

UNITY

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Warren Fretwell, Editor

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The President's Message

Immediate Action Needed to Avert Furlough

The power of the union is truly recognized when we act in a concerted and unified effort to effect change. That's why many employers are anti-union: because they don't want workers to have a say and they certainly do not want them to realize the potential they have when speaking as one.

Today, I am asking all of our AFGE members, their families and our allies to have their say and to help prevent the shut down of SSA offices and the furlough of *all* agency employees for two weeks without pay next year.

The Senate and the House Appropriations Committees voted to support significant decreases in Social Security's FY 2007 budget. The Senate version cuts \$401 million and the House cuts \$200 million. Either scenario will result in substantial reductions in the amount of work SSA can do. Commissioner Barnhart has written to Congress indicating that she will have to shut down operations for two weeks next year because there isn't enough money to support agency activities in 2007 without a furlough of SSA employees and cut backs in production.

Such a furlough would not be like those in the past. During the Clinton administration, a budget battle led the Republican Congress to shut down the government by withholding agreement on appropriations bills. When a budget was

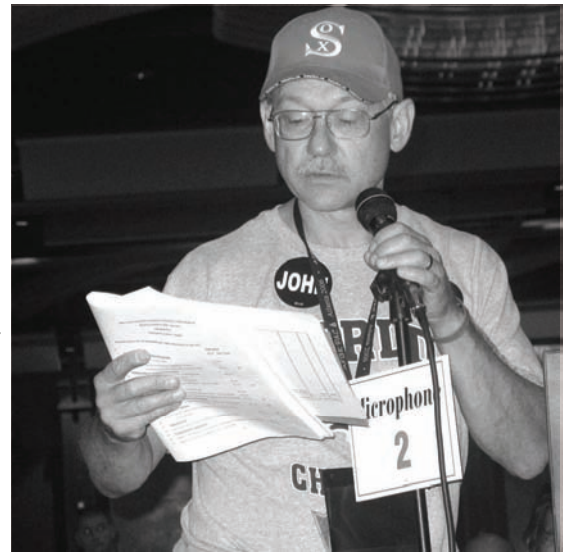
finally approved, federal workers were paid for the time they were forced off the job.

That won't happen this time because the furlough will be a direct result of a budget that Congress passed. If there isn't enough money to operate, then it's the commissioner's call where to cut. She could fund her new Disability Service Initiative—at a cost of \$1.1 billion over the next four years—or she could keep employees working and offices open all year. She chose the former.

The bottom line is that Congress does not have sufficient discretionary money because of the Bush tax cuts, which leave the Treasury short of cash. Add this to ever-increasing Defense Department expenditures and the war in Iraq and there is no money for anything else. All federal agencies are suffering as basic services to citizens are reduced or eliminated.

This battle is one of priorities and you can help set those priorities.

The union sent sample letters-to-the-editor and sample letters to Congress to Local union presidents around the country. They are also posted on our Council web site at



AFGE Council President Witold Skwierczynski addresses delegates at AFGE's national convention in Atlanta during the national convention (see article on page 4).

www.afgec220.org.

All members should send these letters as soon as possible. If you don't send a letter, then call your congressperson and senators and ask them to contact the House and Senate Appropriations Committee members and ask them to fully fund Social Security. Remember: rank and file union members cannot use agency resources or time to lobby congress. You must use your own time, phones, stationery, etc. Union officials, however, are authorized by law to contact congress during official time.

While you're at it, contact groups in your community that rely on SSA and alert them to what congress is doing. Speak at your local central labor council and ask for their help.

(Continued on page 2)



Go to
afgec220.org for
additional information about the fur-
lough. Click on the
***furloughs* icon on the Home Page.**

Service Rep's Removal Overturned

A New Jersey Service Representative was reinstated after a protracted battle with the Social Security Administration that involved both the federal court and arbitration.

The employee was represented by the law offices of Brian Raum with Gian Marco Pastore, Executive Vice President of AFGE Local 2369, acting as technical assistant. They argued that

SSA did not have just cause to remove the grievant from her position. The AFGE-SSA national contract requires that employees will be subject to discipline only for *just cause* (Article 23, Section 1).

