

QUESTIONS FOR MARY GLEN-CROFT

- 1) Are you willing to begin scheduling regular meetings with AFGE Council 220 representatives to discuss issues of concern for TSC and field employees? Will you instruct Regional Commissioners to resume periodic meetings with AFGE representatives?
- 2) The Agency, in recent years, has concentrated on bringing new employees to positions that have traditionally been filled through promotions (e.g., claims representatives). Few merit promotional opportunities exist for bargaining unit members. When jobs are posted (e.g., disability processing units) it appears that those selected have very few years of SSA service. Veteran field employees are discouraged regarding the lack of promotional opportunities in the field. What do you plan to do to alleviate this problem?
- 3) In 2001, Commissioner Apfel agreed to establish the TE position in the field. His idea was to open the door for CR upgrades. He felt that this was the first step to upgrading the CR position. No action has been taken by SSA to effectuate such an upgrade. Consequently the field has a lower graded bargaining unit work force than most of the other parts of SSA. What do you plan to do to upgrade field bargaining unit jobs?
- 4) Most TSR's are in dead end jobs. Limited promotional opportunities exist for TSR's throughout the country but especially in mega TSC cities. Immediate claims taking units could be a possible promotional vehicle but these units exist only in some TSC's. Will you endorse expansion of ICTU units to all TSC's? If so, how many new CR jobs are you willing to establish in TSC's? What other actions do you intend to take to provide upward mobility and promotional opportunities for TSR's?
- 5) In 2007 SSA closed 17 field offices – the most closures in the history of the Agency. Since 2007, office closings have stopped. What plan does SSA have in the future to close offices?
- 6) SSA has increased staff in some TSC's and reduced staff in others. The Agency plans to open a new TSC in Tennessee while vacancies in other TSC's are not being filled. Please explain these actions. Does SSA plan to close more TSC's (i.e., Portland, New Orleans and Minneapolis were closed in recent years).

- 7) The Union feels that Enumeration Centers are a bad idea for employees and the public. Some employees have been forcibly reassigned to such centers. They do a narrow range of the SR job and, in our opinion, are not performing grade controlling duties. In time they lose their expertise as SR's and, consequently, reduce their promotion opportunities. The public is inconvenienced by having to travel long distances for service and, in many cases, required to utilize multiple SSA offices to complete their SSA business. In addition, it appears that Enumeration Centers are strategically placed in areas with high Hispanic populations, which appears to be discriminatory. Why is SSA so enamored with this terrible concept and what are the Agency plans for expansion? If the Agency is planning for more card centers, what are the plans for staffing these centers?
- 8) The Union recently conducted a survey of employees who review Internet claims. An overwhelming percentage of respondents indicated that claimants were selecting disadvantageous months of election, potential auxiliary beneficiaries were not even identified and benefit amounts were incorrectly calculated due to failure to document lag and missing wages. In addition, employees report that they fear identity theft problems in view of inadequate procedures for verifying claimants. Financial literacy, the justification for the MOU gag order, is non-existent in a large percentage of the population who look to SSA employees for advice. What action will the Agency take to correct these problems?
- 9) The Commissioner has recently initiated Medicare Only claims over the Internet. Employees have informed the Union that virtually everyone who contacts the Agency to file for Medicare only by teleclaim or face-to-face ends up filing for benefits after a short explanation of their potential entitlements. Employees have expressed serious concern that allowing the public to file Medicare Only claims on the Internet will result in lost benefits and lost leads for auxiliary claimants. They have expressed concern over the limited information solicited in the application which would prevent Internet claims reviewers from re-contacting claimants regarding potential benefit entitlement and auxiliary entitlement. What action will you take to correct these problems?
- 10) Invitations have been extended to the Commissioner to attend prior caucuses by Council 220 but have been declined. This time he sent you as his substitute. Why does the Commissioner refuse to meet with AFGE Council 220 when he meets with much smaller employee groups such as NADE, the Management Associations and Advisory groups?
- 11) SSA is using its employees to sell iClaims despite the problems that employees witness regarding month of election, incorrect benefit rates and lost leads for auxiliary claims. SSA has always permitted the customer to decide how to access

SSA services. Now employees are used to coerce the public to file claims on the Internet. We should permit the customer to choose whether to communicate with SSA by phone, in person or via the Internet. Now we coerce them to select the Internet. Employees are uncomfortable advising the public to file Internet claims because they know that it is advantageous for a claimant to communicate directly with a trained SSA employee who will insure no loss of benefits or entitlement. Why the change in focus?

