



(April 7, 2016)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee
National VA Council, President

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FEDSMILL - "Respect for Employee Rights, Ideas, Insights, Participation and Unions Generates the Power to Improve Government"

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GRIEVANCE DRAFTING TIPS 1, 2 & 3

Most contracts merely require the union to put the following in the grievance: 1- Article and section violated, 2- Description of the grieved event, and 3- Remedy desired. As clear as that or similar language appears, there are some drafting tips that will boost your chances of winning. (Be sure to check out the conclusion of this post entitled, "[Grievance Drafting Tips 4, 5, & 6.](#)") [Continue reading →](#)

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LADIES OF THE LAW

A conference is coming up that will feature the four most important women in federal sector labor and employee relations. The National Academy of Arbitrators along with FMCS is sponsoring a program in early May where the four Presidential appointees will take the stage to answer questions. They are Mary Jacksteit, Chairman FSIP; Carol Waller Pope, Chairman FLRA; Allison Beck, Director FMCS; and Susan Grundmann, Chairman MSPB. The meeting will be in Atlantic City, NJ and we hear rumors that there are just 29 slots left. Here is the agenda. This track is intended primarily for Federal Sector management and union representatives. Top Federal policy makers will describe where their agencies stand and identify hot issues and trends. Skills to be imparted include bullet-proofing cases, briefs and awards, preparing successful challenges and defenses in discipline cases, dealing with remedies and handling arbitration appeals. Format will include lectures, panel discussions, audience participation and mock hearing. Experienced arbitrators, advocates and attorneys will be there to guide attendees through various segments. For more information contact FMCS Commissioner Barbara Lichtman at [215-717-7500](tel:215-717-7500) or email blichtman@fmcs.gov.

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WOW! AFGE DOES IT AGAIN

In theory, it should be hard for unions to even maintain prior membership levels, much less grow, with the size of government decreasing in every agency. But apparently theory is no match for talented union leadership. In January we [congratulated IFPTE, IAFF and the NLRBU](#) for increasing membership despite severe government-wide staffing cuts. NATCA has also now reported a net membership increase last year. But the big news is that the 800 pound gorilla among federal sector unions, AFGE, has removed all doubt about the success of those four being a fluke. AFGE just filed its LM-2 for 2015 showing that it increased its net membership by almost 13,000 (From 281,731 last year to 294,257 this year.) That means it has increased membership every year since 2000, which none of its so-called rivals has come close to doing. AFGE certainly has our congrats and admiration, but that cannot possibly compare to the satisfaction it must already be feeling. Nothing is as certain a measure of employee satisfaction with a union as setting membership records year-after-year. Hopefully, other unions will learn from what AFGE has done to reverse their own membership declines. Here is what we can tell you about how it did it. [Continue reading →](#)

