



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

NWS Rebuffs its own Employees

(March 15, 2013) NWSEO is diligently working on several issues on behalf of our members and to the benefit of labor relations as a whole. Our hope is that with new leadership a positive era of labor relations will evolve. We are waiting for Dr. Uccellini to step up in the spirit of cooperation for the dedicated employees of the National Weather Service.

On March 13, NWSEO filed a grievance regarding a NWS freeze on filling all pending lead forecaster vacancies without notice to the union or the applicants. NWSEO is now completing research and working on additional grievances regarding a freeze on filling vacancies of other positions.

In addition, this week NWSEO filed a grievance on a change of duty station issue, involving a member who was relocated by the NWS two years ago and now, in spite of an agreement between former NWS Director Jack Hayes and NWSEO President Dan Sobien, the agency is demanding that employee move back to NWS Headquarters. In addition to playing yo-yo with a loyal employee's life, the NWS is not even paying his PCS costs to move back to Headquarters.

Just months ago, the Alaska Region chair negotiated a grand bargain to make the Alaska WSOs viable and to keep them open to serve the public. Alaska Region is already violating that agreement by proposing to remove permanent employees and replace them with temporary employees. Part of the agreement involves forming a team to improve WSO office websites which are commonly used as briefing tools by Alaska Region employees. Alaska Region did not form the team and also unilaterally discontinued the WSO websites, despite an outcry from the public and despite the risk of angering Senator Begich whom NWSEO recently endorsed in his re-election bid.

About six months ago, NWS proposed discontinuing paying PCS expenses for interns, the lowest paid employees in the organization. The NWSEO expressed our disgust with the proposal but started the negotiating process none the less. The NWS never responded to our negotiating outreach which consisted of asking for a clarification of the agencies proposal. Recently we learned the NWS implemented this without even negotiating it.

NWSEO and NWS Director Dr. Uccellini have maintained a good working relationship in the past. Our professional organization was hopeful to begin an era of positive labor relations with his recent appointment as NWS Director. We recognize he takes the reigns at a challenging time, including having to deal with sequester and budget issues. However, despite repeated attempts by NWSEO to solve the issues facing the dedicated NWS workforce, our efforts have, to date, been ignored.

We at the NWSEO believe that the agency's employees are its second most important stakeholder, behind only the American public. We want to work in partnership with NWS management to enhance our service to the public – to make the NWS better than ever. This is truly a time for NWS leadership to work with the dedicated women and men of the NWS.

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