

NTEU73

United We Bargain, Divided We Lose!

THE FORCE

A Publication of NTEU Chapter 73

October 2018

Centralized Evaluative Review

Since CER began in August, NTEU73 has been experiencing an array of questions and complaints about the process. In my department, TEGE we are getting errors on calls that we normally transfer. The CER reviewers are again citing an IRM that we have never used before as we are TEGE Tax Law assistants and not accounts. Our managers are even confused by these errors. While I understand we are still in the first 60 days of this process and part of The MOU states that, "the employer has determined that it will consider mitigating factors such as the inexperience and lack of training of the reviewers, as well as unanticipated problems during the implementation of this initiative, before it issues any negative recordation's to employees." It still has many employees questioning this process. So far, we have seen a huge drop in

employee morale as a result of these errors. Employees are questioning their own judgement and not clear what IRM's to use. The Communication IRM 21.1.1.4 has been resurrected to give errors on things like misuse of wrap and not notating AMS while on the call. As one employee points out, "If we do not choose the wrap option when the call begins and we lose the call we will automatically lose the information on IDRS and will be unable to update AMS, which is now mandatory. As a result of this Contact Reps are getting daily errors on these issues along with errors for disclosure. One TEGE assistant was sharing publicly available information with a caller and received a disclosure error. We were always told, if it's on IRS.GOV it's open to the public. Per the MOU NTEU and The IRS will conduct a briefing one year after implementation of

this initiative. To discuss any adverse impact as a result of the CER initiative. However, The IRS does not anticipate this being an issue. NTEU73 is currently compiling information on these errors. Since either party may reopen this agreement at anytime after the twelve months, it is important that we identify these trends going forward. In the meantime, it is important to write rebuttals to these errors per Article 12. You can stop down to our office on the first floor of The Gateway building or email me directly at Tonya.G.Morris@irs.gov and notify us of the errors you are receiving.

Our Health Care

As the nation's largest employer-sponsored health insurance program, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), we provide comprehensive health insurance coverage to approximately 8.3 million federal employees, retirees, and their family members. Many federal employees are finding it increasingly difficult to continue to afford their health insurance coverages because of the rise in overall medical costs and the limited federal employee pay raises in recent years. For 2018, FEHBP enrollee premiums increased an average 6.1 percent, with some participating health insurance plans increasing their premiums by large amounts. Like other Americans, federal workers, and retirees continue to absorb higher out-of-pocket costs in the form of larger co-pays and co-insurance for office visits, procedures, and prescriptions drugs. Several recent proposals have suggested turning the FEHBP into a voucher plan and providing enrollees with a fixed dollar amount each year toward their benefits regardless of the amount of annual premium increases or actual rise in overall health care inflation. Others in government have proposed altering or eliminating retiree health

benefits. Not only do federal employees and their family members rely on the FEHBP to provide comprehensive health care benefits, but federal agencies must offer attractive health care benefits to maintain a skilled, professional workforce. Additionally, federal workers already pay a higher share on average for premiums and higher overall deductibles than private sector workers covered by large employer-sponsored plans. Rather than seeking to lower costs by reducing enrollee benefits, NTEU supports actions to address the high cost of prescriptions drugs, lowering out of pocket costs, and renegotiating the high cost of drugs for all our employees, families, and retirees with the drug manufacturers. The time to act is now! Contact your Union.

Jim Gregory



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NTEU Chapter 73

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Facebook
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73
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The Force

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Editor
Tonya Morris

What's up with Compensatory time?

Recently Accounts Management solicited for AWS changes or requests. Many employees that were approved to switch over to an AWS schedule learned afterwards that they can no longer earn credit hours. This issue has caused a lot of people to ask the question, what's up with Comp time? These questions have been met with disdain and brashness by management. Many employees have been told that Accounts Management does not offer Compensatory time, and never will. In my search for the answer to this question I've been met with lots of road blocks when dealing with management. The saddest part about managements denial of compensatory time is nobody can tell us why they won't approve it, and it doesn't seem that this issue has ever come up in the past.

So, what is Compensatory time? In its most basic form compensatory time is overtime worked by an employee, but instead of being paid the employee banks those hours to be used when time off is needed. Per IRM 6.550.1.1.11 (4) "Compensatory time must be used before annual leave as long as this does not result in the loss of any accumulated annual leave. If the use of the compensatory time would result in the forfeiture of annual leave, then annual leave may be used." Accumulation of Compensatory time cannot exceed 80 hours. This time must be used within 26 pay periods after its earned. If the time is not used within 26 pay periods it's paid out at 1 1/2 times the employees hourly rate.

