



Telling Our Story

A Communications Best Practices Guide for AFGE Activists





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Introduction

Communications Best Practices for Locals

Communications is a vital function at every level of our union. How we communicate with one another – whether it's through face-to-face meetings, newsletters, flyers, or digital tools – shapes our connection with our members locally and across the nation.

As a union activist, it's important that you're able to communicate with your fellow members. This guide will assist you in reaching and mobilizing members with the help of communications tools. We've pulled together best practices in key communications areas that will build your toolbox and strengthen how you connect with your desired audiences.

This guide will help you create messages that resonate. It will explain email communications and mobilizing your membership. We'll give you tips on how to talk to the press and help you find your corner

of social media. We'll also cover video production and photography. And last but not least, we'll examine how you

can use websites, newsletters, and branding to strengthen your local and make AFGE Big Enough to Win.

With each of these topics, you'll find:

Goals to adapt to your local.

Goals help you visualize success and help you select the right tools to succeed.

Ways to measure success.

Keeping track of performance helps you determine if the tool you're using is the right one. Each section will include ways for you to measure how well you're implementing your plan. We've pulled together tips from the best communicators in the world to help you maximize your use of tools and strategies.

How you can get started.

Throughout this guide you will find tips and definition boxes that explain key

communications terms.

Before you dive in, remember one thing:

There is no perfect plan that works for everyone.

Every local faces its unique challenges. Every local has different needs, goals, and available time. But if you use this guide as a roadmap for planning, you're less likely to take a wrong turn.

Remember one more thing: the AFGE Communications Department is here to help you achieve your goals! For more information and a personalized assessment please contact us at 202.639.6419 or communications@afge.org.



Learn more about communication tools to get out your local's message at www.afge.org/commstraining.



Messaging

We've all heard the saying, "It's not what you say, it's how you say it." Your message matters, regardless of whether you're communicating in-person, through print materials, or online. How we share our values, workplace actions, and information will make the difference in how members engage with our union.

There are three parts to an effective message:

1 Make a values statement on a relevant issue/person

- Relate to your audience and grab their attention

2 Establish the problem

- Something that affects your audience

3 Introduce the solution

- What can be done to solve the problem?
- Make sure your audience sees AFGE and themselves as part of the solution

Good messaging gets members to take action. With that objective in mind, set goals for increased member participation in events and engagement with your communications tools. This includes looking at the numbers (or metrics) behind your social media pages (like Facebook and Twitter), email communications, and even text messages. We'll look more into metric tracking later in the guide.

Messaging Best Practices

Communications to your membership should be:

Values-based. Connect with your members on shared values. When a connection is formed, people begin to see themselves taking action and getting involved.

Personal, story-based.

Put a face to the impact of issues at your worksite. Move government jargon and legalese to the side to make way for personal stories that paint a picture of the shared values of your members.

Simple. Don't leave your audience confused. Messages should be plain and simple. Break down complex issues for your audience. Don't assume they know the whole story (but only tell them the details that really matter).

Actionable. What do you want members to do with the information you've provided? Members should feel empowered to take action and support the mission of your local after every communication.





Positive. Lead with communications that empower, and inspire your members to take action. Explaining a troubling issue at your local shouldn't leave your members feeling hopeless. Members will be engaged if they can clearly see themselves as part of a solution.

Planned. Create a content calendar detailing when you will send out newsletters, post flyers, conduct meetings, and email your members. A content calendar is a great way to keep track of your communications tools and what topics you are discussing with your members. This allows you to build a plan of action around critical campaigns and issues at your local.

Consistent. Plan when you will communicate with your

members and stick to it. You want your members to know when to expect to hear from you.

How to Get Started

Take an inventory of where you are in your communications:

- Do you know how your members prefer to hear from you?
- How many members attend local events?
- Do you have a newsletter? How do you communicate with members right now?
- How many members are signed up for AFGE text messaging?

Once you have an idea of where you are, set goals for where you'd like to be.

Here's a few example goals:

- Create a newsletter and connect with your members regularly
- Create materials to promote upcoming events
- Start a Facebook group with fellow union members so you can stay connected on pressing issues
- Have a coffee date twice a month with a fellow member you'd like to get to know better
- Work with the Communications Department to create newsletter and email templates that are specific to your local



Email Marketing & Mobilization

People increasingly receive their news and maintain family and friend relationships online. Implementing web-based tools can facilitate and streamline how members contact and start a conversation with AFGE. Engaging audiences online is an effective way to complement and magnify your day-to-day union activities.

Email is the foundation of member digital communications. At the national level, AFGE uses an e-activist network that allows us to mobilize scores of trade unionists at the click of a button. This also can be replicated at the local level.

Goals to consider are:

- A consistent email program that serves your local's individual needs. For some, this may mean a weekly email updating the local on events. For others, this may be a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter. For others, it may mean quick messages alerting members when there is a meeting or action taking place.
- Increased involvement in your local (more people coming to meetings, joining the local, attending events, participating in legislative action, etc.).

Measures of Success

With your goals set, there are a few things to consider when assessing if you're on track with your email program. Below are examples for measuring how your members are engaging with the emails you send:

- Open rate statistics (how many people opened your email)

- Click-through rate statistics (if you link to something in your email, how many people clicked on the link)
- Attendance at local meetings, rallies, or events after sending an email about it
- Number of phone calls made to Congress or government in support of pro-worker legislation

An open rate is the percentage of how many people have opened your email. So, if you sent an email to 100 members and 25 of them opened it, your open rate would be 25 percent.

A click-through rate is the percentage of how many people clicked on a link in your email. So, if 100 people opened your email and 13 of them clicked on the link, your click through rate would be 13 percent. If you use an email distribution service like Mailchimp or Constant Contact, you can find these statistics on the administrator dashboard.

Best Practices

Use the following checklist for each email you send:

- Whenever possible, send emails to personal email accounts only, during non-work hours, to personal computers and cell phones.

AFGE National has found that many members are uncomfortable receiving email to their work email address during work hours, as this may be a violation of the Hatch Act or Anti-Lobbying Act.

- Use the most up-to-date email list – make sure email addresses are accurate.

AFGE members can make sure their contact information is current by visiting www.afge.org/update. Here you will find update options for members, local officers, and bargaining council

representatives. It's important to keep this information up-to-date. Providing a personal (non-government) email address is mandatory for you to log in to the AFGE national website. It's also a best practice to receive AFGE action alerts to your personal email account.

- If a member asks to be unsubscribed from the list, make sure they are unsubscribed as soon as possible. To continue sending emails to a member who has requested to be unsubscribed is a violation of the CAN-SPAM Act.

The CAN-SPAM Act is a law that states that to be on an email list, you have to actively opt-in to that email list. For AFGE members, we get email addresses when members list that information on their membership forms. It means that our members gave their permission for us to email them. This law also says that if someone requests to unsubscribe from a list (no longer receive emails), they must be unsubscribed from that list as soon as possible after that request.

Use AFGE-branded materials whenever possible, to build the union community and

establish expectations with your local members.

- Use a public, but secure, email address – one that doesn't belong to any individual person, in case that person retires or leaves their post.

Example: If you are Local 5000, consider starting a Gmail email account used exclusively for sending emails and call it AFGELocal5000@gmail.com. Create a password that two or three trained local members know and keep it safe in case the point person leaves or is unavailable to run the email program. Once you have an account created, you can send messages directly from Gmail or create an account with an email service like MailChimp. More on this in a moment!

- Your subject line should be short, to the point, and catchy, so members are likely to open it.
- Primarily send an email when you have an action for your members to take. When sending meeting minutes or reports, attach them as a review item for the next upcoming meeting. Examples of action-oriented emails include:

- A meeting, rally, or event you would like them to attend.
- A legislative action to take, like calling or writing their lawmaker.
- A newsletter you would like for them to read.
- A social media post you would like them to share.
- Your email should be easy to understand and brief – no more than 300 words.
- Be careful of the language you use. Do not use vulgar, offensive, or charged language. Speak honestly but politely to your members. Focus on how your writing will affect working people and their families.

How to Get Started

First things first! Make sure you have the most up-to-date contact information for your local members. You will want to prioritize home email addresses over professional/work accounts, because you can send a wider variety of email messages to personal accounts.

Next, determine how large is your contact list – this will determine which email program would be best for you to use to send emails to members.



Later in this guide (Page 38) we will explore AFGE's branding and how you can build AFGE's image in your communities.

- If your local is small (less than 20 members), you may choose to use something like Gmail or Outlook to send your messages (but don't use government resources).
- If your local is larger (more than 20 members), you may choose to use a program like Mailchimp, which is a free email program for email lists with less than 2,000 subscribers.

