

The Local Scoop

WHO SAID, “UNITED WE STAND,” FIRST?

- CINDI CARD

We all know the saying, “United we stand, divided we fall,” but who said it first? Some say the Greek storyteller Aesop, others attribute it to John Dickenson, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and some point to Patrick Henry as he used the phrase in his last public speech. Regardless of its origin, it captures an essential truth that there is strength in numbers. We often see this when people with similar interests and a common bond join together to advance a common agenda for the benefit of all the members of a group. It is one of the most fundamental credos of a labor union which seeks to unite workers by becoming the collective voice for those members when dealing with the strength and might of those at the top of the pyramid of management. A single voice would be easy to disregard, but as the saying implies, there is strength in numbers.

Across the power, scope and size of the Federal Government individual voices are bonded together through the American Federation of Government Employees, or the AFGE union. Nationally, AFGE boasts over 300,000 union members and on a more local level, Local 3928 represents many workers at the Nebraska Service Center, the National Benefits Center, the National Records Center, and also at Field Offices in St. Louis, Kansas City, Omaha, ST. Paul, Des Moines and Wichita. Also represented are workers in the Nebraska Verification Operations Center, the Midwest Customer Contact Center, the Lees Summit Card Production Facility and OIDP in Minneapolis. Together these workers seek to unite in a single voice that is as strong as its numbers. Standalone ASC’s in Duluth, Fargo, Sioux Falls and Rapid City also contribute to the AFGE mission by raising their voices and sharing their concerns.

Alone, as the saying implies, it is easy to fall, Together, we will stand.

AFGE



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AFGE



MEET OUR LOCAL (3928) LEADERS

- NAUNI FORTNER

AFGE plays an important role in ensuring workplace challenges and existing issues are met with fair practices and solutions.

Our dedicated AFGE leaders are committed to establishing personal and professional relationships with the Bargaining Unit Employees and Agency Senior Leaders spread across the Agency to bring attention and resolution to important issues.

*"All that harms labor is treason to America."
- Abraham Lincoln*



Ruark Hotopp

—Local 3928 President & Council 119 President

Ruark has been reelected to serve as the President of AFGE Local 3928 for three consecutive terms.

He dedicates himself to being fully accessible and typically works nights and weekends to make sure that the needs of our members are addressed.

Ruark is a consensus builder and goes to great lengths to make sure that all unique perspectives are heard and that everyone has ownership in the work that the Union does. His personal interests include playing guitar, participating in sand volleyball, and traveling to Baton Rouge, Louisiana for LSU football.



Michael Overman

—Local 3928 Secretary-Treasurer & Central Region Vice President

Michael is the AFGE Local 3928 Secretary-Treasurer, and he stays focused on elected representational duties. This includes gathering facts, collaborating with other Union Leadership, and occasionally traveling to negotiate and consult with Agency leaders.

Michael is passionate about ensuring a robust work/home life balance for all Bargaining Unit Employees and has contributed in negotiations needed for funding additional staffing, infrastructure, and action from the Unicameral in the Nebraska State Legislature. In his personal life, he is a member of Combat Vets providing items to homeless Veterans. Michael is a proud grandpa and spends time looking after his mother who is afflicted with dementia.

Adam Holly

—Local 3928 Vice President (North)

As the AFGE local Vice President, Adam prioritizes communication and time organization to ensure emergent situations are handled with dedication and discretion. Adam has achieved many union victories including supporting the expansion of telework, the introduction of remote work, and increased flexibilities of work hours. He intensely respects time and views it as the one finite resource that people have. It’s Adam’s belief that these programs help save time for eligible employees.

While Adam has devoted quite a bit of his personal time to ensuring our Local Union runs smoothly and our goals our met, he still enjoys spending time with his dogs, hanging out with friends and family, gardening, and playing the occasional video game.



Steven Henderson

—Local 3928 Vice President (South)

Steven Henderson is currently serving his third term as the Vice President (South). When not performing representational duties, his average day consists of maintaining the facility as an Ops Support Specialist at the NBC. Prior to joining the NBC, he was the President of AFGE Local 2904, and the secretary/treasurer of AGFE Council 240.

One of his proudest Union accomplishments was the restoration union rights to 100 BUE’s who were transferred from Kansas City to New Orleans in 2011. These employees were assured they would maintain the BUE status, but upon arrival in New Orleans, they were stripped of them.

Steve is a retired US Marine. After retiring he continued to work for the Marine Corps as a government employee for 15 years. He is an avid fan of all things Kansas City.



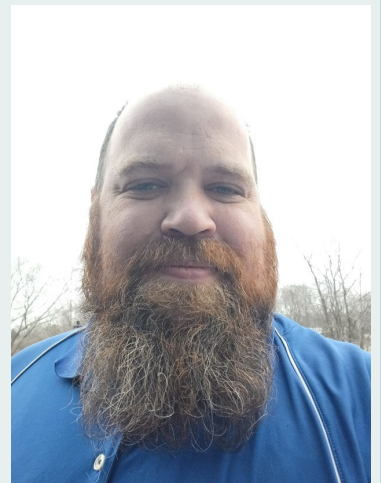
Brendan Love

—Local 3928 Chief Steward (unelected position)

Brendan has served as the Chief Steward for over a year. He was inspired to become a Union Steward by his father, Chris Love who served the members of his Union as a Steward even as he battled cancer.

As a Chief Steward, Brendan keeps the Local organized. He assigns representational cases, trains and advises Stewards, and takes on especially difficult cases himself. Most recently, Brendan and Steven worked with NBC management to ensure that 11 employees stayed with the agency after not meeting the requirements to pass Basic.

Brendan’s hobbies are spending time with family and friends watching sports and is a self-proclaimed baseball nut.



