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Accounts Management Issuing Questionable Evaluations

Accounts Management has been giving out some strange evaluations that has the union scratching its head; and filing grievances.

There is a suspicion that management is intentionally giving low ratings in an effort to keep telephone operators where they are.

"Almost all of the stewards in the Gateway Office are working evaluation cases," said Steward Debbie Mullikin, who has more than her share. "Some of them I have seen have 100% in quality review, yet they are given a 3 in quality. There is obviously something wrong there and I feel sure we will win a case like that."

The question is why these things are being done. It seems to especially impact

the newly hired Customer Service Representatives.

Tonya Morris and Tanesha McCants are also working some of these cases, which seem to have been coming in in numbers.

"Intent is always difficult to prove, but when you see a pattern like this, it makes you suspicious," added Ms. Mullikin. "We are going to do everything we can to get these raised to where they should be. A lot are all threes. It seems to me like it is an automatic thing. I believe

management is telling managers to just give threes for whatever reason. They are not even going by their own quality numbers in some cases. It is something we are looking into and are on top of!"



Debbie Mullikin at last year's Labor Recognition Celebration.

Facebook Can Be the Best Tool for Information

With everything happening so fast and furious in regard to the ramp down and other issues, NTEU73's Facebook page is the place to go.

There are dozens of lunch & learns regarding everything from learning to use USAJobs to Job Fairs. If you do not like being inundated with flyers, Facebook has almost all of them posted and the information will come straight to your phone or device!

Monthly, *The Force* is put on Facebook even before the hard copies are back from the printer, so Facebook users get it before anyone else. There are even occasional bonus articles on the page to keep employees updated. In addition, links are

often posted to federal employee information sites so that employees can keep updated on the dastardly deeds of Congress.

"We want our Facebook page to be a 'go to' place that has information people can use," said NTEU73 President Rick Riley. "We had a tremendous amount of views when we put out information about the agreement we signed with IRS. We posted it on Facebook and we had almost 3,000 views. Facebook has a potential we are only beginning to tap."

With the upswing of social media the past few years, more and more people are using it for daily news. Rest assured, on the NTEU73 page you will see no "fake

news."

"The thing about Facebook is that is instant," said Jeff Seibert, NTEU73 Director of Communications. "The web site, nteu73.org, is also a great source, but Facebook is so convenient. If you like and follow us, you should be as updated as anyone in the IRS."

The Facebook page is "*Official NTEU Chapter 73*." The page that says *NTEU Chapter 73* is an old page that was high-jacked by former president Jackie Huff, who refused to relinquish it after losing the last election. The union only vouches for information on the *Official NTEU Chapter 73* page.

NTEU Chapter 73

Fourth Street Office

Monday—Friday,
6 a.m. —1 a.m.
(859) 320-3617

Gateway Office Room 111

Monday—Friday,
8 a.m. —1 a.m.
(859) 320-3617

Industrial Road Retention Center

Monday—Friday,
9 a.m.—11 a.m.
(859) 594-6138

Facebook

Official NTEU Chapter 73
www.facebook.com/nteu73

Chapter Web Site
nteu73.org

Twitter

www.twitter.com/nteu73

The Force

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From the Desk of the President

**“As always, At Your Service”
— Rick Riley**

I have been trained and certified in Conflict Management twice. Once by the United States Army and the other time I was certified was by the IRS when I took and later taught Interest Based Conflict Management. There aren't many of us left who were certified in using Interest Based Conflict Management. We were taught how to negotiate and get the best deal possible. Since becoming President of Chapter 73, these skills have come in handy. Our agreements are getting a lot for our employees. Unfortunately, management has rights that are non-negotiable, such as moving employees from night shift to day shift or closing Submission Processing. We only have a right to negotiate impact and implementation, but we do a very good job at that.

