

◆ Local 1998 News ◆

Issue 3

National Federation of Federal Employees - Local 1998

November 1999



WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE AFFILIATION OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES (NFFE) WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MACHINISTS AND AEROSPACE WORKERS (IAMAW). THE AFFILIATION BRINGS NEW LIFE TO NFFE AND WILL MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO LOCAL 1998. WE WILL SOON SEE INCREASED SUPPORT FOR OUR EFFORTS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. MEMBERS WILL ALSO PARTICIPATE IN THE IAMAW BENEFITS

President's Message

I find it hard to believe that Colin and I have nearly reached the three-quarter mark of our term in office as president and secretary/treasurer of Local 1998. The time has passed quickly. It has been a rewarding experience to associate with many of you over the past seventeen months and I am proud to be associated with the great membership of Local 1998. As we approach the last quarter of the current term, I would like to address the current state of the Local and some of our priorities for the immediate future.

State of the Local

What is the current condition of Local 1998? In order to make that determination, we need to review recent Local history. I will use a starting point of June 1998, when Colin and I began our term of service. I would like to review a few essential areas.

Communication

Prior to June 1998, there was little communication among the members and officers of the Local beyond the individual offices. A newsletter had not been issued since the early 1990s. There were few other attempts to communicate Local 1998 news and information. Communication is essential to the success of any organization. Where there is little or no communication, it is a sign that an organization is weak and struggling.

During the past seventeen months, communication has increased significantly between members of the Executive Board and the general membership. The Executive Board took the opportunity to meet while in Washington in May. A newsletter has been issued semi-annually, this issue being the third. Colin and I have made our phone numbers and e-mail addresses available to the entire membership. We have instituted our own website. In May we began a weekly update via e-mail to members of the Executive Board and partnership coordinators. That has recently been expanded to include all members of Local 1998 with e-mail addresses. In

addition, Colin and I have communicated personally with many of you by phone and e-mail. Last November we obtained official permission from Passport Services to use e-mail to conduct Local 1998 business (though it must be done on personal time).

What's Next? We need to stay the course we have started through the use of e-mail, newsletters, the internet, and personal communication. As photodig is installed in every agency, we will have a greater ability to stay in communication with the entire membership of Local 1998 through e-mail. Though it is a relatively insignificant item, we are in the process of creating and issuing to every member a Local 1998 membership card.

Association With NFFE

In my 1998 campaign letter I wrote: "I have been a member of the union for nearly three years and have yet to receive a membership card. I understand there are union benefits, but I have yet to receive any information. I suspect there are many of us in the same boat. If we are going to be part of NFFE and pay dues, we need to have greater contact and support." Contact with NFFE has increased. In spite of many internal NFFE problems, NFFE has been supportive of our efforts. Colin and I met with NFFE president Richard Brown last fall while in Washington. John Paolino, chief labor negotiator, has assisted us on a number of occasions with a variety of issues. John also provided a half-day of training for the Executive Board following the partnership training last May. Colin was successful in obtaining a replacement check from NFFE for uncashed rebate checks going back three years. Our northwest NFFE representative, Mike Thorsteinson, spent a day in Seattle instructing



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President's Message - Continued

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us in the basics of management-employee relations. He also assisted us in filing the successful Unfair Labor Practice charge with the FLRA. Jim Davis, northeast NFFE representative, assisted Philadelphia with a recruiting drive earlier this summer and is planning to travel to Portsmouth to assist our new union members at NPC.

What's Next? We need to continue to cultivate the relationship we have developed with NFFE. NFFE will be going through important changes over the next few months as the affiliation with IAMAW becomes effective. We must be in tune with these developments. I believe these changes will be positive and will be beneficial to all of us working for Passport Services. We need to work at stronger relationships with all the NFFE national reps around the country. They can be of tremendous assistance as we move this Local forward in serving Passport employees nationwide.

Membership Growth

A strong, representative membership is necessary to advance the goals of Local 1998. As Colin and I began our term of office last year, the membership of Local 1998 stood at about 40 members, or 6% of the bargaining unit. Over the past year we have discussed the importance of increased membership in order to strengthen our partnerships and to bargain successfully with management as we negotiate a new contract. Many of you have taken this to heart and worked at recruiting new members. At the time we took office, we believed 25% of the bargaining unit was an obtainable goal over the two year term. Due to your efforts we have now reached a membership of 128, or about 20% of all represented Passport employees.

What's next? We need to stay on course for 25%, but I think we can do better. Chicago and Seattle each have about 50% of their eligible employees in the union. Washing-ton-TD has rapidly increased their numbers. If it can happen in those three offices, it can happen in every agency. Consider the impact on negotiations, partnerships, and service to Local membership if we had 300 or more members.