AFGE MEMBER BENEFITS

Are you taking advantage of your exclusive Union Member benefits?

AFGE offers tons of membership perks, including:

- Educational Materials
- Financial tools and assistance
- Free Tax Filing
- Health and Fitness assistance and discounts
- Medical Bill Negotiating Services
- Tech Discounts
- Training
- Travel Discounts
- So much more!

Visit AFGE.org and click .

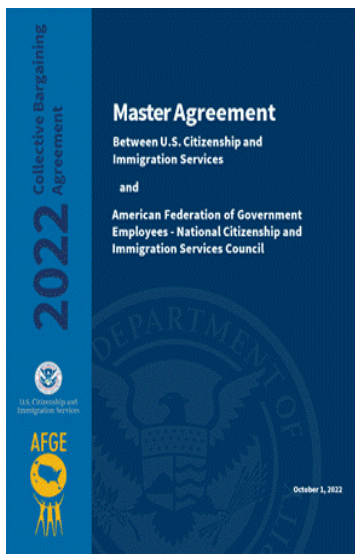
“Member Benefits” at the top of the page to explore the full list of available benefits.

THE UNION AND MANAGEMENT

- JEFFREY MATHES

In 2023 the relationship between the Union and Management changed for the better! Why? We worked together to finalize and implement a new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

The new CBA codified changes in how we do business in many important ways.



*Check out the new
CBA!*

[Click here.](https://connect.uscis.dhs.gov/org/MGMT/HCT/LaborEmployeeRelations/USCIS-NCISC%20119%20Collective%20Bargaining%20Agreement.pdf)

<https://connect.uscis.dhs.gov/org/MGMT/HCT/LaborEmployeeRelations/USCIS-NCISC%20119%20Collective%20Bargaining%20Agreement.pdf>

Telework

Article 29 clarifies telework requirements and qualifications. It sets, in stone, the option to finish in-office days at home telework locations. The article also establishes the right of the Union to have positions be evaluated for telework compatibility. With the requirement that management must evaluate the position within a time frame and make a decision on telework options for the position. If denied, management has to answer why, in some detail, approval or denial alone is not enough.

If telework is denied to a represented employee, Management is required to provide a detailed explanation; The general statement that there is an operational need to deny telework is not enough. There must be a specific rationale communicated to the Union and the employee.

Communication

The CBA now clearly outlines the requirement that management must inform our Union about any significant changes in the workplace and provide the Union an opportunity to comment or negotiate prior to making the changes happen.

The new CBA created multiple advisory committees, including Technology, Safety, and Training, that;

- ⇒ greatly improves our Union’s ability to participate in and improve development of training (both local and Academy).
- ⇒ improves our Union’s ability to be heard on issues like ELIS, STACKS, and other digital program upgrades, systems and improvements.
- ⇒ gives the Union greater participation in Safety actions and oversight such as complaint resolution, accident investigations, etc...

Just So You Know: Article 26 at (a)(5) gives 5 days of Admin leave to help an employee relocate to a new duty location. Two days from where you are at and three days from where you are going. Look It Up!
Note: Voluntary Remote Work is not applicable

Local Supplemental Agreements

The CBA allowed for re-opening for negotiation of all Local Supplemental Agreements to better protect employees and to provide management and employees a better work environment.

You may not know that CBA is not the only Management-Union Agreement that we bargain. The CBA covers all of USCIS directorates, locations, and personnel.

The LSA covers the specific rules and methods to make the CBA work. Why? Because the mission of the different USCIS components are so different, one size can’t fit all. The duties of a Field Office interviewer and FOIA analyst are very different. The environment, duties and the mission require agreement on how the CBA will work for all of us.



LOCAL WINS

SPOTLIGHT

- After a large portion of a Basic class failed, we helped save 11 students' jobs
- Successfully had Annual Time reinstated to an employee after being denied Unscheduled Telework
- Negotiated with Management to reduce the number of required weekly in-office days for Records Employees

CONTACT US

If you need to contact your local Union representative, you can reach us through any of the following channels:

- USCIS Email:
nscunion@uscis.dhs.gov
- Private Email:
afgel3928@gmail.com
- Phone:
531-207-4508
531-207-4511
- Local Website:
afgelocal3928.org
- AFGE Website:
www.afge.org
- Facebook
- Twitter

WIN OF THE YEAR (2022)

The following article was sourced from the U.S. Office of Special Counsel.

[URL: https://osc.gov/News/Pages/21-10-Complaint-USCIS-Retaliation.aspx](https://osc.gov/News/Pages/21-10-Complaint-USCIS-Retaliation.aspx)

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) ... filed a complaint with the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board against the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services (USCIS), alleging that the agency fired an analyst at its Wichita, Kansas, office for reporting an official who divulged employees' confidential grievance information in violation of federal law.

The complaint seeks to correct the retaliatory termination of Kenneth Langley. In June 2019, Mr. Langley informed managers that an agency management official improperly told him and another employee that certain employees had filed complaints and warned them to avoid one employee in particular. Soon after, Langley engaged in protected whistleblower activities by filing a disclosure with OSC.

Within two weeks of Mr. Langley's disclosure, USCIS initiated an investigation of him, which the complaint alleges was a pretext for gathering evidence to fire him for his whistleblowing. USCIS then fired him in March 2020.

OSC's complaint follows its investigative report on Langley's termination, issued last summer to USCIS's acting director. USCIS failed to take corrective action based on that report's finding of whistleblower retaliation, prompting the complaint.

"As the agency responsible for safeguarding the merit system, OSC strives to maximize the impact of its enforcement actions and deter future violations," said **Special Counsel Henry J. Kerner**. "OSC is committed to remedying retaliation against federal employees who engage in protected whistleblowing activities."