



2. All employees of the Gift Shop Division, U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Architect of the Capitol, [excluding a]ll supervisors, management officials and employees described in 5 U.S.C. Section 7112(b)(2), (3), (4), (6), and (7), as applied by the Congressional Accountability Act.<sup>2</sup>

As reflected in the parties' collective bargaining agreement, as the exclusive bargaining representative, Council 26 has delegated to AFSCME Local 658 the authority to act for and negotiate agreements covering all employees in these bargaining units.

Council 26 seeks to amend the foregoing Certifications to substitute AFSCME District Council 20 ("Council 20") for Council 26 as the certified exclusive bargaining representative. Council 26 asserts that it has now merged with Council 20, and that the members of these bargaining units have voted in favor of changing their affiliation/certification to Council 20.

## **II. The Parties' Positions**

The Petitioner submits that the merger election complied with guiding case law precedent, afforded due process, and provided full continuity of representation by Council 20, with the merged entity retaining the same constitution, dues structure, and servicing union representative that these bargaining units previously had under Council 26.

The Employing Office does not oppose the Petition, but it has asked the Board to determine whether the individual filing the Petition on behalf of Council 26 had authority to do so.

## **III. Discussion**

When Congress enacted the Congressional Accountability Act in 1995, it expressly extended the rights, protections, and responsibilities contained in chapter 71 of the Federal Service Labor Management Relations Statute to employees of employing offices in the legislative branch. 2 U.S.C. § 1351(a)(1). In this regard, the Federal Labor Relations Authority has ruled that, to amend the certification of an exclusive representative in an existing unit to reflect a change in affiliation or a merger, the procedures set forth in *Veterans Administration Hospital, Montrose, New York*, 4 A/SLMR 858 (1974), *review denied*, 3 F.L.R.C. 259 (1975) ("*Montrose*") must be followed. See *Florida National Guard, St. Augustine, Florida*, 25 F.L.R.A. 728 (1987). These procedures were designed to ensure that an amendment of a certification of an exclusive representative in an existing unit conforms to the desires of the membership of that unit. *U.S. Dep't of the Interior, Bureau of Land Mgmt., Phoenix, Ariz.*, 56 F.L.R.A. 202 (2000).

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<sup>2</sup> See Certification for Inclusion in Existing Unit, *AOC & Council 26*, Case No. 11-LM-01 (Apr. 14, 2011).

The Board has likewise adopted the *Montrose* requirements. See *Int'l Bhd. Of Teamsters, Locals 246 et al. & U.S. Capitol Police Bd.*, Case No. 03-LM-02 (AC), 2004 WL 5658965, at \*1 (Jan. 14, 2004) (“*Teamsters Local 246*”). Thus, to ensure that an amendment of certification conforms to the desires of a union’s membership, four procedural criteria must be met:

- (1) A proposed change in affiliation should be the subject of a special meeting of the members of the incumbent labor organization, called for this purpose only, with adequate advance notice provided to the entire membership;
- (2) the meeting should take place at a time and place convenient to all members;
- (3) adequate time for discussion of the proposed change should be provided, with all members given an opportunity to raise questions within the bounds of normal parliamentary procedure; and
- (4) a vote by the members of the incumbent labor organization on the question should be taken by secret ballot, with the ballot clearly stating the change proposed and the choices inherent therein.

The vote must be open to all union members in the affected unit but not to all members of the bargaining unit. *Bureau of Indian Affairs, Gallup, New Mexico*, 34 F.L.R.A. 428 (1990). There is no requirement that any specific number or percentage of members must cast ballots in order for an affiliation change to be effective. There must, however, be union members in the unit and proof that the members were sent notice of the meeting. *Union of Fed. Emps.*, 41 F.L.R.A. 562, 574 (1991).

Having reviewed the record in this case and the circumstances culminating in the instant Petition to amend these Certifications, we conclude that the requisite procedural requirements have been met. Specifically, the Petitioner has presented uncontroverted evidence establishing that Local 658, on behalf of Council 26, provided advance written notice to the union members in the bargaining units at issue that a meeting called for the sole purpose of discussing and voting on the merger of Council 26 with Council 20 would be conducted at the Capitol Visitor Center on April 18, 2018. A secret vote was conducted using ballots that clearly described the proposed change. The tally of that secret ballot vote established that the majority of the members who participated voted in favor of ratifying the merger and changing the certification. Based on the foregoing, we conclude that the procedural safeguards set forth in *Montrose* were satisfied.

The Board, in addition to considering the *Montrose* procedural requirements, must also be satisfied that any change in affiliation or merger does not affect continuity of representation. *Teamsters Local 246*, 2004 WL 5658965, at \*1. Here, the collective bargaining agreement remains in effect and there is no indication that the merger resulted in

changes to union members' dues obligations. The Local 658 officers who were designated by Council 26 to service the bargaining units at issue have remained unchanged, with the exception of the President of the Local Union, who has resigned. Further, Seth Couslar, an agent who was elected by the membership to act as an agent for Council 26 and Council 20, continues to serve as the representative for federal sector locals affiliated with Council 26, including Local 658. It is undisputed that, both before and after the merger vote, Mr. Couslar attended and continues to attend Local 658 membership meetings, and he continues to represent unit employees in grievance proceedings. These facts support a finding that the merger did not disrupt continuity of representation.<sup>3</sup>

Based upon the foregoing, we find that the merger election and the subject Petition satisfies the *Montrose* and continuity of representation factors discussed above. Accordingly, we shall grant the Petition.

### ORDER

The Petition to amend the Certifications in Case Nos. 10-LM-01 and 11-LM-01 is hereby granted. The Certifications of Representative are amended to substitute AFSCME District Council 20 for AFSCME Council 26.

It is so **ORDERED**.

Issued, Washington, DC, June 28, 2018.

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<sup>3</sup> As an elected representative of Council 26, as well as Council 20, we also find that Mr. Couslar had the authority to file the instant Petition.