

THE

GUARDIAN



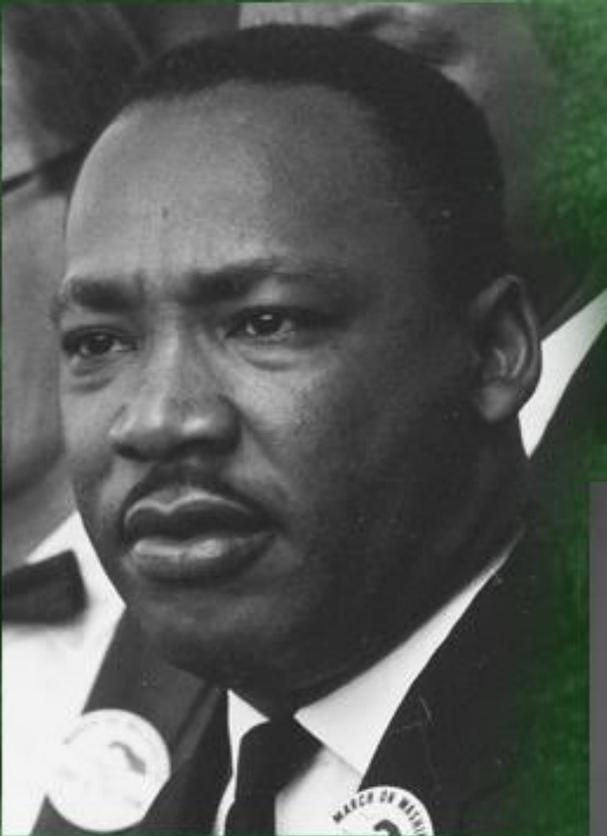
Inside this Edition

- February marks Black History Month2
- I Belong NTEU.....3
- Stewards Working For You..... "What is Arbitration?"4
- Day's Work..... "Can I Use Wrap Time?"5
- Andover Happenings.....6
- 2019 Legislative Priorities... ..7
- United Benefits Retirement Seminar.....8
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Information Table.....9
- President's Day Puzzle.....10
- Chapter Officers.....Happy President's Day11



NTEU The National Treasury Employees Union

February marks Black History Month. NTEU is proudly celebrating all month long.



I BELONG NTEU



I BELONG NTEU Because... "management was not recognizing my disabilities and wanted to terminate my employment and because I know I can assist employees in numerous difficult situations," said Mike McDonald, Chapter 68 Steward and Proud NTEU Member.

I BELONG NTEU Because... "my family supports trade unions and the obvious advantages of health, safety and the benefits from union membership, including higher wages, are valued but the ability to negotiate thru collective bargaining and for our voice to be heard as one is the most important reason I am a proud NTEU member and steward," said John Sullivan, Chapter 68 Steward and Proud NTEU member.

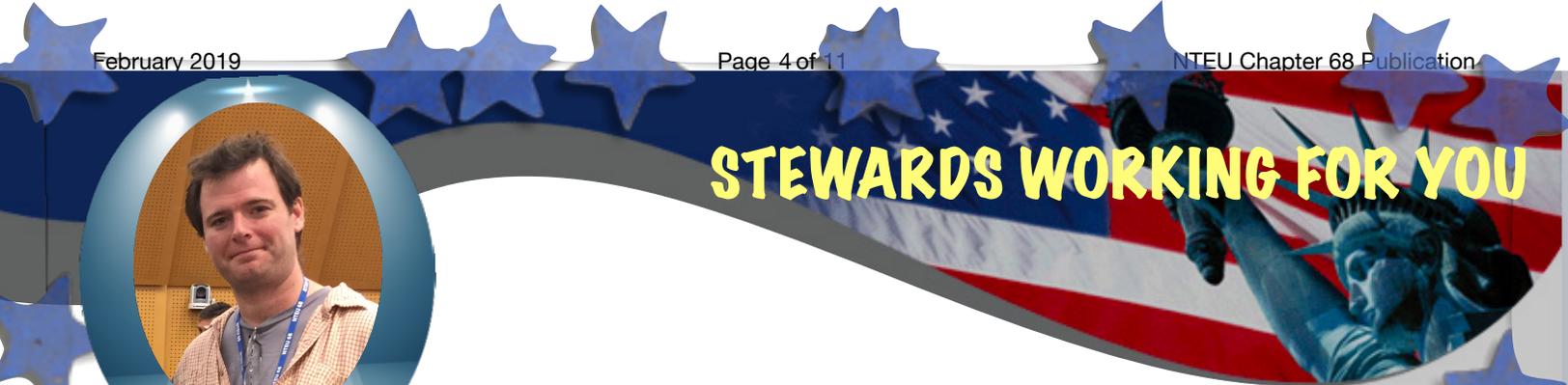
Why Joining a Strong Union is the Way to Go? They Work! Union members band together, allowing the voices of individual fellow employees to be heard and possibly made into a goal of the union. Unionized employees typically elect representatives to bring concerns to the union's attention. Collective Bargaining makes sure changes are negotiated rather than imposed.