The most important part of Interest Based Conflict Management is being able to talk. Every good relationship is based on honesty and open communication. Lately, that has become an issue here on Campus. I am working on reestablishing

any partnership that has been broken, but if management wishes to continue to ignore and snub our efforts, I'll take the other road. Many

higher ups do not like to hear the truth. I've found that to be true now that I'm President. There are management chains and managers that don't want to hear the real truth. They have their conception of what is true and what management is supposed to do. Several managers don't lead their employees, but micro manage every action. It is to the point that an employee is afraid to go to break or lunch, or to make a mistake because they will be berated by their manager. Errors are really no more than an opportunity to learn, but first, someone has to be willing to teach, not beat. Believe me, there are times I'd prefer to use the first method of Conflict Management I was taught. In those times, I send in the Bulldog Stewards of Chapter 73. We are blessed with some of the finest stewards and staff in the nation and at this time we need them.

If we all don't pull together in this conflict, we shall lose a lot.



New Swing Shift Chief Steward

Dennis Stone has been named the new Chief Steward for Swing Shift. Dennis is a relatively new steward who has risen quickly in the NTEU73 ranks. A steward for a year and a half, Dennis began as a steward in Submission Processing and now works swing shift in Accounts Management. He had been working in the Gateway Office regularly over the past year or so. Dennis will now be in charge of managing the swing/night shift stewards, tracking cases and making sure employee's issues are addressed in a timely manner.

“Dennis has an outgoing personality and prides himself on servicing member's needs,” said NTEU73 Vice President/Chief Steward Karen Walsh. “I feel he is a

welcome addition to the NTEU staff. He is a self-starter who is already a well known volunteer in the new Consolidation Room, known as C.O.R.E. I personally look forward to working more closely with Dennis and know we can expect great things from him.”

“Dennis is an educated man and presents himself as a professional should,” added NTEU73 President Rick Riley. “Dennis is personable, and dedicated to serving the

members. His attitude is that we are not only here to file grievances, but to help employees by addressing their issues and problems. Dennis believes in going the extra mile, even two, to help people out.”



Dennis Stone

Award Payouts on the Way!

The awards IRS employees receive for outstanding performance will be paid out in the first quarter of 2018. No exact date has been announced.

To be eligible for an award, an employee must meet all of the following requirements: must have been on a permanent bargaining unit position on June 24, 2017. (this refers to the position of record, not the appointment type such as perm, seasonal, etc.); was assigned a performance rating of record, approved by management and validly entered into HR Connect/e-Performance with an average critical job element score of 3.4 or higher; was on IRS rolls for 12 continuous months from June 24, 2017; served 260 hours or more in a bargaining unit position during the employee's twelve month appraisal year; and has passed misconduct/discipline screening.

Just because an employee meets the basic requirements does not mean he/she will receive an award. As in the past, employees qualify for awards based on their ranked critical job element score within awards pools.

This is done in three steps: 1.) employees are assigned to awards pools and occupation categories in accordance with negotiated

provisions. 2.) Employee's average critical job elements (CJE) scores are ranked from highest to lowest within each pool and category. 3.) The eligible employees with average CJE scores in the highest 55% of each awards pool and occupational category qualify for awards. Anyone with a score of 4.6 or higher will receive an award, no matter their ranking. Anyone with a score lower than 3.4 is not eligible for an award.

The actual awards are paid out by award shares. The number of shares an employee receives is gotten by multiplying the average CJE score of the employee by the employee's grade.

The value of the share is found by dividing the total award funding by the total number of shares in the pool. Then the number of shares is simply multiplied by the share value to determine the monetary amount of the award. The minimum award is \$500 and the maximum is \$3,500. Employees can still elect to get a Quality Step Increase (QSI) at management discretion or paid time off.

Every year, NTEU73 gets many questions from members about their awards and the process. If you have a question or feel like your award was not calculated properly, stop by any union office.

NTEU Chapter 73 Stewards

Day Shift:

4th Street - Tommie Braswell, Ron Cunningham, Leann Gosser, Nicole Guethlein, Bill Lawrence, Shannon Lovins, Laura Mitchell (Treasurer), Hillary Montgomery, Michelle Robinson-Cunningham, Jeff Seibert.

GWC—Ronnie Clemons, Sarah Corea, Tomeka Cottrell, Christiana Davis, Loretha Hudson, Bob Krekeler, Tanesha McCants, Quiana McCoy, Tonya Morris, Debbie Mullikin, Chris Pierce, Nakia Reeves, Rick Riley (President), Melissa Rowland, John Selmeier, Debbie Steiner, Rebekah Taylor, Karen Walsh (Vice President-Chief Steward).

