



Out of Many/One Union
AFGE NVAC/AFL-CIO

REFLECTIONS

2011

National Veterans Affairs Council, #53 American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO

Dear NVAC Leaders,

What an amazing year 2011 has been! Looking back, NVAC has been extremely busy. We've held successful Training and Education sessions and participated in the Legislative and Mobilization Conference and National Partnership Council meetings. But nothing compares to the signing of the Master Agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the AFGE/NVAC on March 15, 2011!

After seven years of consistent negotiations and the dedicated work of the AFGE/NVAC, the agreement was approved and signed by Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The Department and the Union agreed that a constructive and cooperative working relationship between labor and management is essential to achieving the Department's mission and to ensuring a quality work environment for all employees. The parties recognized that this relationship must be built on a solid foundation of trust, mutual respect, and a shared responsibility for organizational success. Along with the signing of the new Master Agreement, we've had numerous trainings across the country, all to better help our Locals in understanding and enforcing our contract.

Through the hard work of our National Negotiating Team, we have secured the best contract in the

federal sector. By an aggressive Grievance and Arbitration program, we will ensure that management lives up to their responsibilities and creates a level playing field for all of our employees.

Our legislative program, with the guidance of Marilyn Park, continues to advance our interest in Congress. We continue to seek legislative support,



(R-L) Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki; Deputy Assist. Secretary Office of Labor Management Relations, Leslie Wiggins; Alma L. Lee, President AFGE/NVAC; John Gage, President AFGE and Negotiating Teams at the signing of the Master Agreement

request oversight and promote a relationship with Congressional staff on key committees. Both the House and Senate, on bipartisan basis, sought our input and many of our local activists provided key testimony on a wide range of health care and benefits issues. Both VHA and VBA issues, have received the benefit of our expertise. NVAC helped to defeat a number of bills contrary to the interest of our employees, such as elimination of continuing

medical education (CME) reimbursement for physicians and dentists, and criminal penalties on front line VHA employees for alleged failures to follow infection control protocols. We also were able, working with the AFGE Field Services Department to block new attempts by the VA to illegally out-source federal work without competition. By working with the Senate VA Committee, we were able to bring our concerns about downgrading of medical

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NVAC Highlights

January

- **Joint Training and Education Committee Meeting**
Washington, DC
- **National Partnership Council**
New Orleans, LA
- **Master Agreement Contract Negotiations**
New Orleans, LA

February

- **AFGE Legislative & Grassroots Mobilization Conference**
Washington, DC



March

- **National Partnership Council**
Charleston, SC
- **Joint Semi-Annual Labor Management Relations Meeting**
Washington, DC

April

- **Joint Training and Education Committee Meeting**
Washington, DC



May

- **4th District Caucus**
Columbia, MD
- **Train-the-Trainer**
Phoenix, AZ
- **National Partnership Council**
Milwaukee, WI
- **Med. Support Assistants Meeting**
Washington, DC

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support personnel, who then requested a meeting and extensive information from the Assistant Secretary for HR & Administration, John Sepulveda.

We have continued our close relationship with Veterans Service Organizations, meeting quarterly with them. We have provided briefings on nurse staffing methodology to veteran groups and to Committee staff, and provided a list of recent examples of harmful short staffing in VA medical facilities, and the related staffing issues in PACT implementation.

This was perhaps the biggest year in history for training. After working with management to develop joint training materials, almost 3000 labor and management leaders received joint training on the Master Agreement in 26 locations throughout the country. Facility training on the Master Agreement will continue in 2012. A national training on bargaining and subjects for local bargaining provided leaders with the tools needed for Local Supplemental Bargaining. We also developed joint training on the Executive Order and 7422, and those trainings will also continue into 2012.

In organizing, I am pleased to proclaim that NVAC's membership continues to experience growth, with over 82,000+ members!! New units throughout the organization have overwhelmingly voted to become part of the NVAC family, including Professionals at Long Beach and Hines VAMC . We have been, and continue to be, the largest Council in AFGE.