Federal employees have always done better for themselves and their families when they join together in a strong union. It's through collective bargaining that they have a voice on the job and greater control over their lives and their futures. It's through joining a union that people, together, strive for improvements at the place where they spend a large portion of their waking hours: Work.

If you want success in your working lives, don't go it alone. Join a strong union and make your voice heard.

Reasons to Join. Money. Let's deal with this one straightway, and let's be sure to get it right. You want a pay raise? NTEU fights for you. If a bigger paycheck matters to you, then consider joining.

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.



STEWARDS WORKING FOR YOU



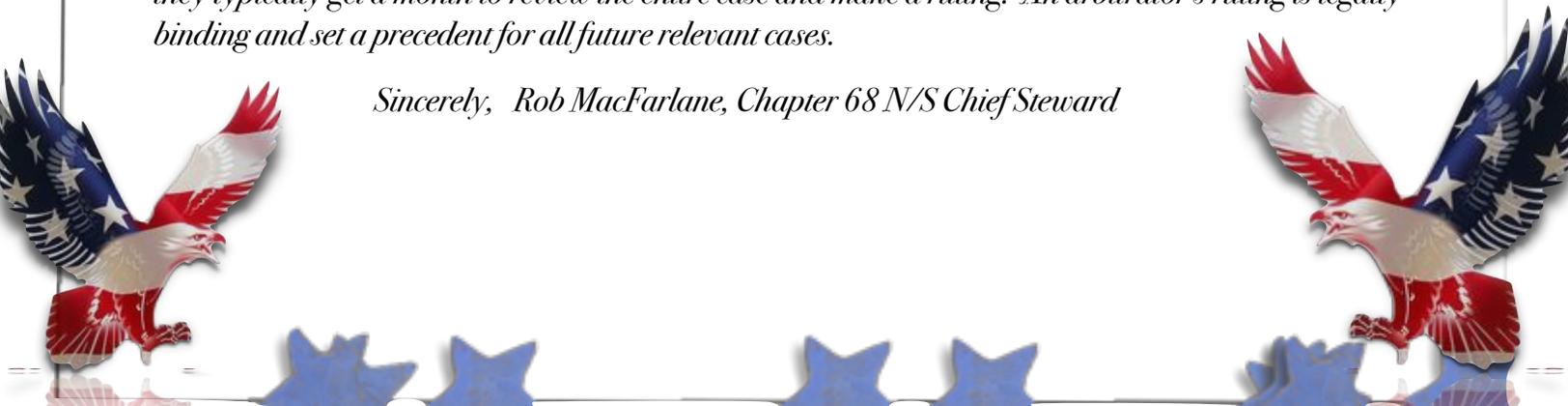
What is Arbitration?

When an employee has been harmed and has a complaint about a matter relating to their employment, or would like to claim a violation or misapplication of an agency policy that impacts bargaining unit working conditions, they can file a grievance. The grievance procedure is outlined in Article 41 of our contract, and has several steps. The final step of the grievance procedure is called arbitration. If we have still not reached a satisfactory outcome after all grievance appeals have been exhausted at the local level, NTEU can elect to invoke arbitration. Whether or not a case goes to arbitration is at the sole discretion of NTEU. That decision is typically made by our field office, and is based on numerous factors about the case.

Once a case makes it to arbitration, the format of the meetings becomes much more formal. Once a case is scheduled for arbitration, the agency assigns an agency attorney and a Labor Relations Specialist to the case. The agency attorney takes on the case for the IRS, while our NTEU Field Rep takes on the case for NTEU and the employee, along with a knowledgeable and qualified representative from the chapter. The chapter representative is either the steward of record on the grievance, or a Chapter Officer or Chief Steward. A national arbitrator is selected for the case. The arbitrator acts as both judge and jury, while the NTEU field rep and agency attorney act as the lawyers for each side. Witnesses are called, and they are examined under oath, and usually cross-examined by the other side. The NTEU officer/steward working with the NTEU Field Rep on the case serves as the "subject matter expert" to the field rep, since they have knowledge of the case since it was first filed as a grievance.

