STATEMENT BY RICH COUTURE, SPOKESPERSON FOR

THE AFGE SSA GENERAL COMMITTEE

April 24, 2025

Earlier this week, *Government Executive* made the Union aware that the Social Security Administration (SSA) plans to strip important civil service protections from thousands of dedicated SSA employees by converting them to Schedule F (now known as Schedule Policy/Career or Schedule P/C), per an internal email obtained by that publication. Among those impacted are at least 7,000 line employees represented by AFGE in components such as the Office of Hearings Operations, Office of Appellate Operations, Office of Quality Review, Office of the Chief Information Officer, and many more. The Agency intends to complete this conversion of workers to at-will employees within 90 days from April 7, 2025.

While Schedule F is intended to cover employees in “policy-influencing” positions, AFGE bargaining unit employees at SSA do not make or interpret policy. Rather, our workers dutifully implement the policies set forth by Agency leadership, as it has under successive administrations. Put another way, AFGE unit workers at SSA are line employees who are supposed to be excluded from Schedule F consideration under the Administration’s own guidance.

The Agency clearly intended for its Schedule F plan to remain secret until it was ready to shock thousands of SSA workers with the real threat that they could be fired for no reason at all, with no civil service appeal rights. This plan is a draconian overreach that has nothing to do with the Administration’s supposed goal of ensuring policymakers toe the line. Rather, this plan is about giving SSA the ability to summarily fire employees who have nothing to do with policy-making in order further shrink the size of the workforce. This plan will dramatically impact the ability of SSA to timely process disability decisions, hearings, and appeals for claimants all over the country, who are already waiting too long. This plan will make our IT systems even less stable and less secure, at a time when we have experienced increased outages. When viewed together with other actions, like SSA’s previous staff reductions, its planned layoffs, and its plans to start closing field offices in 2026, the Schedule F plan will cause further deterioration in SSA’s ability to serve the public and restrict timely access to the benefits and services they paid for.