So, as you can see 2011 was a very busy year, and I am certain 2012 will be just as busy. We will continue to provide training on needed subjects. Most importantly, 2012 will be an election year, where the House, the President and one third of the Senate will be up for election. I know that if we continue to work as hard in 2012 as have done in the past; there is nothing we cannot accomplish.



On behalf of this Council, my wish for all of you in 2012 is to have a very peaceful and prosperous New Year! Continue to keep our veterans in your thoughts and for a safe return home. Your continued support makes all things possible for our veterans and members!

STRONGER TOGETHER



NVAC Executive Board



Alma L. Lee
NVAC President



MJ Burke
1st Executive VP



Oscar L. Williams Jr.
2nd Executive VP



Bill Wetmore
3rd Executive VP



Dorothy Jefferson
NVAC Treasurer

NVAC District Representatives

The map shows 15 numbered districts across the United States, each with an arrow pointing to a representative's portrait and name:

- District 1:** BJ Ocker (CT, MA, VT, MA, NH, RI)
- District 2:** Ena Thompson - Judd (NJ, NY)
- District 3:** Curtis Jackson (DE, PA)
- District 4:** Robert Fetzer (MD, NC, VA, WV)
- District 5:** Valorie Reilly (AL, FL, GA, SC, TN)
- District 6:** Bill Wetmore (DC Metropolitan)
- District 7:** Oscar L. Williams Jr. (IL, MI, WI)
- District 8:** Willie Haywood (IN, KY, OH)
- District 9:** Dixie Wyatt (AR, KS, MO, OK)
- District 10:** Anthony McCray (LA, MS, TX)
- District 11:** Mike Kepner (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA)
- District 12:** Vera Logan (CA, NV)
- District 13:** Jeff Sladek (AZ, CO, NM, UT, WY)
- District 14:** Bill Wetmore (DC Metropolitan)
- District 15:** Victor Ramirez (PR)

National Representatives

David Bump, **Barbara Casanova**, **Diane Clines**, **Charles Hamilton**, **William Jefferson**, **Ben Johnson**, **James H. Martin, MD**, **David Mollett**, **Tatishka Musgrove**, **Geneva Moore**, **Stephanie Starks**, **Adrienne Woods**

Safety Representatives

Irene Coley, **Keith Ireland**, **Doris Randleman**, **Brenda Stromski**, **Rosetta Sloan**

NVAC Highlights

June

- **Train-the-Trainer**
Pittsburg, PA
- **Train-the-Trainer**
Chicago, IL
- **Master Agreement Training VISN 6**
Charlotte, NC



July

- **Legislative Committee Meeting**
Washington, DC
- **VBA Master Agreement Training**
New Orleans, LA
- **Joint Training and Education Committee Meeting**
Denver, CO



August

- **National Partnership Council**
Seattle, WA
- **AFGE Human Rights Training Conference**
Atlanta, GA
- **VHA Senior Leadership Conference**
Chicago, IL



2011 Demands to Bargain



Oscar L. Williams, Jr.
2nd Executive Vice President
Chair, Mid-Term Bargaining Committee

The Mid-Term Bargaining Committee works throughout the year to address issues for bargaining units employees that may not have been addressed in the Master agreement. All national DTBs and MOUs are posted on the website.

