

NTEU73

United We Bargain, Divided We Leg!

THE FORCE

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W&I Cancels Read Time

The extended shutdown caused many CSR's to be nervous about returning to work. The nature of a CSR'S job and the ever-changing procedures and IRM's they are accountable to be knowledgeable of can be overwhelming. Any extended break from the repetition of performing these duties can be problematic. The combination of the 35-day partial government shutdown and the denial of read time has put a lot of CSR's behind.

Management has relied on language in the Customer Service Agreement (CSA) as justification for canceling read time, which states, "Generally, neither read time nor meeting time will be scheduled during peak hours or on peak days". The IRS feels that due to the 35-day partial government shutdown they are behind in training seasonal employees on the new tax code which has hindered their ability to maintain a certain "level of service". It's NTEU's position that read time and meeting time is very valuable to CSR's.

As we all know every year the new filing season brings new challenges. The communication between CSR's and managers during these team meetings help to quickly identify trends and figure out the best solutions to these issues. Having time to read and

discuss IRM's and issues that are occurring during calls is critical to having a successful filing season.

NTEU has discussed with the Accounts Management leadership that when employees are charged with errors, they are entitled to admin time under Article 12, Section 9 to draft a rebuttal to any negative evaluative recordation. Each time an employee does that, they will not be on the telephone answering taxpayer calls. This is counterproductive and causes bad moral.

We've been told that managers are aware of which issue are the subject of read time and will not charge errors that are due to lack of read time. If management determines that a certain change is critical for employees to know, they will still grant some read time for employees to learn it as an exception to the moratorium. If any CSR's are charged an error due to the lack of read time, please contact the union office and let us know so that we can forward these issues to our national office.

As civil servants we are employed by the Internal Revenue Service, we swore to faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which we entered. It's our goal to provide tax payers with the best service possible. The cancelation of read time is counterproductive; and has put both employee and taxpayer at a disadvantage.

Tanesha McCants

NTEU73 Welcomes New Hires

Accounts Management has brought in several classrooms of new hires to help relive the burden of current BMF assistors. NTEU73 would like to reach out to these new employees and let them know we are here to assist you. We know this is not an easy job and so far the training has been difficult. With the shutdown and the fact that management has denied all leave, don't give up hope, NTEU73 is here for you. If you have been denied your leave during training, come see us. If management has given you AWOL for arriving late, come see us. We want you to succeed, even if management doesn't seem to share that same goal. Shame on you Accounts Management for not offering your new employees a supportive environment and making this new job seem like a nightmare. If you want to retain

employees might I suggest a new approach, try easing them into it. Treating employees harshly from the very beginning might force them to seek a different position right away. You know the old saying, you catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

Tonya Morris



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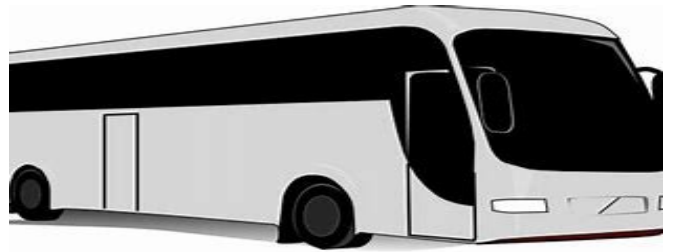
PTSP

Over the past month NTEU73 has seen an increase in TIGTA interviews concerning The Public Transportation Subsidy Program. Many employees are being asked questions on benefits going back to 2014. If an employee received a reimbursement, they are being asked how they came up with their estimate. According to the IRM a participant should be sure estimates are as accurate as possible to avoid any benefit overpayment or underpayment. Currently the maximum monthly benefit is \$260.00 and is paid to the participant in advance. If an employee rides TANK and METRO this can get rather confusing. METRO is divided up into zones and they offer day passes and 30-Day Rolling Passes as well. A bus rider must first know what zone they are in to know their best options. TANK, offers a METRO/TANK combination pass but this is only good for zone 1 in the METRO service area. If you over estimate and receive an overpayment, the balance must be returned. You can return unused passes with form 11664 G or send a personal check or money order to the PTSP specialist on form 11664-G or you can just simply leave the balance on your Transerve card and request less transit subsidy at the next distribution. Most of this general

information came directly from IRWEB, under the benefits tab. Every employee who enrolls in PTSP is required to take an ELMS course on the subject. The material covered in The ELMS course can and will be used against you so pay close attention. Your transit subsidy can only be used by you and can only be used to commute between your residence and your official Post of Duty. If you are in non-pay status, such as furlough you cannot use your PTSP benefits.