IRRC - Florence - Jan Colwell, Brandon Mikusa, Jennifer Smith.

Night & Swing Shift

4th Street— Jim Gregory.

GWC—Alison Bower, Michael Bradford, Phillip Cargile, Erin Cooper, John Gilliam, Shawana Oliver, Dennis Stone, Michele Townsend.

Membership Incentive Ends in September: Join Now and Collect!

If you join NTEU now, you receive from NTEU National Office a bounty of \$50! This incentive is slated to end on September 30, so act now!

In addition to the national payout, NTEU is paying an additional \$25 to the person who recruits a new member. So, if you are a member, and you know someone who is not, you can get \$25 for getting them to join and they get \$50! Just put your name at the bottom of the form 1187. Generally, incentive checks are issued within a week.

The Summer Incentive Campaign is something that NTEU National Office does every year. Local NTEU73 has been adding to the incentive for recruiters.

Since the incentive started on May 1, NTEU73 has signed up 41 new members.

"Membership is always a big focus and it is not just about the money," said NTEU73 President Rick Riley. "We talk about it all the time, but the more members we have, the more power we have as a union. The higher our membership percentage the more seriously we are taken."

Currently NTEU73 has been hovering around the 60% mark, which is up about 7% since Mr. Riley took office.

"Since I was elected, we have signed up 416 new members," he said. "I think that is pretty strong. Our first goal was 60%. But it is a moving target because while we sign up members, we lose some through attrition. People leave the service to take other jobs or simply retire. But it is very important to join and I hope everyone does!"

**NTEU73 keeps
members informed
with chapter news as
well as national news.**

Visit nteu73.org

**On Facebook:
Official NTEU Chapter
73**

**National Web Site
nteu.org**

Rumor Mill: Buyouts Might Be Getting Bigger!

Last year, the Obama administration asked for a \$40,000 dollar buyout for Department of Defense (DOD) employees, raising it from the maximum payment of \$25,000. The administration made the case that \$25,000 was no longer an adequate incentive to induce an employee to leave government service and retire. After taxes, the payout was far less than \$20,000 for most employees.

The same buyout has been offered since the Clinton administration with no increase. It may not seem like it, but that has been almost 17 years ago. While those ready to retire anyway may have found it attractive, with inflation figured in, fewer and fewer were actually retiring because of the payment. The end result of the Obama

administration request was that, after Congressional action, DOD employees received the increased incentive of forty thousand dollars.

Earlier in the year, rumors abounded in the IRS Cincinnati Service Center about \$40,000. At the time, it was stated that it was a special case for DOD employees only. IRS people would get only up to twenty-five thousand dollars. It appears, that could possibly now be changing.

President Trump has also recently requested the payout to be increased to \$40,000, government wide. The increased amount would be paid to

“avoid involuntary separation during periods of reductions in force,” according to FedWeek. Should Congress approve the request, that

would mean the employees being offered a buyout in October, could receive up to the higher amount. Again, that is if Congress approves it.

The president’s budget has called for cuts to several agencies. So far, the State Department, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of the Interior have all announced that they plan to offer buyouts to meet the budget objectives of the President.

EPA will be offering the buyouts to shrink their 15,000 employee workforce by 3,200 employees, according to the *Washington Post*. Even though the federal hiring freeze has been lifted, EPA has no plans to hire anyone in the near future, having to decrease their budget by 31%. In addition to cutting employees, EPA will also be eliminating 50 programs they now administer, including global warming research, restoring the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay and Puget Sound, and funds to states for environmental projects.

The Department of the Interior will be cutting its budget by 12% and plans to reduce its workforce by 6%, according to

Government Executive. The State Department is facing similar downsizing.

As the years roll on since Bill Clinton was president, less and less federal employees are taking buyouts. Recently, a typical year has had 2,000 to 3,000 people retire and take the incentive. Lately, the buyouts interest has increased due to all the talk of downsizing and as federal agencies search for humane ways to nudge the aging workforce into earlier retirements in an effort to meet budget demands. Most federal agencies have been ordered to research ways to be more

efficient, the old story of doing more with less.

