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To: Disman, Beatrice <Beatrice.disman@ssa.gov>

Bea [Disman]:

I found the regional memo that you issued regarding SSA's "Going Green" initiative particularly disingenuous. It's a scientific fact that excessive automobile carbon emissions result in depletion of the ozone layer, greenhouse gases and unhealthy air which results in thousands of people dying and contracting diseases due to air pollution. Increased use of mass transit will result in less carbon emissions, less pollution, less ozone layer depletion and a diminished greenhouse effect. Less people will die prematurely and less people will contract debilitating diseases caused by breathing unhealthy air.

The economic stimulus package that recently passed Congress provided SSA with an additional \$1 billion in administrative expenses. The FY 09 budget resulted in an \$834 million increase in SSA's administrative expenses over FY 08. The stimulus package also contained an increase to \$230/month for transit subsidies for federal employees. Other agencies increased their transit subsidies for their employees as a result of the stimulus legislation. SSA's current transit subsidy is \$105/mo. in the Washington DC area and \$60/mo. everywhere else.

The Union asked Commissioner Astrue to increase the transit subsidy to the amount provided in the stimulus package. Despite the large amount of additional revenue that SSA is receiving in the stimulus package, the Commissioner refused to increase the transit subsidy. AFGE requested bargaining with SSA regarding the new legislation which increased the amount that agencies could pay to employees for transit subsidies. SSA issued a letter to the Union refusing its bargaining request.

So much for SSA's "Going Green" initiative. When the rubber hits the road on a real program which will help to lower carbon emissions and save lives, SSA says NO. When Congress passes legislation providing for additional benefits for federal employees, SSA says NO. Other Agencies headed by Obama appointees say YES.

So you can tout your horn regarding SSA's "Going Green" accomplishments if you wish. Unfortunately the notes of your horn are flat and are not in sync with the instrumentation of other agencies of the government. SSA's transit subsidy program was already deficient before the March 1, 2009 effective date of the stimulus transit subsidy increase. Now SSA will lag even further behind in both its commitment to environmental improvement and its commitment to adequate employee benefits.

Not only does SSA refuse to follow the stimulus legislation and increase transit subsidy benefits for its employees but it also has a history of lackadaisical interest in correcting one of the biggest environmental complaints of employees, namely, poor air circulation in offices. The Union

receives numerous complaints from employees regarding sick building syndrome or offices with inadequate air circulation (e.g., Schenectady, NY where the entire staff is suffering from throat and breathing problems and have complained about it for years to no avail). Rather than work with the Union in alleviating these problems, you and your colleagues demanded termination of effective union monitoring of SSA's numerous health and safety problems through joint Union-Management health and safety inspections. Certainly without effective oversight SSA can try to hide its environmental problems under the carpet and has done so. Health and safety inspections done exclusively by management since 8/05 don't even address issues such as sick building syndrome. Management often does such "inspections" in a few minutes and submits reports that purport that their offices are healthy and safe. (Have you received any health and safety inspection reports regarding the Schenectady air problem?) Don't you think that it's a conflict of interest to allow managers to unilaterally conduct health and safety inspections and submit reports on such inspections when they are evaluated on their performance in maintaining a healthy and safe environment?

Your memo asserts that SSA has for years recycled. Your statement is "we recycle". As you know this is not entirely accurate. Whereas other federal agencies have adopted comprehensive recycling programs, SSA's program is weak. Some recycling exists in the big facilities like Headquarters and the Program Service Centers. However, there is no mandatory recycling program in SSA field offices and SSA hearing offices. Many recycle nothing. Some of those offices with no recycling program are under your supervision in the NY Region. When the Union proposed a comprehensive national recycling program in contract negotiations, SSA refused to agree to any such initiative. SSA's contract negotiators informed the Union that SSA didn't want to expend the time, effort and money for effective recycling efforts in the field. In fact, SSA negotiators laughed at the Union proposals and considered them a joke.

More and more SSA field offices are relocating to areas without public transit access. SSA has even opened enumeration centers that are not accessible by public transportation (i.e., Las Vegas and the new Houston site) and forced the public to use these centers for their Social Security business which could have been conducted in community offices that are accessible by public transportation. Is this an example of SSA's "green" attitude?

Since the Agency Strategic Plan requires that the business that we do with the public be done in an environmentally sound manner, perhaps those SSA managers who either ignore such requirements or who deliberately mislead Congress and the American public regarding SSA's environmental commitment (i.e., Commissioner Astrue and Deputy Commissioner McMahon) should be fired or should resign so that the President can appoint new leadership for SSA that will understand the importance of a sound environment in SSA.

Witold Skwierczynski

President

AFGE Council 220