

NTEU Chapter 46 NEWS

Chapter Website: www.nteu46.org

National NTEU Website: www.nteu.org



NTEU Legislative Conference held in Washington, D.C. March 8 through 11, 2010.

John Darden, President of NTEU Chapter 46, recently made congressional visits on behalf of federal employees to support efforts to improve agency funding, ensure collective bargaining rights, affordability of health benefits, reinstatement of partnering with management, retirement benefits and pay parity for federal employees.



RO Inventory Levels

In early February, National NTEU President, Colleen Kelley, announced that she had been working with the executive leaders of SB/SE for years about addressing inventory complaints that have been coming from the field going Revenue Officers. I believe we are all aware of the substance of these complaints. Over the years, NTEU has been informed by management that it has studied the issue extensively and it can document how current inventories are workable and appropriate. Unfortunately, even if IRS had all the science in the world proving that current inventories are manageable, none of their employees believe it. Inventory levels are causing an enormous amount of stress, and negatively impact the ROs, their work product, and their working environment. The point being that IRS cannot afford to ignore what it's employees think and feel.

In more recent productive discussions with Doug

Shulman, Chris Wagner, Faris Fink, and David Alito on this ongoing issue, Colleen Kelly indicated she was pleased to announce that management has agreed to establish a joint committee with NTEU to examine the RO inventory issue. Management has agreed to do a dozen or so pilots where we will be able to test out what happens when the inventories are reduced. It has been NTEU's position for years that if employees are given fewer cases to work they will be able to close each of them faster. The net result being that over time, they would be able to close just as many cases as employees working under the current high



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inventories. Now that we have a joint agreement with IRS management to jointly conduct these pilots, we will now have a chance to prove just that. Colleen credits IRS leadership, NTEU's relentless efforts, and the anticipation of, and issuance of, a President's Executive Order, with generating the motivation to try these things.

As David Alito, Director SB/SE Collection, recently indicated, the inventory level study that was commissioned in 2009 has been completed. Based on the results of that study, SB/SE Collection is partnering with NTEU to conduct lower inventory level pilots within each Collection field Area across the country. The details of these pilots will be

Chief's Word

By Cheryl Dalton



Spring has "Sprung". Springtime is inspiring. It is a time for rebirth and reawakening. It is also a time for renewal. In Chapter 46, spring is a time for our stewards to continue to listen to our bargaining unit and pay attention to the challenges they are experiencing. We must ensure management is following the tenets of our New National Agreement II contract. All four seasons encompass different issues and attitudes. Chapter 46 stewards will be attending the national training in April to improve their skills and knowledge to help our members.

In the spring, our agency has additional challenges for our employees, such as filing and paying their income tax returns timely. We have the threat of 1203 over

communicated, jointly with NTEU, as soon as the specifics have been worked out and we will work jointly to evaluate and assess any impact on the program.

Now it is just the matter of defining and designing these pilots. To assist National NTEU with this process, I have been appointed along with two other Revenue Officer chapter presidents to work with Frank Ferris on this team. They are Doreen Greenwald, Chapter 1, Milwaukee; and Pat Frazee, Chapter 74, Akron. I will update you when we have details about when we will begin meeting and progress on their agenda.

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our heads if we don't comply. The stress that the filing season puts on us has been compounded this year by the sadness and reality of the Austin tragedy. Our members are professional employees who deserve to work in a safe and secure environment. It is unfortunate that a crazed, taxpayer chose to take his vengeance out on our fellow employees at the Echelon Building. As a result, the security has been enriched. NTEU Chapter 46 saddened by this tragedy and our heartfelt sympathies are with those fellow employees in Austin.

Spring invigorates us and encourages us to renew our attitudes. At Chapter 46, we are continually dealing with challenges and looking for alternative ways to resolve them. Our stewards are constantly looking out for the interests of our members and non-members in the bargaining unit. Employees are our greatest interest and the greatest asset for the agency. They deserve our renewed attention.

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IRS E-Mail Policy Revised

In a February Memorandum, National NTEU President, Colleen Kelley, announced the IRS has corrected its e-mail usage policy with regard to when bargaining unit employees may use their IRS e-mail address on non-IRS web sites.

Due to computer security concerns, in early January 2010, the IRS Computer Security Incident Response Capability (IRS CSIRC) issued a communication stating that bargaining unit employees should not use their IRS e-mail addresses for "all non-IRS websites." When NTEU learned of this new policy, inquiries were made in light of the many

bargaining unit employees who utilize non-IRS services, which require an e-mail address, as a part of their job. NTEU argued that the use of a personal e-mail address for services that are utilized as a part of an employee's position would be inappropriate.