The IRS has been decimated in recent years with budget cuts and attrition of employees, an issue NTEU National has been addressing for literally years.

So will the IRS follow suit and offer buyouts to all

employees who are approaching retirement and not just those who are affected by the Submission Processing shut down? No one yet knows; the answer is a resounding “maybe.”

But lately, IRS has been making the case for more funding and, thus, more hiring. It has been becoming increasingly difficult for IRS to attain its mission. Just last year, IRS was given authority to hire 700 new enforcement employees. It is not at all certain that the IRS will indeed “downsize” in the near future. While centers like Cincinnati, Austin and Fresno will be losing employees due the “consolidation,” other centers, like Ogden and Kansas City, may well be gaining. Plus, for every enforcement employee hired, IRS increases the amount of money coming into the federal government. That is a strong argument for hiring.

As it appears now, there is a very good chance that buyouts will indeed be increased government wide. It remains to be seen if that will affect IRS workers. Employees await the official conformation of the buy-out. But the rumor mill is alive and well.



NTEU73 keeps members informed with chapter news as well as national news.

Visit nteu73.org.

**On Facebook:
Official NTEU
Chapter 73**

Address Change?

If you have recently changed your address, please let the union know so you can continue to get information from NTEU. IRS does not share changes you made with them, so you must also tell us!

Please send any address changes to
Jeff Seibert / NTEU73 Membership:
jeffrey.w.seibert@irs.gov.

Update on Job Swaps: What's Coming?

NTEU73 has been taking the lead where job swaps are concerned. The union has taken the initiative to begin compiling lists of employees who wish to swap. Employees can come to the union office and have their name put on a list of potential swappers.

"After we get the lists together we then help match up employees so they can swap," said NTEU73 President Rick Riley.

One day last month, the union held a "lunch and learn" with Mr. Riley and NTEU Attorney Will Igoe to explain the process to Gateway Center employees. The official Job Swap Board will open around October 1st and stay open for 21 days. During that period, employees who wish to swap will list their names on the board and make an official swap, assuming the application gets approved.

So far, the chances of getting buyouts look good and they are expected to be approved shortly by OPM. Treasury is still working on the request, which will be sent over to OPM shortly.

"Twenty-one days is just too short of time to find a good match, that is why we are working the swaps right now,



unofficially" said Mr. Riley.

Perhaps the most difficult step in the process is finding someone with which to swap.

An employee cannot get a "promotion" during a job swap, the result being that employees have to match up by grade.

Many employees are finding their matches on their own, and the union has been involved in matching people up, too. The union has recently been discussing the question as to whether a seasonal is prohibited from trading with a permanent employee. That apparently is not in writing anywhere. Research is being done.

The paperwork is relatively simple. Both employees have a part to fill out on Form 14013, which is available in the union offices. The impacted employee fills out Part 1 and the non-impacted employee fills out part 2. Copies are given to both managers. Management will not be able to act on the request until the buy-out has been officially offered. Their hands are tied until the actual approval of the buy-out

comes from OPM. Until that time, they will not have the authority to approve the swap. However, it is important for employees to lock in their trading partner. Getting the application in is one way to do that.

Union Working to get Seasonal Employees Who Work Ten Months to be Converted to Permanent

NTEU73 recently won an arbitration case in which management was ordered to consider converting all seasonal employees who have worked over ten months without being furloughed. As a result ten employees were immediately converted with the rest waiting to be considered. Some employees have worked well over a year without being furloughed.

The contract says that if an employee works over ten months of continual service, the agency will consider converting the employee to permanent. It stops short of saying the employee WILL be converted.

An arbitrator cannot order the IRS to convert the employees, but can only require that they consider doing it. That language comes from the contract. And it obviously gives management a lot of wiggle room.

In the past, Submission Processing has been very cooperative in making sure

employees in this situation are converted.

