



One Voice, Union Strong

Local 1998 of the National Federation of Federal Employees, IMAAW, AFL-CIO

Representing the employees of Passport Services, a division of the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs, since Oct. 19, 1981

Workplace issues, proposals discussed at national UMC meeting

By Local 1998 S/T Jennifer Gile

From February 23-25, the National Union-Management Committee (NUMC) met at the Seattle Passport Agency for the combined 2009-2010 meeting. In attendance for the Union were Local 1998 nationwide officers Colin Walle, Rob Arnold, Jennifer Gile and Sue Lagle as well as CPC Senior Steward Boyd Hinton. Passport Services Director Dottie Flaak, Operations Officers Steve Rojas & Marc Saint-Victor, DOS Labor-Management Liaison Steve Polson, and Seattle Passport Agency Director Teresa Bobotek attended for Management.

The Parties came to the table with an ambitious agenda containing a whopping **41 topics!** Although many of the topics came from recent grievances and ULP's (see page 3) or past agendas, the majority of the issues discussed were suggested by

our local Union reps and bargaining unit employees (BUE). Some of these issues included: training, instructions, promotions/evaluations, early dismissals (see page 4), awards, and anti-fraud resources. The Parties bargained over TDIS/PIERS monitoring, transfer selection methods and ergonomics. Due to the short time frame, most bargaining could not be completed. However the Parties did sign an Ergonomic Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for Management to provide equipment when requested by BUE's. To view the MOA, please visit our website.

Although consensus was not reached on every issue, in many cases Management agreed with the Union that changes need to be made for the wellbeing of BUE's and Passport Services. The Parties came out of the talks with many ideas to discuss further on March 31, 2010.



RS Lagle signing the Ergonomic MOA

Miami Passport Agency helps evacuate American citizens from Haiti

By Local 1998 Steward Liza Escobar

After the devastating earthquake that killed thousands in Haiti, the Miami Passport Agency stepped up to the plate to help. The outreach began when a group of employees went to a predominantly Haitian neighborhood in Miami called Little Haiti. We passed out flyers

with information to help individuals who were trying to locate family members in Haiti.

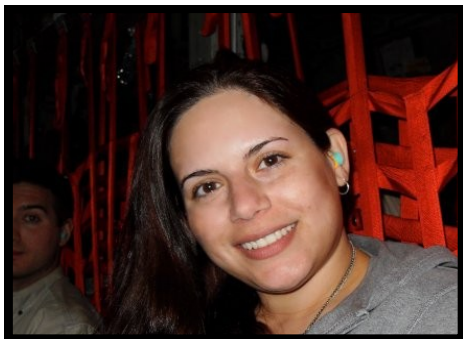
Some employees were chosen to meet and greet American citizens in Homestead, Miami, and Orlando. Other employees, such as myself, were fortunate enough to fly to Haiti in shifts from Homestead Air Force Base to assist in bringing American citizens back to the United States. While there we helped create flight manifests for the military, checked citizenship evidence, and helped evacuees board the flights. Sounds simple, yet it was anything but.

When I stepped off the C-130 in Port-au-Prince, I stepped into complete chaos. The line of evacuees seemed endless, the airport was in bad shape with visible cracks in the structure, you couldn't hear above the roar of the engines, the pace was fast

and furious, and the evacuees were justifiably exhausted. The military pilots would arrive and advise us of the number of passengers they could board, and then we would check citizenship evidence and create a flight manifest.

Once the manifest was created, the selected passengers were moved into a waiting tent until boarding. Then the next pilot would arrive and we would do it all over again. In order to help stowaways off the flights, and to help passengers that were exhausted, we also helped carry their children and bags onto the plane.

I was only there for 20 hours, yet this amazing experience and the memories will stay with me forever. I speak for my colleagues, as well as myself, when I say that it was truly rewarding to be able to help those in need.



PPT/MM Steward Escobar in a C-130

Local 1998 Training Report

By Local 1998 VP Rob Arnold

CBA joint-training class

Through the course of negotiations over the new 2009 collective bargaining agreement (CBA), the Parties agreed that a joint-training session to highlight the major changes and issues would be very beneficial to Management and Union reps at the local office level. Thanks to a Local 1998 training course planned for late September (see below-right), a large number of Union reps were already planning to be in Maryland around the same time as the annual Assistant Regional Director's conference in Virginia. Working with Passport Headquarters' Lori Voelz and Brykya Shelton (*thank you!*), we were able to schedule the two events to overlap on one day, and so the final day of the ARD conference was devoted to familiarizing everyone with the new CBA.

