. The law is a watershed moment that sets the stage for achieving the ultimate goal of providing all American workers with paid family leave.

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate this," said Annie Lee, an attorney at the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights in San Francisco. "It both makes me very grateful to have this but also very angry that this is not more commonplace."

Lee, whose baby boy is due in December, plans to take a total of six months – three months of paid

parental leave and then three months of annual and sick leave combined. Her spouse is going to take six months as well. He works for a foundation that gives him five months of fully paid parental leave and an extra month partially paid leave. For Lee and her partner, that's one year that they can bond with their newborn and not worry about losing a paycheck.

Without this new benefit, Lee said it would have been hard since taking leave without pay is not an option for people who live in an expensive area like San Francisco.

Lori Hess, a Social Security Administration employee in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is grateful for this new benefit since she has already used up all her annual and sick leave for a birth of her first child.

"I just feel like they're treating us like a human by giving us this benefit to take care of our family," said Hess, whose baby girl is due in November. "It makes me feel like they care. It makes me feel that they care about my work process. If I'm stressed out and trying to take care of the new baby and go to work and have all that other stress, it makes it difficult to do a good job at work."

Indeed, studies show that providing this leave costs relatively little but results in increased employee morale and productivity, reducing employee turnover, and helping the government avoid costly and timely hiring and training processes for new employees.

"This gives the government a competitive advantage over other employers," explained Lee, who

has just won the AFGE Outstanding Community Activism Award. She discussed how she has institutional knowledge so her work should want to retain her. "Because I'm very good at what I do, you don't want to lose me. And so this is one thing you can do to retain me especially because there are so many things at work that are not very good right now."

For someone with pregnancy complications like Tanyell Jackson, paid parental leave is a godsend.

Jackson, a Department of Veterans Affairs medical supply technician in Montgomery, Ala., has been put on bed rest for four months and will continue to be until the birth of her baby boy in November. Because of that, she has used up all her leave, and without this paid parental leave benefit, it would have been very difficult for her to take care of the baby.

"Nobody can afford to take 12 weeks without pay," said Jackson. "I think this benefit is good, especially for those who don't have that kind of leave."

AFGE is working to expand paid parental leave to groups of federal workers who are currently ineligible because they are not Title 5 employees. This includes Federal Aviation Administration employees, certain Department of Veterans Affairs employees, District of Columbia Courts and Public Defender Services employees, certain employees of the Executive Office of the President and White House Office, non-screener personnel at the Transportation Security Administration, and Article I judges, including bankruptcy and magistrate judges.

Local 171 E-Board/Stewards

AFGE Local 171

307 Reformatory Road
El Reno, OK 73036

Phone El Reno: 405.422.2820

Fax El Reno: 405.422.2850

Phone OKL: 405.680.4298

Fax OKL: 405.680.4297

E-mail: Afge171Alert@yahoo.com



United We Stand Together in Solidarity

Local 171 Website:

www.afgelocal171.com

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E-Board

J. Lepird – President / SCR Legislative Coordinator

J. Lyon -- Secretary/Treasurer

B. Coker – Vice-President ERE / OWCP

S. O'Brien – Vice-President OKL / OWCP

G. Brueggen – Chief Steward ERE / CPOF

D. Jones – Chief Steward OKL / CPOF

K. Menz – Sergeant at Arms

Stewards – El Reno

R. Barger – Facilities/Unicor/OWCP

T. Wright – Correctional Services/EEO

G. Strider -- Correctional Services

T. Norton -- Correctional Services

B. Kuykendall – Trust Fund

Stewards – Oklahoma City

J. Seely -- Correctional Services

C. Dawkins – Correctional Services

J. Lopez -- Correctional Services

D. Morris – Correctional Services

J. Grigsby – Food Service

M. Michon – R & D

A. Rios – R & D

M. Rudkin -- R & D

S. Adams -- Health Services

Back Issues of this Newsletter can be found on: www.afgelocal171.com

Right to Speak with the Union on Duty Time

All Bargaining Unit Staff have the Right to meet with and speak with a Union Representative on Duty Time. This is addressed in the Master Agreement, Article 6, Section d.

"If an employee has a problem or situation which the employee desires to discuss with the Union during working hours, upon request to their supervisor in advance and workload permitting, the employee may report to the Union Official as approved. If the employee cannot be made available at that time, the supervisor will inform the

employee when he/she can be made available".

This allows you the ability to discuss possible violations of the contract and/or policy with the Union while at work on duty time. Your Supervisor doesn't get to decide who you talk to in regard to an issue, the Union designated the Representatives. This is in accordance with the Local Supplemental Agreement in El Reno, Article 6, Section a. "It shall be understood by the Employer that all Union representatives will be

designated by the Union and not by the Employer or Employee". The Local Supplemental Agreement in Oklahoma City, Article 6, section b states "It shall be understood that all Union Representatives will be designated by the Union President or his/her designee".

Make sure to contact the Union if you have an issue that could be a violation of the contract. The Union is here to address your issues with the Agency and ensure that your Rights are not violated.