

THE GUARDIAN



2



3

Inside Edition

- President's Desk 2
- Use of Skype 3
- Celebrate MLK 4
- Can I Work a Second Paid Job? 5
- Can I Request a Reasonable Accommodation? 5
- Unscheduled Leave 6
- NTEU ...Who We Are 7
- Legislative Digital Advocacy 8
- Tips to Turbocharge Your Telework Experience 9
- Know Your Officers 10



4



8



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

From the Desk of the President

Happy New Year NTEU! We certainly live in unprecedented times but in these times NTEU hopes that you had very happy holiday season! We hope that with everything going on that you were able to spend time with family or friends and that you could have some semblance of normalcy! At the very least we can be happy that we live in a time where video chatting is possible which allows us to speak with our families even though they're not physically with us.

There are many ways to use the word union... it could be a marriage, a union of workers or it could be our union, America. Regardless of how to use the word, all of the meanings are the same: togetherness, partnership or undivided. Our union, America, has had its troubles over the last year and especially in 2021, even only a few days old. We have not seen the kind of attacks on Capitol Hill that we saw a few days ago since we were at war with the British.

America is strong... our union is strong. It is strong because Americans are resilient and federal employees are resilient. Federal employees, like you and I were in that building defending what our past generations fought for and it still stands today as strong as it ever was because our union, America, is strong.

While I praise all Americans, I praise you in particular. Without federal employees America would have many more difficulties than we do now. Some jobs are inherently governmental. Putting our jobs into the hands of those whose goal it is to make money over the well being of the American citizens just does not work. Just look at the times the IRS has gone to private debt collection... we lost millions every time. That's because government agencies do the will of the American people, not the will of the shareholders who have a financial bottom line. It's always important to remember that even though we cannot see it, we are affected every day by federal employees. Every time you go to a grocery store or a restaurant, the FDA is there making sure our food is safe... The SEC protects our markets... the CFPB is there to protect consumers... the TSA makes sure our planes are safe. So as always, thank YOU for keeping America safe and running!

Lastly, I wanted to also thank YOU for being members. When I and my administration took office in 2013 our membership percentage was hovering around 64%... Because of your efforts and your membership, chapter 68 now stands at 71.1% membership! Not only are we at 71.1% membership, Chapter 68 also leads all service centers nationwide in percentage membership!! This is because of you, our members! I am so very proud to be your chapter president and many of you often thank us for what we do but, there can never be confusion that the only way we can do what we do is because of your membership! You have all made us so proud and we as a board are humbled and honored to be your chapter leaders.

Thank you and you have our hopes and prayers for a healthy and prosperous 2021!

In Solitary,

Gary Karibian

A large, 3D, gold-colored graphic of the year '2021' is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page. The numbers are thick and have a metallic sheen, with shadows and highlights that give them a three-dimensional appearance. The '2' and '1' are particularly prominent.



Still confused about Use of Skype while Teleworking?

It's no wonder with conflicting messages coming from management. We have raised the fact that some of the guidance issued by various operations has been incorrect on the Skype online communication tool. In Article 50, Section 5A3, we agreed that managers may require employees who are teleworking to use "online communication tools" if it determines that it would be useful in performing duties at the telework site. We did not agree that management has a right to direct all non-teleworking employees to utilize Skype. We did agree that teleworking employees could be required to use SKYPE while teleworking, and also obtained an agreement from IRS to rules that are designed to protect employees from management abuses. Here's some clarification.

- ~ Employees "may be required" to use online communication tools, just as they may be now.
- ~ If required to use instant messaging, they may use all of the features of that SKYPE function, such as "busy" and "do not disturb," for example, when they are working on a pressing matter that requires their undivided attention.
- ~ Managers cannot use on-line communications tools to track or monitor employees, measure their productivity or as a time and attendance tool. We had the same agreement regarding OCS.
- ~ Finally, the contract makes clear that the use of webcams is not required.