"A strong, representative membership is necessary to advance the goals of

Partnerships

The Partnership Agreement between Passport Services and Local 1998 was signed in April 1995. A few attempts had been made to organize regional partnerships, but by June 1998, the vast majority of partnerships had fizzled. I came to this office with a belief that partnerships may be the most important development in employee/management relations in many years. We are dealing with constant change in the Passport Office due to technology advances and a government work place being reshaped by the political climate. If we do not form strong partnerships, nationally and locally, these changes will be made without our input.

Last November, Colin and I met with management officials and emphasized renewal of the partnership under the 1995 agreement. Working with Jeanne Sprott of Field Coordination, we have re-initiated this process with the training held at the Foreign Service Institute in May. Two to three representatives from each office attended. A June 1999 memorandum from Georgia Rogers,

Managing Director for Passport Services, and myself called for re-establishment of regional partnerships. At this time, more than half of the offices have established working partnerships. Important issues are being discussed and solutions to problems drafted. One big disappointment is the failure of many Regional Directors and Assistant Directors to participate directly.

What's Next?

We need to stay on course and make sure every office has a working partnership. We need to broaden the experience and share the ideas generated in the regional partnerships. We also need to re-establish the national partnership as called for in the Partnership Agreement.

"Partnerships may be the most important development in employee/management relations in

Union Contract

When running for Local president in 1998, I called for re-negotiation of Agreement Between Passport Services and the National Federation of Federal Employees—Local 1998. It was last negotiated in 1991. It is a good contract, but needs to be updated for changes in technology and personnel policy. In June I submitted a request to Georgia Rogers to re-negotiate the contract. Negotiations are now scheduled to take place early in the year 2000. We have sought input from the members of the Local and the employees of Passport Services. We are currently in the process of drafting a revised contract.

What's Next? Continue our preparations for negotiation. We continue to seek your input, for this is your contract. After negotiating a new agreement, we want to discuss specific measures with Passport Services for instituting and adhering to the provisions of the contract.

Union Dues

We are all concerned about how our bi-weekly deduction is being spent. I made this statement in my 1998 campaign letter: "The majority of the dues go to NFFE, but a small portion goes to the local. Where is that money? How has it been used? As president, I would work with the secretary-treasurer to account for all dues."

Colin has prepared a review of Local finances since June of 1998, which appears in this edition of the newsletter. Colin has done a tremendous job in updating finances, obtaining rebates from NFFE, and in working with the personnel office to get dues taken out in a timely manner.

What's Next? With the affiliation of NFFE with IAMAW, we should soon be receiving regular rebate checks. Unfortunately, our portion has become small leaving the Local with little income. The time has come that we need to seriously consider an increase in dues. I am making such a proposal that will be addressed on a separate handout that will accompany this newsletter.

Over the past year, we have been involved in a number of other activities. Earlier this year we conducted agency Vice Presidential elections to ensure that the Local as a whole is run democratically. We have lobbied management for a more streamlined awards process. We have dealt with complaints and grievances on promotions and selections, performance ratings, holiday time off, and a variety of other issues. Almost every day I receive a phone call or e-mail from one of you with questions and concerns. Most of your issues are easily resolved, but the number of contacts points out

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President's Message - Continued

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the necessity of not only having the union, but of building a stronger and more effective Local. We have all accomplished a great deal during the past seventeen months. Many of you are to be commended for the efforts made at building membership, representing employees, and renewing partnerships. And yet, there is so much more to be done. We cannot sit still or we will slide back. Working together we can continue to move the Local forward better serve our membership.

As always, please feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail.

Until next time,

Bill Beardall
President Local 1998

Colin's Corner

Greetings fellow union members!

We now have 130 members in our Local, which is an unprecedented number in our history. Bargaining unit members from Stamford, Honolulu, NPC, and TD have joined the union for the first time. Welcome aboard to all the new members!

The job of the secretary-treasurer is to safeguard and account for the Local's finances and to serve as the keeper of important union materials, such as its constitution, membership list, and seal. "How much money do we have?" "How many members do we have, and who are they?" "What is in our Local Constitution?" "Do we have an official seal for our Local?" Unfortunately, these are actual questions asked by union members in the past. One of my campaign promises was to help our union establish institutional continuity: to make sure that the officers had answers to those questions, and to make sure that those answers are passed on to the next secretary-treasurer. Toward that end, we have scanned copies of the contract, the Local 1998 Constitution, the Partnership Agreement, and the SF1187 form. Thanks to Christi Mason and Jon Peterson, of the Seattle office, for their help in this endeavor.

