

Brothers and Sisters of AFGE:

My name is Ron Consalvo. I work for the FAA at the Technical Center in Atlantic City, NJ. I am writing to talk about a topic that is on many of our minds. That topic is privatization of various federal agencies. I want you all to know that this threat is very real and severely damaging to federal employees and the agencies that they work for. I know this because it happened to me in 2005 and the results were devastating to me and the many people I represented as the Eastern Region Director of the National Association of Air Traffic Specialists.

During the first term of President George W. Bush, he signed an executive order that removed Air Traffic Control from its status as inherently governmental. The FAA then did an A-76 study to determine the feasibility of outsourcing the Flight Service air traffic control functions. The study was flawed but the FAA got its desired result of removing flight service functions and the employees who do that work from the FAA. A contract was awarded to Lockheed Martin to perform flight service functions. LM was given the workforce to perform those functions. As part of our collective bargaining unit with the FAA, the agency was supposed to provide career transition assistance to displaced employees. The agency's idea of career transition assistance was reminding employees that they had an offer to work for LM. And because of that offer, they were not obligated to provide any more assistance. Bottom line was either take the job and leave your government career behind or feel free to find your own employment. LM as part of its transition plan was to downsize from 58 flight service stations to 20 locations. My union brothers and sisters had to deal the stress of moving to a new location along with losing their federal jobs. For many, this meant leaving their families behind and paying rent for themselves while also maintaining their primary residence. LM was clear that their pay and vacation and sick time would remain at FAA levels for as long as they worked for LM. Many of those employees were tasked with training lesser paid new employees and were fired as soon as the new employees were proficient in doing the job. The outsourcing caused financial, emotional, physical damage to many of the affected employees.

I was one of the lucky ones. Let me tell you my story. On the date of outsourcing, October 5, 2005, I lost my federal employment of just under 19.5 years. I dedicated my life to my career as a flight service controller. I worked shift work and weekends and missed many family events due to that schedule. I paid extra into my FERS retirement in order to qualify for an air traffic pension. I was 6 months, 3 weeks and 2 days short of qualifying for that pension. By virtue of not reaching 20 years in air traffic service time, I did not qualify for my ATC pension. That will cost me 14% in retirement benefits annually after I retire. Since I never worked in the other 2 options of ATC prior to age 31, I was unqualified to work in other ATC jobs. My only choice was to accept working for LM or move to Alaska to perform flight service functions. Based on political lobbying, the Alaskan flight service functions and employees remained with the FAA. I was a single dad raising 2 high school aged children at that time. Moving them to Alaska and away from their extended family was not an option. I chose to work for LM in Millville, NJ and continue to search for federal employment. I was promised that my facility would remain open for 3 years. They lied. It closed 11 months later. I was given the option of moving at my own expense to another LM location for an undetermined length of employment or staying put and looking for other employment. I was a 47-year-old widowed single dad with a very narrow skill set and no place to go for employment. I

ended up being unemployed for 11 months with only 6 months of unemployment checks. I had to tap into my TSP account to be able to pay my bills and provide for my family. Fortunately for me, someone remembered working with me 15 years prior and offered me a federal job. That job was a GS-5. My previous grade was GS-12. I took a 53% pay cut just to regain my federal employment. Think about what a 53% pay cut would do to you and your family. I can't even describe the damage it did to me financially, physically and emotionally. Luckily, through hard work and some really good people, I was able to achieve my previous grade. Many of my former union brothers and sisters weren't as lucky. Some had to deal with the breakup of their family. For some, the stress was so intense it caused serious health issues. Others lost their homes.

I wanted to share my story to encourage all of you to get engaged and work with your local and national union leaders to protect your jobs. This threat is real and it is here now. I implore you all to get involved. The job you save may be your own. If your agency isn't facing this threat now, you may be next.

In Unity,

Ron Consalvo

President AFGE Local 200