After converting the ten employees, Submission Processing Director Jim Fish has informed the union that he "does not have the authority" to convert the others. However, NTEU73 President Rick Riley has been discussing the issue with him, and Mr. Fish does not seem opposed to doing it. It is not clear just how much the consolidation of Submission Processing is affecting the conversion decisions.

"We are looking into what can be done about it," said Mr. Riley. "On the face of it, if IRS does not have the authority to convert these employees, that is a decision someone up the chain makes. This is, in and of itself, a violation of the arbitrator's decision. They are saying, in essence, they cannot consider it because of the consolidation. However, Mr. Fish says he wants to do it because the contract doesn't give an exception just because of a ramp

down. I believe that we will get this done at the Joint Oversight Committee."

NTEU Attorney Will Igoe, who won the case, says there are a couple options. One would be to file another grievance, possibly for individual employees. The other would be to file an Unfair Labor Practice against the IRS for failing to carry out the arbitrator's decision.

"I really would rather not do that," Mr. Igoe said. "We have a great relationship with Jim Fish and I would not want to do anything to damage that. He has always seemed willing to work with us so I think some time will help see how this plays out. But we are not finished with it. We really think there are still quite a few members out there that need to be converted. One guy I know has worked over 14 months without being furloughed and has not been converted. If we have to, we will work these one case at a time."

60 Second Updates

House Passes Pay Raise for 2018

The House Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) appropriations bill has been approved by the House Appropriations Committee. Historically, this is the measure that carries the General Schedule for federal employee pay raise.

As in the past four years, the bill did not include specific language on the January 2018 across-the-board pay increase, which would allow the President's 1.9% proposed raise to go into effect in January unless further Congressional action is taken to increase or decrease the proposed raise. The FSGG appropriations bill must still be approved by the full House and Senate. The measure did include language to ensure that Wage Grade employees ultimately receive the same pay adjustment as General Schedule employees.



Language in this bill would also ensure federal employees affected by the OPM personnel records and background investigations data breaches would continue to be able to receive credit monitoring and ID theft protection services.

NTEU Opposes House Budget Plan as Unworkable and Harmful to Taxpayers

The 2018 budget proposal released today threatens federal employees and their ability to provide necessary services to the American people.

"This budget is a hodgepodge of bad policy, harmful spending cuts and rollbacks of protections for consumers and taxpayers," said National President Tony Reardon.

In a letter sent today to the House Budget Committee members, Reardon specifically stated federal employee pay and pensions are being treated as a "blank check to pay for particulars that have nothing to do with federal employees and retirees."

Bill Introduced to Increase FERS

Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD-4) has introduced H.R. 3269, the Federal

Employee Pension Act; a bill to repeal the increased FERS contributions for employees hired in 2013 and beyond. This legislation would return most federal employee contributions to the original 0.8%, from the recent hike up to 4.4%. It will be recalled that NTEU objected to those pension increases at the time, and we continue to object to any and all proposals that seek to increase FERS employee contributions. Former Congresswoman Donna Edwards introduced this NTEU-supported bill in past congresses.

House Bill to Loosen Thrift Restrictions

A bill has been introduced in the House that would loosen restrictions on how federal employees and retirees can withdraw money from the TSP

"I have heard from many NTEU members over the years about the stringent withdrawal rules of the TSP, and the desire for additional payment and withdrawal options. In our role on the TSP's Employee Thrift Advisory Council, we have raised the issue many times, and pushed strongly for this legislation," said NTEU President Tony Reardon.

NTEU73 Stewards Working for the Members

Your NTEU Stewards work for you, and are available if not in person, by phone or email. There are multiple stewards located in most Cincinnati IRS Center location. Here is a list of stewards manning the current NTEU73 offices:

Gateway:

- ♦ Chapter President **Rick Riley**
- ♦ Vice President/Chief Steward **Karen Walsh**
- ♦ National Vice President **Debbie Mullikin**
- ♦ Secretary **Tanesha McCants**
- ♦ Stewards **Sarah Corea** and **Debbie Mullikin**
- ♦ Night Shift Chief Steward **Dennis Stone**

Fourth Street Center (Flat Top):

- ♦ Stewards **Tommie Braswell**, **Michelle Robinson**
- ♦ Treasurer **Laura Mitchell**
- ♦ Director of Communications, Office Manager **Jeff Seibert**
- ♦ Night Shift Steward **Jim Gregory**

If you have any issues or concerns, call an NTEU73 office at 859-669-5700 or 859-669-5370.