Who's eligible to earn compensatory time? The Fair Labor Standards Act states that, "A FLSA Non-exempt employee is one who is covered by the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Act." Per IRM 6.550.1-1 "Non-exempt employees are eligible to earn and use compensatory time in lieu of overtime payment." Management cannot force a FLSA nonexempt employee to except Compensatory time in lieu of Overtime. The request to work Compensatory time in lieu of Overtime must be voluntary. The

Fair Labor Standards Act states that, "A FLSA Non-exempt employee is one who is covered by the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Act." When management makes a broad statement, declaring that they will not ever approve Compensatory time in lieu of Overtime this is very problematic. The IRM clearly states that employees are eligible to earn Compensatory time, to deny employees that eligibility, is unfair and goes against the spirit of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The intent of this Act was to ensure employees were not forced to except Compensatory Time by agencies when they are entitled to be paid overtime. It was never law makers intent to deprive employees of the option to work Compensatory time.

Management has taken a hard stance that because the 2016 National Agreement states that, when offering voluntary overtime, the Employer is permitted to offer non-exempt employees the choice of either earning compensatory time only for the overtime hours worked or electing not to work the overtime hours. It is managements believe that because the 2016 National agreement uses the word "permitted" that this means they don't have to, and therefore will not offer this option to employees. NTEU73 would like employees to know that you do have the option to request compensatory time, and we will continue to challenge management to get employees the benefit of earning and using compensatory time.

Tanesha McCants

New Title Same Mission

On June 4th I was officially notified that I became the newly elected National Vice President of District 10 in a special election. The special election was necessary due to that position being vacated by our newly elected Chapter President Debbie Mullikin. I am honored and humbled to now hold this position. There are 15 Districts across the country that each have a National Vice President to represent them. They come together to serve on the National Executive Board with National President Tony Reardon and National Executive Vice President Jim Bailey. District 10 serves the Cincinnati Service Center, Memphis Service Center and the Detroit Computing Center. While I have over 20 years of experience with the local chapter, I am looking forward to learning more about the Memphis and Detroit Centers. I understand that my new position requires me to work on national issues that affect our membership as a whole. I don't take this responsibility lightly and look forward to the exciting challenges this will present. I believe that my experience with NTEU will equip me to meet these challenges. I will continue working for the membership at the local level. I hope to take the knowledge I gain from working at the national level back to the chapters that I now represent. Although I may hold a new title, I have the same mission to represent our membership fully and to the best of my ability. It is an honor to serve as your National Vice President and I promise to make you, the membership, proud.

Karen Walsh

How to Retire

The GRB Platform gives employees 24/7 access to their personalized and general retirement, insurance, and employee benefit information. Viewing your personalized GRB information will give the employee the opportunity to find out if they are eligible to retire or compute your estimated retirement annuity.

Create an Account and Login:

The GRB Platform can be accessed at

<http://platform.grbinc.com>

New Users must click on the link New User?

Create Account link. Follow the prompts to login. You will be asked to verify your identity. You will need to provide your:

***Social Security Number**

***First Name**

***Last Name**

***Date of Birth**

***Work e-mail (@irs.gov)**

You may also be asked to supply this license number, 1112. Once your information is verified, you will receive an e-mail from the GRB Platform with a link to create your password.

After you have created your password, you can login using your e-mail address and password. If you forget your password, you can click on the Forgot Password link on the login page and the system will send you an e-mail with a link to create a new password.

Tile Descriptions:

The GRB Platform uses subject tiles and a menu button at the top of the screen to organize your benefits information. Here is a description of the subject tiles and features:

Retirement – Summary of your personalized retirement benefits, self-service calculators, and links to resource information. If you have

Special Circumstances (Part time, Military, or Refunded service), it could significantly affect your estimate.

Thrift Savings Plan – Review your TSP contribution elections and links to resource information as well as download your current TSP account balances. Includes a link to EPP where you can make changes to your TSP elections.

Health Insurance – Review information on your current Health Insurance enrollment as well as FEHB program information and links to Resource information. Includes a link to EPP where you can make changes to your FEHB elections during the FEH Open Season or after a Qualifying Life Event.

Life Insurance – Review information on your current life Insurance enrollment and coverage amounts as well as FEGLI program

information and links to Resource information. **Dental & Vision Insurance** – Review general information on Dental & Vision enrollment as well as FEDVIPS program information and links to Resource information and the BENEFEDS website.

Flexible Spending Accounts – Review general information on Flexible Spending Account enrollment as well as FSA program information for all 3 Flexible Spending Account types and links to Resource information and the FSAFEDS website.

