

AFGE – There From the Beginning

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

Congressional Budget Analysis Confirms AFGE's Charge that TSOs Are Underpaid

Washington, D.C., Sept. 7 – The Congressional Budget Office's cost analysis of the conversion of Transportation Security Administration employees from the current pay system to the General Schedule confirmed what the TSA union has been saying all along – that the employees have been low-balled and unfairly treated under TSA's Performance Accountability Standards System (PASS).

The CBO's cost analysis, which was released Sept. 2, estimated that Transportation Security Officers would receive pay raises averaging \$1,700 if they were transferred to the GS system as called for under the Transportation Security Workforce Enhancement Act. The bill, H.R.1881, passed the House Homeland Security Committee in July and is now being considered by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

"Although it is not clear how many TSOs would receive a pay increase under the GS pay system or what would be the amount of an increase, it is clear that the wages of the nation's 38,000 TSOs would finally be fair and consistent," said AFGE President John Gage.

AFGE is at the forefront in moving TSOs to the GS system, which has dedicated funding, unlike the PASS system of performance "bonuses" that vary from year to year even if the TSO receives the same performance rating. Salary increases under the GS system also become part of the base pay on which retirement pay is calculated. Under the PASS system, TSOs see thousands of dollars diverted from their pensions resulting in the devaluation of their pensions and does not provide an incentive to make a job at TSA a career. This contributes to the excessively high TSO attrition rate and agency training costs.

AFGE called "speculative" the CBO's estimate that it would cost TSA \$700 million over five years to convert its employees into the GS system. The union stressed that classification experts at the Office of Personnel Management will have to undertake a systematic analysis of the duties of TSO positions in order to determine the appropriate GS classification and grading.

"We have been telling Congress for years now that TSOs have been underpaid. The cost of providing a fair compensation system to TSOs is only about 1.5% of the total TSA budget of \$7 billion in 2009." Gage said. "I strongly believe that this amount will be quickly absorbed by savings resulting from the collective bargaining process."

AFGE asserts that the actual cost of collective bargaining will depend on how many issues can be negotiated nationally. The union has long advocated for a national master collective bargaining agreement which will provide a greater degree of uniformity on issues such as leave usage, training, and promotions. One nationwide bargaining agreement will cost far less than implementing 400 different agreements at over 400 individual airports.

"Studies have shown that unionized workers are more productive and efficient than non-unionized workers," Gage added. "Increased productivity and a stabilized, full-time workforce will serve to further TSA's mission of aviation security for the flying public."