VHA Clinical Simulation Business Practices for Audiovisual Recordings	January 12
VA Volume XIV Chapter 7 Local Travel	January 31
VA Acquisition Policy Division (D1AL-Pi) new Requirement for Purchasing Agents 1105	February 2
VA Chiropractic Care Study (VICCS) Research Project	February 14
Veterans Health Administration Corporate Data Files	February 17
VHA Handbook 1850.04 Employee Uniform	February 23
VA Telephone Transformation Project	March 7
OI&T Service Desk Consolidation Project	March 19
VA-funded Research Project Evidence Based Practice and Patient Centered Care	April 4
VHA Pilot on Boarding "Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process"	April 4
Standardized Assessment and Case management Tools for Social Workers PACT	April 6
VHA Handbook 5005 Staffing Conversions of Health Care Occupations to Title 38 Hybrid Status	April 6
VA Worklife and Benefits Service (058) Telework Notices	April 6
VA Fleet Management GPS Locator Tracking Vehicle Management Program	April 7
VA's Emergency Shutdown Furlough	April 7
VA Handbook 5007 Part V Chapter 6 Sunday Premium Pay for Parttime Employees	April 20
VA Handbook Hours of Duty and Leave	May 19
VA Directive 0633 and VA Handbook 0633 Transit Benefit Program Intake processing Center (IPC) in Regional Offices	June 1
VA Directive 0633 and VA Handbook 0633 Transit Benefit Program Express Lane Program Pilot	June 21
VHA Generic Changes to Activities of Emergency Department Integration Software (EDIS) National rollout	July 18
VA Handbook 0730/3 Security and Law Enforcement Implementation of the Office of Mental Health Service mandatory training requirement	August 8
VA Office of Information & Technology (OI&T) Initiative OIT Competency Model	August 10
VA ICD-10 Project Initiative	August 30
VHA Handbook 1907.xx Health Information Management of Release of Information	August 30
VA 7422 Tracking System	Sept. 9
VHA T21 Initiative	Sept. 13
VA Point of Service Interactive Kiosk nationwide rollout and mandatory training	Sept. 23
VA Handbook 5011 Hours of Duty and Leave	Sept. 23
Revised VA Handbook 0633 Transit Benefit Program	Sept. 23
CPAC Billings Performance Plan Standards	October 13

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2011 Demands to Bargain

Revised VA Handbook 0633 Transit Benefit Program	September 23
Extension of Mandatory Overtime	October 6
CPAC Billings Performance Plan Standards	October 13
VA Handbook 5011, Hours of Duty and Leave Changes on the use of sick leave usage and advance sick leave for Serious Communicable Diseases	October 13
Gown and Glove Study in VA Community Living Center	October 25
VHA Nurses Handbook Changes	November 10
VA Handbook 0735 Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12)	November 10
VA Directive and VA Handbook 0634 Transit Benefit Bicycle Program	November 22
EES Upward Mobility & Career Development Program	November 22
VA OI&T Two-Factor Authentication for Users with Administrative Rights on Servers	November 23
VA Procurement and Logistics Office (PLO) centralization of Human Resources and Fiscal Service of SAO Acquisition Employees to VHA Service Center VSC	December 8
VA Directive and VA handbook 0700 Administrative Investigations	December 12

2011 Memorandums of Understanding

Patient Centered Care Veteran-Centered Care Models within the Department	January 13
VHA Primary Care Transformation Initiative (PACT)	January 24
OI&T SOP employees Tuition Reimbursement Program	February 4
Utilization Management Program	March 28
Memorandum of Clarification – Procedures for Local Supplemental .Agreements	March 31
Office of Information and Technology Service Line Management Program within OI&T Regions	April 8
Electronic Contract Management System eCMS Implementation	August 8
Mandatory training of VHA Mental and primary Care Providers on Provision of care to Veterans who experienced Military Sexual Trauma as required by Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services act of 2010 (Public Law 111-163)	October 5

2011 VBA Demands to Bargain

Alberta Franklin
Chair, VBA Mid-Term Bargaining Committee



Mandatory Overtime VBA	March 11
RVSR PD - VSR, RVSR and DRO National Performance Standards	April 8
VBA Imposed Sanction	April 14
Expansion of Fiduciary Hub Pilot VBA	April 21
VSR Single Signature Initiative-PMC	April 28
Intake Processing Center (IPC) in Regional Offices	June 01
Claims Assistance Efforts	June 21
Express Lane Program Pilot	June 21
VRM Customer Relationship Management CRM System	September 22
VBMS (Veteran's Benefits Management System)	September 23
Extension of Mandatory Overtime	October 6
Call Center National Performance Standards	October 21
Loan Guaranty National Performance Standards	October 26
Transformation Initiatives	November 05
Telework Policy	December 27

2011 VBA Memorandums of Understanding

Revised National Performance Plan Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's(VRC) Counseling Psychologist (CP) National Performance Standards	January 20
Mandatory Overtime	June 30
Quality Review Teams	December 21

