

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SSA FIELD OPERATIONS LOCALS **AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO**

*Representing over 29,000 Social Security Employees working in over 1,300 field installations
And 36 tele-service centers across the nation, Puerto Rico and Pacific Islands*

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AFGE Council 220 Launches Issue Organizing Campaign

On December 1, 2017 AFGE Council 220 will launch a 700 office issue organizing campaign.

The reason for this initiative is to encourage SSA bargaining unit employees to get active with their union to preserve their jobs, pay and benefits, civil service rights, and union representational rights. In addition, AFGE will be asking employees to get involved in convincing Congress and the public that SSA needs to be properly funded so that the Agency can once again provide accurate and timely service to the public.

The current administration has introduced a budget that resulted in significant staffing cuts in SSA in FY 17. Funding for SSA administrative expenses has been cut by an inflation adjusted 16% since 2010. The President's proposed FY 18 budget for SSA does not even cover inflation. Both the House and Senate Appropriations committees have voted to reduce funding below the President's budget request. Passage of either budget by Congress will result in significant service deterioration.

The Senate Appropriations committee passed a \$492 million cut in SSA's administrative budget for FY 18. Passage of this Senate bill by the full Congress will result in furloughs of up to 20 days for all SSA employees, a hiring freeze, an overtime moratorium, field office closings, reduced field office hours, and an even more aggressive effort by SSA managers to force the public to do their SSA business on the internet.

The President's budget also proposes significant cuts in federal retirement benefits. Despite the President's pledge to not touch Social Security, the President's original budget proposal contained massive reductions in disability benefits. The President's budget also proposes severe cuts in Medicaid, housing, environmental spending, education, medical research, etc. The budget also proposes substantial cuts in taxes for the wealthiest citizens. Tax cuts proposed by Congress will result in enormous deficits and will likely lead to efforts to reduce even further federal employee pay and benefits, SSA benefits and Agency budgets to operate programs.

Congress has already passed legislation to severely limit appeal rights for those who work at the Veteran's Administration. This legislation negates contract language and makes it easier to fire employees for minor offences. We expect similar efforts by Congress to strip all federal employees of civil service rights.

The organizing campaign is intended to educate employees about the reality of the dangers to their jobs and livelihoods from Congress and the President. The goal is to encourage employees to take action and fight back. It no longer is enough to join the union, sit back and ask your union representatives to fight your battles. It's time that we all engage in the fight to defeat these threats to federal employees and the programs that we administer.

We will be asking employees to visit their Congresspersons and Senators and explain to them and their staffs what life is like in an underfunded and understaffed Social Security office. We will ask employees to talk to their families, friends, neighbors, church members, etc. about the attacks against SSA and federal employees and how these attacks will adversely affect them.

We will ask employees to develop alliances with the public through the endorsement of a public bill of Social Security rights. Employees will be encouraged to reach out to their community organizations and SSA advocacy groups and work together to preserve and strengthen SSA.

We cannot win this struggle by ourselves. There simply aren't enough employees in SSA to be able to effectively demand that Congress stop these crippling measures. We need to work with allies and the millions of SSA customers to win this battle.

Now is the time to demand that our political leaders maintain vital social programs, properly fund those programs and treat federal employees and their representatives with respect.

Please attend our lunch meetings when we visit your office and find out what you can do to defeat these efforts to harm you and your families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Witold Skwierczynski', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Witold Skwierczynski, President