President Colin Walle flew to Washington, D.C in advance to meet with Steve Rojas from Program Management Operational Support (PMO, previously known as FO) and DOS Labor-Management Liaison Steve Polson. The following day, September 25th, Walle and Polson presented the joint-training effort to the ARD's and 25 Union reps. Some of the items covered were the new grievance process, formal meetings and employee rights.



Local 1998 reps brainstorming for mock negotiations

Training opportunities abound

In addition to the two classes offered in September, Local 1998 reps across the country were also able to attend a variety of other labor-related courses:

- ◆ 10 reps attended courses at the IAMAW Winpisinger Education & Technology Center.
- ◆ Local 1998 VP Rob Arnold attended an FMCS Institute course on arbitration evidence and witness examination. Advocates and attorneys from both the Labor and Management sides of the table attended, making class discussions very insightful.
- ◆ Reps from Boston, Denver & DC attended FLRA classes (see January 2009-Issue #15).



NFFE 1998 representatives in Leesburg, VA for the joint-training on our new CBA

First ever "passport-only" class

The big news on the training front since our last issue is the unprecedented training opportunity that fell into the Local's lap during 2009. IAMAW Winpisinger Education & Technology Center Director Chris Wagoner gave the green light to a week-long class tailored to Passport Services labor issues. Once a date for the course was set (September 27-October 2), IAMAW Instructor Anne Wiberg worked with the Local 1998 nationwide officers in the months leading up to the training, responding in good humor to constant requests for schedule changes and increasing demands on her staff's resources.

It was decided that the main course themes would be "grievances" and "bargaining." Once the agenda was set, Local 1998 President Walle, VP Rob Arnold and S/T Jennifer Gile worked long hours to create PowerPoint presentations, handouts, worksheets, role-playing scenarios and a brand new Steward Manual. The week proved very productive. The students, most of whom were new to the IAMAW's training facility, dealt with a demanding week of classes, often working past dinnertime. The course culminated in six mock negotiating sessions where the students had to persuade "Management" (played by some very convincing Union brothers and sisters) that their proposals were in the best interest of Passport Services. The bargaining topics included work schedules, duty officer rotations, awards, leave scheduling, desk assignments and dress code.

Classes were chiefly conducted by Local 1998 officers Walle, Gile and Arnold, with special sessions taught by Winpisinger instructors and NFFE national staff. A huge thanks must also be extended to Assistant Director Mary McHugh, IAM Government Employees Dept. Director Frank Carelli, NFFE President Bill Dougan and NFFE Secretary Treasurer Bill Fenaughty for making this happen!



30 NFFE 1998 "passport-only" course participants

Grievance Report: A grievance is a formal complaint over any violation of the Contract, law, rule or regulation.

Arbitration victory for the Union

By Local 1998 Vice President Rob Arnold

In 2008 and 2009, 47 employees were given admonishments for what Management determined to be inappropriate PIERS searches. While employees who performed a large number of unauthorized celebrity searches were fired and/or prosecuted in court, those who were admonished included cases of a single questionable search. In many instances, employees could not recall the circumstances of the search because they were asked about it years after the search was performed.

The Union filed a grievance over the admonishments being unfair. Management believed admonishments could not be grieved because the Foreign Affair Manual (FAM) excluded them from the grievance process, so they denied the grievance on that basis. Because the issue of grievance exclusions could have far-ranging consequences, the Union decided to risk thousands of dollars by going to arbitration.

President Colin Walle and I consulted with NFFE officials Bill Fenaughty and Susan Grundmann to help us prepare our case. The hearing was held in Washington, D.C. on May 21, 2009 where Mr. Fenaughty and I advocated for the Union.

Arbitrator Sean Rogers ruled that the burden of proof was on Management. Both Management witnesses admitted that portions of our collective bargaining agreement (CBA) can be grieved, whether or not they are listed in the Grievance Article. President Walle testified on the Parties' bargaining history.

After reviewing the evidence and subsequent written arguments, on July 30, 2009 the Arbitrator ruled in favor of the Union: *admonishments are grievable*. As the losing party, Management was responsible for the costs of the arbitration. The main takeaway message is that when there is a conflict between the CBA and the FAM, the CBA always wins.