In light of NTEU's inquiry, the IRS CSIRC has corrected its e-mail usage policy to state that employees should not use their IRS e-mail addresses for nonwork-related web sites.

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GovTrip Agreement being Renegotiated

NTEU recently reopened the March 5, 2008 Letter of Understanding (LOU) to address the significant number of problems that have arisen as a result of GovTrip. On January 28, 2010, the IRS briefed NTEU as to the current status of the implementation of GovTrip.

The IRS supported the use of GovTrip stating Northrop Grumman has made numerous upgrades to address concerns that have been raised by employees. With regard to adaptive technology users, the IRS stated that there were still four areas in GovTrip that are not yet compliant with the Rehabilitation Act and must be addressed.

NTEU mentioned various systematic GovTrip problems and provided specific examples of the problems that included the inefficiency of local travel, poor training, the lack of user-friendliness that results in additional time employees spend on the system, and the fact that GovTrip changes or edits are difficult and expensive to make. In response to NTEU's concerns, the IRS stated that if employees should encounter a problem they needed to fill out an Employee Resource Center trouble ticket in order to capture the data relating to any GovTrip problem.

Otherwise, the IRS would have no record to indicate that any problems exist.

When NTEU discussed the ongoing inefficiencies of processing local travel, the IRS admitted that GovTrip was not designed for agencies where local travel is utilized by a large portion of the workforce. With regard to the issue of the exorbitant fees that GovTrip charges, the IRS stated that the use of GovTrip is estimated to save the federal government \$417 million over the ten years, because the contract with the E-Gov Travel Service aligns all government travel programs, including air, lodging, rental car, per diem, and policy into one integrated platform.

As a part of these negotiations, NTEU plans to address not only the technology problems with the GovTrip software but also the recent management sentiment that employees should be reprimanded or negatively evaluated for their incorrect application of GovTrip. Please continue to let the chapter know about any problems or concerns you may have relating to GovTrip.



The Austin Tragedy Tribute to Vernon Hunter and Colleagues

We sometimes suffer with understanding-

Understanding why something so horrific can happen to me.

A person with a caring heart; a heart devoted to helping others, through my dedication to performing my duties as a Government employee.

The goals you set for yourself and your desire to expect more of you,

Your ongoing efforts to provide excellent customer service to the United States of America doing what you do..... may seem to be in vain.

You will find yourself asking, "Why Me"!

These are words of comfort and encouragement to my colleagues,

As well as those affected by this tragedy.

Remember that things sometimes happened to make us stronger,

Even sometimes to break us down.

The enemy would like for us to believe that he and us are one in the same.

We are not-

We are Government employees with a very important Mission and Goals to service Our Country.

So don't allow the slander of our ethics and character discourage you from being you,

Discourage you from providing the excellent service that you do.

Stand Strong! Have Faith! Believe!

We are a family and we are all in this together.

Written By:

LaKetra M. King

Steward, NTEU Chapter 46 and Author of "Reality of My Life"

Correct Mailing Address for Chapter 46 Election

NTEU Chapter 46 will be holding a chapter election July, 2010. We want to make sure that any mailings sent out in the course of this election go to your correct home address.

If you have moved during the last 12 months or have not been receiving any materials from NTEU such as the NTEU Bulletin, please give us your correct address.

Fill out the attached form (below) and bring it to the NTEU Chapter 46 office,



Member of NTEU Chapter 46 visit with Texas Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson during the recent NTEU Legislative Conference held in Washington, D.C.

Room 833 of 1100 Commerce Street or mail it to:

NTEU Chapter 46
1100 Commerce Street
MC 1700 DAL, Room 833
Dallas, TX 752442

Do so no later than **April 8, 2010**

Change of Address

Member Name: _____

(Print Legibly)

Previous Address: _____

Current Address: _____

Current home E-Mail: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

2011 Proposed Budget

The President has submitted his FY 2011 budget proposal to Congress. This budget proposal calls for roughly \$12.6 billion in funding for the IRS in FY 2011, which is an increase of more than \$487 million, or 4%, above the FY 2010 level.

Specifically, the budget would provide almost \$5.8 billion to support IRS enforcement activities, including a variety of new revenue generating initiatives that are expected to bring in an additional \$2 billion a year in tax revenue by 2013. The President's request would also provide increased funding for IRS taxpayer services, including additional resources for high-quality phone service to ensure taxpayer's questions are answered quickly and correctly. A total of \$4.1 billion in operations support funding is proposed to assist overall planning, direction, and support for the IRS, while the Business Systems Modernization program and the Health Insurance Tax Credit Administration would receive \$387 million and \$18 million respectively.