Using a service like Mailchimp (www.mailchimp.com) will allow you to track the performance of your emails through open and click-through rates. This data is helpful in determining what subjects resonate best with your audience. You can even use the information to test what's

the best day of the week and time of day to email your members. This level of tracking is not available through Gmail and Outlook.

Once you determine what email system you will use, make sure your local has a common (but secure) email address to use as a response mailbox for emails, and an account key to get into your email system.

- **Example:** Your local has decided to use Mailchimp to reach your 500 members. You set up a Gmail account called *AFGELocal5000@gmail.com*, with the password *GoAFGE!* as your password.

Now that your common email is set up, pick two reliable local members – one as a point person, one as a backup – who

have the time to commit to putting out email content.

- It's good to have two people, in case the main person is busy, unable to produce the email, or leaves their position in the local.
- These two people should be well trained and familiar with the best practices. Both individuals should have access to the common email account so that they can respond to local members' concerns and access the programs they need to put out content.
- Make sure that these two members know how to load the members into your system and send emails before they are left with the "keys" to the system.

Once your two local members are trained on the communications system you choose to use, determine how often and about what you will email your members.

Example 1: Your local is small, and your goal is to increase turnout to local meetings. You decide it's best to only send out emails to your members if the local is having a meeting.

Example 2: Your local is negotiating a contract right now. You decide it's best to send out a weekly contract negotiation update to your local members to keep them involved and informed.

Example 3: Your local is active in the community, and you like highlighting your volunteer



work with a bi-monthly newsletter. You decide to send that newsletter out via email every two months.



TIP Mailchimp will allow you to change the name of the 'sender' of your emails while still using the email address you identified when you created your account. Keep your sender consistent, so people know what to look for and expect when hearing from their local.

Example: If Local President Brenda Smith sends emails for AFGE Local 5000, try and always send it from her so people know who to look for.

We recommend sending emails using the name of your local president or other leader within your local. Members are more likely to open an email with a name as the sender, rather than 'AFGE Local 5000'.

Now that you're all set up, it's important to keep your

communications consistent. If you set out to send a newsletter every two months, make sure you can maintain that level of content and time commitment to putting it out. If you're overcommitted, scale back – but do not disappear from communications.

Setting Your Objectives

If you have yet to create an email newsletter for your local, here are some objectives of implementing one:

Get the word out. Share important actions with your members through email, such as ways to volunteer for a campaign, a letter to send to their member of Congress, a reminder about a rally or meeting the local is holding.

Stay up to date. Make sure that your local has the most up-to-date contact information for your members.

Communications is a two-way street. By encouraging members to reply directly to your email, you maintain a two-way conversation with

your members and ensure their needs are being met.

Transform membership engagement.

Increase involvement with your AFGE local members using email as a helpful (but not the only) tool.

Select and train a communications coordinator.

Train and maintain a point person within your local for your email communications, with steps in place to make sure the program doesn't lapse if the person leaves their post. Overall, having a communications coordinator at your local will ensure all of your efforts are consistent and receive the attention they deserve.

Be consistent. Sustain a consistent email program that works best for your local, based on feedback, resources, and email best practices.

If you need any assistance, don't hesitate to reach out to the AFGE Communications Team! Drop us a line anytime at communications@afge.org or 202.639.6419.



TIP Remember to ask your members for feedback, and consider it when writing future communications or scheduling them. **Example:** Maybe your local is made up of people who work late and would prefer to read emails before work rather than after.



Media Relations

Developing a relationship with the media is an important strategy for improving the local's public image. At the local level, you can take on improving the visibility of your local through increased outreach with local reporters that establishes AFGE as the leading voice for government employee issues.

Building a local press outreach program is important to many AFGE locals. Here are goals to consider:

Meet your local press. Hold personal meetings/luncheons with key reporters to build relationships, network, share ideas.

Speakers Bureau. Identify local members who can speak to the press on behalf of your local and provide their contact information to the Communications Department.

Press Releases. Coordinate with the Communications Department on at least one press release/news advisory annually.

Letters to the Editor. Get Letters to the Editor published quarterly in local newspapers.

Opinion Pieces. Get at least one op-ed authored by the local president published annually in local newspaper(s).

Social Media. Increase social engagement of your local by creating and/or sharing social media content.

Measures of Success

With your goals set, it's time to assess press outreach success at your local. Here are some

benchmarks to consider:

- Increase number of positive AFGE mentions in the local press
- Appear quarterly in local media (through news article/report, op-ed, letter to editor, etc.)
- Increase social engagement
- Hold at least one public event annually where media is invited to cover (town hall, rally, employee luncheon, organizing event, etc.)





Best Practices for Press Releases, Articles, and Media Advisories

The AFGE Communications Department has resources to assist you in crafting and distributing press releases, opinion pieces, and media advisories. Feel free to ask for help at any time! With that said, when composing your press releases, letters to the editor, op-eds, and media advisories, remember to:

- Write compelling headlines in the active voice to grab readers right off the bat
- In articles, fashion the first paragraph as a hook that cements readers' attention and gets them reading more
- Incorporate examples or statistics to show how an issue affects workers and people in your communities
- Highlight members' stories where possible to bring local

attention to national issues

- Incorporate links into text to provide added content to readers
- Incorporate photos into releases to tell the story visually

Using the active voice in your writing clearly identifies for the reader the subject who is engaging in action. Active sentences reduce union-ese and acronyms, and paint a vivid picture for the reader. A passive voice is often wordy and depicts a subject being acted upon. We want to avoid the passive voice whenever possible.

Example

Passive voice: A demonstration on workplace safety issues at a local government facility will be held by workers

Active voice: Workers protest workplace safety issues at local government facility

How to Get Started

With the goals and best practices outlined above, you can get started in a press outreach program that fits the needs of your local.

To kick off the action:

- Identify local reporters who cover your issues and build a press list with phone numbers and emails of local contacts. The AFGE Communications Department can assist in building this list.
- Identify newsworthy events to promote
- Reach out to the Communications Department staff for training
- Review AFGE's Media Center for tips and ideas
- Create a social media presence (see page 17)
- Contact the Communications Department for on-brand collateral (press release template, logos, etc.)



Social Media

Connecting with our members digitally provides an expanded opportunity to reach activists near and far. We can keep them updated on news and actions as they happen, as well as engage in conversations on how to take our movement forward. Sharing stories, photos, videos, and updates on social media keeps activists informed 24/7.

There are countless social media platforms available on the web and via mobile applications. Our experience has been that AFGE members are most active on Facebook, while we have a growing community on Twitter. With that in mind, our best practices will largely focus on these two platforms.

In terms of objectives, we recommend you:

- Optimize your social media content to increase the number of followers and improve engagement.
- Amplify AFGE National social media content to increase the organization's role as a thought leader.

FACEBOOK

How to Get Started

Getting started with Facebook pages can be done at www.facebook.com/pages. Pages are free and easy to create.

- We recommend creating a 'Page' for your local instead of a 'Profile.'
- Pages are best for external-facing conversations. The content posted on pages is for a general audience and should not be 'members-only.'
- Groups are specific for internal conversation. Groups can be 'members only' and used as a communication tool for committees within your local or your executive board.
- You should decide which option (Facebook page or

group) works best for the needs of your local.

- Make sure you have a profile photo and cover photo available before starting your page.
- We recommend using the AFGE logo or a specific AFGE local logo for your profile photo.

Measures of Success

Digital platforms allow for greater flexibility in tracking how your audience is engaging with the material you are posting online over time. Facebook has a number of measurement tools you can use to gauge your success. These tools include:

Total Facebook post reach:
The number of people your

post was seen by.

Total Facebook page reach:

The number of people who were served any activity from your page including your posts, posts to your page by other people, page like ads, mentions, and check-ins.

Total Engagement: Reactions, comments, shares.

Total Following: Page likes.

Goals

Goals to keep in mind when using Facebook at your local are:

- Increase your number of page likes or Facebook group membership by 10 percent of your total membership each quarter
- Share more relevant, newsworthy content



You can boost engagement on social media posts through budgeted social media promotion. Engagement on Facebook is defined as the number of reactions, comments, and shares on a given post. Contact us at communications@afge.org, 202.639.6419 if you're ready to take your Facebook reach and engagement to the next level.