If you are currently using this program please look over the information on IRWEB to be sure you are using this benefit correctly. Otherwise if you have questions please put in a ticket and The Department of Transportation will respond.

Tonya Morris



NTEU73 Helps During The Shutdown

The 35-day furlough was a bitter sweet experience. NTEU73 officers and stewards brain-stormed to determine how we could best help the employees who were deemed essential and required to report to work without any pay. As a show of support, we decided we would provide lunches/dinners for the employees at work.

On January 10th, NTEU73 served the employees in the flat top pizza. The line in the cafeteria was out the door and around the corner in the hallway. As the employees were being served, you could hear one after another saying thank you. It felt good knowing we could help them in a small way. We finished the day with a rally to express our desire to return to work with pay.

In the following days, NTEU73 provided the funds for food three more times. Employees would tell us how grateful they were and shared their personal stories of the hardships and challenges they were facing. Some employees could not afford day care for their children while they worked. Rent and car payments were overdue. Not all creditors were being understanding of the situation. Some employees were facing eviction or car repossession. Many of the essential employees did not qualify for unemployment. As the days continued, there were simply no signs of an end to the furlough.

Jim Gregory contacted a representative from La Soupe, who agreed to provide food; the employees and the stewards from NTEU-73 would serve. The food was dropped off in front of the Gateway

building and some was taken to the third floor Gateway canteen, with the rest taken to the flat top. La Soupe offered to provide food once a week until the furlough ended. Others in the community offered help as well. One person brought can goods and other necessary items to be given to employees in need. The items were stored in the union office and employees who came in for lunch and dinner were told that we had those items for distribution. Restaurants in the area offered discounted food or free food during the furlough. The last time we received food from La Soupe, management also assisted NTEU73 with serving the food in the Gateway center.

Team building to accomplish our goals is a part of our everyday work life at the IRS. Working together through the partial government shut-down was no different than any other of the challenges we face. Community support through the difficult time is what makes America great.

Janet Colwell



Despite the 35-day shutdown and all of the other issues calling for our attention in these times, we want you to know we are still engaging in efforts to keep pushing IRS to bring more jobs to Covington and to get answers to questions you have raised. After we contacted Sen. Sherrod Brown, he wrote to Commissioner Rettig on our behalf to get this information. Here is that letter. Once we hear back from Sen. Brown's office, we will share those answers with you

SHERROD BROWN
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FINANCE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

January 3, 2019

Charles P. Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
111 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington D.C. 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig:

I write regarding the impending "ramp down" of the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) Covington Kentucky facility, where the IRS is the city's largest employer. As you know, the Covington facility is part of the Cincinnati processing facility that handles paper submissions to the IRS. The IRS announced in 2016 a massive downsizing of the facility in Covington, impacting over 1,800 jobs. We have spoken regarding this issue and you have committed to me that you would do everything possible to maintain the positions of the impacted workers. Now with the holiday season upon us and a new tax filing season fast approaching, I am writing you to request that you provide my office with an assessment of the progress you have made preserving the jobs of the impacted workers.

While I am chiefly concerned with ensuring that new placements are found for these workers, this is also a key issue for all taxpayers. Smooth filing, top-quality customer service, and robust enforcement are the backbone of a properly functioning IRS – generating revenue for the FISC, and maintaining the public trust. Since FY 2010, IRS funding has been cut by more than \$715 million. The agency has been under an "exception-only" hiring freeze since December, 2010. The total number of workers employed full-time by the IRS has been reduced by more than 20,000 over this time period.

Over this period, Congressional action has increased significant new burdens upon the IRS: the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the Affordable Care Act, the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE), and the reauthorization of the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC), and the program to authorize private debt collectors to pursue low-income taxpayers for small and uncollectable debts, have all created significant new responsibilities for the agency. Maintaining an experienced and trained work force should be a priority for the IRS and the American people.