Arbitration hearings typically take place within a conference room here at the Andover campus. At the hearing are the following: A National Arbitrator, IRS attorney, Labor Relations Specialist, Court Reporter, NTEU Field Rep, NTEU Steward/Chapter Officer, and the Grievant. A quick arbitration hearing can wrap up in one workday, but often they can take up to two or three workdays. After the hearing wraps up, the IRS attorney and NTEU Field Rep each have one month to compose a "brief", and submit it to the arbitrator. The brief is a written summary of the case, highlighting the key points to each side's case. Once the arbitrator receives the briefs from each side, they typically get a month to review the entire case and make a ruling. An arbitrator's ruling is legally binding and set a precedent for all future relevant cases.

Sincerely, Rob MacFarlane, Chapter 68 N/S Chief Steward



A Day's Work

Can I Use Wrap Time?

IRM 21.1.1.4 (13) reads as follows:

“Use of wrap time should be minimal except in rare instances. CSRs are expected to complete calls (account adjustments, tax related research and writing Account Management Services (AMS) notes) while on the line or on hold with the caller. If the taxpayer does not want to be placed on hold while specific actions are being taken on the account, wrap time should be limited to no more than two minutes. For additional information regarding completing on-line account inquires, see IRM 21.1.3.20 (2), Oral Statement Authority.”

The IRM is not the controlling document and it is incorrect. The controlling document in this case is the Customer Service Agreement, the CSA which is the agreement signed by both NTEU and the Agency. Section 4B2 of the CSA states the following:

“Conditional wrap is appropriate in situations where the taxpayer does not wish to stay on the line and case documentation is required. Other situations that may warrant the employee being in conditional wrap are if a case is complex and requires additional time to complete documentation or research, or if there is a need to prepare to take the next call. However, employees are expected to resolve telephone inquiries (including account adjustments) while the customer is still on the line.”

The biggest concern of the IRM is that it clearly indicates that you cannot be in wrap for more than 2 minutes. The CSA states that wrap time can be used for multiple things including complex cases that would require additional time to complete.

Chapter 68 brought this to the attention of management. In their response, they seemed to agree that there were some issues with the IRM and that the CER team is to be reviewing cases per the CSA. It was also pointed out that IRM 1.4.16.3.5.4 seems to show that more than the 2 minutes of wrap time can potentially be used.

So, what is the truth about wrap time?

It is true that wrap time should be used as little as possible. The CSA does state that “... employees are expected to resolve telephone inquiries (including account adjustments) while the customer is on the line.”. However, there are many reasons where you are able to use wrap time and management should not give you an error or even have concerns with your work. As long as you have a legitimate reason for going into wrap and it coincides with the wording in the CSA, you are absolutely eligible to go into wrap and you are able to use wrap for more than 2 minutes in contradiction to the IRM.

If your manager tells you that you can only use wrap for 2 minutes or if you are told that you cannot use wrap at all, please contact the NTEU office immediately. Also, if you are given an error for being in wrap and you feel it's a violation of the CSA, please contact us immediately to help rectify the problem.

NTEU
The National Treasury Employees Union
Chapter 68

Andover Happenings



As many of you remember, Congresswoman Lori Trahan met with about 40 IRS Service Workers at the Andover Medical Center to hear our stories of how the shutdown impacted our lives. In a private discussion with the Congresswoman's DC Legislative Staff, they said that Lori was deeply touched and our stories were very helpful to her become instrumental in helping members through one of the most difficult times in their working lives. With that said, I asked a member and chapter steward, Mike McDonald, whom attended the press conference to share his story with us. It's important to build strong relationships with our elected officials because they want to hear from you and help us make our working lives a better place.

On Friday January 11th, at 4:30 PM, U.S. Representative , Lori Trahan representing the 3rd District including Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Lowell Dracut and other communities held a meeting at the Andover Medical Center for those affected by the government t shutdown. The Andover Medical Center is across the street from our campus. There was standing room only and the major news stations and local newspaper journalist attended this meeting.

After Representative Trahan introduced herself and her staff she asked the affected attendees to state their name department they worked in and specific issues. During the introduction a major issue focused on collecting unemployment benefits, essential employees having to work, hardship, the lack of service to the taxpayers, furlough pay, and other issues. The Department of Unemployment for Massachusetts was denying claims as the IRS does not respond within the time frame required.

Representative Trahan was cognizant of this fact and stated she was working on this with State of Massachusetts Unemployment. She provided a telephone number to a member of her staff who had been assigned to deal with this issue. An essential employee indicated they had to go to work for campus support to open the mail assembly the checks and have them ready for deposit. This took 2 hours a day. The employee stated they lived fairly close but mentioned how the cost of gasoline would be a significant issue if she lived farther away. Comments were made about how the taxpayers were not going to be serviced. Another person stated how we had not been trained regarding the new tax act as well as funds had not been appropriated for the training. People mentioned how they could not pay their rent, gasoline, food, day care, mortgages credit card bills as some of the problems the shutdown was causing.