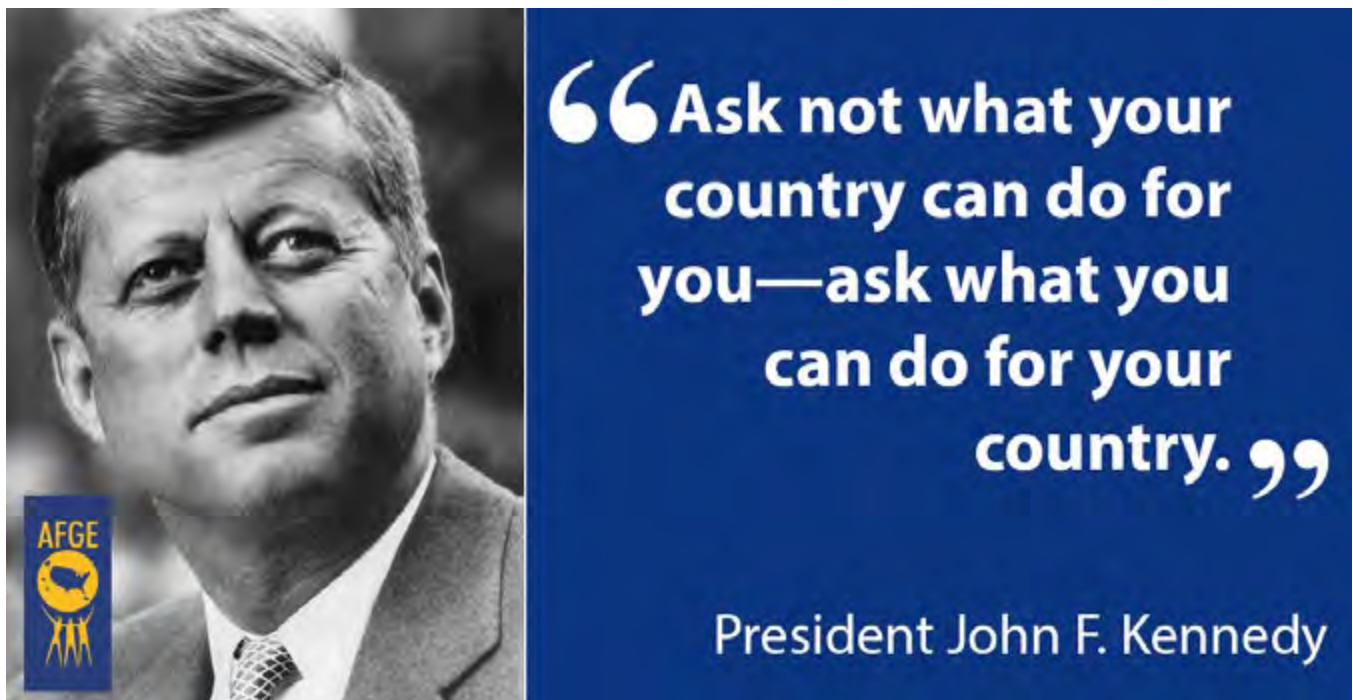


Figure 1: An example from the AFGE Facebook feed that follows the best practices of an ideal graphic to share on Facebook.

Best Practices

These best practices will assist you in taking your Facebook presence to the next level.

Graphic design

- Every graphic should have a photo or artfully formatted text
- Every graphic should include AFGE's logo
- Graphics with a boost (ad money) cannot exceed 20 percent text per Facebook's advertising guidelines
- See **Figure 1** for an example of these best practices.

Frequency of posts

- Post at least 3 times a week
- You can determine when your fans are online by using the "Insights" tab on your Facebook

page. The "Insights" tab is only visible to page administrators. From "Insights" select "Posts" from the left panel then "When Your Fans Are Online" from the top menu bar. See **Figure 2** on how this information is displayed.

- Schedule posts for when your fans are online



To schedule a post simply draft the text and click the drop-down arrow next to "Publish." Users can schedule Facebook posts and tweets by signing up for a Hootsuite account. There is a free version of Hootsuite that has limited functions but is useful for scheduling social media content in advance.

Which posts work best?

- Videos perform substantially better than any other posts
- Videos should be uploaded directly to Facebook instead of YouTube
- Photos come in a far second
- Articles should always have a large photo displayed with them
- Avoid text-only posts at all costs

Which subjects get the best response?

- Posts about issues such as pay, union victories, and back pay wins already are great and typically receive the most engagement
- Broader labor issue graphics and videos seem to get

better engagement than AFGE-specific content (larger potential community of interest)

- Graphics/videos about the work that AFGE members do for the public also seem to get the best response/engagement

Achieve Your Goals

Below you'll find tips on how to implement these best practices to meet your goals:

- Build relationships with key organizers and activists with engaged social media followings and mutually re-share one another's content
- Let your members know when you've posted a new video/graphic to drive views and engagement

- Track performance month-to-month using Facebook Insights
- Identify the best-performing posts to use as model for future posts
- Repost best-performing posts as necessary
- "Like" shared posts on Facebook
- Follow other labor organizations and partners and share their posts, if applicable

TWITTER

Measures of Success

Similar to Facebook, tracking your success on Twitter can be done using the following data points provided within the platform.

Total number of followers: The number of people that sign-

up to receive your tweets.

Total number of impressions:

The number of times users see your tweets.

Total Engagement: The number of times a user has interacted with the tweet including all clicks, retweets, replies, favorites, and follows.

Total number of retweets: The number of times a user reposts your tweet to their timeline.

Goals

For those new to Twitter, the following goals can help in building your audience and presence on the platform.

- Increase number of followers to at least 10 percent of your total membership each quarter
- Increase total engagement

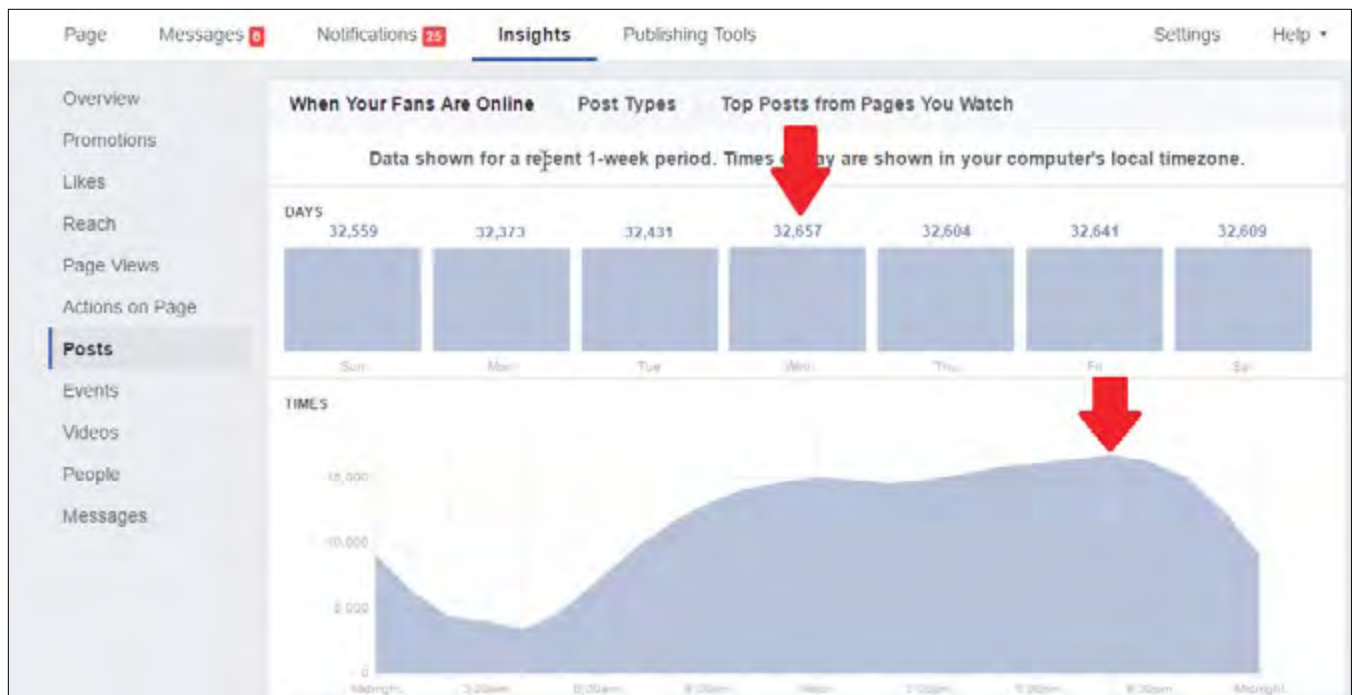


Figure 2: Image of the Facebook Insights tab that shows you when your fans are online. You can see your most popular day of the week and time of day. The red arrows indicate these most popular times for a one week period.



Best Practices

Implementing these best practices will help you reach the goals you've set.

Tweet design

- Short tweets with clear messages
- Include photos with tweets wherever possible
- Include links with tweets when possible
- See **Figure 3** for an example of these best practices
- Retweet posts from @AFGENational, @AFLCIO, your local state federation, and other labor affiliates

Frequency of posts

- About 5 posts per day
- Repost same link with

different wording several times a day and/or week

Which tweets work best?

- Live tweets from events
- A series of tweets around a particular subject
- Tweets that "mention" (tag) other organizations in tweets that may interest them

Which subjects get the best response?

