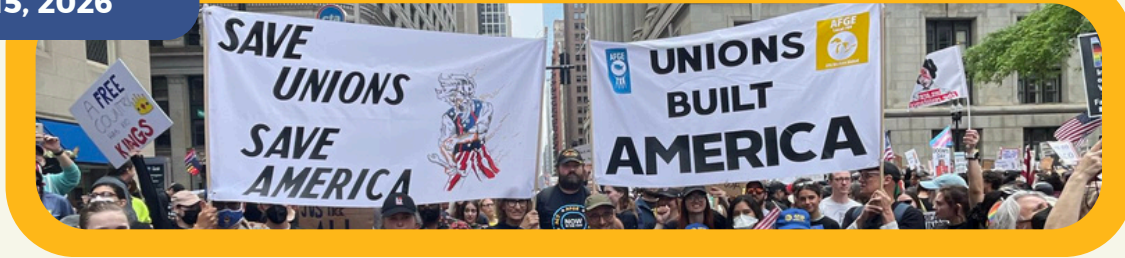


June 15, 2026



## **AFGE COUNCIL 238 HALF YEAR ROUND UP**

*Dear Union Family -*

*The first half of 2026 has brought unprecedented attacks on EPA workers, science, and our agency's mission. But it has also shown the power of EPA union members standing together and refusing to back down.*

*Throughout it all, AFGE Council 238 has been fighting on every front: challenging layoffs, defending workers facing retaliation, pushing back against attacks on science, and making sure EPA workers had a voice in the national conversation.*

*As we reach the midpoint of the year, we wanted to share some of what we've accomplished together and highlight the headlines, stories, and victories our union helped make possible.*

***Here's a look at what we've accomplished together.***

***In solidarity,  
Justin Chen  
President, AFGE Council 238***



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## January: One Year In, Workers Refused to Stay Silent

January marked one year into President Trump's second term, and AFGE Council 238 made sure EPA workers' voices were part of the national conversation.

In a major Guardian feature on the administration's environmental rollbacks, anonymous testimonials from our members spoke candidly about declining morale, staffing losses, political interference, and fears about the future of the EPA. E&E News also turned to Council 238 as it examined what federal workers called "phase two" of the administration's efforts to reshape the civil service.

January also brought heartbreak. After the tragic murder of AFGE NVAC member and our union brother Alex Pretti, Council 238 stood alongside his family, fellow union members, and allies. We spoke out, honored Alex's life, and joined vigils across the country to ensure his legacy as a union member and public servant would not be forgotten.

### Top Coverage:

The Guardian: ['Shameful': Trump's EPA accused of prioritizing big business over public health](#)

E&E News: [Feds brace for phase two after Trump's 'shock and awe'](#)

Washington Post: [ICU nurse fatally shot by Border Patrol in Minneapolis cared for veterans](#)

## February: Defending the EPA's Mission, and the Environmental Justice Workers Who Help Carry It Out

In February, when the Trump administration moved to revoke the Endangerment Finding, we refused to stay silent. And when the agency announced another round of devastating layoffs targeting environmental justice employees, we sounded the alarm, warning that the continued gutting of the workforce weakens our ability to respond to environmental and public health threats.

### Top Coverage:

POLITICO: [Trump's big climate reversal sets up a courtroom clash](#)

The Hill: [Obama, Dem leaders slam Trump for repeal of EPA climate finding](#)

E&E News: [Trump EPA lays off more environmental justice staff](#)

The Hill: [EPA firing 22 environmental justice staffers, union says](#)

### March: More Voices. More Pressure. More Momentum

In March, we took action alongside a coalition of public health and environmental groups and sent a letter to EPA Administrator Zeldin demanding the agency rescind the 19 RIF notices issued to staffers working on environmental justice.

Then, reporting in E&E News found that internal agency records showed ethics officials found no issue with employees signing the EPA Declaration of Dissent in 2025, further putting pressure on the agency following the unjust retaliation of over 100 EPA employees.

### Top Coverage:

E&E News: [EPA faces pressure to rescind environmental justice layoffs](#)

E&E News: [Zeldin disciplined EPA dissenters after ethics office found no 'concern'](#)



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## April: Taking the Fight to the Next Level

April was a turning point. A bombshell E&E News investigation revealed that EPA leadership disciplined employees who signed the 2025 Declaration of Dissent despite warnings from agency attorneys that their speech was protected by the First Amendment.

Council 238 didn't back down. We pursued legal challenges to the retaliation, helping build enough pressure that Administrator Zeldin was forced to answer questions before Congress.

At the same time, we fought back against efforts to dismantle the Office of Research and Development, warning that the reassignment and relocation of EPA scientists threatened decades of scientific expertise. And when gas prices began to skyrocket, we wrote about the importance of telework for federal workers in The Hill.

We also took our fight to Alaska. In an op-ed for the Alaska Beacon, Council 238 member Declan Farr made the case that when the federal workforce is weakened, communities feel the consequences—and that defending EPA workers means defending the people we serve.

### Top Coverage:

E&E News: [Trump EPA punished dissenters despite 'legal risk' warning](#)

Federal News Network: [Suspended EPA employees allege retaliation, whistleblower violations](#)

E&E News: [Zeldin pressed on discipline for EPA's critics](#)

The Hill: [EPA tells some scientific research staffers to relocate](#)

The New York Times: [How the Trump Administration Ended Independent Science at E.P.A.](#)

The Hill: [As oil prices surge, bringing back telework is common sense](#)

Alaska Beacon: [Our leaders in Washington shouldn't forget the Alaska workers who take care of us](#)

## May: Refusing to Stay Quiet

In May, after months of federal workers increasingly speaking out about actions they believed were undermining agency missions and public services, the Trump administration proposed a government-wide NDA policy designed to prevent employees from speaking publicly about their concerns.

AFGE Council 238 remains resolute in our belief that workers should never be silenced, and Americans should never be in the dark. Our job is to protect public health and the environment, not to stay silent when those protections are under threat.

And we will continue to speak out in the months and years ahead.

### Top Coverage:

E&E News: [Trump's gag order sends shivers down feds' spines](#)



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