



AFGE Local 910 Newsletter

AFGE Local 910

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M11-244

*We recommend
calling or emailing
to schedule an
appointment with a
union representative
to ensure
availability.*

Time & Leave Tips from a Timekeeper

Below are a few tips for communicating and inputting your leave and premium pay (OT / CT / On-Call) requests. Always communicate with your supervisor regarding time and leave requests and do not hesitate to ask questions.

If you are waiting on VATAS approval to see if your supervisor is going to approve your leave, OT, or CT, you missed a process step. PLEASE make sure you send an email or Teams message your supervisor requesting OT/CT/Leave. Once an approval is received, then you know you are good to go and can enter your leave. If you are requesting CT/OT, please make sure you also send that approval to your timekeeper.

When adding a leave request for more than one day, you do not have to enter a separate request for each day. As long as the leave type is the same (LA, LS, FMLA LA, etc.) and all days are in the same pay period, you can put it all into one! If it crosses pay periods or uses different leave types, enter separate requests.

If your tour crosses midnight, you do not have to put in a leave request for each day, one request is fine (1800 – 0600). The only exceptions for this is if you are using two separate leave types, such as LA and CT, or if your tour starts in one pay period and ends in the next pay period (this only happens every other Saturday night).

If you need to change or remove a leave request that has not yet been approved, just go to the leave request tab → click the request → scroll to the bottom and click 'cancel'. If your leave request is already approved in VATAS and you need to change it, you will need to request your supervisor revert the leave request to 'pending'. Once in pending status, you can go in and change or delete the request.

Lastly, review your timecard for accuracy! Your timekeepers are human and mistakes happen. No one knows your schedule better than you! Please communicate any errors to your supervisor, and be respectful if mistakes are made.



AFGE Holiday Lunch & Learn December 15, 2021 10:00am - 2:00pm Hall of Heroes

Mark your calendars for our quarterly lunch & learn on December 15, 2021!

Members will be provided lunch and their annual holiday gift; this year we have sweatshirts.

Official Quarterly Meeting
1700-1730 in M11-244

Dinner in M11-244
12/15 from 1600-2200

Breakfast for 3rd Shift
12/16 from 0700-0900

Can't wait to see you there!

Bereavement Leave

Article 35 Section 18 - Leave for Bereavement

Upon requests, subject to any documentation requirements, leave approving officials shall approve up to five days of annual leave, sick leave, and/or LWOP for employees to mourn the death of the following family members:

- Spouse;
- Children, including adopted and step-children;
- Parents, including stepparents;
- Siblings, including step-brother/sister; or,
- Any individual related by affinity, i.e. whose association with the employee is the equivalent to one of the family relationships identified above.

Upon request, subject to any documentation requirements, leave approving officials shall approve one day of annual leave, sick leave, and/or LWOP for employees to mourn the death of a grandparent or parent of their spouse.

The supervisor has discretion to require documentation (e.g., obituary, death certificate) prior to final approval of bereavement leave. However, this documentation will normally be required only in unusual circumstances.

The screenshot shows a dropdown menu for 'Remarks' in the VATAS system. The 'Funerals' option is selected and highlighted with a red box. Other options include 'Duty Connected Injury or Illness', 'Jury Duty', 'Meetings with Labor Organizations and Other Groups', 'Organ donation - 30 days', 'Parades, Ceremonies and Civic Activities', 'Participation in Civic Organizations', 'Participation in Hearing and Appeals', 'Participation in Military Funerals', 'Pending Potential Disciplinary Action Determination', and 'Rest Periods'. The 'Special Notes' field is also visible at the bottom.

How to enter leave for bereavement:

1. Log into VATAS
2. Employee Main Menu → Leave Requests → Add Leave Request
3. Enter Leave Type: **LA-Annual** or **LS-Sick**
 - For LA requests, add special note: **Funerals**
 - For LS requests, add sick leave purpose: **Care of family member, including medical/dental/optical examination of family member, or bereavement**

Sick Leave Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can managers deny sick leave based on staffing levels?

A: No! The only reason managers can deny SL is due to insufficient SL balance. There have been several SL denials lately, with "staffing levels" listed as the rationale.

Q: Do employees have to select a sick leave reason in VATAS?

A: The short answer is yes. According to Article 35, Section 4C: *Sick leave is an earned benefit that will be granted to the employee for appropriate absences.*

Section 4 D&E define what is an appropriate absence for SL for Title 5 & Hybrid employees (they are different!).

In order for your supervisor to know if it is appropriate to grant SL, they need to know the basic reason for your SL. If appropriate, the supervisor can grant the leave. Employees do not need to share information above/beyond the reasons listed in in Section 4 D&E.

For example: An employee needs to indicate that the SL request is for a medical appointment; however, they do not need to share what type of medical appointment it is (could be "medical, dental, or optical

Recruitment Bonus!

New members **and** their recruiters receive a \$50 bonus, just in time for the holidays!

Jury Duty Leave

Article 35 Section 9 - Employee Absences for Court or Court Related Services

In accordance with applicable law, government-wide regulations or other outside authority binding on the Department, an employee summoned or subpoenaed in connection with a judicial proceeding by a court or other authority responsible for the conduct of that proceeding shall be authorized to attend the judicial proceeding without charge to leave or loss of VA salary in the following instances:

- For jury duty;
- To appear as a witness on behalf of the Federal, District of Columbia, state, or local government;
- To appear as a witness on behalf of a private party in an official and job-related capacity or to produce official records; or
- To appear as a witness on behalf of a private party in an unofficial capacity and one of the parties to the proceeding is either the United States, District of Columbia, or a state, or local government.