- Graphics/videos about the work that AFGE members do for the public as a whole seem to receive the best response/engagement
- Tweets about pay and union victories are always good

Implementing these best practices can help you meet

your goals.

Here are some steps you can take:

- Engaging audiences online isn't just about posting your own content. Also make it a point to share content from other like-minded organizations. For example, you can share the videos posted on AFGE's Twitter page.
- Track your page's performance month-to-month via <https://ads.twitter.com>
- Identify your best-performing tweets to use as model for future tweets
- Repost best-performing tweets as necessary
- Thank organizations/individuals for retweeting or following your page



Anatomy of a Tweet

Figure 3: This is an example of a tweet from the AFGE National account that has a short message, includes a photo and tags other users on the platform.

The @ symbol calls out a user.

Tags an organization or user who appears in your post.



The # symbol tags your subject and links you to similar posts on this topic.

Find us on your favorite social media platforms



/afgenational



/afgeunion



/afgeunion

Twitter

Facebook

Instagram



Video Production

Enriching your online content can come in the form of videos. With a dedicated video program within the AFGE Communications Department, there are over 100 videos for you to choose from to share on your online platforms. From personal testimonies to collective action to issue-based content, there's an AFGE video for everyone. Watch and share these videos at www.youtube.com/afgeonline.

This portion of the guide will outline how you can begin to incorporate video content into the communications you share with your members. When creating videos at your local, it should be to educate, inform, and entertain your members and the general public on issues surrounding AFGE, the government workforce, and the labor movement through personal storytelling.

A key goal should be to produce an effective video that informs your audience of an issue and asks them to get engaged. A great video educates your audience on an issue and asks them to participate in an action.

Below we have ways you can measure success and get started. The AFGE Communications Department is here to assist you in creating video content that tells the story of your members.

Measures of Success

There are a number of ways in which you can measure the success of your videos. We recommend that you keep track of the amount of video views, the completion rate of

those who watched the video, the video's reach and viewer engagement. The completion rate simply measures the number of people who watch a video from start to finish, and the video's reach is how many people saw the video on their timeline or feed. View engagement refers to the reactions, comments and shares on a video when it's posted to Facebook or Twitter.

If you include an ask in your video you will also want to keep track of how many people participated in that action.

How to Get Started

Most of us already have the tools we need to produce a successful video. To start filming and posting videos, all you will need is a smartphone with a functional camera and free hard drive space. For more complex projects, you can always contact the AFGE Communications Department for advice.

Filming with no audio

needed: The majority of users are now watching video without sound. So to engage viewers, the video should either have captions added or the narrative

of the video should not be driven by sound. This guide includes examples of both. See **Figure 4** and **Figure 5** on the next page.

Positioning your Cell Phone while Filming

You can fit more onto the screen when filming in landscape. Portrait is for photographs. Landscape is for video. You are losing a large amount of space when filming in portrait and it is difficult to view on some screens. See **Figure 6** on positioning your device.

Rules to live by

Recording Sound: Often overlooked, sound is a critical part of a video. If you are recording video, you are also recording sound. So why not work for the best sound possible? Make sure that you are close to the subject/action that you are recording – that way you will have the best possible sound. The further you are from a subject, the lower the quality of the audio. Get in close!



Figure 4: An example of a video that has no audio advancing the story of the video.

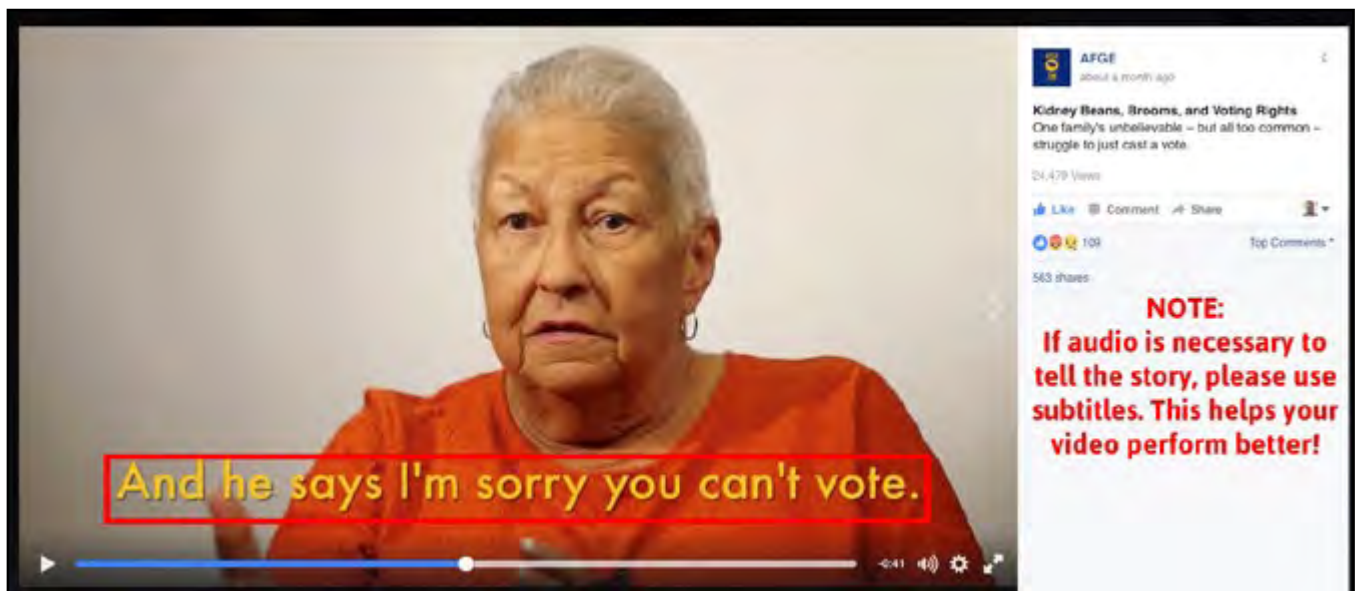


Figure 5: An example where audio is necessary and includes subtitles.

Framing your Shot or The Rule of Thirds: Think of your shot as if you are filming on a grid (see **Figure 7**), with nine separate squares inside of it. The eye is naturally driven to the intersection of these points.

Thus, when framing your shot you want to utilize those points in order to create a compelling image.

Best Practices

These best practices are a baseline in creating video

content for your local.

- Do not zoom in on a subject, especially if you are filming hand held. If you want a closer shot, get closer. Zooming from a cellphone degrades the image quality.
- Verify that your subject is in

focus before recording.

- Edit the beginning and the end of a video so that you're only publishing the action. This can be done using a cellphone.
- If possible, use a tripod. If you can't, try to keep your phone as stable as possible.
- Be short and to the point. Get your main message across as early in the video as possible.
- Identify yourself in your union capacity. For example, Jane Doe, Steward at AFGE Local 999, who represents employees at Springfield VA Medical Center.
- Contact the AFGE Communications Department for equipment recommendations or technical questions.

Upon Completing Production of the Video

Now that you've completed your video, the next important step is to share it with your audience. Here are some tips on getting the word out about the story you've captured.

- Upload the video natively to Facebook and/or Twitter. Do not share a YouTube link on Facebook
- Ask your members, friends, and family to share the video on their pages
- Send the video via email
- Include a mention of your video in your newsletter
- Report your performance to AFGE National!

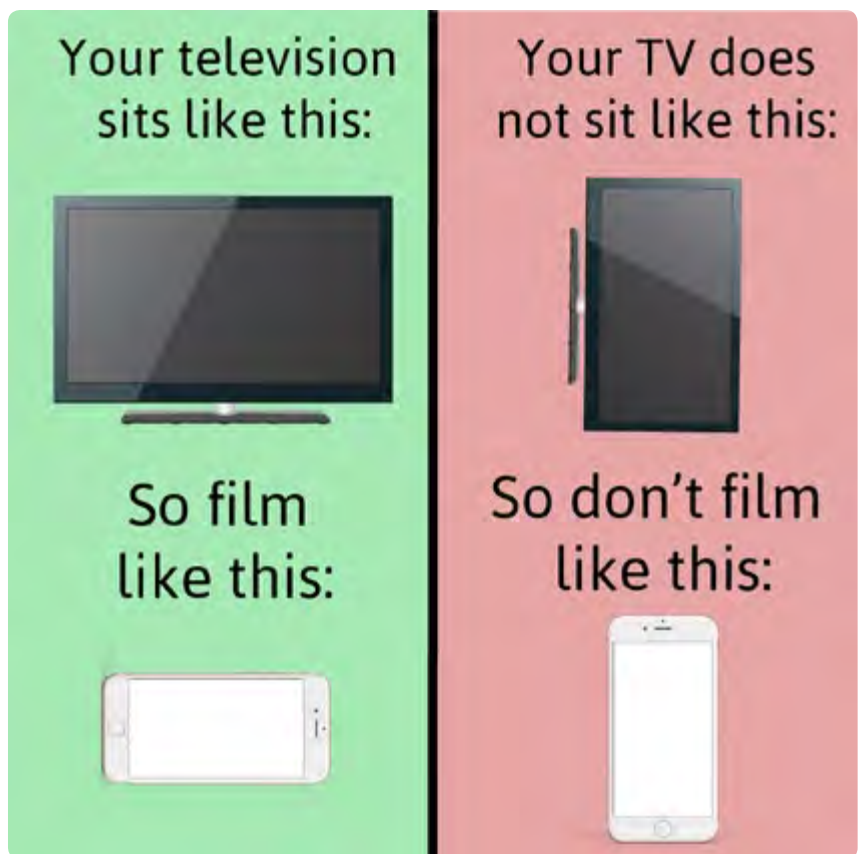


Figure 6: An example of how to hold your mobile device when creating a video.