In 2001 and 2002, the grievant improperly used the agency's computer system to obtain information and used that information to assist a fellow employee, whom she believed was

being threatened by a claimant. The Office of the Inspector General investigated and SSA issued a removal notice in June, 2002. However, the agency said that it was unaware that the OIG had also filed a criminal complaint with the U.S. Attorney, and it rescinded the removal action and instead placed the grievant on indefinite leave without pay.

The court action was resolved by a guilty plea and in October, 2003, the agency issued another removal notice. In the interim, the grievant won an arbitration over the indefinite LWOP. SSA would not let her return to work, however, and, instead, put her on administrative leave (with pay).

The union claimed the second removal was not timely; nor was it justified.

The grievant submitted as evidence copies of discipline issued by the agency during the past five years to other employees. Several of these cases were Category III offenses per the Table of Penalties for systems violations. None of the cases led to the removal of an employee, including cases, such as this one, in which the charges included providing misinformation to the OIG.

Arbitrator Herbert Marx concluded that "there is no basis for a disproportionate penalty applicable to the grievant, as compared to treatment of similar instances during the past five years.... The charges were proven, but the penalty of removal is unduly harsh and incompatible with past treatment of similar offenses."

The arbitrator mitigated the penalty to a 60-day suspension and ordered SSA to promptly offer the grievant reinstatement to her former position with back pay for the remaining period of her removal.

Social Security Administration and American Federation of Government Employees, Local 2369, Case No. NY-2006-R-0009, Sept. 25, 2006.

Avoid Furlough By Taking Action Now!

(Continued from page 1)

Send an email to those candidates running for office in November and ask them to take a stand and support Social Security workers and beneficiaries.

These contacts must be done quickly. We have been advised that the Republican leadership intends to present an omnibus spending bill after the November elections. If the Social Security budget is not increased before then, it will be too late. So, all AFGE members and friends should make their contacts now.

CONTACTS WITH CONGRESS

Members of the Council 220 Executive Board have been meeting with House and Senate members and their staffs and the message we received was that they were not hearing from anyone about the furlough and reduction in SSA services from anyone back home. We have also heard from some of our union representatives in the field that they have begun to make these contacts; but we need more.

There's more at stake than just SSA workers' pay, after all. Commissioner Barnhart told Congress that the proposed budget would "cut an additional 4,000 work years, beyond the budgeted 1 for 3 replacement level in FY 2006 and FY 2007." When added to the already reduced staffing levels, the FY 2007 is closer to 6,000 fewer work years with a 1 for 8 replacement ratio in the Field!

Barnhart also indicated that she would have to impose a staffing freeze,

curtail most overtime and decrease the number of conducted Continuing Disability Reviews by over 476,000. "CDRs save \$10 for every \$1 spent administering them, so this reduction would result in a significant increase in Federal spending," Barnhart said.

Although I don't agree with the commissioner's decision to go forward with DSI, I do agree that the reduction in SSA's budget will adversely affect all employees and create major disruptions in all agency workloads—from account numbers to initial retirement claims to disability decisions and appeals to answering the 800-number. *All work loads will be affected!*

And, all workers will be affected—negatively. This furlough amounts to a loss in pay of approximately four percent. I know few people who can afford to lower their annual earnings. So, it is important that we act together, complain to congress, alert your families, your friends and the media that the failure of Congress to properly fund the Social Security Administration while using the Trust Funds to underwrite tax cuts for the rich and Defense Department no-bid contracts is an outrage.

Visit www.afgec220.org for more information.

Witold Skwierczynski is president of AFGE Council 220.

From Around The Nation

New Performance Appraisal Info Available

(On the Web) Council 220 has numerous alerts, background and additional guidance available on its website (www.afgec220.org) regarding the implementation of the new performance appraisal system at SSA commonly known as PACS.