2011 Title 38 Mid-Term Bargaining

Barbara Whitson - Casanova
Chair, Title 38 Mid-Term Bargaining Committee



Demand to Bargain

Nursing Handbook which encompasses Federal Supremacy Issue
VHA Handbook 5005
Impasse/ULP filed on Staffing Methodology

Memorandums of Understanding

VA Directive 5013
Audio-Recordings- Simulation
Clinical Flow Sheet Application

NVAC Highlights

September

- Meeting with General Allison Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits
Washington, DC
- VBA Leadership Conference
St. Louis, MO
- Joint Semi-Annual Labor Management Relations Meeting
Washington, DC



October

- Joint Training and Education Committee Meeting
Asheville, NC
- LSA Training
Las Vegas, NV

November

- National Partnership Council
West Palm Beach, FL

December

- Joint Training and Education Committee Meeting
Charleston, SC
- Legislative Committee Meeting
Washington, DC
- VBA Transition Meeting
Washington, DC
- Carey Symposium and Awards Ceremony
Washington, DC



Grievance and Arbitration

Bill Wetmore
3rd Executive Vice President
Chair, Grievance and Arbitration Committee



This year we hired an additional Attorney to our staff, Joseph Mendoza. He, alongside Ami Pendergrass, will enable the Council to resolve more National Grievances, and continue to supply advise and counsel for our Locals.

We want to emphasize that our process for developing new cases remains as follows; that each employee's issue will be reviewed by:

1. the Local President to determine if it can be resolved at the local level. If the Local President doesn't see a path to resolution locally,
2. then we encourage the Local President to contact his or her District Representative for assistance. If the District Representative doesn't see a path to resolution after applying their resources, then he or she should contact the Chair of Grievance and Arbitration for committee review.
3. As always, our position is that a local should pursue a grievance to at least the stage of filing a notice of intent to invoke arbitration, as provided by Article 44, Section 1. Do NOT proceed to local prosecution of a matter after filing that notice if the matter is the subject of a national grievance, because the result of the national grievance may well resolve the local case. However, it may NOT resolve all local issues. In such circumstances, please contact the Chair, Grievance and Arbitration, to discuss the status of your local case. As always, comply with all time lines.



Joe Mendoza

Master Agreement Training Sessions

June:

VBA East..... Baltimore, MD
VISN 20..... Portland, OR
VISN 23..... Des Moines, IA
NCA..... Indianapolis, IN
VBA South..... Columbia, SC
VISN 6..... Charlotte, NC
VISN 4..... Pittsburg, PA
VISN 16..... New Orleans, LA

July

VISN 17..... Austin, TX
VBA West..... Las Vegas, NV
VISN 7..... Atlanta, GA
VBA Central..... St. Louis, MO
VISN 12..... Milwaukee, WI
VISN 2..... Syracuse, NY

July (cont.)

VISN 21..... San Francisco, CA
VISN 19..... Denver, CO

August

VISN 5..... Washington, DC
VISN 1..... Boston, MA
VISN 11..... Detroit, MI
VISN 22..... Las Vegas, NV
VISN 9..... Nashville, TN
VISN 18..... Albuquerque, NM
VISN 15..... Kansas City, MO

October

VISN 8..... San Juan, PR
VISN 3..... Atlantic City, NJ
VISN 10..... Columbus, MO

Local Highlights

AFGE/NVAC before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs

Maryann Hooker, MD; Local #342 Secretary addressed the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs on behalf of AFGE / NVAC concerning the FY 2012 Budget. AFGE's primary testimony focused on the portion of FY 2012 budget request related to "Clinical Staff and Resource Realignment". Dr. Hooker summed up her remarks by stating, "Perhaps, instead of looking for modest savings through realignment and the use of fewer physicians and RNs, the VA may want to examine the enormous growth of staff and resources at the VISNs, and the percentage of VISN staff that do not provide or support direct patient care."



(L) Maryann Hooker

LSA Training

Over 200 activists packed the conference rooms at the New York New York hotel in Las Vegas, NV the week of October 25, 2011 for the first Local Supplemental Agreements Training hosted by the NVAC.