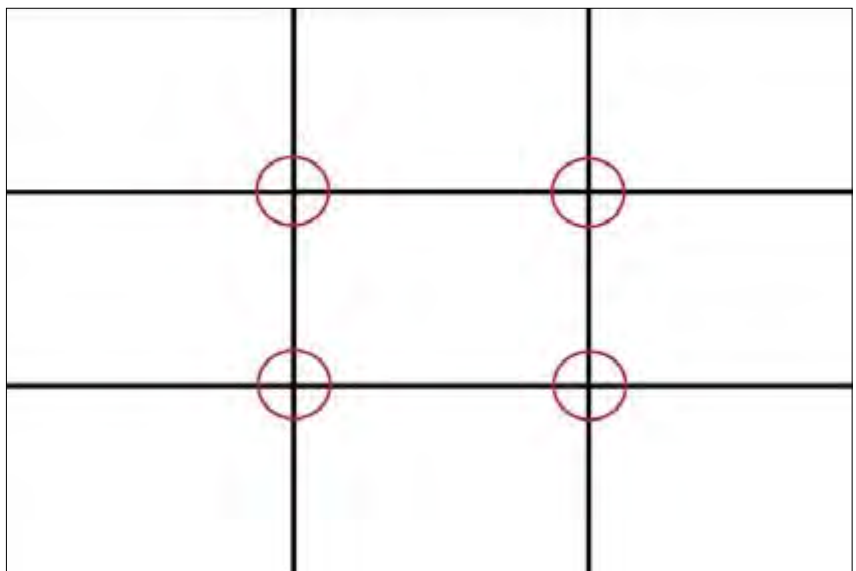


Figure 7: Filming or photographing with a grid in mind helps in framing your shot.

Example of the rule of thirds

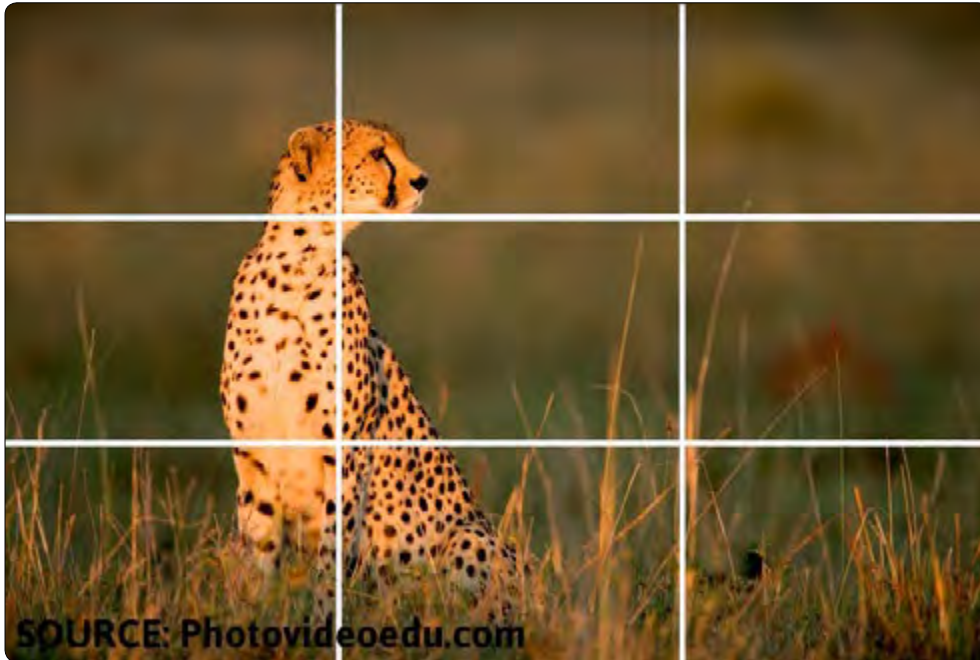


Figure 8: A wildlife photo that exemplifies the rule of thirds.

Example of what not to do

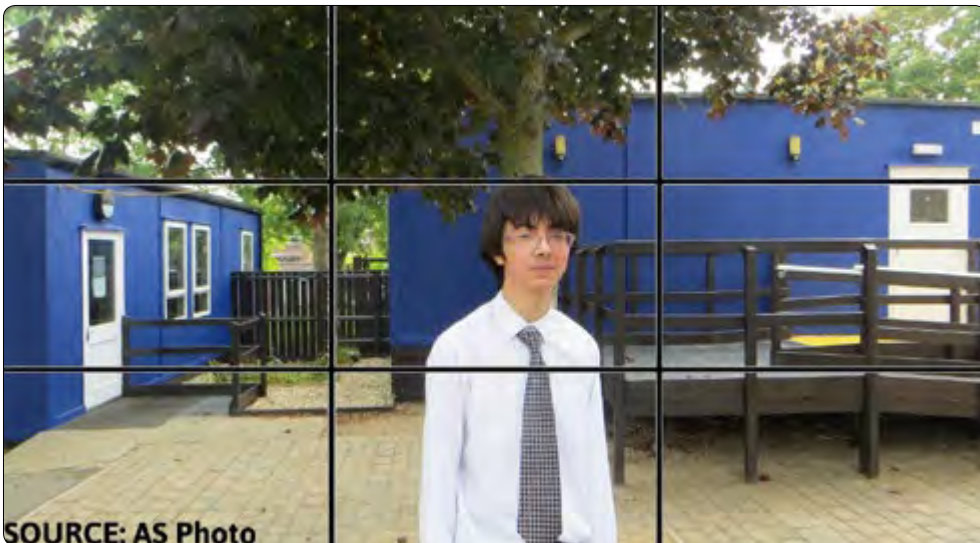


Figure 10: An image of an individual that demonstrates a poor use of the rule of thirds.

Practices to Avoid

Steer clear of these filming pitfalls:

- Filming yourself in your government uniform
- Positioning yourself as solely speaking on behalf of a federal agency
- Moving the camera away from the subject of the video
- Filming in portrait
- Filming inside U.S. Government facilities without the expressed written consent of an agency's public affairs department



When appearing on camera, emphasize that you are speaking on behalf of the union. For example, "I'm a union member who works at the VA."



Watch the stories of AFGE leaders and activists come alive through photo and video.