The Council created a committee to review the agency's performance plan, much of which is also available on SSA's own INTRANET, and prepare flyers that have been distributed to AFGE Local presidents around the country. Hopefully, you have seen these by now. But, if you haven't, all of the material is available on the web site.

Go to the web address above and click on the LIBRARY section. There you will find "Cope with the New Appraisal System," which provides you with employee guidance on PACS.

Is SSA Looking to Contract Out Work?

(Washington, DC.) In keeping with the general contracting out theme of this government, the Social Security Administration posted a *Request for Information* about the collection of bulk data for retirement, disability claims and/or other types of benefits. "The goal of the RFI is to solicit input from potential third party providers to determine the need for and feasibility of SSA building a web service or other electronic means to obtain claims data in bulk form."

The first question that comes to mind is, *Shouldn't the public be asked to determine if there is a need and not the companies that stand to benefit from fat government contracts?*

SSA claims the RFI will enable

New

it to assess if it can maximize the use of third parties data to streamline claims submittal for both third parties and SSA. It adds that the agency is "interested in expanding the relationship with third parties by allowing the submission of claims related data to SSA in bulk."

The long term vision, according to the RFI, *is to eventually collect data for Title II and Title XVI initial claims and appeals, including required disability reports, available medical evidence and any other relevant data a third party may have. The premise is that the data, once uploaded to SSA, would be funneled to the appropriate SSA legacy systems for processing.*

So, you were wondering why the agency hasn't been staffing Field offices sufficiently to meet their workload needs. You might not need to look any farther than this RFI.

AFGE Convention: No Confidence in Barnhart

(Atlanta, Ga.) Delegates at the AFGE national convention in Atlanta, Georgia voted overwhelmingly to support a resolution voicing no confidence in Social Security Commissioner Jo Anne Barnhart.

The resolution was sponsored by AFGE Local 3302 and criticized SSA under the leadership of Commissioner Barnhart of being more political despite becoming an independent agency, of using the trust funds to lobby for privatization, and for sinking the labor-management relationship.

Council President Witold Skwierczynski spoke in favor of the resolution pointing out the decline in workplace morale and said the union's relationship with the agency is

at its lowest point in his over 30 years with SSA.

Other delegates supported the motion, including those from the Department of Labor who said they wished they had thought of submitting a resolution condemning Elaine Cho, the anti-worker Secretary of Labor.

The resolution's conclusion is: *AFGE does not see Commissioner Barnhart as an effective or honest leader, nor does she have the independence or capacity to meet the challenges facing the Social Security Administration.* It passed on a voice vote.

One month later, the White House announced that Michael Astrue would be nominated to succeed Barnhart as commissioner



Astrue

when her term is up at the end of the year.

Astrue has been an executive with pharmaceutical and biotech firms and worked in SSA's general counsel's office during the Dorcas Hardy years. His most recent employment has been with a conservative think tank. The Senate is required to confirm his appointment.

UNITY is an official, quarterly publication of AFGE Council 220, PO Box 47638, Baltimore MD., 410.965.6707, fax: 410.966.7151. Letters-to-the-editor may be sent to Warren Fretwell, Editor, PO Box 15424, Syracuse, New York 13215-0424 or fax: 315.479.0063 (voice: 315.479.0064). Letters may be edited for space. Editorial comment appearing in UNITY may not reflect the position of AFGE Council 220. Send all name and address corrections to your Local Treasurer. If you are a Field Office AFGE member and do not receive UNITY, ask your Treasurer to make certain that the Council block shows "220" for your entry on the membership roster.

Delegates Attend National Conventions

The American Federation of Government Employees and Council 220, AFGE, held their national conventions in Atlanta, Georgia in August. Delegates from around the country attended both.

The Council 220 convention was held on the Friday and Saturday preceding the national convention. President Witold Skwierczynski gave the opening address and compared and contrasted the Council's first convention in 1976 of 40 delegates with the 2006 convention's 99 delegates and 15 alternates.

Skwierczynski pointed out that the Bush agenda created the tone of our national contract negotiations, which set back the union's institutional rights. Official time was severely cut and that is interfering with the union's representational role. These impediments are being litigated while we develop new strategies, including member mobilization.