I have also created a transition notebook to make the job easier for the next secretary-treasurer. The notebook includes a copy of Local 1998's Constitution, our Partnership Agreement with Passport Management, our LM number and other Department of Labor information, our IRS non-profit taxpayer ID, and a list of members and their addresses. This is a duplicate of the notebook that I use, so I will send it to whoever succeeds me immediately after the election results are announced. The seal of the local was lost in the mail en route to me, so it will have to be replaced.

Finances

I have completed a financial report detailing the local's finances (see your vice president for a copy). The Unfair Labor Practice charge that I filed against the Personnel office, for delays in processing SF-1187s, was successfully concluded in August. Dues are being deducted on a timely basis and we received a check for \$843.42 from Passport Services to reimburse us for the dues. NFFE northwest representative Mike Thorsteinson was instrumental in filing the charge. Management team members Bill Struck and Steve

Ledford were responsive and quickly resolved the issue.

Out of \$8.14 you pay in dues every two weeks, \$7.71 goes to NFFE National and \$0.43 goes to Local 1998. How has Local 1998 used this money? In three words: democracy, representation, and communication.

Democracy: Funds were spent to hold NFFE Local 1998's first election in years for president and secretary-treasurer, in May 1998. An election was also held in April 1999 for the office Vice Presidents, who serve on the Executive Board with Bill and me. Leah Anderson attended the 1998 NFFE National Convention in New Orleans on behalf of our Local. Costs included a PO Box rental, envelopes, postage, labels, along with airfare, convention fees, and some meals associated with the trip to New Orleans. In the future, savings could perhaps be achieved by sending Local 1998 members who live in the host city to the national convention, thus avoiding airfare and meal expenditures.

Representation: Costs were incurred only for envelopes and postage for grievances and the Unfair Labor Practice charge filed against PMD. We have set up a savings account that serves as our constitutionally mandated arbitration fund.

Communication: Printing costs, envelopes, and postage were paid in order to send three newsletters to all the members. The web site was established at no cost by Bill.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to get to know many of you, and look forward to working with you to help make our union even stronger and more effective. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, I'm just a phone call or email away.



Reminder: Please send all requests for union dues payroll deductions (SF1187) to me at PO Box 2221, Seattle, WA 98111-2221. The forms must be sent to me so that I can sign them as the "authorized official" and so that I can better keep track of new members and their addresses. If the dues have not been deducted within 6 weeks of sending the form to me, please give me a call or send me an email.

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[www.geocities.com/
CapitolHill/Lobby/6014/](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/6014/)

Spring Partnership & Union Training
By Leah Anderson, Vice President - Los Angeles

Our trip started on May 9 (Mother's Day). I wasn't that thrilled, because I had to leave at



8:50 A.M., so I didn't have much of a Mothers Day. I arrived in D. C. safe and not so s o u n d (s m i l e) . Upon arrival at The

Virginian Suites, I met Eva Brumfield from Chicago and Annette Wood from San Francisco. I had talked with each on many occasions, but had never met them before. It was nice to put a face with the name. That evening, a few of us got together and went out for our own Mother's Day dinner.

Bright and early Monday morning union and management representatives met in the lobby of the hotel. From there we took a shuttle to the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC). Partnership training was done by Hank Groton and Denise Patterson McKinney from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. The attendees were split up into two sections because of the number of people attending. All of the regional offices, plus the Office of Technology Development, Special Issuance Agency, and the National Passport Center were represented. Mr. Groton was an excellent instructor. The other group reported that Ms. McKinney was also an excellent instructor. We had two full days of instruction, brain storming, finding solutions to problems, and even getting some of the managers to open up and have fun.

Both management and union representatives learned that both sides have to work together for the partnership to work. Each side has to respect the other side. It must



be done as a team effort. Some of the topics we discussed included:

1. How to create an effective partnership
2. When to have the meetings

3. How to manage the meetings
4. How to measure the progress
5. Problem solving techniques
 - Recognizing the problem
 - Finding a solution
 - Implementing the solution
 - Evaluate the outcome

I considered one of the most important issues to be that management and the union **BEING WILLING TO COMMUNICATE AND COMMIT** in order for the partnership to be successful. There can be not "surprise-isms", meaning that management can not make a decision about wanting to do something and then notify the union about it after the fact or after it has been implemented.

The day after the partnership training, all the union representatives met with John Paolino at NFFE national headquarters for a half day of training. He taught us what management can and can not do. It was a morning of valuable training.



We all had a chance to meet with the president, Rick Brown, and have our picture taken with him. We all said our teary goodbyes and went off to either catch our planes, trains, or buses.

Well, I guess I have rambled enough about what a nice time I had meeting everyone. I feel that we all came away with a better understanding of the meaning of partnership, and how important it is for both management and the union.

Respectfully
Leah Anderson

**Make A Difference
Please Give**

