Court Order Restores Union Contract for BOP Law Enforcement Officers at Thomson Federal Prison

THOMSON, IL, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- AFGE Local 4070 welcomes today's federal court order restoring the collective bargaining agreement covering law enforcement officers employed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

The Lieutenant Osvaldo Albarati Stopping Prison Contraband Act

On September 29, 2026, U.S. District Judge Vernon D. Oliver granted a preliminary injunction in National Council of Prison Locals et al. v. Federal Bureau of Prisons 3:25-cv-01907. The court set aside the BOP's September 25, 2025, cancellation of the master agreement and ordered the agency to immediately reinstate the agreement and related local agreements for the remainder of the contract term, which runs through May 28, 2029.

"Today's ruling is a win for law enforcement officers at Thomson and throughout the Federal Bureau of Prisons," said Jon Zumkehr, president of AFGE Local 4070. "Our members had their union contract stripped away. That contract allows Law enforcement officers to enforce safety rules, challenge unfair discipline, and have a voice on the job. We are grateful it has been restored."

> The injunction a win for Law enforcement officers at FCI Thomson and throughout the Federal Bureau of Prisons"
>
> *Jon Zumkehr*

Local 4070 represents correctional officers and staff at FCI Thomson. Those employees work under the same national agreement between AFGE's Council of Prison Locals and the BOP that the agency terminated last year. Following the cancellation, the BOP stopped recognizing the union as the employees' exclusive representative, ended official time and dues deductions, and moved forward with

changes to schedules, leave, and workplace conditions without following the negotiated process.

Zumkehr said the cancellation placed additional strain on employees already performing dangerous work.

“Correctional officers work in dangerous conditions every day,” Zumkehr said. “The last thing they need is to have their rights taken away. Canceling the contract added stress to an already high-risk mission. Today’s order restores those protections while this fight continues.”

The court found that the union is likely to succeed on its claim that the BOP’s termination violated the Administrative Procedure Act. The BOP’s official letter cited an executive order as the reason for terminating the agreement. That same day, the BOP director publicly said the “whole purpose” of ending the contract was that the union was “an obstacle to progress.” The judge found those explanations inconsistent and ordered the contract restored.

Progress on Officer Safety and Workplace Rights

Local 4070 also pointed to recent progress in Congress on officer safety and federal workers’ rights.

On September 16, 2026, the president signed S. 307, the Prison Staff Safety Enhancement Act, which became Public Law 119-110. The law requires the Bureau of Prisons to act on recommendations from the Office of Inspector General concerning the sexual harassment and sexual assault of BOP employees.

S. 736, the Lieutenant Osvaldo Albarati Stopping Prison Contraband Act, has passed the Senate and is awaiting action in the House of Representatives. The bill is named for a BOP lieutenant who was murdered after seizing contraband, including cellphones used to coordinate the attack. It would strengthen penalties for providing cellphones in federal prisons and require the BOP to review its policies concerning prohibited objects. Local 4070 urges the House to pass the legislation.

“We also appreciate the support of Congresswoman Mariannette Miller-Meeks, who represents Iowa’s 1st Congressional District, and Congressman Eric Sorensen, who represents Illinois’ 17th Congressional District,” Zumkehr said. “Both stood with federal employees and voted to restore their workplace rights. When law enforcement officers at Thomson and across the BOP needed a voice in Congress, they showed up.”

Miller-Meeks and Sorensen voted for the Protect America’s Workforce Act, a House measure intended to restore collective bargaining rights taken from federal employees. Sorensen also co-sponsored the bill.

“We hope today’s ruling will stop the attacks on these workers,” Zumkehr said. “Officers at Thomson and across the BOP continued showing up for the public after their contract was taken away. They should not have to do this job without the rights they bargained for. Reinstate the contract. Pass the contraband bill. Respect the workforce. Let these officers do their jobs with the protections they earned.”

AFGE Local 4070 will continue standing with the Council of Prison Locals, AFGE, and BOP law enforcement officers until the contract is secure and the attacks on these workers end.

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