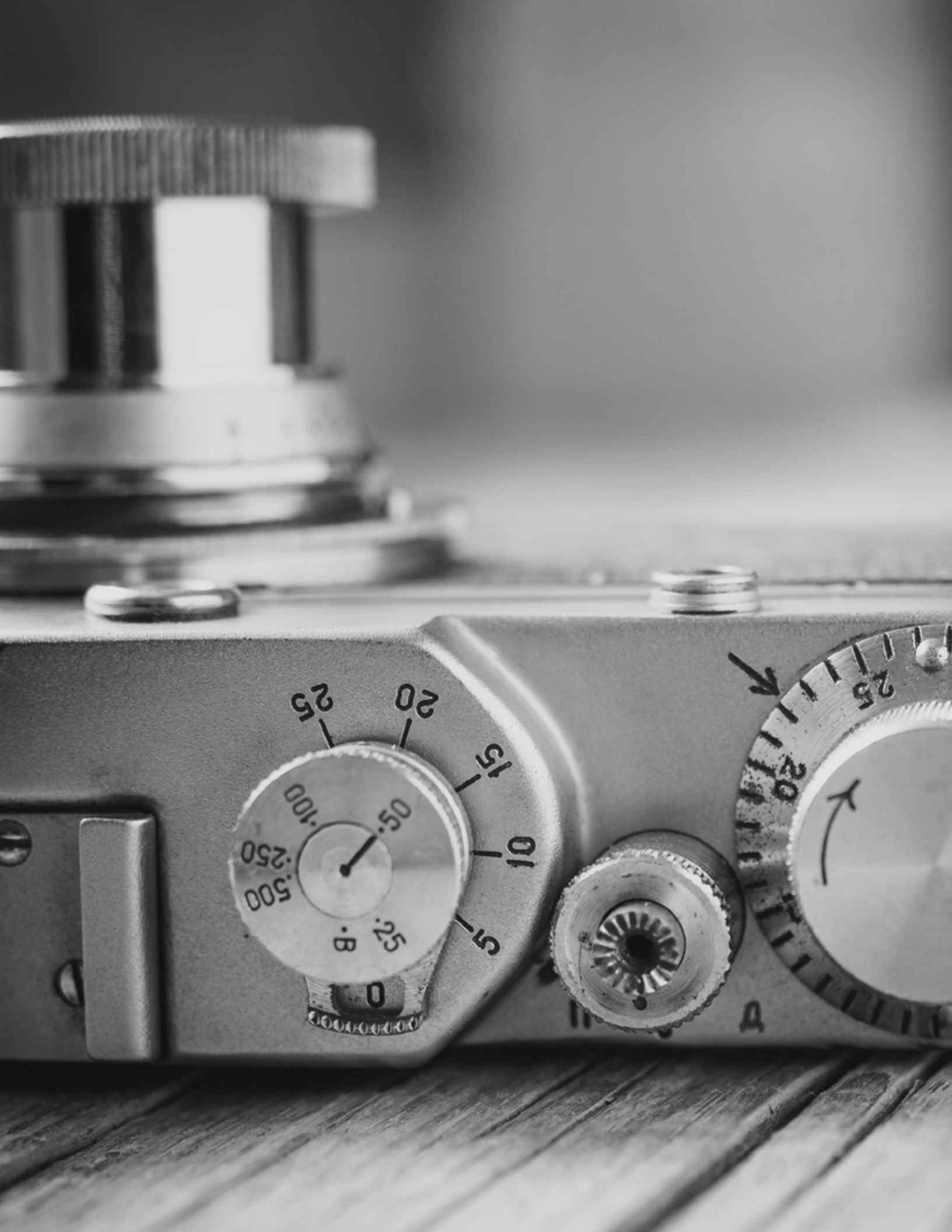
Subscribe to our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/afgeonline

You'll find personal stories, conference recaps and demonstrations from AFGE members around the country.

Need photos for your newsletter or want to see action shots from the latest demonstrations?

Check out our photo archives at www.flickr.com/afge





Photography

Much of our content at the national level is accompanied by images and video of AFGE members in action. You can find thousands of photos available for sharing and download on our Flickr site at www.flickr.com/afge. Visual content helps make stories come alive. We recommend you incorporate them in your newsletters, websites, flyers, and social media posts as frequently as possible.

Using photographs is a key way to enhance and tell the stories of your members, illustrate the union's mission, and showcase local events. Setting goals is important with any communications tool and photography is no different. Below are a few goals to keep in mind at your local to ensure you have visual content included in your materials:

Goals

- Incorporate more authentic photos in your local's newsletter, website, and/or social media platforms.
- Make sure someone is taking photos at all of your events. This can be done with a smartphone or a digital camera.
- Encourage your members to send you photos of them in action! This can be at lunch & learns, rallies, trainings, and AFGE National events.
- Engagement on Facebook (reactions/comments/shares)
- Engagement on Twitter (The number of times a user has interacted with the tweet including all clicks, retweets, replies, favorites, and follows.)
- Views on Flickr

Flickr is used by individuals and organizations to store and display photos and videos online. It's free to create an account and you can store up to one terabyte of content at no cost. Learn more about Flickr at www.flickr.com/about.

Measures of Success

As you include more photos into your communications platforms, you want to begin tracking how often you're using images and how successful they are online. This will inform what types of photos resonate best with your audience.

- Inclusion of at least one image or graphic in every communications piece you produce (i.e. flyers, newsletters, posters, Facebook posts, etc.)

Best Practices

It's often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. When images are added to the content we consume, it makes the material come alive. Nailing down a few photography fundamentals will help you capture images that tell a compelling story.

Lighting. With photos, lighting is everything. A good rule of thumb is make sure the lighting source (i.e. lamps, windows, the sun) is behind the photographer.

Keep steady. When using a mobile device (smart phone or tablet) keep steady while capturing the image.

Fill the frame. Especially when photographing people. See **Figure 12** and **Figure 13**. Use the rule of thirds to help compose your image.

Don't zoom on mobile. When using a smartphone, do not zoom in on a subject. If you want a closer shot, get closer. Zooming from a cell phone degrades the image quality.

Action. Action shots – such as rallies, door knocking, members at work, and service projects – are visually more interesting and have a greater capacity to tell a story.

Describe the photo. Include short descriptions for photos you include in your newsletter and/or Facebook posts.

Tag online. When posting photos of your members on Facebook be sure to tag them. Also, encourage members to tag themselves in photo albums posted to Facebook.

Great Examples of Fill the Frame

Figure 12: An image of Sandy Parr and Augusta Y. Thomas that illustrates fill the frame.

Figure 13: An image of the first group of AFGGE members to attend District 14 University. This image illustrates how to fill the frame when taking a large group photo.

How to Get Started

If you're new to capturing photos for the union, start practicing using the tips above. Identify a non-government smartphone or digital camera that you can dedicate to taking photos at union events.

Be sure to look at your local's events calendar and



Figure 12: An image of Sandy Parr and Augusta Y. Thomas that illustrates fill the frame.

identify events that you want photographed. For high profile and/or large member events, consider hiring a photographer.

You can check with the national office, your local AFL-CIO state federation, or Central Labor Council for recommendations.



Figure 13: An image of the first group of AFGGE members to attend District 14 University. This image illustrates how to fill the frame when taking a large group photo.

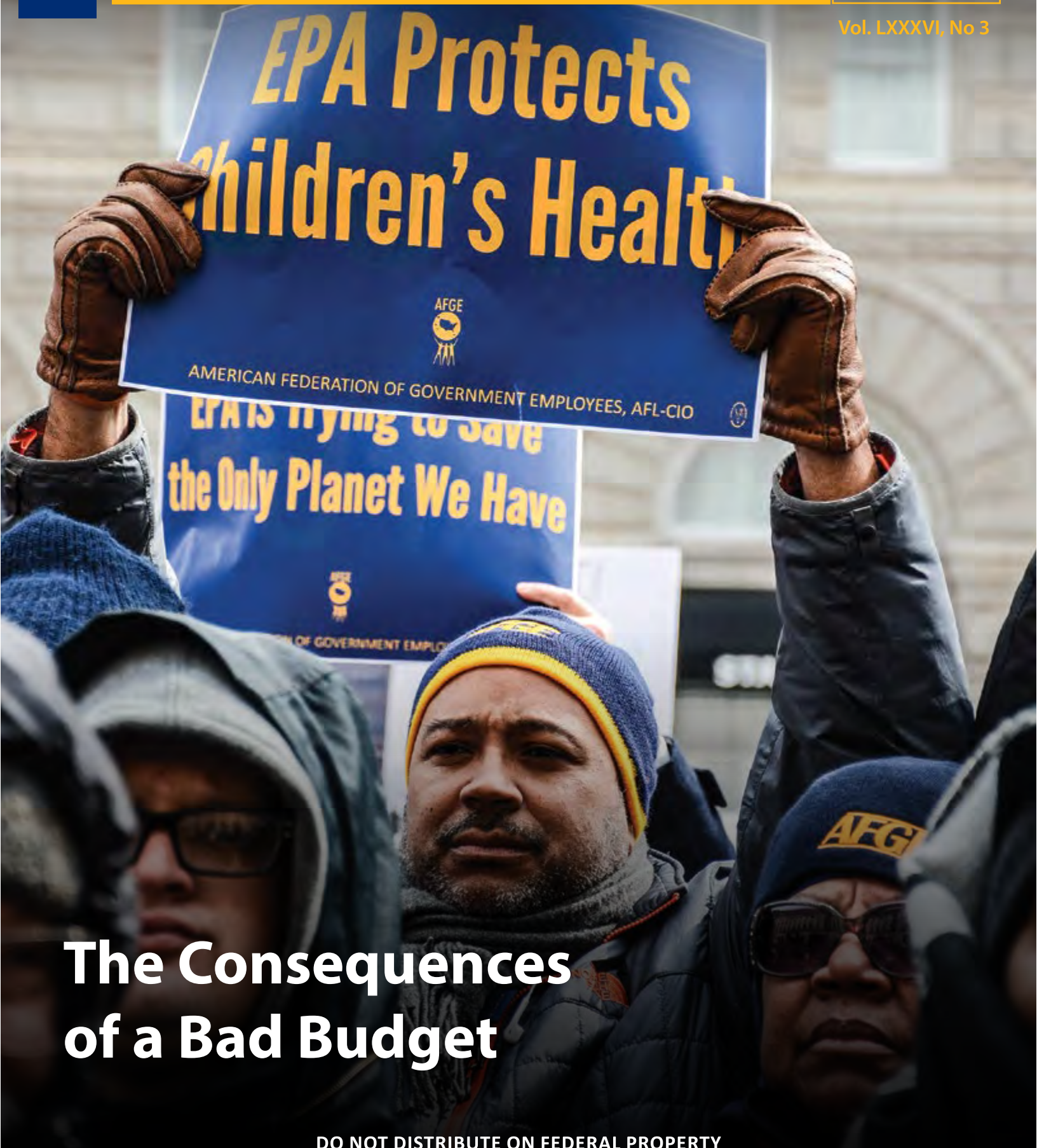


THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

For current and retired government workers and their families since 1933 • American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO

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The Consequences of a Bad Budget

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE ON FEDERAL PROPERTY

Newsletters

Regular newsletters keep members informed about AFGE activities and issues. They are a great way to share stories and information that will interest your members and your local community. The distribution of your newsletter can be done through email or print, and circulated in person or sent by mail.