The convention delegates considered proposals on training materials for union activists, Council web site changes, access to union officer-of-the-day, negotiation strategies, TSC problems, expanding communications to union members including expanded use of our eBlast list, creating a retired union representative corps, providing the Council office with assistance, improving legislative initiatives, prioritizing major issues affecting workers and more. Top priority issues were identified as 1) Right to representation, 2) New performance system, 3) Increased leave denials and 4) Staffing.



AFGE Council 220 1st Vice President Charlie Estudillo (standing) speaks with Council delegates about a pending resolution during the union's national convention.

Ed Coyle, Executive Director of the Alliance of Retired Americans, was invited to speak to the delegates. ARA has 3.5 million members, is growing and is continuing to help seniors show their political clout. They have chapters in 26 states and plan to influence the November elections. Coyle indicated that the ARA expects two things to happen if the Republicans retain control of the House and the Senate: privatization of Social Security and the break-up of organized labor. They intend to fight both.

Elections were held for all Executive Board positions. The results:

President

Witold Skwierczynski	8,542
Katrina Lopez	5,332

Executive Vice President

Debbie Fredericksen	8,116
Ralph deJuliis	5,758

First Vice President

Charlie Estudillo	9,982
Steve Kofahl	3,872

Second Vice President

Jim Campana	8,246
Jim Richardson	5,628

Third Vice President

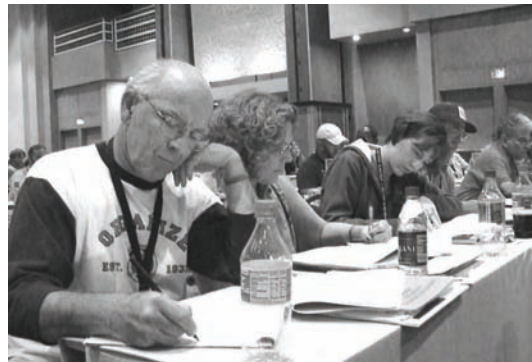
Dana Duggins	9,671
Avon Sansone	4,203

Secretary

Ken Keillor	9,333
Ann Hart	4,541

Treasurer Rita Pyle was elected by acclamation.

AFGE's 37th triennial national convention began on August 7th. National President John Gage told the 1,200 delegates about the difficulties of working under political appointees who want to destroy the mission of the agencies they head. He said we must all fight back and vowed to keep AFGE actively involved in political campaigns to help elect representatives



Members of Seattle regional Local 3937 study resolutions at the national convention. From left: Steve Kofahl (RVP), Carrie Kitchin-Kofahl, Laura Novakoski, John Mack and Jeff Saul.

who support federal workers and their agencies. He also told of the remarkable progress AFGE had achieved in the last three years despite the attack on workers' rights under the current administration.

The delegates split up into several workshops with the majority participating in that which handled resolutions on Constitution and Rules.

Guest speakers included Rep. Jim Marshall (D-Ga.), NEA President Reg Weaver, and Cecil Roberts, president of the United Mine Workers, who got the delegates on their feet with a fiery speech condemning the anti-labor attitudes and programs of the Bush White House.

Numerous resolutions were adopted or rejected by the delegates. Contact your Local delegates to review the resolution books.

AFGE national officers supported a per capita increase of over \$3.00, but settled for a \$2 increase per member, per month.

Election results:

President 1st ballot

John Gage	73,898
Bobby Harnage	68,526
Larry Raney	22,073

President 2nd ballot

John Gage	85,507
Bobby Harnage	77,526

National Secretary/Treasurer

J. David Cox	144,978
Kitty Peddicord	19,573

NVP for Women's & Fair Practices

Andrea Brooks	93,575
Marilyn Wiley	70,776

Letters to the Editor

Dear UNITY,

It has been company belief that the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees are disadvantaged at retirement in more ways than one. The Civil Service Retirement Systems (CSRS) employees receive credit for unused sick leave if they retire on an immediate annuity. This unused sick leave is added to their length of creditable service.