Even though no compensation is received for serving on jury duty in a federal court, employees may keep expense money received for mileage, parking, or required overnight stay. Money received for performing jury duty in state or local courts is indicated on the pay voucher or check as either "fees for services rendered" or "expense money." "Expense money" may be retained by the employee; "fees for services rendered" must be submitted to the appropriate financial office.

It is agreed that days off and/or schedules will not be changed to avoid granting absence for court or court-related services.

An employee who is granted court leave and is excused or released by the court for any day or substantial portion of a day is expected to return to the employee's regular Departmental duties except when:

- Only a small portion of the work day would be involved and thus no appreciable amount of Department services would be rendered;
- The distance from the court to the place of duty is such that this would be an unreasonable requirement; or,
- The employee is regularly scheduled to work on a tour any part of which includes 6:00 pm - 6:00 am.

An employee who is granted court leave and serves for a full day or substantial portion of a day is not expected to report for the next tour of duty if that tour occurs within twenty-four hours of the court leave and if any or all of it occurs during 6:00 pm - 6:00 am.

How to enter leave for jury duty:

1. Log into VATAS
2. Employee Main Menu → Leave Requests → Add Leave Request
3. Enter Leave Type: **LC-Court**
4. Enter Special Note: **Jury Duty**

Leave Type:	LC - Court
Current Leave	
Start Date	LA - Annual
Month Day Year	LB - Advanced Annual
Add New Request	LC - Court
	LD - Donated Leave
Remarks	LG - Advanced Sick

Remarks	Duty Connected Injury or Illness
	Funerals
	Jury Duty
Submitter	Meetings with Labor Organizations and Other Groups
Remarks:	Organ donation - 30 days
	Parades, Ceremonies and Civic Activities
	Participation in Civic Organizations
Approver	Participation in Hearing and Appeals
Comments:	Participation in Military Funerals
	Pending Potential Disciplinary Action Determination
Timekeeper Sub	Rest Periods
Special Notes:	

National AFGE Grievance on Vaccine Mandate

More information on the vaccine mandate will be sent soon. National AFGE is working on this through the grievance process. More information can be found at www.afge.org

New Submission Process for FMLA/PPL/LWOP/VLTP

Agency recently announced a streamlined process for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Paid Parental Leave (PPL) Advanced Leave, LWOP and Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP) submission in LEAF. The new process will create a faster more efficient leave approval process. The leave team will be able to see the request, review medical documentation and route for approval all in one location for all VISN 15 employees.

OCHCO Bulletin for Employees Receiving or Assisting a Family Member with COVID-19 Vaccination

[OCHCO Bulletin: Authorized Absence for Individuals and Family Members who Receive the COVID-19 Vaccine - Version 4 \(constantcontact.com\)](https://constantcontact.com)

[OCHCO Bulletin Attachment: Duty Status for Employees Receiving or Assisting a Family Member with the COVID-19 Vaccination \(constantcontact.com\)](https://constantcontact.com)

Member Benefits

Discounted Movie Tickets

Local 910 members can purchase \$5 movie tickets to AMC or B&B. Members may purchase up to twelve (12) tickets per year.

Did You Know?

Your union dues are tax-deductible.

AFGE National Benefits

A comprehensive list of benefits for AFGE members can be found by following this link:

<https://www.afge.org/member-benefits/>

Open Season for Health Benefits, Dental and Vision Insurance, and Flexible Spending Accounts

The 2021 Open Season for Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) and Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) and Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), is being held from Monday, November 8, 2021 through Monday, December 13, 2021.

During Open Season, eligible employees may enroll in or make changes to their FEHB and FEDVIP plan and enroll in a health care and/or dependent care FSAFEDS account for 2021. If no action is taken during Open Season, FEHB and FEDVIP enrollments will automatically roll over into 2022. Employees must re-enroll in FSAFEDS to participate in the program in 2022.

FEHB changes can be made in the employee's Defense Finance and Accounting Service MyPay account: <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>, or by providing a paper Standard Form (SF) 2809: https://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2809.pdf, to their servicing Human Resources (HR) office. FEHB changes are effective January 2, 2022.

FEDVIP changes can only be made on www.benefeds.com and are effective January 1, 2022.

FSAFEDS enrollments can only be made on www.fsafeds.com and are effective January 1, 2022.

If you have questions, please contact:

KCVA Human Resources: V15HRBenefits@va.gov

VA Federal Benefits Open Season Toolbox: <https://vaww.va.gov/OHRM/Benefits/OpenSeason/>

Office of Personnel Management 2021 Federal Benefits Open Season website: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/openseason/index.asp>

Local 910 Officers:

Chris Smith, President
Janet Constance, Exec VP
Jill Folsom, Secretary Treasurer
Debbie Brackenbury, Title 38 President
Shelley Barney, Title 5 President

Local 910 Stewards:

Corrin Heesch
Athenia Ingram
Frankie Morgan
Rhonda Reliford
Tiffany Taylor
Ashley Wilson
Ron Peters

Did you know?

Employees can work overtime while on leave, as long as the overtime worked is outside of your normal tour.