Effective print and email newsletters are simple and uncluttered. The articles should be short, relevant, and to the point. Make the headlines snappy with short, colorful words and active verbs. It should include lots of pictures and graphics and be attractively laid out.

If your local doesn't have a regular print or e-newsletter, consider creating one that keeps members informed and engaged.

Measures of Success

Newsletters are a tried and true method of keeping groups and communities up-to-date on issues they care about. A successful newsletter can take on a number of different forms depending on how it's distributed and the overall purpose of the newsletter.

For AFGE locals we recommend that you distribute a newsletter at least once a month. Quarterly distribution also can work for locals that are constantly communicating with their members through regular emails, an updated website, and/or a social media platform that is updated frequently.

A key measure of success for newsletters is how many people are reading them out of how many are distributed. For print

newsletters, you have to get creative in how you can track readership.

THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD • May/June 2018

AFGE Win Brings Hope to Families of Children with Autism

AFGE member Lutreva Byrd and her son Emanuel.

If your child's well-being were at stake, how long would you fight for them? Would you ever give up?

Lutreva Byrd has spent years trying to find the best treatment for her 9-year-old son, who was diagnosed to be on the autism spectrum at three years old. But, like millions of Americans who struggle to pay for health care, Byrd just couldn't afford the treatment her doctor told her was her son's best hope.

"It has been so challenging because you never want your child to be left behind and you want the hope of knowing they have chance at opportunities just like everyone else," Byrd said.

As a federal employee in Alabama, her health insurance under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program does not cover Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), the most effective known treatment for Autism Spectrum Disorders. There is an ABA treatment center and a school in Byrd's hometown of Huntsville. It's convenient and nearby, yet her family can't pay the \$1,400 in monthly fees. Regular appointments with an ABA specialist, at \$300 a visit, also are out of reach.

But Byrd has never given up – and neither have her union brothers and sisters. AFGE has spent 10 years convincing the Office of Personnel Management to issue a new rule requiring all FEHBP carriers to provide coverage for ABA. After a decade of dogged

action, OPM finally relented, giving parents like Byrd the ABA coverage their children need starting in 2017.

"I was overwhelmed with joy, to be honest, because I wanted to start my son in this type of treatment as he is still under the age of 10," said Byrd, assistant vice president of AFGE Local 1858. "I am so excited about what AFGE is doing for all federal employees and I want to be an asset to aid others, as knowledge coupled with unity equates to power."

Michael Wilson, an AFGE member from Massachusetts, can relate. As a parent of three children, two of whom are on the autism spectrum, this new coverage comes as a welcome relief.

"I cannot tell you how many times my wife and I have called ABA treatment centers for our children just to be turned away because we lack the coverage," said Wilson, a correctional officer at Devens Medical Center, a federal prison.

As the legislative coordinator for Local 222, Wilson knows the power of persuasion and determined action.

"This is why I love and support my union," Wilson said. "There is something to be said with strength in numbers and real solidarity, normal people sticking together fighting the good fight. Well, it pays off."

From left to right Sean, Liam and Evan Wilson. Sean and Liam have Autism spectrum disorder.

Table of Contents www.afge.org

Figure 14: In this article from the AFGE Government Standard, the text in blue are examples of pull quotes.



To track readership via a printed newsletter include an action in the newsletter and track how many people participate in the action.

- For example, you could include a contest in your newsletter. Keep track of how many people enter the contest and select a winner from those entrants.
- If you have a website, you can ask readers to go to your site and complete a task. Use those web-based results to determine how many people are taking the actions included in the newsletter.

We highly recommend that you distribute your newsletter electronically. You can use services mentioned in the Email Marketing & Mobilization portion of this guide. The key metric for e-newsletters

is open rate. If you have 10 people on your list and 10 people read your email, you have 100 percent open rate – which would be incredible considering the industry average is about 18 percent. With the formatting provided through email services, you also could print out this newsletter and distribute it. Remember, if you're going to take the print route, have an actionable item included in the newsletter so you can determine its engagement.

Best Practices

With all the planning, writing and designing that goes into a newsletter, you want to make sure your members are reading it!

Below are best practices to implement your newsletter:

- For e-newsletters make the subject of your email interesting or no one will read it.
- Make sure the email is from an actual person in your local and not "From: AFGE Local 5000."
- Include good quality graphics and images in your newsletter. Images make your stories come alive and help readers visualize the information.
- White space is your friend. It makes the newsletter easier to read. You don't need text stretching from corner to corner!
- Keep articles short. Less is more when it comes to text.
- Use lots of photos and pull quotes (recognize that most people will just skim the articles).

Pull quotes are design elements used to add interest and separation to a body of text.

To create pull quotes in your articles, select a quote from the main text, enhance its typeface, and separate it from other paragraphs. See **Figure 14**.

- Use good photos! Refer back to the best practices outlined in the Photography section of this guide.

The Best Newsletters Are: Part of a plan.

- What are you trying to accomplish? Increased Membership? More PAC contributions? A major issue you need members to understand and take action on?

- Set measurable goals, and judge your newsletter against whether it's furthering those goals.

Focus on your audience.

- Think about to whom you're communicating and what matters to them.
- Connect on a personal level – include member profiles and stories that illustrate AFGE's values.

Encourage feedback.

- Ask your members what they think – ask them what's missing, or invite them to write a story.
- Incorporate that feedback and let us know what you learn.

Have that "special something."

- Be creative. Mix it up. Make it fun.
- Try new things – humor, wild headlines, original cartoons. Innovate!

Online Newsletters

- Seek member feedback opportunities
- Test messaging whenever possible
- Regularly look at your click-through rates, engagement, etc., to expand on these best practices

How to Get Started

Creating a newsletter can seem daunting. However, developing a plan of what stories to write, when the newsletter will be distributed, and how you will measure success will put you well on your way to providing your members with the regular communication they need. Content is usually the largest hurdle that locals need to overcome. Below are content ideas for your newsletter:

- Stories about relevant workplace issues
- News about members and profiles of union members
- Analysis of a particular worksite success or issue
- Information about the collective bargaining agreement
- Updates on political and legislative news (remember to follow Hatch Act and lobbying rules)
- Surveys on relevant issues
- Announcements about union meetings

The AFGE Communications Department also is here to assist you in developing a template, selecting an online email distribution platform, and providing additional writing tips. You can reach out to us at communications@afge.org or 202.639.6419.





Website Optimization

The purpose of an AFGE local microsite is to raise awareness of the local and what the local currently is doing for its members. A potential AFGE member new to the government might not know why or how to become an AFGE member.

A website is a great first stop for new employees or existing employees who are introduced to the local via lunch and learns and other organizing events. The other main feature of an AFGE Local Microsite is to let local members know about agency news, contract updates, and other information that matters to union activists.

Goals

When thinking about general goals for the Local Microsites, they are all task-based.

Updating the following items on the website are very important:

- Contacts
- Photos
- Calendar
- Featuring members for above average work and community service
- News
- Documents
- Sharing stories and pages from the website on Facebook
- Any information related to AFGE and the Labor Movement

Measures of Success

Digital platforms provide a wealth of data that can help you measure how many people

your site is reaching and what content is viewed the most.

Below are tips on how you can assess the success of your site:

- If requested at post@afge.org, Google Analytics can be sent to locals to see metrics for their microsite.
- When members join the local, ask them how they found out about AFGE. If they say via the Microsite, it means that the website is working as an organizing tool.
- If articles or pages are being shared to Facebook or other social media from the microsite, that also can be viewed as a measure of success.