LSA Participants

AFGE Testifies before Senate VA Committee on Performance Variations

The American Federation of Government Employees' National VA Council testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs at a hearing dedicated to the review of performance levels at Veterans Benefits Administration's Regional Offices. The testimony was delivered by **James R. Swartz Jr.**, a Decision Review Officer at the VBA Regional Office in Cleveland, OH and President of AFGE Local 2823.



Ron Hardison and Lisa Hartman



Jim Swartz

Tennessee AFL-CIO Convention Election Results

President **Ron (B.R.) Hardison** of AFGE Local 2400 was re-elected as Vice President for his third term and **Lisa Hartman**, RN, Executive Vice President of Local 2400 was elected Vice President at Tennessee AFL-CIO convention AFGE Local 2400 was also awarded the Presidential Award, as a federal local in Tennessee. Congratulations to all!

Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence Symposium Award Winners



Pictured – Mark Enderle, MD, Director, Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO), from Fayetteville, Arkansas, receiving VA's highest award for organizational performance excellence, The Secretary's Robert W. Carey Trophy Award, from VA's Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, The Honorable Raul-Perea-Henze, MD. Also pictured are VHSO senior staff and The Honorable Robert A. Petzel, MD, VA's Under Secretary for Health (far right).

Our Future

2012 looks to be a busy year once again. With spending cuts on the way we don't know what obstacles will lie in our way, but make no mistake, we will be ready to face, address and conquer anything that will affect our bargaining unit employees. *Marcus Aurelius said, "Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present."*

Training

2011 was one of the most productive years for training in NVAC history and 2012 promises to continue that upward trend. There will be a Train-the-Trainer class for Title 38 Trainers, and more MA Training will also be rolled out in 2012. We will continue to provide training on our new Master Agreement and the Executive Order. We also plan to provide training to locals as they engage in Local Supplemental Agreement bargaining.

Grievance and Arbitration

When issues are brought to us that have first been reviewed by the Local President and by the District Representative that involve multiple locals we know we will be assured of having witnesses who have agreed to testify. We will continue to look at overtime issues in various settings, among other potential National Grievances. With the addition of Joe Mendoza Esq., to compliment the hard work of Ami Pendergrass Esq., our legal team will be able pick up new cases for

those locals who are seeking help with local matters.

Political Action

Our legislative program will continue to move our agenda forward to protect our employment rights and continue to secure collective bargaining rights. In 2012, on the health care front, we will continue our campaign for Title 38 bargaining rights, support oversight of CME needs, lobby for VEOA veterans' preference appeal rights for veterans appointed under Title 38 and employment protections for VA canteen workers. On the VBA front, we will continue our valuable collaboration with VSOs and Democratic Hill staff to improve VBA training, improve skills certification testing and overhaul the current work credit system used to set VBA performance standards. We will also continue to share our concerns with VSOs and the Hill about questionable and wasteful VA spending practices, to ensure that "belt tightening" in these financially difficult times does not occur on the backs of veterans in need of health care services.

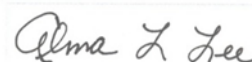
Organizing

The coming year brings new challenges to keep our membership thriving. Our priorities in the coming year will be to organize, organize, organize! We will be focused on organizing the Muskegee RO, Manhattan non-nurse professionals and Milwaukee professionals. We will also be launching another National Organizing Campaign in 2012, again, so stay tuned! Kudos to all the organizing

events staged within our locals during the past year. Now let's get started...

Looking Forward

I know that you, the Local Leaders are looking forward to this new year. You have both the tools to represent your members and the knowledge to lead them as challenges arise. John Wayne said, "Tomorrow is the most important thing in life. Comes in to us at midnight very clean. It's perfect when it arrives and it puts itself in our hands and hopes we've learned something from yesterday." Your tomorrows are coming, go out there and show them what you have learned.



Alma L. Lee
President
National VA Council, #53
AFGE, AFL-CIO

Mark Your Calendar

February 12 - 16, 2012
AFGE 2012 Legislative and Grassroots Mobilization Conference
Washington, DC



April 23 - 27, 2012
New Presidents Training
Salem, VA



August 11 - 17, 2012
AFGE 39th Triennial Convention
Las Vegas, NV