Why are hard-working, dependable FERS workers penalized or not given the same right?

In addition, FERS employees are also losing out with the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) due to the slow economy. We as FERS employees won't be taking much of our retirement benefits with us when we leave Federal service. Instead of increasing in total value, our TSP continues to decrease in value.

I would like to recommend that OPM change the law on "unused sick leave" for FERS employees to be the same as CSRS. This is a national problem that needs immediate attention.

J. Walker
Dothan, Alabama

Dear J.,

The laws that govern federal retirement were enacted by Congress. If you believe that CSRS has more lucrative pension rights than FERS and that is unfair, I recommend that you speak with your local congressperson.

I would remind you, however, that there are those who believe the FERS pension plan contains advantages not found in CSRS (the employer contribution to the TSP, it's portable, etc.).

When the economy takes a dive, CSRS and FERS employees who invest in the TSP will realize losses. However, investing for retirement is something employees should do over a career. Every economic cycle has its peaks and valleys. The best thing you can do to weather these ups and downs, whether you're in CSRS or FERS, is to talk with an investment

professional who can advise you what TSP funds to invest in and at what levels.

Your concerns about FERS are obviously important to you. But, from a union perspective, the November elections are probably the highest priority that deserves our "immediate attention." Your job, your economic livelihood, your pension, your right to belong to a union: all of these things may be on the line.

Editor, UNITY

Dear UNITY,

Please discontinue sending your newsletter to me. I am no longer employed by the federal government. I retired. Thanks.

D. DeLeon
Long Beach, Ca.

Dear D.,

If you are still a member of AFGE you will continue to receive the union's newsletters, including UNITY. If you do not remain a union member, then your newsletters will discontinue automatically. However, AFGE Locals have reduced membership dues for retirees. So, you may wish to continue to enjoy the benefits of union membership and stay active in your Local by signing up as a retired AFGE member.

Editor, UNITY

Dear UNITY,

I was curious as to whether AFGE was planning on producing any informational materials for the general public or lobbying Congress concerning the proposed furlough of SSA employees. The administrative expense for running the traditional Social Security programs was about 2.4 percent 30 years ago and is down to 0.7 percent now.

Congress has never given us credit for accomplishing this reduction in administrative expenses. Instead, SSA has been replacing only

about 1 for every 3 employees who have left [Ed. Note: that ratio is only 1 for 8 now]. The Trust Fund has more than enough money to pay our administrative expenses without furloughing employees.

I resent the Trust Fund money being used to cover the federal deficit, which includes earmarks for pork barrel projects, when our agency is shortchanged.

If the country needs more money to pay for the war in Iraq, then all taxpayers should be asked to contribute. A furlough is the equivalent of a tax increase on SSA workers.

We all know we will be expected to do the same amount of work even if we are furloughed for two weeks! If Social Security workers are furloughed one day each month, then that will be just like what already happens after a federal holiday: we will have twice as much work to do on the day we get back to the office!

Name withheld on request

Editor's note: AFGE and Council 220 have met with newspapers and radio journalists about the furlough and appropriations problems. We are continuing our efforts to get the message out.

**AFGE Council 220
is on the internet:
See our new
webpage at
www.afgec220.org**

The Perks of Being Over Fifty

With so many SSA workers nearing retirement age, you might appreciate this list of “perks” that come with the age.

1. Kidnappers are not very interested in you.
2. In a hostage situation you are likely to be released first.
3. No one expects you to run - - anywhere.

Helpful Benefit From Union Credit Card

Union members losing income due to a recent illness or disability have access to financial help thanks to a unique benefit that comes—at no cost—with every Union Plus Credit Card.

The Lifeline Trust has already provided more than \$64,000 in grants, helping some 43 union cardholders when they most needed a hand.

The Trust, established by Union Privilege and funded by HSBC, the company issuing Union Plus Credit Cards, provides a one time grant ranging from \$500 to \$2,000, and a one-time payment of up to \$250 that is applied to the outstanding Union Plus Credit Card balance. The money does not have to be repaid.