Long Term Care – Review information on Long Term Care enrollment as well as FLTCIP program information and links to Resource information and the LTCFEDS website.

Social Security – A personalized summary of your Social Security benefits as well as a self-service Social Security annuity calculator and links to Resource information.

Pay & Leave – Review a summary of your current pay, work schedule, Service Computation Date (SCD), and leave balances as well as links to Resource information and to the EPP where you can make changes to your

withholding elections and payroll allotments.

Workers' Compensation Benefits – Review a personalized summary of Workers' Compensation and Disability Retirement benefits as well as links to resource information.

Seasonal Employees:

Seasonal employees should keep in mind that although the GRB Platform does show estimates for the information they provide; seasonal employees will also have a different formula to calculate their retirement amounts and should consult with their GRB Specialist for a more accurate amount.

Consolidation Team:

There are also members of the Consolidation Team that are available in the CORE Room located in the Flat Top building that are available to assist employees with creating accounts and accessing accounts during regular scheduled work hours.

As a NTEU Member, if you are unable to get an appointment in the CORE Room, you can come into the Union office and one of our staff members will assist you with creating and accessing your account on the GRB Platform as well.

Support Services:

The help desk is available 24/7, including Federal Holidays.

If you need help creating or accessing your GRB Platform account, please contact the IT Help Desk:

Telephone Number:

1-866-743-5748 / Option 2

1-866-7HELP-4U

TTY Number:

1-866-435-7486

1-866-HELP-4U-6

Jennifer Smith

Swing Shift

NTEU73 is proud to announce that our 5 swing shift stewards have implemented a strategic way to better assist bargaining unit employees. This new strategy is already being proven with a combination of 12 step 2 and 3 grievance wins/negotiations within the last month and a half. Keeping a strong employee-steward relationship, helps both parties stay connected with vital information for successful outcomes. For example, Erin Cooper successfully won a step 3 grievance, she was able to get 8 hours of AWOL changed to available annual leave for a probationary employee. Erin's tactics are absolutely brilliant, to say the least. Sarah Baker suggested retirement for a veteran employee, rather than suffer the aftermath of an adverse action of removal. The employee took on Sarah's suggestion and avoided a demeaning oral reply resulting in removal.. Sarah also incorporated her sharp negotiation

skills and successfully had a non-grievable memorandum revised. The information removed would have been damaging to the employee's critical job elements. She equally introduced the same employee to reasonable accommodations for medical purposes. Sarah shows more than advocacy for our chapter, but also true care and concern for the employees.. Our full-time swing shift steward Jimmy Gregory, has been fighting for employees for over 13 years. He has negotiated an unaccountable amount of grievance cases with effective results. Recently, he highlighted negative areas imposed by management involving advanced sick. Jim was able to not only get non-FMLA advanced sick leave approved, but had the employee's annual restored in lieu of LWOP. He was also able to expedite the process for an employee's overdue Grade Schedule increase. Trisha Lawrence's inclusive writing skills had aided an employee to avoid a 15 day suspension without pay,

down to 10 days with a written reply. She has also utilized similar techniques, discussing the best plan to minimize hostile working conditions in the EIN department on swing shift. Trisha was able to withdraw a step-2 grievance regarding an employee's FMLA, Alternative Work Schedule and to reestablish a previous position as well. In recent times, our Chapter's President Debora Mullikin made comprehensive changes to re-position a few stewards. Ultimately, swing shift's working environment has become more pulsating and less confusing "so to speak." If anyone thinks they have the right "stuff" in becoming a steward, feel free to let us know. We encourage those to come forward who are well versed in grassroots efforts.

Charlene Robinson

NTEU73 Celebrated Labor Recognition





Union Yes

Now more than ever is the time to become a proactive dues paying union member. Your rights as a federal employee are under attack. The powers to be are looking to cut supplemental security out of your retirement, take away your alternative work schedule, whisk away telework, eradicate your annual COLA increases, and obliterate your employee right to have a union that can collectively bargain on your behalf. Little by little anti-union entities are chipping away at your rights to make your federal career even more miserable. Elected officials in Washington feel that you are the scum of the earth and need to be eradicated. You are lazy, unconscionable, and feckless. You are the "deep state." You are the problem. Unions are communist organizations hell bent on destroying the American way of life.

Now is the time to act. If you are not a union member, now is the time to reconsider. The 5-4 ruling in Janus v. AFSCME restores the First Amendment rights of freedom of association and free speech to more than five million government employees nationwide.

