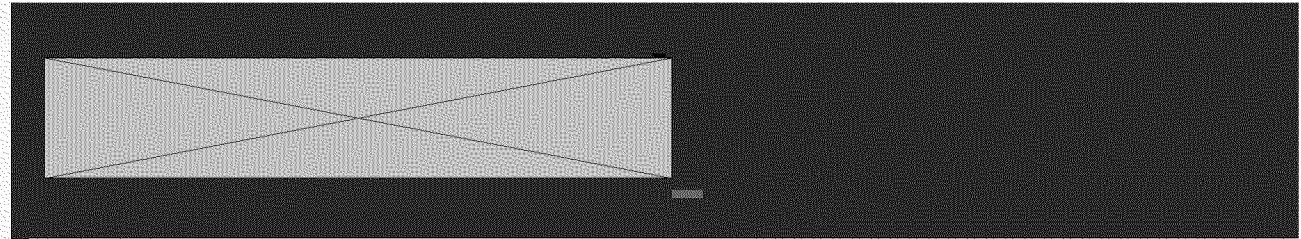


To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: The Washington Post
Sent: Wed 10/11/2017 4:01:46 PM
Subject: Federal Insider: Internal political turmoil hits largest federal union as Trump, GOP target government workers



Internal political turmoil hits largest federal union as Trump, GOP target government workers

By Joe Davidson

Alex Bastani was ousted as American Federation of Government Employees Local 12 president by the national president. (Kevin McCarron)

During a time when government workers are facing increasing threats from President Trump and Congress, the largest federal labor union is again facing its own political turmoil.

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) President J. David Cox Sr. dismissed four elected officials of the union's Department of Labor (DOL) unit last week over allegations of improper expenditures and failure to honor the votes of members.

This upheaval is another internal dispute and distraction for AFGE at a time when Trump and congressional Republicans are tightening the screws on federal employees through proposed or actual cuts to compensation, staffing, due process rights and moves to weaken unions.

Federal employee organizations need all their resources and more to defend against repeated assaults from the White House and Congress. Just days before the local's leaders were jettisoned, Trump issued an executive order that weakens union influence by dismantling the labor-management forums where general workplace issues are discussed. The day after the firings, the House approved a spending plan that would sharply reduce government

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subsidies for the Federal Employees Health Benefits program. The House Budget Resolution also calls for \$32 billion in cuts that probably would target feds, potentially including a series of retirement hits Trump previously proposed.

Meanwhile, there are continuing efforts by congressional Republicans to undermine civil service due process rights, allowing agencies to fire feds faster.

It seems AFGE has enough to do without eating its own.

The ouster of Local 12's leadership comes less than two months after the union's National Executive Council ejected another duly elected official and a Cox political opponent. Eugene Hudson Jr. was booted from the national secretary-treasurer post in August for what union officials considered improper procedure in using a staffer to send a politically sensitive email to union members.

Hudson later announced his candidacy for Cox's job.

Like Hudson's removal, the latest action comes as Alex Bastani, the sacked local president who ran against Cox in 2012, was contemplating another run for national office. Even if the motives behind the ousters were pure, the circumstances breed intrigue.

In a memo to Local 12 members, Cox said he placed the unit in trusteeship, which can last up to 12 months, because "it is essential that proper financial controls and democratic principles be restored." Local 12 officials, Cox wrote, "failed to abide by a vote of the local membership, conducted in September 2016, regarding the establishment of an audit committee and the hiring of an outside vendor for conducting an audit."

The alleged improper expenditures involved an \$18,000 Hyatt Regency luncheon in June for hundreds of union members and retirees. The event celebrated the local's \$7 million overtime dispute settlement with the Labor Department. Local 12 is one of the larger AFGE locals in the Washington area.

J. David Cox Sr. (Bill O'Leary/The Washington Post)

Leaders of the now-deposed unit believe the move by Cox did not follow proper procedures and was a political ploy to remove Bastani, whose plans to run for secretary-treasurer now would be more difficult as a fired local official.

“All said, there have been no financial or representational misdeeds,” Eleanor Lauderdale, Local 12’s former executive vice president, said in a statement. “There has simply been a sloppy *coup d’état* by AFGE National Office and District 14,” which covers the Washington area. She cited the settlement as an accomplishment that would bolster Bastani’s candidacy.

“Simply put,” Lauderdale said, “the award gave Mr. Bastani a very high profile, and he has previously run against both National AFGE President Cox and AFGE Vice President Bunn. AFGE officials do not want to run against anyone with a \$7,000,000 settlement listed as an achievement.” Eric Bunn Sr. is national vice president from District 14.

A spokesman for AFGE said it does not comment on internal union matters.

Lauderdale filed an unfair labor practice charge against the Labor Department alleging it was improperly involved in an internal union dispute by acting on behalf of the national office. Among other things, the charge says uniformed agency security guards were used to escort the displaced treasurer, Kevin McCarron, from the department’s headquarters where the Local has offices.

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“Indisputably,” the charge says, “DOL assisted AFGE National in imposing the trusteeship.”

The intrigue deepens with the ousting of Local 12’s leadership just two weeks before the unit was scheduled to vote on officers. That election was canceled by the national office, and candidates opposing the incumbents were installed in interim positions, according to Bastani and Lauderdale. If the local’s members were unhappy with the former incumbents, Lauderdale said, they could have been voted out soon.

“The federation had no reason to prevent this scenario from coming to fruition, except that it feared its wishes would not come true,” she added. “Therefore, as opposed to the democratic electoral process, the federation made up charges and tossed out the incumbents.”

Do the federal courts have the authority to hear a case to explore the costs of the charges against the union leaders? Yet, if Cox appoints the hearing panel, as the union constitution calls for, to consider the actions he took, it “The hearing will be a kangaroo court,” Bastani said by telephone. “I don’t even see the point of attending. ... I don’t think it’s going to be impartial at all.” The hearing is scheduled for Dec. 1, within the 60 days dictated by the union **Read more:** Yet holding the hearing two months after the officers were punished is like having a trial after the defendants are sentenced. For federal courts to second-guess the union’s effort for establishing a full record of the asserted irregularities that caused the imposition of this trusteeship.”

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