

DDJC's Rienti Rises to the Top of DLA AFGE Locals

When Defense Distribution Depot San Joaquin, CA (DDJC) Material Handler Frank Rienti first joined the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) nearly 25 years ago, it was out of a concern for health and safety. When he was elected the President of DLA Council of AFGE Locals in October 2003, his top priority was keeping jobs from going out to private contractors and still providing a safe and healthy work place. "When I first started work as an on-call equipment cleaner at McClellan AFB (Air Force Base) we worked with several chemicals," recalled Rienti, "and, I didn't think management was taking care of our health and safety."

He first joined the DLA organization when the distribution portion of the Sacramento Air Logistics Center at McClellan AFB was transferred to DLA in 1991. When McClellan closed in 2000 he came to work at DDJC. Since then he has been commuting 62-miles a day from his home in Citrus Heights to his office at Sharpe. He has held practically every position in AFGE except as a local president. Prior to his recent election, he served as the Vice President of Defense Distribution Center's western depots.

He just shakes his head when asked if he plans to go further. "This is tops for me," he says of the office he will hold for a three-year term.

Rienti was asked by about three-fourths of the DLA AFGE locals to run for the office. Many were not happy with the flow of communication and were left in the dark on many issues he said. So for Rienti, getting strong lines of communication going, and uniting the 21 DLA locals that total 4,000 dues paying members, were a couple of things he wanted to get to work on right away.

"They were not fully informed of what was going on at DLA," Rienti said. In his first meeting with VADM Keith Lippert, SC, USN, Director, DLA, he talked about the importance of good communication. "We also talked about the mission and how the mission comes first, because without the mission we don't have employees," Rienti said.

He succinctly states his goals: "One—communicate to the locals so they know DLA's direction; two—bring the locals' concerns to DLA; three—tell the employees what AFGE and DLA are doing; and, four—organize." Rienti rates listening as his strongest asset. "I do a lot of listening," he admits. I like having the all facts before me. I like to do things right."

During a normal day, Rienti figures he spends a good five hours on the phone putting out fires and talking to his nine-member executive board. "Everyone wants to talk to the president," he chuckles.



Frank Rienti, President, DLA Council of AFGE Locals.

He also spends a lot of time researching items and then there is lots of reading—Merit Systems Protection Board and arbitration hearings. He learned early on of the large amount of reading that is required. During his first year as a shop steward, union officials handed him stacks of regulations and told him he needed to start learning them. "It is not a 7 to 3:30 job," he is quick to point out. "I spend a lot of time at night and on weekends taking care of AFGE business. However, my family provides a lot of support and always has. Often they say how proud they are of me and what I'm doing."

Since becoming the DLA AFGE president, Rienti has assigned members of his executive board to different committees to do studies and gather information on the A-76 process, whereby federal jobs may be performed by contracted employees. He also plans to continue lobbying efforts among the senate and house representatives to garner support against A-76. "In February I'll be going back to D.C. for a big legislative conference," he said. "We get several senators and congressmen to come in and speak to us. We also, make personal visits to their offices."

Rienti concedes the job has been a lot of work. But, the good part, he says, is knowing what is going on and sharing that information with the other locals.

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