AFGE LOCAL 3313
AMERICAN FEDERATION
OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

February 28, 2025

Local 3313 Message to Members: 2025-3

Title: State of Labor Relations Update

Items Covered: Return to Office
Reduction in Force
Finding Information/Joining AFGE

All,

Return to Office

Dear Bargaining Unit Employees, this subject was addressed in the prior communication #2, dated February 11, 2025. AFGE Local 3313 is working hard on addressing the pending return to office (RTO) notice from OPM and the Assistant Secretary for Administration. Please know that Local 3313 supports you and will continue to fight on your behalf to ensure all applicable laws and due process are followed going forward. Several of the Operating Administrations have agreed to open bargaining, while others have not. For the two that have not complied, the union has filed an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge with the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) against them. The Union alleges those agencies have violated the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (5 USC 71).

Reduction in Force (RIF)

A quote by the late American Author and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar, "Expect the best: Prepare for the worst, capitalize on what comes "rings poignant, defiant, and true during these times. In other words, don't fear the obstacles, plan for them, and make use of them when they come. That way, you will gain a sense of achievement either way. Please note, that I am a management Analyst, I am not a paid professional regarding personal financial decision-making, thus consider this as information and not professional advice. Please contact your Operating Administration's Human Resources Benefits professional for specific information. The 47th presidential administration has directed agencies to begin developing reduction in force (RIF) and reorganization plans outlined in the "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative Executive Order issued on February 11. OPM's direction to the Departments can be found here.

The regulatory requirements governing reduction in force are contained in Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 351[1]. Federal agencies must follow the procedures contained in our specific Collective Bargaining Agreements and the Code of Federal Regulations when conducting a RIF[2]. OPM's RIF regulations prioritize four factors in releasing employees:

1. tenure of employment (e.g., type of appointment);
2. veterans' preference;
3. length of service; and

[1] https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-5/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-351
[2] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/reductions-in-force-rif/

4. performance ratings.

During a RIF, an employee may be separated, downgraded, transferred to another position, or left alone. Further information may be found in the Workforce Reshaping Operations Handbook A Guide for Agency Management and Human Resource Offices [3] In anticipation of the worst, employees should take the following immediate actions:

- Familiarize yourself with your specific situation.
- Set-up a meeting with your Benefits professional (officer).
- Download a copy of your Electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF).
- Assess your finances and build reserves as applicable – just because you survive the first RIF, does not mean there won't be a second.

During a RIF scenario, several programs are often activated to include Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA), Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR), and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VSIP). Here is a little information on these programs.

VERA[4] –allows agencies that are undergoing substantial restructuring, reshaping, downsizing, transfer of function, or reorganization to temporarily lower the age and service requirements to increase the number of employees eligible for retirement. VERA can make it possible for employees to receive an immediate annuity years before they would otherwise be eligible. VERA must be approved by OPM and used at the agency's discretion.

DSR[5] – Non-voluntary early retirement in the federal government can occur through a reduction in force (RIF) or Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR). DSR provides an immediate annuity to employees who are in-voluntarily separated. Employees separated for cause are not eligible for DSR.

VSIP[6] - Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments

Benefits

- *Grade in pay retention* – if you successfully completed twelve months at the higher grade and are placed in a grade one or two grades lower, then you are entitled to retain the higher pay for two years.

- *Future Priority Placement* for other jobs is authorized at the discretion of the Agency.

Employees involuntarily removed may be entitled to severance pay.

Severance Pay[7]

- Involuntary removal.
- Completed 52 weeks.
- Eligibility – Employees may not have declined a position offer in the commuting area and no more than two grades below your current position.
- Removal for cause will nullify severance.

[3] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/reductions-in-force-rif/workforce_reshaping.pdf
[4] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/voluntary-early-retirement-authority/
[5] https://www.opm.gov/retirement-center/publications-forms/csrsfers-handbook/c044.pdf
[6] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/voluntary-separation-incentive-payments/guide.pdf
[7] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/fact-sheets/severance-pay/

- Calculation[8] –
    - Considers Age (over 40), years of service, and basic pay.
    - 1 week of basic salary for each full year of creditable serve up to 10 years.
    - 2 weeks of basic salary for each full year of creditable serve beyond 10 years.
    - 25% for each full 3 months of creditable service that exceeds your final full year.
    - Age allowance – 2.5% for every 3 months above 40.

Know your Bargaining Unit Status

You are receiving this because you have been identified as a member of AFGE Local 3313's Bargaining Unit. For those unsure whether you are included in the bargaining unit, please review box 37 on your SF-50 form. You are in a bargaining unit if the block includes any number other than 7777, or 8888. Please note that all bargaining unit employees are included in the union whether they are paying members or not. Stay informed with AFGE news alerts. You can sign up for these updates with your personal contact information here.

For general questions, emails from OPM or DOT Management, unusual instructions from your supervisor, or anything else regarding your rights as a worker, reach out to your respective Union officials listed on our site Union Officials | AFGE LOCAL 3313

(Membership allows for more benefits compared to non-memberships! Go here to learn more: AFGE | Join AFGE Today!

1 Attached
Local 3313 Communication to the Membership Memo #2

Approved:

Eugene Johnson
President
AFGE Local 3313

[8] https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/fact-sheets/severance-pay-estimation-worksheet/