Arbitration invoked over Chicago schedules

Articles 12, 26 & 27: Management unilaterally terminated the 4/10 CWS on the night shift at the Chicago Passport Agency. Arbitration is scheduled for June 9, 2010.

ULP Charge Settled

In 2008, NFFE Local 1998 filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge against the Department of State after a Honolulu Passport Agency probationary employee who served as a Union representative was recommended for non-retention. In January 2010, the Department of State and NFFE Local 1998 reached a joint resolution to this charge, to the satisfaction of the Union, Management, and the employee.

The terms of the settlement are confidential, however the Parties agreed to make public the following: 1) a settlement was reached; 2) the Agreement does not constitute an admission of guilt, fault, wrongdoing, or liability by any Party; and 3) the Parties recognize the statutory right of employees to organize and bargain collectively over terms and conditions of employment and to be free from interference, coercion, restraint, discrimination, and/or retaliation in conjunction with the exercise of such rights.

March 2010



Fenaughty, Arnold & Walle – prepared for arbitration

Sick leave restriction rescinded

Article 31: The Union succeeded in getting an unfair sick leave restriction rescinded for a Veteran with a health issue.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Article 6: Union reps at the Washington (DC), New Orleans and Seattle Passport Agencies filed grievances for employees who were not treated with respect and dignity.

Veterans Leave Accrual

Article 6: The Union is pursuing a grievance over the abrupt change in leave accrual status for Passport Specialists who served as U.S. Military Veterans.

Notational requirements

Articles 4, 12 & 18: The Union submitted multiple grievances, currently in progress, over the unfairness of new notational requirements introduced in 2009 and 2010.

Adjudication standards

Article 18: The Union is preparing to file a grievance over aspects of the 2010 adjudication standards, including the methodology used to establish the standards.

Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charges : A "ULP" is filed with the FLRA over a violation of 5 USC 7116.

New and Pending ULP's

By Local 1998 President Colin Patrick Walle

Recently, Local 1998 filed two Unfair Labor Practice charges after Management officials in two offices (WN & CPC) made changes to working conditions without bargaining with the Union:

- WN: Management made unilateral changes to the desk seating arrangement. The arrangements were previously negotiated with the Union.
- CPC: Management refused to bargain with the Union on the use of volunteers for the outreach program, subsequently terminated that program, and a manager blamed the Union for the termination.

The Union had previously filed two other ULP's - over the job elements for non-adjudicators and the 2009 Internal Controls Guidelines - which are still pending with the FLRA.

Your award-winning newsletter

It was announced on August 29, 2009 that the 2009 editions of this newsletter won multiple accolades for the IAMAW's 2009 newsletter contest (800 eligible IAM locals). NFFE Local 1998 was recognized in three categories:



- ◆ General Excellence (3rd Place)
- ◆ Layout and Design (Honorable Mention)
- ◆ Feature Article (Honorable Mention)

Secretary-Treasurer Jennifer Gile serves as the editor of the newsletter, Union President Colin Walle serves as the publisher, and PPT/WN Union Steward Tanika Jenkins wrote the article that received Honorable mention for Best Feature. To view previous issues of our newsletter, please visit the newsletter page on our website:

http://www.nffe1998.org/news_Newsletters.htm

Local 1998 membership growth

By Local 1998 S/T Jennifer Gile

Over the years, Local 1998 has continued to grow as BUE recognize the many benefits of membership. Currently we are at **444** dues-paying members, up from **369** since our last regular newsletter was published (April 2009-Issue #16) – and hopefully many more to come. Much of this growth is thanks to the tireless work of our Senior Stewards and Stewards, including the numerous membership drives they have organized.

In recognition of our outstanding success as a Federal union with above average membership numbers, Local 1998 is one of five NFFE locals selected by NFFE national to send a representative to Legislative Week. We are excited about this opportunity and look forward to furthering labor interests with Congress.

Early dismissals – problem solved!

By Local 1998 S/T Jennifer Gile

The 2009 winter holiday season saw the usual crazy weather and hectic public counters that we have come to expect. And, as with previous years, orders came down for early dismissals on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Unfortunately, many offices did not receive word in time, and consequently many BUE missed out on some or all of the early dismissal.