The decision decreases funding and political clout of public employee unions in 22 non-right to work states. Collective bargaining in the eyes of the Supreme Court is inherently political. Union bargaining affects matters of public policy such as taxes, spending and the policies of government, and thus no citizen, even if employed by the government, should be forced to subsidize it. Why should you be forced to protect your rights? It doesn't matter let management run rough shod over you and make your work environment even more hostile. A living wage is a thing of the past. You enjoy working in sweatshop conditions. You won't live long enough to retire anyway, so who needs it. The whole predicament is the fault of the labor unions and their left-wing ideology.

Employers are aware that employees will be disinclined to pursue small-value claims when confined to proceeding one-by-one, will perceive that the cost-benefit balance of underpaying workers tips heavily in favor of skirting legal obligations. Billions of dollars in underpaid wages will be at issue. The courts have ruled in favor of employers, depriving employee's rights to redress their losses and insulating employee rights violators. There is one entity that remains that can protect your employee rights and bargain on your behalf. Solidarity can be your savior. You can no longer sit on the sidelines while the federal

government ransacks your rights. Together we can defeat the scourge. All employees benefit from our union contract and its grievance procedures. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. Now is the time to raise your voice and beat your hands on the desk. We all worked too hard for employee rights to just let them slip away.

We are at war. We all want an effective and efficient government workplace. Superseding union contracts and castigating union federal employees is no way to accomplish this. Federal employee morale is already rock bottom. Quality employees are leaving in droves for greener pasture in lieu of fighting what seems like an inevitable loss. We need to stand together to build a more effective and efficient government workplace. We need to stand together if we want to keep our current wages and benefits. We need everyone in the fight. There is no longer an excuse to let others fight for you. The union needs your help. We have lost a few battles but if we stick together, we can win the war on embattled federal employees.

Chris Pierce

NTEU73 Stewards Working for Members

Your NTEU Stewards work for you, and are available if not in person, by phone or email. There are multiple stewards throughout Cincinnati IRS center locations Here is a list of stewards currently in NTEU offices:

Gateway:

Chapter President **Debbie Mullikin**

Vice President **Chris Pierce**

Office Staff/Stewards **Tonya Morris, Shannon Lovins, Tanesha McCants and Karen Walsh**

Swing Chief Steward **Charlene Robinson**

Swing Steward **Jim Gregory**

Fourth Street Center:

Office Staff **Quiana McCoy, Will Kohler and Jennifer Smith**

Florence:

Stewards **Janet Colwell**

Alison Bower: worked with an employee to get a tour of duty change..

Ronnie Clemons attended two tax compliance meetings.

Janet Colwell was able to get an employee's AWOL changed to LWOP.

Erin Cooper won a step 3 AWOL grievance.

Loretha Hudson worked with an employee to get her evaluation raised to a 4.6.

Jackie Johnson was able to get an employee's evaluation raised to a 4.8

Will Kohler assisted multiple impacted employees with filling out job swap requests. He also helped an employee get their FMLA approved and 80 hours of AWOL approved.

Rachel Lovins worked with an employee to get LWOP for a preplanned vacation.

Shannon Lovins worked with ACS management to get several employee's Annual Appraisals restored.

Tanesha McCants was able to get an employee evaluation raised to 3.8. She was also able to get an employee overtime.

Quiana McCoy helped an employee get FMLA. She also assisted in The Core room.

Tonya Morris helped a member get advanced sick leave. She was also able to get two employees Annual Appraisals raised.

Debbie Mullikin was able to get Innocent Spouse 4 days of telework.. She was also able to get a TE/GE employee a compressed work schedule.

Michael Reeves Jr. worked with an employee to get a memo removed.

Charlene Robinson was able to get an employee's Annual Appraisal raised to 4.2.

Kimberly Seiwert was able to get an employee's Annual Appraisal raised to 4.6.

Jennifer Smith helped an employee get 8 hours of overtime pay.

Hope Towe worked with an employee to get AWOL removed.

Karen Walsh is currently negotiating a team consolidation in Submission Processing due to the consolidation.

If you have any issues or concerns, call an NTEU73 office at (Gateway)859-320-3617, (4th Street) 859-320-4649. Florence 859-594-6138

NTEU 73 Local Steward Training.

Every year NTEU73 stewards attend a training to discuss the issues important locally. During this time we are able to meet with our field representatives to get clarity on these issues. We are also able to meet with NTEU National Executive Vice President, Jim Bailey to talk about national issues as well. With the updates to the contract coming out and federal employees being attacked by the current administration, we had a lot to cover. We also had a discussion with Labor Relations on the subject of information requests and why we aren't getting back what we ask for. TIGTA met with us to inform us on what their obligations are in reporting to management. They also wanted to let the new stewards know what to expect in a TIGTA meeting. Joe Trejo from Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service joined us to talk about EEO mediations, harassment and

bullying. Overall it was an information packed week for all of us stewards new and seasoned. Unfortunately under the new contract provisions local training hours have been cut drastically. This may have been our last local training.