If you have any further questions contact Chapter 68. "... mission is to ensure that every federal employee is treated with dignity and respect.

NTEU
IS **HERE** FOR **YOU**

NTEU

you.
PLEASE WEAR A MASK



On Monday, January 18, NTEU and Chapter 68 will join the nation as we remember and honor the contributions and legacy of

Dr. Martin Luther King., Jr.





Can I Work a Second Paid Job? While many federal employees find ways to supplement their income, government ethics rules and agency policies could put a moonlighter's day job at risk. Federal employees may not engage in outside employment that conflicts with official duties and responsibilities. IRS requires federal employees to get pre-approval from a supervisor or agency ethics officer even if coworkers have similar outside jobs. Management will vet the secondary employer for issues such as conflicts of interest or representing private interests before the government. These restrictions apply even when employees are on unpaid leave, including furlough. NTEU-negotiated contract typically lays out the process for securing approval for outside employment. If you have questions, check with Chapter 68 union office. Federal employees can earn extra money through freelance writing assignments or speaking engagements when they are off duty, thanks to a landmark NTEU legal victory. In the 1995 class action lawsuit filed by NTEU, the Supreme Court concluded that a statute broadly prohibiting federal employees from accepting compensation, called "honoraria," for articles or speeches unrelated to their federal employment violated their constitutional free speech protections. Three years after NTEU's First Amendment victory, the honoraria ban for federal employees was lifted. *Refer to CBA Article 6, Outside Employment for further info or see your union representative.*



H A P P Y N E W Y E A R



Can I Request a Reasonable Accommodation? Federal agencies are required by law to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified employees with physical or mental impairments. Reasonable accommodations can be anything from screen reader software and book holders to ramps and telework. NTEU contract outlines the process for submitting requests for reasonable accommodations, including confidentiality requirements and medical documentation, timeframes and procedures for employees to appeal denials. NTEU contract also lists the steps in the interactive process, outlined in regulation, and a Chapter 68 steward can explain or discuss the interactive process with you. Your Union Steward can also help you submit a request and make sure you have the necessary medical documentation. If your request is denied, your Union Steward can help you decide what to do next, whether it's submitting additional documentation or suggesting other options for accommodations. Your Union Steward may recommend filing a grievance if there was not a valid reason for the denial or the agency refuses to explain why the request was denied. The past year, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issued new guidance on workplace accommodations, confidentiality of medical information, protections for older workers and pregnant employees in light of coronavirus. This information is available here: www.eeoc.gov. *Refer to CBA Article 55, Reasonable Accommodation for further info or see your union representative.*

Unscheduled Leave: What is it and why should I care?

The term “unscheduled leave” means literally that, leave that is unscheduled. Under article 34 section 2B, the contract is clear and states “Where foreseeable, employees must request advance approval for sick leave.”. So, for example if you have a doctor’s appointment scheduled in advance, you should notify your manager so they schedule you out for the day or the period of time.

What happens when you have the need for unanticipated sick leave? What happens when you wake up in the morning with the flu or a massive headache or the cold? The contract gives employees the right to use sick leave and self-certify their illness... in other words in most cases employees will not need a doctor’s note to certify they need the day off. The issue comes when an employee uses unscheduled leave either frequently or in unusual patterns.

Whether you have leave on the books or not, management has the right per the contract to question your use of leave if you are using it frequently or in unusual patterns. Without a reasonable explanation, if the leave usage continues, you may be given a leave restriction letter. A leave restriction letter is generally for 6 months and any time you request unscheduled leave you would be required to provide a doctor’s note.

The reason why management has the right to question the use of leave is because by the standards, management has the right to a reasonable expectation that employees will report to work as scheduled. Management does not have the right to abuse their authority. Management does not have the authority to ask the nature of the illness or to demand a diagnosis. Management cannot supersede the contract and demand that an employee call in during their shift.