Representative Trahan stated she was against the shutdown, and specifically mentioned how this meeting allowed her to comprehend the circumstances we were facing. The meeting lasted an hour and 45 minutes. Representative Trahan was aware some of her constituents were present, that they were democrats and had voted for her. Several Individuals had the opportunity to speak with her privately before and after the meeting. The meeting was televised on several Boston news stations.

Sincerely, Mike McDonald, Chapter 68 Steward and Proud NTEU Member

I AM
NTEU





NTEU's legislative agenda, blueprint, established during a meeting in Washington, D.C., of the Legislative Advisory Committee. This group of NTEU members from various federal agencies (IRS, CBP, FDA) across the country spent hours reviewing the legislative landscape, examining previous year's events and challenges and opportunities in 2019 for federal employees and then recommended priority issues to National President Tony Reardon.

At the end of a long day, they recommended a slate of legislative key issues to be discussed at upcoming Legislative Conference for 2019. This year's theme is "NTEU United".

Achieving Pay Equity. Federal workers are aging. If the federal government is to have the ability to compete with the private sector in recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce, it is essential that the federal government provide its workers a pay raise. In 2018, the private sector wages for professionals rose by an average of 3%. Like their private sector counterparts, federal workers face ever-increasing costs-of-living, with rising utility, health care and food bills, along with school loan and rent or mortgage obligations.

Securing Agency Funding. Promoting specific agency funding and staffing needs to do our jobs. Adequate resources and staffing, agency reorganizations, preventing government shutdowns.

Protecting Retirement. Public service is one of the most stable lines of work one can pursue. The first good thing about government retirement benefits (FERS, TSP and Social Security) is how easy it makes retirement planning. While everyone needs to be aware of "the three-legged stool of retirement", two of the three legs are as solid as they can be for public servants. We need to take an active role to protect our retirement benefits and prevent these important benefits from being cut.

Guaranteeing Workplace Fairness. Ensuring members have access to union representation. Protecting due process and collective bargaining rights and official time and fair treatment of all employees.

Ensuring Affordable Health and Family Benefits. Opposing changes to retirement plans. Increasing telework options. Maintain FEHBP; address prescription drug costs. Government wide paid parental leave.

NTEU CHAPTER 68 EVENTS



UNITED BENEFITS

Hosted by NTEU Chapter 68

All Members are Invited to Attend Half Hour Lunch and Learn Classes

Retirement Seminar

Tuesday, February 26th—11:00 a.m. & 5:00 p.m.

Café Function Room 224

For those close to Retirement or Age 55

Retirement Overview & GRB Platform

Retirement Package Assistance Available for Members

Understanding Your Benefits

Tuesday, February 26th – 12:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Café Function Room 224

Benefits Overview

TSP, FEGLI, FEHB, FERS, CSRS

**United Benefits Counselors will be available by appointment
Please call or email Karen to set up your one on one time.**

Please request 1 hour of Admin time

Article 36—Section 11—Subject to workload considerations the Employer may grant an employee up to a total of four (4) hours excused absence per calendar year for the purposes of attending a health benefits fair, reviewing health benefits information and materials, receiving financial counseling, and seeking supplemental retirement counseling. Except for excused absence for retirement planning, as provided for in Article 21, no other administrative time shall be authorized for general benefit counseling.