Tommie Braswell has been helping employee's with the Consolidation Team.

Ron Cunningham got a one day suspension removed from for an employee.

Jim Gregory had an employee's evaluation raised, had AWOL removed and got him a grade increase!!

Nicole Guethlein helped and employee get prior credit for previous government experience.

Bill Lawrence is helping an employee with "Higher Graded Duties."

Laura Mitchell helped and employee with work load assignments.

Tonya Morris is working an appraisal grievance in AMB.

Debbie Mullikin requested reconsideration for telework in RICS/IVO. Also has an appraisal grievance in AMB.

Michelle Robinson helped an employee get a Detail to another area.

NTEU Fighting Law That Would Take Away Employee Rights

Harmful legislation has been introduced, the Promote Accountability and Government Efficiency Act (H.R. 3257), that would make radical changes to the rights and protections of federal workers.

To start, the bill would make any employee hired on or after one year after the bill's enactment an at-will employee that may be removed or suspended without notice or a right to appeal for "good cause, bad cause, or no cause at all." However, certain legal protections remain, such as laws protecting employees from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicapping condition, etc. Laws protecting the employment rights of veterans would also apply. However, monetary court awards are limited to \$50,000 per person, or in the case of a collective bargaining unit, \$10,000 per occurrence or \$300,000 in any calendar year. Furthermore, employees may appeal an adverse personnel action only to a single agency and for those who file with multiple agencies, the remedy is limited to \$1,000 in the aggregate.

For current employees (not at-will), the legislation allows agencies to suspend (with or without pay) an employee if the agency head determines that the performance or misconduct warrants such suspension. Employees are entitled to: written notice not later than 10 days after the suspension starts, 10 days to respond, an attorney or representative, and a review by the agency head and a final written decision. Appeals may be made to the MSPB, but the employee may not be reinstated pending the final decision of the appeal. Current employees are also prohibited from appealing adverse personnel actions to more than one agency.

The legislation also prohibits employees from receiving an increase in their annual rate of pay if the employee did not receive at least a score of 4 or 5 out of 5 (or equivalent rating) on the employee's latest performance review, and the number of employees receiving a score of 4 out of 5 does not exceed 50 percent of all employees at that agency. In the case of an employee covered by a collective bargaining agreement, a grievance filed on

behalf of such employee that results in an increased performance rating may not result in an increase in the annual rate of pay for the employee.

Under the bill, employees may not be paid an annuity on the basis of their service if the individual is convicted of a felony offense that is related to the performance of any position within the service occupied by such individual. Regarding official time, the bill states that an employee must be in non-duty status and may not use any government property when carrying out any activities related to the internal business of a labor organization

Moreover, employees engaging in such activities must account for their time spent carrying out such activities and may not engage in any political activities that may impact an employee's agency.

NTEU is fighting against these harmful proposals on Capitol Hill and will continue to strenuously defend federal workers and retirees from such vicious attacks. If you would like to get involved, call your Congressman!

Green for Signing Up for NTEU!

The Summer Membership Campaign is Back!

**If you sign up for NTEU between May 1-September 30
You get \$50 and whoever recruits you gets \$25!!**



**With all that NTEU is doing for you,
this is a deal you cannot pass up! Sign Up Today!
Just stop by any union office to get your form and \$50!**



**In These Troubled Times, United Benefits
can be a BIG Benefit to YOU!**



United Benefits will be in the Service Center throughout the coming months to help employees get a firm understanding of what faces them as they prepare for retirement. Their staff professionals, fully endorsed by NTEU, are experts on VERA/VSIP, the Thrift Savings Plan, the GRB Platform, your Health Insurance and all the paperwork involved. They can also take care of all your insurance needs, including disability, cancer, accident and life insurance!

They are here to help YOU!

Call today to set up an appointment with a United Benefits Representative to get your future in order!

**Call Roxy to set up your time to chat:
423-309-2758**