Please provide the following information to my office no later than the January 15, 2019:

- (1) A detailed description of the plan that has been put in place to reassign the workers at Covington to other offices in the Cincinnati area;
- (2) An update on the progress the IRS has made with those reassignments;

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- (3) A detailed description of the plan that the IRS has put in place to offer employment to the workers that cannot be placed within the Cincinnati area;
- (4) An update on the progress the IRS has made with those reassignments;
- (5) A record of all communications that have been taken place from the IRS to the affected workers and duty stations in order to clearly convey updates on the changing situation;
- (6) Any internal studies that the IRS has conducted that have led the agency to believe they can manage the dramatic increase in workload with fewer personnel.

I appreciate your continued partnership, as well as your stewardship of the IRS in a challenging time. I look forward to your response and to working with you in the New Year.

Happy Holidays to you and yours.

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Over the shutdown, NTEU73 said goodbye to longtime steward and former Vice President, Karen Walsh. Karen retired after 31 years of service, she's been with NTEU73 since 1998. 4 years ago Karen brought me on as a steward and I thank her immensely for all of her guidance. As a chief steward Karen worked diligently to make sure all of us new stewards were familiar with the grievance process and accompanied us to our grievance meetings. We will all certainly miss the way Karen dealt with management and her skills at negotiating. She often said the things that needed to be said and she did it with composure. Karen continues to work with NTEU as National Vice President for District 10.



Final Thoughts

As December 31st fast approaches it's the end of the year and the end of my 31st year at the IRS. I remember starting my job in Receipt and Control January 1987. I worked third shift as a GS 2 intermittent. We didn't receive annual or sick leave so I was sure not to miss work. When overtime was offered I would work as much as possible. In one 3 weeks stretch I worked 70 each week. My hard work paid off and I got noticed. I was among a handful of employees who were asked to stay on after filing season ended. I ended up becoming seasonal the following year and eventually perm on dayshift.

I have heard from employees over the years who feel like their hard work goes unnoticed. In most of these cases it is indeed noticed even if there is little to no praise along the way. Being flexible is a way to get noticed. Adapting to change is another way. Taking on additional assignments is another. Finally, what I believe the biggest component is teamwork. Getting along and helping your teammates makes for a harmonious and stronger team unit. You may not want to invite some co-worker to your house for dinner or even listen to them tell you things about their life, but rising above that and conducting yourself in a professional manner is what we are paid to do.

If you feel you are giving your all, 100% of your best, and yet you are still going unnoticed then you don't need to just take it and suffer.

Perhaps you have been unjustly passed over on a promotion. Or maybe you were unfairly rated on your evaluation. When these things occur, rest assured that you have options. Could you have been discriminated based on a protected class? Then maybe an EEO complaint is your best route. Is it because you were new to a job and watched your all 5 evaluation lowered to all 3's just because you were new? Whether it is the EEO process or the grievance process NTEU is here to help you. Please keep in mind you cannot pursue both EEO and the grievance process for the same issue.

As I've watched things change over the years one thing has remain constant. The steadfast resolve of NTEU to be the employee's advocate. I honestly cannot imagine what the workplace would look or be like if NTEU no longer existed. AWS....gone. Telework.....gone. Awards....gone. These are just very small percentage of the hard-fought benefits NTEU has won for you. NTEU only stays strong locally and nationally because of those of you have stepped up to support NTEU by being a member. So, my final thoughts are with you, the members of NTEU. If no one else has yet thanked you, I want to say it. On behalf of NTEU Chapter 73 and National NTEU, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Karen Walsh



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March 11, 2019 - May 23, 2019

NTEU73
United We Bargain, Divided We Suffer!

Why We Can't Strike

Since the enactment of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, federal employees have been legally prohibited from striking. That law was intended to prevent public-sector workers from leveraging a work stoppage that could cripple the U.S. government or major industries in negotiations for better pay, working conditions, and benefits. But it likely did not envision a scenario where the government would require its employees to work without paying them, as is the case just 8 weeks ago.

Another law passed during President Jimmy Carter's administration, the Federal Service Labor Management

Relations Act of 1978 not only bars federal workers from striking, but also even talking about a strike. Moreover, the act bars workers from getting a future federal government job if he or she 'participates in a strike, or asserts the right to strike against the Government of the United States.

"An individual may not accept or hold a position in the Government of the United States or the government of the District of Columbia if he ... participates in a strike, or asserts the right to strike, against the Government of the United States," the law reads.