**Jim Ragan—256.312.3015
jim@unitedbenefits.com**

**Karen Ragan—256.312.3016
karen@unitedbenefits.com**

NTEU Sponsored Event

Blue Cross Blue Shield Information Table

*Blue Cross representative will be available
for any specific questions.*



Personal one on one meetings to address your individual needs

Cross Point Tower 3, 9th Floor Conf. Rm

Date: Wednesday, March 27th

Times: 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM

Andover – Café Function Room 224

Date: Thursday, March 28th

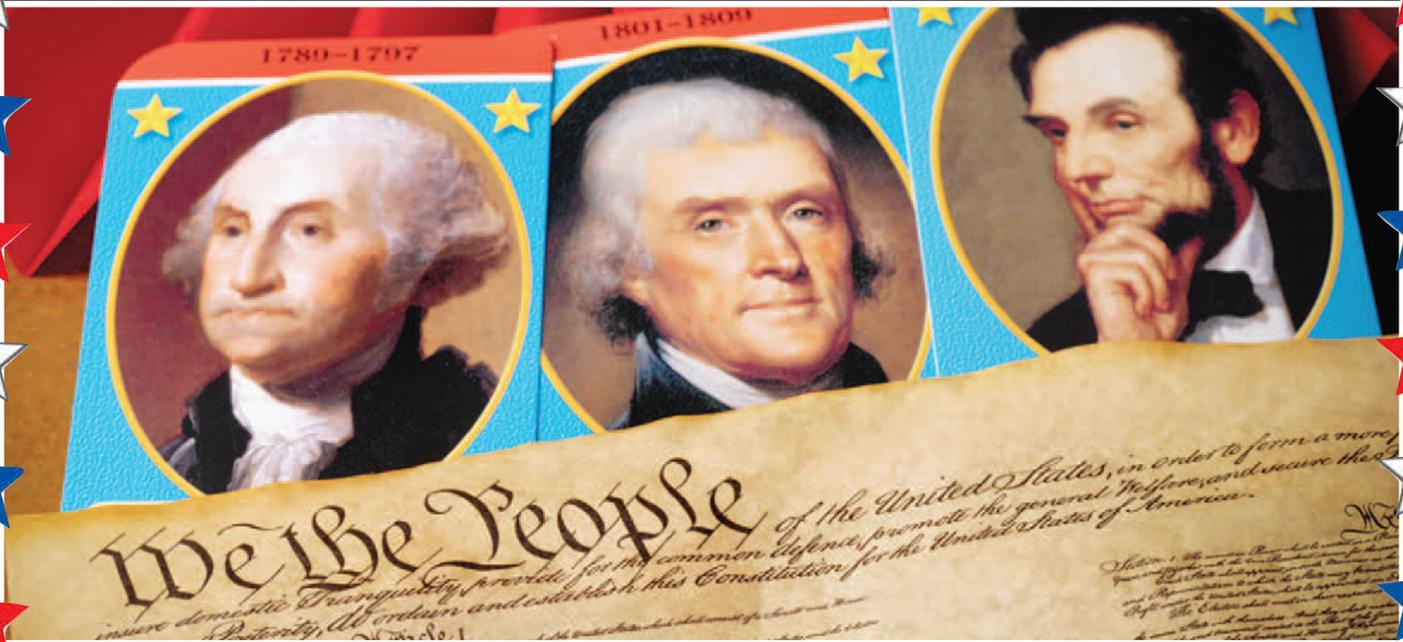
Times: 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
and
5:00 PM to 7:00 PM



NTEU members only

For questions or to schedule a one-on-one meeting, please contact NTEU office at nteu.chapter.68@irs.gov or call 978-783-8426

PRESIDENTS' DAY WORD SEARCH



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q | O | H | Q | O | N | Q | L | A | R | E | D | E | F | S |
| A | R | Y | A | D | I | L | O | H | P | O | H | P | Q | R |
| S | P | P | R | E | S | I | D | E | N | T | Y | I | W | F |
| E | W | J | E | W | T | O | P | U | O | P | N | O | A | V |
| E | S | M | D | S | A | L | C | J | L | W | L | L | S | O |
| Y | L | K | A | D | T | Q | O | M | Q | S | O | Q | H | T |
| R | E | E | E | E | E | A | U | K | A | D | C | A | I | E |
| A | C | I | C | C | S | S | N | L | S | E | N | S | N | N |
| U | V | O | K | T | I | Q | T | I | Q | C | I | Q | G | N |
| R | F | U | L | A | C | I | R | E | M | A | L | W | T | M |
| B | R | P | J | R | U | E | Y | U | E | F | U | E | O | J |
| E | T | U | O | T | P | I | R | P | I | R | P | I | N | J |
| F | G | E | O | R | G | E | T | U | P | T | U | P | N | A |
| I | U | N | I | T | E | D | G | Y | L | G | Y | L | B | I |
| Y | N | Q | R | E | D | A | E | L | K | B | T | E | W | P |

See how many of these words you can find in the puzzle. The words can be forward, backward or diagonal.

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. George | 5. President | 9. February | 13. Vote |
| 2. Washington | 6. United | 10. Leader | 14. Holiday |
| 3. Abe | 7. States | 11. Federal | 15. Country |
| 4. Lincoln | 8. America | 12. Elect | |

Chapter 68 Officers

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Nell Arndt, Membership Trustee & Legislative Coordinator, (978)783-9268

Barbara Thomas(Doumaney), Membership Trustee, (978)783-8426

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NTEU website: www.nteu.org

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/NTEUNational



★ **HAPPY** ★
PRESIDENTS' DAY