- 12) Why has the Agency chosen to use the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) for hiring as opposed to other methodologies of hiring such as competitive methods?
- 13) Allsup claims that 98% of his clients are approved. That means that Allsup Inc. is cherry-picking, turning away thousands of eligible individuals who come to them first rather than to SSA, as a result of their aggressive advertising. No protective filing dates are established for them and Commissioner Astrue and his designees have informed us that the Agency will not require Allsup or other third parties (other than state welfare agencies using the existing IAR process) to establish such protective filing dates. Do you agree with the Commissioner's decision? If so, why?
- 14) In January 1997 report to the AFGE/SSA National Partnership Council, the report of the Third Party Assistance Team contained the SSA OGC's determination that all applicants must receive an oral explanation from an SSA employee of their rights and responsibilities. This was based on the General Counsel's interpretation of the Social Security Act. Policies and procedures for Internet and third party claim processing do not provide for this required explanation. Why is SSA violating the law in this regard? Why did SSA fail to answer this question when it was posed by AFGE during two iClaims conference calls in late 2008, after SSA agreed to provide a response each time?
- 15) AFGE and SSA negotiated an agreement in 1997 that established Management Information Integrity Monitoring Team at headquarters to receive and address reports of manipulation of work processes and work measures. Commissioner Astrue unilaterally disbanded the MIIM Team, leaving employees no negotiated procedure for reporting statistical manipulation. Cheating is now on the upswing throughout SSA, with old inappropriate practices dusted-off (e.g., mass T2 and T16 technical denials, benefit verifications or replacement Medicare cards for every FO visitor) and new ones instituted (e.g. staging interviews for VIP). As DCO, will you work with AFGE now to stop the corruption and how do you propose that we should work on this together?
- 16) What is being done to monitor cheating to meet goals, objectives, etc?

Ex: Having SSA employees log onto the Internet, have the claimant application put on the Internet as if the claimant is filing but in reality the employee is doing the filing on behalf of the claimant. This bumps up the number of Internet applications but they are actually bogus claims.

Ex: Having employees ask if the person has Internet access or knows someone who has it. Then being told to go home to file online if they do have such access. The claimant may have everything they need to file but we refuse to allow them to do so while in the office. This makes the office look as though they are taking a lot of Internet claims but the public may not like that choice. They are being told they have to file at home on the Internet. No choice is given for how the claimant wants to file.

- 17) Do you condone the waste of taxpayer time and money by forcing employees to take unnecessary claims or to produce unnecessary work just to inflate an office's work credits (e. g., taking unnecessary SSI or SSA disability claims when applicants are clearly ineligible and display no interest in filing.)?
- 18) The Denver Region now has 28 EEO cases pending involving older and disabled workers. A major class action discrimination case has been filed by disabled employees who accuse SSA of discrimination in their promotion policies. Employees complain that a disproportionate number of promotions are awarded to employees who are under 40 years old and have been selected over highly qualified applicants who are over 40 years old. What is the Agency doing to stop this discrimination against these two protected classes and why is the problem getting worse, not better?
- 19) What are the Agency's plans for continuing the SDW cadre?
- 20) Management in many field offices frequently suspends flex time for training, staff meetings, IVT training and for other reasons. Information from training and meetings can be conveyed to employees by alternative means obviating the need to suspend flex time. Can't the Agency use such alternative techniques rather than continually reducing an employee benefit?
- 21) Many employees have the impression that managers discourage employees from Union involvement and intimate that any attempt to seek Union assistance will have an adverse affect on their careers. Will you take action to eliminate this anti-union orientation?
22. Enlightened management in both government and private industry have an open door policy with both workers and labor and encourage employees and union

officials to communicate their concerns and ideas. Many management officials have closed their doors to AFGE union officials and directed them to labor relations. This management communication strategy appears to be part of an overall strategy to attempt to marginalize the union. This strategy creates conflict and mistrust. Are you willing to open the door to the union and resume communications with AFGE? Will you instruct management at all levels to also open the door?

23. SSA's recent proposal for implementing President Obama's Executive Order regarding Forums did not contain any provisions for union regional and local pre-decisional involvement and collaboration on management proposed decisions. Why is SSA reluctant to engage in such pre-decisional involvement despite President Obama's express direction to do so? Will you personally participate in union-management forums?