Convenience for Cinfed Credit Union Members

Earlier this year the Credit Union National Association determined that credit union members in Kentucky received more than \$73 million over the past year in direct financial benefits, generally through lower loan rates, high savings rates and fewer fees than banking institutions.

For Cinfed Credit Union members, those financial advantages are multiplied by the ease of accessing and managing their accounts. A few examples of that convenience:

- Online banking: Cinfed's web site offers 24/7 access for making payments, transfers and other transactions. Cinfed's Mobile App provides the freedom to manage accounts from a smartphone.
- Onsite location: Located on the 1st floor of the Gateway Building, just a few minutes' walk from anywhere in the complex, Cinfed provides a full-time branch location open every workday.
- Kasara Checking: One of the best checking account options in the region – free checking with no monthly service fee, no minimum balance to earn rewards and no charge for a debit card.
- Financial planning: Kevin Hagerty, a licensed professional financial advisor, provides expert assistance for investments, including retirement, and holds regular office hours in Cinfed's Gateway location.

The most important component, however, is member service. The Cinfed staff's goal is to greet members by name when they walk in. By knowing them individually, the staff can make the personal connections that have the greatest impact – and serve members best.



To Benefit The Brighton Center

NTEU73 Members Help children in need.

For the month of November, NTEU73 will be holding it's annual Holiday Toy Drive to help underprivileged children enjoy this upcoming Holiday season.

Drop by any NTEU73 Union Office, or The Holiday Party with a new, unwrapped toy and the raffle ticket included in your Holiday Party invitation and you will be entered to WIN 1 of 3 \$100 dollar gift cards courtesy of NTEU 73. Gifts accepted from all but only members will be entered to win.

Channel your inner Santa and bring some joy to a deserving child this Holiday Season.



A DOZEN GOOD REASON TO JOIN NTEU

1.

NTEU is the fastest growing federal sector union currently representing some 150,000 employees nationwide.

2.

Not a day goes by that NTEU nationally and locally isn't working for your rights as a federal employee.

3.

NTEU is the most powerful, pro-federal employee lobbyist on Capitol Hill, constantly testifying before Congress, rallying and petitioning on behalf of members for equitable pay, benefits and more hiring.

4.

Members are perpetually protected through aggressive court actions spearheaded by NTEU's Office of the General

5.

Members receive job-site representation on a daily basis from well-trained chapter officers and stewards.

6.

Professional representation is provided to members in EEOC proceedings, hearings before the Merit Systems Protection Board, replies to proposed suspension, demotion or removal based on unacceptable performance.

7.

NTEU members are well-informed through the NTEU Bulletin, the NTEU e-Bulletin, the Political Insider, the NTEU DHS Update and NTEU's web site: www.NTEU.org.

8.

Members elect their chapter officers, have a voice in the direction of the chapter and ratify their NTEU/agency contract

9.

NTEU is always working to improve the image of the federal employee in the media and through legislative actions.

10.

Skilled negotiators represent NTEU members at the bargaining table resulting in effective and all-encompassing NTEU/agency contracts to protect employees' rights.

11.

All members in good standing receive a free \$1000 Accidental Death & Disability insurance policy.

12.

Members are eligible for: NTEU credit card; short-term care, professional liability, auto and homeowners insurance; and discounts on moving expenses, car rentals, hotel/motel stays and more.



PNC

Festival of Lights

CINCINNATI
ZOO

November 17, 2018 - January 1, 2019

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Order Tickets using your Corporate Discount!

Get your discounted tickets today. The earlier you purchase, the more you save!

Tickets purchased October 1st-31st- **\$8 per ticket**

Tickets purchased November 1st- 16th- **\$10 per ticket**

Your Discount Ticket Pricing:

\$15.00 per adult and \$10.00 per child (ages 2-12 & 62 & up) if purchased after November 16.

To order your deeply discounted tickets to the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden:

1. Go To: <http://cincinnatizoo.org/groups/group-discounts/>
2. Click "Log In" under Corporate Discounts.
3. Enter your Username (email you used to set up the account), your Password and the Company Code: **NTEU73**

A standard processing fee of \$3.00 will be applied to each order.

Regular gate admission is \$19 per adult and \$13 per child/senior Parking is \$10 per vehicle

Have questions? Email groupsales@cincinnatizoo.org or call 513-487-3481