Frank Voce, a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades Local 1269 received a grant of \$1,000 and an additional \$250 to lower his credit card balance last year. Voce had filed for disability because the pain from a herniated, crushed disc had become unbearable. While checking his Union Plus Credit Card account online, he read about the new benefit, applied and help was on the way.

“It was one of the few times in my life that a big financial institution actually came through with what they promised,” says voce, who hopes to return to work within the year.

“The program also agreed to lower my interest rate and allowed me to skip a couple of payments,” adds Voce.

To apply for a Lifeline Trust grant, cardholders can call 1-877-761-5028.

AFGE members may take advantage of other benefits, services and discounts from UnionPlus (aka., Union Privilege) by going to its website at www.unionplus.org.

4. People call at 9 pm and ask, "Did I wake you?"
5. People no longer view you as a hypochondriac.
6. There is nothing left to learn the hard way.
7. Things you buy now won't wear out.
8. You can eat dinner at 4 pm.
9. You can live without sex , but not your glasses.
- 10 You enjoy hearing about other people's operations.
11. You get into heated arguments about pension plans.
12. You no longer think of speed limits as a challenge.
13. You quit trying to hold your stomach in no matter who walks into the room.
14. You sing along with elevator music.
15. Your eyes won't get much worse.
16. Your investment in health insurance is finally beginning to pay off.
17. Your joints are more accurate meteorologists than the national weather service.
18. Your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either.
19. Your supply of brain cells is finally down to a manageable size.
20. You can't remember who sent you this list.

And you notice these are all in big print for your convenience.

Donut Hole Takes Bite Out Of Americans

by James Parks

For starters, retiree Edward Eisenhower and his wife will have to cut back on Christmas presents this year for their five children and 12 grandchildren because they will have to spend a lot more on prescription drugs. Eisenhower, 70, a former production-control supervisor at Bethlehem Steel and Alcoa, will hit the Medicare “donut hole” sometime between next month and the early fall.

“We make enough to live comfortably, but we’ll have to cut back on a lot of things,” he says. “I can’t pay for the prescriptions and keep living the way I’ve been living.”

Under the new Medicare Part D rules passed by Congress in 2003, out-of-pocket prescription expenses between the annual amounts of \$2,251 and \$5,100 are not covered. This gap has been dubbed the “donut hole.” Of the 11.8 million Medicare enrollees whose plans include a coverage gap, 6.9 million of them could hit the donut hole.

Eisenhower says he needs prescription drugs for allergies, high blood pressure, diabetes, an enlarged prostate and uric acid. It costs more than \$1,600 for a three-month, mail-order supply.

“It’s going to hit hard,” says Eisenhower, who receives Social Security and a small pension from his days at Beth Steel. His company pension was reduced 36 percent because he retired early after the plant shut down 20 years ago.

Eisenhower doesn’t have the security of union-negotiated health care. For the first 10 years of his 30 years at Beth Steel, he was a member of the Steelworkers. Then he moved into management. When he retired from Alcoa, the company had just bought the plant where he worked and did not extend the company retiree health care plan to new employees.

Seniors on Medicare are in this bind because the Bush administration

insisted on protecting the profits of pharmaceutical companies rather than reducing costs for consumers, according to the Alliance for Retired Americans. The Bush Medicare plan does not allow the government to negotiate lower costs with drug companies—as other federal agencies, many corporations and several states do.

“The longer we go without allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with the drug companies, the worse the situation gets,” says Ruben Burks, secretary-treasurer of the alliance.

Because the overwhelming majority of the Medicare Part D plans include a donut hole, experts say it’s a safe bet that millions of seniors on fixed incomes, especially those with chronic illnesses and disabilities, will be struggling to pay for the life-sustaining medications they need but can’t afford without coverage.

Under Part D, a standard drug plan pays 75 percent of initial drug costs up to \$2,250 after a \$250 deductible for most seniors. But then the program pays nothing until drug expenses reach \$5,100, after which the government pays 95 percent of all costs.