When the nationwide Union leadership learned of this problem, we immediately contacted Passport HQ to remedy the situation. Passport HQ advised local offices to grant those employees the administrative leave they are entitled to under Article 31, Section 6 of the CBA (“Administrative Leave or Excused Absence”).

Benefits Corner

By Local 1998 S/T Jennifer Gile

There are many benefits available **only** to dues-paying members that can be viewed at <http://www.nffe1998.org/bylaws.htm>. Due to our affiliation with the AFL-CIO, members are also eligible for valuable Union Plus discounts and programs.

Ready to go GREEN? Dues-paying members are eligible for great rebates and discounts on green home improvements, vehicles, and more! For information, visit:

www.unionplus.org/green-unions/labor-environmentalism



Go Green, Save Green

Local reps negotiating agreements

By Local 1998 President Colin Patrick Walle

While the new 111-page long collective bargaining agreement (CBA) covers many working conditions and rules for employees across Passport Services, there are still a number of issues and details that must be negotiated at the local office level. Union representatives in local offices have been working hard to address new topics or to update old policies to ensure they are in compliance with the new CBA. Topics include:

- **Work Schedules:** Union reps in Detroit and San Francisco have reached agreements, while reps in Boston, New Orleans, CPC, WPC, Seattle, Minneapolis, Honolulu, and Colorado have submitted proposals. Chicago's dispute is headed to arbitration (see page 3).
- **Dress Code:** Union reps in CPC and Colorado negotiated local agreements, while Union reps in Minneapolis, Washington, SIA, and Seattle have submitted proposals.
- **Parking:** Union reps in Miami negotiated the first ever local agreement on parking spaces between NFFE Local 1998 and Passport Services, requiring that Management obtain spaces for twenty bargaining unit employees.
- **Desk Arrangements:** Union reps in Seattle negotiated a seating agreement, while reps in WPC and Minneapolis are addressing this issue.
- **Awards:** Union reps at CPC reached an agreement on a “Coin” award, while reps in Seattle, CO, WPC, and Minneapolis are tackling this subject as well.
- **Leave Procedures:** Union reps in Colorado successfully bargained for an agreement, while reps in Minneapolis are also working on it.

NFFE Local 1998 Nationwide Union Reps

President Colin Patrick Walle; **Vice President** Rob Arnold; **Secretary-Treasurer (S/T)** Jennifer Gile; **Recording Secretary** Susan Lagle; **Chief Steward** Karen Proctor-Adams; **Trustees** Karen Proctor-Adams, Michelle Tardiff, & Josue Trinidad-Perez

NFFE Local 1998 Local Senior Stewards

BN: Janis Galvin; **CPC:** Boyd Hinton; **CG:** *; **CO:** Corrina Davis; **CT:** *; **DA:** *; **DE:** Tonia Aikens; **HH:** Ted Palmer; **HN:** Lisa Bohannon; **HQ:** Kamaria Blandford; **LA:** *; **MN:** Jerry Carter; **MM:** Dale Chai; **NO:** Debra Reese-Jolly; **NY:** 2 Feathers Neal; **PA:** Sharlene Dandridge; **NPC:** Helen Bechard; **SF:** *; **SE:** Sang Hwang; **SIA:** Amaise Robinson; **WN:** Melissa Toby; **WPC:** Angel Rivera

NFFE Local 1998 Local Stewards

BN: *; **CPC:** Boyd Hinton; **CG:** Claude Scott & Jeri Titus; **CO:** *; **CT:** *; **DA:** Reggie Saunders; **DE:** *; **HH:** Jeff Affleck; **HN:** Butrina Tolbert & James Rideaux; **HQ:** Kamaria Blandford; **LA:** Lynnette Frowner; **MN:** Lindsey Liddell; **MM:** Ana Mercado & Liza Escobar; **NO:** Debra Reese-Jolly, Jeanette Triplett & Jamie Brewin; **NY:** Millie Nunez; **PA:** *; **NPC:** Susan Lagle, Arthur Levant, Paul Barton, Amanda Booher, Kathleen King, Frank Love, Helen Bechard, Cheryl Miller, & Michelle Tardiff; **SF:** *; **SE:** Michelle Salisbury & Bernard Thomas; **SIA:** Akia West; **WN:** Tanika Jenkins & Josue Trinidad-Perez; **WPC:** *

* denotes a vacant position. Contact the Union President for interest in filling a vacant position or if you are an employee without representation.