Best Practices

Use these best practices to create a clean site that readers visit regularly:

- Use high quality images
- Link to articles that support your issues and provide context for your site visitors
- Post articles written by the local about:
 - o Agency news
 - o Member stories
 - o Community events and involvement
- Spell check all articles on your site and ensure that they are 100 percent factual
- Don't let it go stale

How to Get Started

Sign up using www.afge.org/webcontact and someone will assist you with:

- Creating a plan
- Showing you how to use the Content Management System to update your own site



Members can update their contact information at [**www.afge.org/update**](http://www.afge.org/update)



Join the AFGE Affiliate Microsite Program and build your own website. We provide free training and web hosting. Learn more at [www.afge.org/websites**](http://www.afge.org/websites)**



AFGE Branding

A “brand” is the name, images, words, messaging and colors used to represent our union and establish a connection in the minds of the public.

Big brand names like Target, Apple, and Harvard understand just how important branding is. They have shown us the same images, colors, and messages (their brand identity) so many times that we only need to see their logo to know who they are and what they stand for.

With a brand that is consistently promoted and well-defined, the AFGE name will grow stronger.

Through the AFGE brand we instill a promise of unity, empowerment, and progress. We use these principles as the foundation of our work as trade unionists and defenders of working people.

Goals

When branding is done right, we gain the trust of current and potential AFGE members as well as members of the public. Trust is a critical factor in the branding process. If people trust us, they will listen to us.

How to Get Started

Use the AFGE Brand Book, found at www.afge.org/branding, as a guide for all of your external communications (i.e. flyers, business cards, letterhead, banners, websites, emails, etc.).

Best Practices

- Use the AFGE Brand Book to ensure your local consistently uses the proper AFGE name, logo, and corresponding

images in our daily communications so we can all benefit from the positive associations it creates.

- Complying with the brand also shows up when you use the updated logo and blue/gold color scheme on your flyers, bulletin board postings, and newsletters. The national office can assist you in designing business cards that are in step with our branding guidance. Looking to use a PowerPoint presentation at your next unit meeting? We have a branded template that you can use for your meetings.
- Starting at the local level, our brand can take shape in a multitude of ways. At rallies and events, you and your members can wear your blue and gold AFGE shirts. This is unity and solidarity personified!
- When communicating with members, your messages

should center around these themes.

Unity: From our constitution to the culture of our union, we know that we are stronger together. By standing together, we give public servants a voice at work and the power to secure better lives for our families.

Empowerment: As activists, we exist to empower working people. AFGE cultivates community leaders with legislative, political, representational, and communication skills.

Progress: AFGE members have dedicated nearly a century to making life better for public servants and their families. We are committed to cultivating a new generation of labor leaders and giving them the tools they need to move our country forward.



Have questions about branding? Contact the AFGE Communications Department at communications@afge.org or 202.639.6419. www.afge.org/branding

AFGE Typography

Typefaces currently used in print and digital AFGE materials.

Calibri

Use: Documents, press releases, letters, PowerPoint presentations, body text for flyers.

Myriad Pro

Use: Body text for flyers, PowerPoint presentations, postcards.

League Gothic

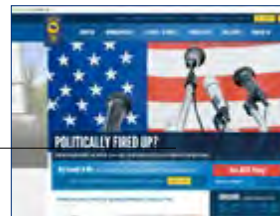
Use: Headers for flyers, rally signs.

Futura

Use: AFGE logo text.

ASAP

Use: AFGE websites





Stay up-to-date with AFGE news and events by visiting

www.afge.org and texting

"AFGE" to 225568.

Appendix



WORDS THAT WORK

Words to Embrace		Words to Replace
In Union	instead of	In a Union
Unions of Working People, Working People at (worksite)	instead of	Union, The Union
Rights at Work	instead of	Official Time
Public Servants	instead of	Government Workers
Working People	instead of	Workers
Voice at Work/Negotiate	instead of	Bargaining
Contract	instead of	Master Agreement/CBA
Protecting Rights at Work	instead of	Representation
Team	instead of	Group
Hold Management Accountable	instead of	Grievance Procedure
Good for our Families, Working People	instead of	Good for the Economy
Defense Workers, etc.	instead of	DoD Employees, etc.
Speak Up Together	instead of	Bargain
Economy Out of Balance	instead of	Economic Inequality
Good for Families	instead of	Good for the Economy
Powerful Interests, Hands of the Few	instead of	Big Banks/CEOs/Corporations
Denying Your Pay	instead of	Falling Wages
Fair Return on Work, Make a Good Living	instead of	Wages, Low Wages
Economic Stability	instead of	Economic Opportunity

WORKING. FOR A BETTER LIFE

The job of a good message is not to say what's popular;
it is to make popular what needs to be said.

Working people deserve to make more than a decent living, we deserve a decent life. It's time America's economic policies put people and families first, instead of the interests of a handful of wealthy and well-connected corporate CEOs. A working people's movement can change these economic rules that unfairly favor the rich. We need to begin by changing the debate from "what is good for the economy" to "what is good for America and working people." People work for more than a paycheck; we work to sustain our families.

We have to recognize that currently our words do not reflect our values. We must build a way of speaking to people that reflects the values we share with most Americans. That vocabulary must reflect their lived experience and vividly express their hopes for a better life.

The AFL-CIO, working with ASO Communications and Lake Research, conducted an extensive investigation to find language that simultaneously accomplishes three goals:

- ▶ **Motivates our base and activists.** A good message works when people want to repeat it. Our messages work with our base in the general public—those who are ready to embrace our solutions as well as economic justice advocates and activists.
- ▶ **Convinces the persuadable.** Half the population holds both progressive and conservative views. A good message activates people's progressive instincts and makes our solutions seem like common sense.
- ▶ **Alienates the opposition.** Alienating the opposition exposes their core values—values with which most American strongly disagree.

What follows are three one-pagers. The first summarizes messaging principles. The second provides examples of words we should use and the words they replace. The third contains messages written in this new vocabulary. In dial tests, each of these messages scored highly with the base and persuadables while they alienated the opposition. And they were extremely popular with advocates and activists. From these messages you'll get the flavor and spirit of how we should be thinking and talking about the economy and work.

OVERVIEW AND GOAL

Our goal is to establish a long-term, aspirational narrative that generates support for raising wages and better lives, based on the fact that working people are the source of our nation's wealth.

We want to shift the fundamental beliefs and ideas Americans hold about economic issues. Therefore, our research did not test messages through the lens of partisan identity, but rather examined underlying perceptions about where wealth comes from, how jobs are created, and government's role in setting wage and other labor standards.

We seek to activate in our target audiences the recognition that all work has inherent meaning, all working people have a right to make more than a decent living, and we all deserve to live better lives. Overall, the research strongly points to using new language that is *more personal, more concrete and more active*.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ Provide an **aspirational call** to better lives that goes beyond purely financial issues
- ▶ Embrace and lead with **progressive values** like family, freedom and fairness
- ▶ Describe **real experiences**: “can’t make ends meet,” vs. abstractions: “wage stagnation”
- ▶ Assert that **human action** deliberately created problems and that only deliberate human action can fix them
- ▶ Name problems in an **active voice**—“CEOs decided” rather than identify them passively—“incomes fell”
- ▶ Focus on the **outcomes**, not the policies: “more time to care for a sick child” vs. “paid leave legislation”
- ▶ Emphasize **“helping the family”** vs. “growing the economy”

FAMILY COMES FIRST

Everyone knows—family comes first. Whether it's for that newborn you swear already smiles, your elderly mom or your spouse nursing an injury, being there and providing for family isn't negotiable. Every working person deserves to be paid enough to set their kids up for a bright future, and return the support they once received to their parents, and to speak up, with one clear voice, for a better workplace. Working people deserve to make more than a decent living; we deserve to have a decent life.

VALUE WORK

America has so much good work to be done, roads to be paved, kids to be taught, energy to be generated. All work has value and all working people have rights. But when people are given a work schedule that constantly changes or told to work more for less, the workplace isn't fair. We cannot allow anyone to be paid less than a living and left scrambling to retire. People's hard work should be recognized and rewarded. We must act together for fair wages, the right to speak up for each other and to earn paid time off when loved ones need us.

CHANGED RULES

We need a better balance between the right to profit and the rights of those who produce these profits. A handful of wealthy CEOs and politicians have rigged the rules in their favor and hard work, ingenuity and perseverance are not rewarded the way they used to be. Wages ought to reflect a fair return on work. We can create an economy where working people have a say at work, including raising wages and improving benefits. We need an economy that works for everyone. America should work for we the people, not just the wealthy and well connected.

A NEW VENTURE

America is a land of entrepreneurs. Many of us want to create the next big thing for ourselves that also would create new jobs for others. But right now many people live paycheck to paycheck, working unreliable hours, with few or no benefits. Launching a new venture requires first making ends meet today and having something left over to launch a new venture tomorrow. To restore opportunity, we need basic standards—good wages, strong benefits, secure retirement and time to be with family. Reaching for the stars first requires standing on a secure foundation.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO