



# *The Four Winds*

*National Weather Service Employees Organization*

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## **Unprecedented Labor Problems at the NWS**

(April 4, 2013) NWSEO filed a record 10 grievances against the NWS in March, more than double the amount filed in an average year. The agency's unilateral decision to cease investment in its labor force and lifesaving mission, coupled with the choice to ignore its labor relations duties are at the heart of the grievances. "We understand that tough choices must be made by all federal agencies, but it is crucial to maintain the lifesaving mission of the NWS," said NWSEO President Dan Sobien. "The agency *must* by law bargain with the NWSEO on changes of conditions of employment. We intend to force them to perform their obligation."

The most recent [grievance](#) is against the agency's decision to terminate access to nine American Meteorological Society online journals. "Talk about a giant leap backward in facilitating science to operations," said Sobien upon learning of the termination of the online journals. "These journals are an important tool, used by members for both research and keep up to date with innovations in science and weather forecasting."

Many of the grievances involve unfilled vacancies for positions including lead forecaster, journeyman forecaster, HMTs/interns, and ITOs; emergency essential employees at WFOs across the country. The decision to leave the positions vacant predates sequestration. "The NWS has determined that these positions are so important that employees must show up for work during a calamity or show up to work without pay during a government shutdown. Now, they are leaving these very same emergency essential positions vacant. It just doesn't make sense," stated Sobien.

The grievances demand the agency set the conditions of employment back to their original state until negotiations are complete. Continuing to unilaterally make decisions without union input, will ultimately cost the agency both time and money that could be better spent promoting the mission of the NWS. To date, NWSEO has yet to hear from Uccellini in regards to any of the 10 grievances filed this month.

National media has shown interest in the NOAA hiring freeze. Emergency managers and members of Congress are echoing NWSEO's concerns that the vacancies will lead to degradation of the agency's mission to save lives and property. An [April 2 article in Climate Wire](#) explores how the hiring freeze could affect emergency management, water management, and research. In the article, Alabama emergency manager Eddie Hicks is quoted, "We are looking to the National Weather Service to have the adequate staffing to be able to warn the public, to let the emergency managers know what conditions they need to be prepared for, so it's very concerning to us because we know that some of the local offices are understaffed now."

-NWSEO-

**No one cares more for National Weather Service employees than  
National Weather Service employees.  
No one works harder for National Weather Service employees than  
National Weather Service employees. We are NWSEO.**