

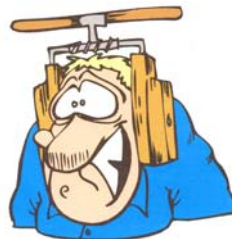


## John's Column

By John Darden  
Chapter President

## Negotiations

I sincerely hope that everyone had a happy and memorable holiday season and that the New Year finds you in good health and even better spirits. I am writing about negotiations or what is more commonly referred to as the “negotiation two step”. As some of you may have noticed, I have not been around much the last few weeks. Well, that is because I have been spending a great portion of my time in Washington, D.C. working on negotiations on the new IRS contract. I may have been a little optimistic in my previous article when I indicated I was excited about the opportunity these negotiations give us ... For the majority, these negotiations have just given me headaches on a daily basis, but in the end the headaches will be worth the victories that I know NTEU will win for the employees of the IRS.



Without going into specifics, NTEU and IRS are currently in negotiations over the new contract. This time, the IRS has decided to open negotiations on thirty-six of the fifty-four articles of our current contract. That is two-thirds of the contract. Some of the articles that the IRS has opened relate to appraisals, promotions, reassignments, awards, hours of work, overtime, sick leave, flexiplace, AWS, TIGTA interviews, etc. Needless to say, none of these proposed changes are geared to help employees or protect any employees' rights.

During a three and half month period between November and February, I will be spending ten weeks in Washington, D.C. listing to management tell us these

changes are necessary in order to make the Service operate more efficiently. Yes, we all know that any dictatorship operates more efficiently, but at what cost? You can just imagine the rosy picture that management envisions with either your direct supervisor or your second level supervisor having complete discretion on AWS, flexi place, hours of work, start times, sick leave, employee rights, promotions, details, reassignments, etc, with no checks or balances. For example, if the Service needs a grade 12 Revenue Agent in Odessa, they would just reassign you there without any competitive action. It wouldn't matter that you live in Dallas and there just happens to be four grade 11 Revenue Agents sitting in Odessa waiting for a vacancy announcement for that grade 12. This is what the IRS calls FLEXIBILITY.

So anyway, after spending all day listing to someone telling me and the other members of the NTEU negotiation team how much better off the Service would be (for managers) by making all these proposed changes to the contract, my head is about ready to explode. I'm sure that management feels the same headaches as they go back and forth with the best labor law attorneys in federal sector, Frank Farris and Ken Moffett, along with the rest of the NTEU negotiation team. Unfortunately, my day is not over. After heading back to my room for a quick bite to eat and take another couple of pain relievers for my headache, I begin the daily process of meeting back with the NTEU negotiation team and working up counters to the proposals being made that day.

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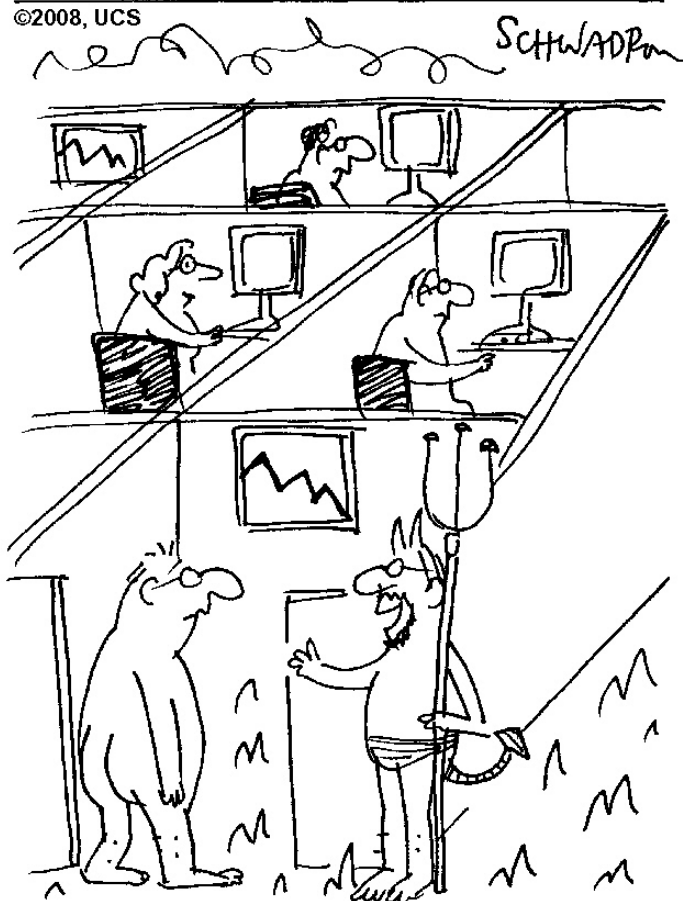
## Good News for Carmen Munoz

Back in March of 2007 and again in July of 2008 we provided you with a special message from Carmen Munoz, a MITS Program Analysis working out of our Farmers Branch POD. Carmen has been in need of a kidney transplant and was looking for a donor. Carmen was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease which is a genetic disorder suffered by over 600,000 individuals.

Recently, Carmen was able to beat the odds to obtain a kidney transplant. Less than 20% of those patients on the transplant list actually receive transplants. Carmen had been waiting for a transplant since 2006 and was rewarded in her search after she posted her plea on [matchingdonors.com](http://matchingdonors.com). She received a telephone call out of the blue from fellow Texan, Pam Davison, indicating she had a kidney for her if she wanted it.

Sure enough, the kidney was a match. However, four local hospitals refused to perform the transplant due to the circumstances surrounding the donation. I.E. having a stranger volunteer rather than having a family member or friend make the donation. Carmen was finally able to locate a doctor at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore that was willing to perform the surgery.