If you find yourself using a lot of unscheduled leave, please contact NTEU to discuss the possibilities of FMLA. Usually members approach NTEU only after they’ve received the leave restriction letter. During the conversation we often find that the member has an FMLA reason for calling out. We help them to get on FMLA which protects them from any kind of discipline or leave restriction letter. It’s important that members use their legal and contractual rights to protect themselves! If you have been spoken to by management about your use of leave or if you believe you use a lot of unscheduled leave, come see NTEU!

Not at the office?

No Problem!

You can still join NTEU.

**It has never been
faster, easier and more
convenient to join NTEU.**

Complete the one-page SF-1187 membership form online and submit it securely.

Join us today.
nteu.org/join



NTEU. Here for you.
ΝΤΕΝ. ΗΓΙΣ ΓΙΝΤ ΛΟΓ

What We Do

NTEU is the nation's largest independent union of federal employees, representing 150,000 workers in 33 departments and agencies.

Who We Are

Our union is comprised of a diverse group of individuals who share in common a commitment to public service. We proudly represent law enforcement officers, scientists, attorneys and cyber-security experts. Our members are revenue officers, food inspectors, bank examiners, park rangers and the list goes on. Each of these federal workers plays an important role in keeping the country running and prospering.

What We Do

NTEU is the voice of the federal workforce on Capitol Hill, in the courts, at the bargaining table and in the media. We fight for fair pay and benefits, improved working conditions and other issues that affect the working lives of federal employees.

We were created in 1938 to make sure federal employees are treated with respect and dignity. That remains our mission to this day and will continue to guide our work in the 21st Century and beyond.

Where We Are

NTEU is where you are. Our chapters are in 33 agencies across the country. Our headquarters are in Washington, D.C., and we have field offices in Washington; Atlanta; Austin, Texas; Chicago; Denver; Hoboken, N.J.; and Oakland, Calif. Highly-trained stewards and chapter leaders are in NTEU-represented workplaces nationwide to help employees solve issues—big and small.



<https://www.nteu.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NTEUNational/>

Legislative Digital Advocacy is Having a Moment: Are Your Tools Ready?

There's never been a more important time for legislative advocacy to show your value - as a federal employee - but only if you're armed with the right legislative advocacy platform. First and foremost, you need to get engaged taking action to push for the legislative, funding and support. That means emailing and contacting your members of Congress using NTEU Legislative Action Center.

As a federal employees, we need to urge members of congress to ensure federal employees are protected and supported in any upcoming legislation to address the coronavirus pandemic. Unfortunately, many agencies are still failing to properly communicate with employees, leaving far too many employees wondering how agency return plans will protect them, their families, their coworkers, and the American public.

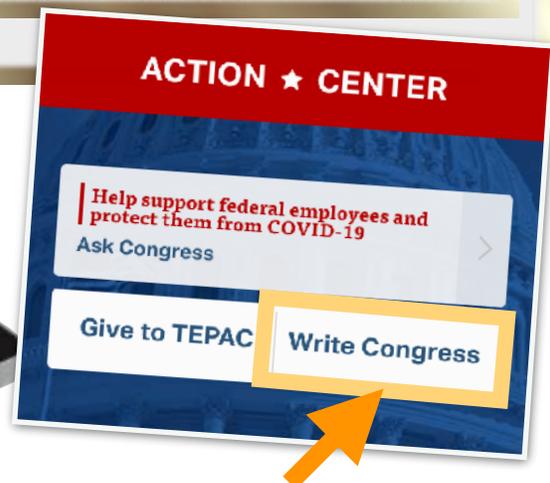
While many federal employees are teleworking from home, others perform jobs that require them to be on site and interacting with the public, putting them at greater risk of exposure to the virus. And some employees are still being required to work in offices without proper protective equipment, cleaning supplies and other safety measures that are needed to ensure they are safe. As a federal employees, we are concerned about our health and safety as well as that of our colleagues and our families.