Federal employees generally haven't tested the prohibition on strikes since President Ronald Reagan famously fired

more than 11,000 air-traffic controllers who refused his order to return to work during contract talks in 1981. The controllers walked out in demand of higher pay and a shorter work week. A number of the air traffic control strikers were even jailed for striking

Let's not forget that ALL federal employees take an oath declaring, "I am not participating in any strike against the Government of the United States or any agency thereof, and I will not so participate while an employee of the Government of the United States or any agency thereof."

Will Kohler

Adverse Action

The Terms, Discipline, Unacceptable Performance, Reprimands, Suspensions and Adverse Action each have specific definitions and special procedures. It is important to be able to distinguish between them as employee of the IRS. Here are the Definitions of Adverse Actions.

Adverse Actions; are reprimands or suspensions of more than 14 days, reductions in pay, furloughs of 30 days or less, and removals that are normally based on misconduct charges. However, they can be based on performance problems, and your taxes as well.

Disciplinary Actions; are reprimands or suspensions of 14 days or less that are normally based on misconduct charges, taxes, etc. However they can be based on performance problems also.

Unacceptable Performance Actions; involve demotions, reassignments, or removals for poor performance, or unac-

ceptable ratings in one or more critical elements.

Reprimands and Admonishments; come via final decision letter by management, and generally without notice, and are held in your personnel file for 2 years, and then taken out by management.

Suspensions; of any length are preceded by an advance written notice of the charges and specifications. You or your union Representative have a reasonable time to reply orally or in writing. You have the right to a union representative or your own attorney present at your hearing. Furthermore, you are to receive a written final decision at the earliest practicable date.

Emergency Crime-related Actions are those for which a sentence of imprisonment may be imposed. They usually involve indefinite suspensions. This should be considered a criminal action, and you should consult your attorney on these matters.

Adverse Action-based Reductions in grade or pay, Furloughs of 30 days or less and

Removals are preceded by an advance written notice of the charges and specifications. You will be given reasonable time in which to reply orally or in writing. Furthermore, you have the right to have a union representative, or your own private attorney at the hearing. Management will provide a written final decision at the earliest practicable date.

Furthermore, if you get one of these Adverse Actions don't wait days before coming to the union office with your Adverse Action letter. We only have a short defined time period, seven days to get a response back to management, so we can prepare your an oral or written reply.

In closing if you should get any Actions taken against you, by management please come to the union office on the 1st flr. Union office at the Gateway Center or the 4th St Union office, so we the union can help you resolve the issue at hand. Keep in mind our only mission is to help you !!!

Jim Gregory

Understanding The Shutdown

Let's start by talking about the history of government shutdowns and why they occur. United States politics, "government shutdowns" occur whenever Congress fails to pass or the President of the United States refuses to sign or vetoes legislation funding the operation of some or all government agencies. Under the Antideficiency Act of 1982, the federal government must "shutdown" the affected agencies by both furloughing non-essential personnel and curtailing agency activities and services that do not directly relate to national security or protect the access of the government. With that keep in mind the government shouldn't spend money that hasn't been allocated. (working without pay)

- Government shutdowns happen when legislation to allocate money needed for the operation of the government agencies fails to be enacted.

- By law, most government agencies must furlough their non-essential personnel and stop or limit their activities during a government shutdown.
- While few last very long, all government shutdowns result in increased costs of government and inconvenience for many citizens
- When the government shuts down, that doesn't mean that all federal operations cease - just the ones deemed nonessential. Nonessential federal workers are furloughed, which means they are sent home and docked pay. (They can later be paid retroactively for this time off.)

The government shutdown for thirty-five days the longest in US history. The shutdown had a great effect on our country and federal employee's. For the first time in some peoples lives they had to visit food banks, borrow money, go without due to the shutdown. The fact that we as civil service employees had to face hard-

ships because our government couldn't agree isn't fair to us. Having to look in the faces of our children and say we can't go to dance, track, gymnastics, basketball and any other activities due to nonwork status or working without pay. The government is the only place where you must work on an IOU small or large business couldn't get away with that. We all had our different experience through this shutdown hopefully some learning ones also. The fact that another shutdown is looming in the air creates a sense of uncertainty and we shouldn't, as federal employees have to endure that. Years ago, the federal work force was the way to go, great retirement not many layoffs if any. Not only are we losing jobs we are having more shutdowns that last longer than before that's why its important to make Congress aware of the struggles of federal and civil service employees.

Quiana McCoy

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NTEU73

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