The operation was successful and both Pam and Carmen are recovering nicely. For more information relating to this remarkable story go to <http://www.wbaltv.com/video/18050514/index.html> for the video broadcast that appeared on a WBAL TV in Baltimore on November 21, 2008.



**"We've made it a little more hellish by modeling it after IRS workspaces."**



## Did you know

that the IRS has an Employee Assistance and Work-Life program? The program offers confidential counseling on personal issues, legal information (resources and consultation), financial information (resources and tools), and information, referrals and resources for work-life needs. Help is available by telephone or online and you can call any time toll-free at 800-977-7631, TDD 800-697-0353 or [www.guidanceresources.com](http://www.guidanceresources.com) for company ID: IRS112. For additional information research IRM **5.1.3.4.1** or **25.16.1.14.8**.

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## Stewards Corner

By Andrea Hardwick

### **READ THIS AND GET ANGRY!!!!**

If you are reading this article, I know that you are a dues paying member of NTEU Chapter 46 and do not need a reminder of the importance of union membership to help combat inequities in the workplace. We all know that no non-NTEU member (commonly referred to as a scab) would be so ethically deficient as to take advantage of benefits fought and paid for by hard working union members. If someone would be doing that, it would be a form of stealing and as we all know the code of conduct (refer to Document 12011) prohibits any IRS employee from having even an appearance of violating any law. But you may know someone in your work area to whom this message may apply. After all if you look around your office you would find that about one in four of your co-workers fall into this category. So, go over to them and allow them the opportunity to become part of the solution and not part of the problem. So with that said, on with my story...

If you are a Customer Service Representative, how would you like to lose wrap time on the phones all together? How would you like not to be fully represented if you are discriminated against and treated unfairly? These are just a few of the changes proposed by Congress with which we are faced. Did you know that it is NTEU that fights for your rights behind the scenes? It was NTEU that was able to get us the higher pay raise that you will soon receive. Your union dues are what make arbitrations, representation of employees and fairness possible.

Now, I know what you're thinking. This girl is just trying to get me to join. Honestly, when I first became a steward last year, I began with the idea that I just wanted to represent employees and leave it at that. After all, I had experience as an Army Officer and believed in fair representation for all. Now that I have a better understanding of how the union affects everyone and how important its existence is, I feel

that it is my obligation to inform all employees about their rights and have them represented as they should as detailed in the Wagner Act of 1935.

Some of you may think, "Why should I join the Union if I reap the benefits anyway?" Well, the best answer is that would be stealing. But to get the crux of the matter (WITFM – what's in it for me), you never know what your future situation may be. Employee resources are often realigned. That perfect working situation you are currently enjoying may not be there tomorrow. Management officials and their policies often change. As a result, employees may react by retiring or some have become complacent. I am sure you have heard the joke going around that due to current economic reverses the light at the end of the tunnel has been turned off.

On a higher scale, let us not forget that representation and legislation at higher levels such as arbitration can be quite costly. Our chapter has paid out thousands of dollars over the past year to arbitrate cases for our members.

It was through our unions with which your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were involved that enabled changes in our workplace that we so blindly take for granted today. It was their sacrifice and hard work that made possible the favorable working conditions we enjoy today, unlike the sweatshops that you are aware of only through history books. We have it a lot easier now and we must continue to work to keep what we have won. We must not let these benefits become eroded. I know times are hard. Now that the election is over, our leaders have admitted that we are in a recession and have been in one for over a year. But through our collective strength, we can make a huge difference. So, for you that are members, I thank you. For those of you who have not yet made the commitment, think about joining. It's a choice I haven't regretted. Who knows what we will be able to accomplish once we all join together!






"Our weekly staff meetings prove that there is no problem so great that it can't be made worse."

## Negotiations from Page 1

Now, after a few weeks of negotiations I am carrying around my computer and three or four binders with a print out of all the proposals and counter proposals for each of the articles that have been discussed to date.

Fortunately, this process is being broken down into two and three week pain sessions. Unfortunately, during the week I am allowed back at my office, I spend at least one day going over my travel voucher and making new travel arrangement or changing arrangements previously made but having to modify due receiving revised travel authorization codes. I then get to spend the rest of the week trying to catch up on the two hundred or so e-mails that I received while I was out. I then get the opportunity take a few days off for the holidays.

There is hope. As of the New Year, I will have served half my sentence and have only another five more weeks to go.

Working on this new contract has been challenging to say the least, but I wanted to let you know that we are working hard to insure everyone continues to receive the benefits of union representation and have a contract that insures the well being of every federal employee. 

## Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down



Thumbs down to Rebecca Wheatley, the SBSE Collection Territory Manager, who refused to release an employee in her territory POD in order to take a job in W & I. Although the Territory Manager is retiring, that was an outrageous call that she made for our member. He wanted to go to W & I and was selected until Ms. Wheatley refused to release him. So much for Employee Satisfaction.



Thumbs up to W&I for realizing the need and the implementation of converting approximately 1,500 positions with seasonal work schedules to permanent full time work schedules. The team that created the guidelines gets two thumbs up for creating a specific action plan that was almost fool-proof.



Thumbs down to Operation 3 management for their reoccurring incompetence particularly in the converting of 50 seasonal employees to permanent positions. After discussions with NTEU, the Human Capital Office decided in order to expedite the conversion of over a thousand seasonal employees to permanent in Accounts Management that it would take only 10 specific guidelines. However, it was extremely unfortunate that locally they were not capable of following all the rules. For example, guideline number 8 requires employees receiving an offer to have at least 5 workdays to accept.



Thumbs down to Austin Employment Section II and Operation 3 management for informing people they are hired with the IRS and then telling them later (after they had quit their jobs) that was in error. We can only hope that the former employers will hire them back. This is an extremely high price to pay for a mistake! 