As Congress continues to work on legislation to address the coronavirus pandemic, we need to ask Congress to do everything they can to ensure that federal employees are protected, that we are given the tools and resources to perform our jobs in a safe environment as well as hazardous duty pay when our jobs put us at higher risk, and that we have the leave we need to take care of ourselves and our families.

Federal employees, like all Americans, are worried about the spread of the coronavirus and we look to your leadership to help us through this.

NTEU Stands United to Protect You! In 2020 there had been no shortage of challenges and NTEU staved off numerous attacks on federal employees by standing united. Let's do it again in 2021!

Subscribe to NTEU's Legislative Action network list. Provide us with your home email address and NTEU will keep you informed of important legislative action alerts and more! [NTEU.org](https://www.nteu.org)



Caution: Do not use government computer or email. You must use personal device, email and own time.

Tips on Staying Healthy While Working From Home

The global spread of COVID-19, the novel coronavirus, is keeping people at home. Much of the world is on lockdown, and, even in places that aren't, people are encouraged to stay at home.

Create a Morning Routine. Humans are creatures of habit—and that's partly because routine helps us mentally and physically prepare for things. Whether it's having a cup of coffee every morning, doing some morning stretches or taking your dog on a walk, creating a morning routine can greatly help you get ready for the work-day at home. It's also important to think about other controls, too. Working in your pajamas might work for some, but it might not be productive for others. Do you feel refreshed working out in the morning or the evening?

Leave Home. You don't have to eat out every day, but it is important to leave your home and give yourself a new space to breathe, work or exercise. This is true for in-office workers too: leave the building at least once a day. Your body needs to move, and fresh air and new scenery do your mind a lot of good.



Eat well and boost your immune system.

Staying healthy has never been so important. Not only will taking care of yourself help prevent sickness, but it is also much easier to manage your mental state when you are well-rested and feel good physically. Make sure that you are eating a balanced diet, take your vitamins, and get enough sleep.

Get regular exercise. Staying at home is a recipe for inactivity. Not only is exercise good for your physical health, but it is good for your mental health, as well. Studies have shown that exercise alleviates stress and increases our feel-good hormones, known

as endorphins.

Engage in relaxation activities. Take charge of your own mental health by allocating time each day to engage in activities that relieve stress and bring you peace. Some examples could include spending time in meditation or prayer, getting (or giving yourself) a massage, and taking a long hot bath. Think of these activities as essential to your well-being and give yourself permission to enjoy them.

Spend time in nature. Spending time outside is perhaps one of the most powerful tools we have to restore our mental health. Studies have shown that not only does it improve our mood, but it can also restore our ability to concentrate and focus. Even if you are completely surrounded by a concrete jungle, research shows that just looking at nature photos and listening to nature sounds—like birds chirping or waves crashing—can make a difference. There are even indications that being in nature makes us more likely to cooperate and share.





[www.facebook.com/
NTEU-Chapter-68](http://www.facebook.com/NTEU-Chapter-68)

NTEU CHAPTER 68

OFFICERS

Gary Karibian, Chapter President, Gary.H.Karibian@irs.gov
Beth Willwerth, Secretary, Beth.A.Willwerth@irs.gov
Noelia Batista, D/S Chief Steward & Treasurer, Noelia.Batista@irs.gov
Rob MacFarlane, N/S Chief Steward & Exec. Coordinator,
Robert.Macfarlane@irs.gov
Nell Arndt, Membership Trustee & Leg. Coordinator.,
Nell.S.Arndt@irs.gov
Barbara Thomas (Doumaney), Membership Trustee,
Barbara.Thomas@irs.gov
Bob Harrington, National Vice President Dist. 6,
RobertA.Harrington@irs.gov

NTEU Union Office located at ANSC Stop 935, Room 1106

Email: nteu.chapter.68@irs.gov

Mailing Address: P O BOX 4186 Ballardvale Station Andover, MA 01810

Website: www.nteuch68.org