In keeping his commitment to NTEU and congressional leaders, President Obama requested pay parity in his budget recommendation for 2011 for both the military and federal civilian personnel. NTEU has long supported pay parity between federal employees and military personnel, a principle that has been followed for most years in the past two decades.

While the level of the proposed average raise is low this year, it does reflect the change in the Employment Cost Index (ECI) in wages and salaries for private sector workers as measured by the Bureau of Labor statistics of the Department of Labor. The ECI is the reference point

for the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act. This law became effective in 1994, and was designed to close, in stages, the gap between public and private sector pay. It has not, however, been implemented as intended, and the gap, as measured by the Federal Salary Council, now stands at 26 percent in favor of the private sector. We must close that gap if federal agencies are to compete effectively for the quality personnel they need.

NTEU is committed to continuing to work with our colleagues in the military on this pay recommendation. We will work to ensure that parity continues and to explore possibilities of increasing the pay amount as the White House proposal moves through the legislative process. Meanwhile, the President has proposed a freeze for 2011 political appointees and members of the White House staff.

On another important issue, The President's budget includes several important contracting out provisions that NTEU believes will help bring fairness and accountability to the competitive sourcing process. The proposal would continue a government-wide moratorium on A-76 public-private competitions for federal work and require federal agencies to create an inventory of all contractor employees performing services for the government. These "service contract inventories" would also have to include the name of the vendor, the type of service provided, and the cost of that service.

Be assured that NTEU will continue to monitor these important provisions as well.



Survey 2010

The IRS annual survey is approaching and NTEU is encouraging you to take the survey. The results will provide a new baseline of current job satisfaction levels of the IRS workforce, including the tens of thousands newly hired over the last year, and it will give us useful data in our efforts to effectively implement the President's recently-issued Executive Order (EO) on Labor-Management Collaboration Forums.

National NTEU President, Colleen Kelley has argued and debated for years the need for a presidential Executive Order on collaboration or partnership. The EO issued on December 9, 2009, gives us more leverage than we have had in a long time to make improvements for those who we represent. We cannot pass up this opportunity to breathe real life into the EO that we fought so hard to have issued.

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Yes, we know there continues to be a great deal of skepticism about the value of the survey. This has been relayed to the IRS. They are well aware of our ongoing concerns. Still, the survey can be a useful tool to create and take advantage of opportunities we have to make workplace improvements.

Over the years, NTEU's stance on the survey has been determined based on the situation in that year. These factors included the NTEU/IRS relationship, employee interest or dissatisfaction, what we have been able to use the survey to produce from a workplace improvement perspective, and success in having the voice of employees heard and acted on by the IRS. Whether the survey was a joint NTEU/IRS survey or whether we asked employees to boycott it, or to take the survey, we took the position based on what we thought would call attention to the real issues employee are facing, and our reaction to what the IRS did or failed to do with the results.

The administration is putting a renewed emphasis on employee survey data. In the President's 2011 budget proposal, the administration said it plans to strengthen federal agencies' ability to use the employee survey data to make improvements. And NTEU wants to be a part of that.

We know well that the twin objectives of improving both agency performance and employee satisfaction go hand-in-hand. As the EO recognizes, these

objectives can be accomplished only with NTEU's involvement.

To gauge these improvements, we need effective measurement tools. The survey is one tool available to evaluate and document employees' current job satisfaction and to measure the results of collaborative efforts to improve it. It will help us to develop a new baseline of current job satisfaction levels of the current workforce. We will not, of course, rely on data from this survey alone, but will conduct our own surveys and research on specific employee issues. However, the IRS survey can serve as an effective starting point for some of this information.

National NTEU is in the process of putting together a Memorandum of Understanding with the IRS on some long-standing issues that NTEU and employees have with the survey. This should be in place long before the survey is available for employees to take, and will provide us time to discuss any issues, questions, or suggestions you have for communication to the workforce and implementation of the 2010 survey.

We fought for nearly nine years for this EO on LM collaboration, and now we need to capitalize on it. NTEU has always been proud of using every tool we have available on behalf of those who we represent. With the EO, the 2010 IRS Survey is one of those tools.



Chapter 46 Bids Farewell to James Rucker

Ride into Retirement

NTEU Chapter 46 says best wishes and good luck to its former Chief Steward, James Rucker as he enters a new stage of his life. James retired from the IRS at the end of December 2009. Good luck James, you will be missed by NTEU and all the employees at the IRS. Thank you for your service!



"For those of you headed to work, today's forecast calls for scattered frustration, followed by a brief storm of criticism and a flurry of random distractions."