This structure means that sicker patients with higher drug costs will end up not only paying more for their drugs but also paying a higher share of their costs than those with fewer prescriptions, says Marilyn Moon, director of health programs at the American Institutes for Research, who authored a 2004 report on Medicare for the Commonwealth Fund.

A senior with \$1,000 in annual drug costs would pay \$438 out of pocket under the plan, while a beneficiary with \$5,000 in costs would be responsible for \$3,500 of his or her total costs, according to Moon’s report.

And it’s going to get

worse. BNA’s *Health Care Policy Report* says the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have updated the standard Part D benefit for 2007, increasing deductibles, out-of-pocket maximums and other costs for seniors by 6.8 percent. Beginning Jan. 1, the deductible for the standard benefit will increase from \$250 to \$265. In addition, seniors will have to spend \$3,850 out of pocket before having 95 percent of their drug costs covered, instead of the \$3,000 they have to spend in 2006.

The donut hole also will grow. In 2006, that gap is between \$2,250 and \$5,100, but in 2007 it will be between \$2,400 and \$5,451.

In a just-released video, “The Problems with the Medicare Drug Program—and How to Fix Them” from Families USA, narrator Walter Cronkite addresses the complexity, confusion and expense of the program. Glaring gaps such as the “donut hole” and failure to contain skyrocketing costs are examined.

The short film is forward-looking, with Cronkite and Part D experts recommending crucial improvements to the benefit. The veteran journalist offers some key prescriptions: Allow Medicare to bargain for lower drug prices and close the wide gap in coverage. The 14-minute video is available through the Families USA website.

James Parks writes for *AFL-CIO NOW*.





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SSA Adversity Conference

By Dwight Jenkins

This is an abbreviated version of my 12-page journal of the magical four days I spent at SSA's "Diversity" Conference.

These are the people who run the agency, or who want to. I step off an elevator and enter a Shakespearean street fair: a magician, balloonists, sketch artists, American Indian flutist, portable bars, head and neck masseuses. An Ethiopian gypsy turns Tarot cards.

As I enter a cavernous ballroom, there is a mirage, an oasis of earthly delight: a professionally staffed Haagen Daz station! A long line waits eagerly to drink from the caramel and fudge buckets.

There is Deputy Commissioner of Operations Linda McMahon and I introduce myself as a unionist and writer of harsh things about her; but, she merely swirls her drink and smiles as she shoots back, "Well, we all have our roles to play." Commissioner Barnhart and I pose for a prearranged photo-op. She laughs when I ask if I

could hold up devil's horns behind her head.

Charles Black, an actor, performs a one act play about civil rights. He is followed by a drum line and marching band that serves as the introduction to the Parade of Nations—employees from around the nation carrying the flags of their heritage. I later learn that Atlanta CREO sought to exclude the Native American tribes from participating in the parade!

Susan Taylor of Essence Magazine reminds us of America's racist beginnings. She turns to Commissioner Barnhart and says, "With your visionary leadership we can tell the truth" (I couldn't help but think of the many SSA employees who have been forced out of work by local management more interested in numbers than people).

Motivational speaker Keith Harrell tells us to learn to *lighten up, not tighten up*. Looking heavenward and pointing a long, reverent index finger into the air, he says, "Trust in

Him!"

Attorney John Kemp speaks on disability followed by leadership vignettes from Barnhart, McMahon, Reginald Wells and others. Associate Commissioner for Training Wayne Harmon talks about personality traits and leadership styles.

A three-piece Dixieland band revives my spirits after a rather tedious, 90-minute rendition of *The Dating Game*.

I was looking forward to the workshop on non-discrimination in the workplace, but it was a non-event. Only four of us showed up.

They called this a Diversity Conference and I ate of it as such. But, I now delicately and discreetly spit it into a linen napkin for you and say, it is a *Promotion Conference*, a *Networking Conference*, a *Celebrate SSA Conference*; but not a Diversity Conference. Men still dominate the back pages of the book in a mostly female agency. *Dwight Jenkins is the Sec/Treas. of AFGE Local 3343.*