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# THE GUARDIAN



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# Local Training

Why Stewards are the Best!



Chapter 68 held its Local Steward Training which is crucial for both seasoned and new stewards. Gary discussed recent chapter ongoings including a big win on use of wrap time. He also welcomed new stewards, Syreeta Basantes, Val Connors and Christina Terruso on board!

Janine set the tone of open discussion on the importance of a steward's communication skills. Stewards are visible in the workplace and that happens because they communicate with our members. As a steward, they find themselves informally educating and helping members and managers on a day-to-day basis.

She also spoke about grievance filings. At the heart of our role enforcing rights under the Contract is the grievance process. Ideally, we seek to efficiently and expeditiously utilize this process in order to solve workplace problems for members. As a union steward, we are the members closest link to NTEU, we are the face of the Union! Members look to stewards for help with a variety of workplace matters. If you need a steward, then look for the NTEU flag or visit the union office for help. We are there for you whenever you need us!

Dennis educated us on how the three E.O.'s affect federal employees and unions by stripping away pay raises, performance awards and union rights. The vast majority of federal employees are dedicated public servants who are dedicated to their mission and to service the American people. They should be treated with dignity and respect!

He also taught accommodating employees with disabilities. It's important for stewards to understand the legal definitions of disability. The central focus of the class was to understand and how to assist members who needs a reasonable accommodation especially when their disability is impacting their work performance. Having Janine and Dennis on board at the local training available to answer questions is priceless!



Gary Karibian, Chapter President



Janine Davitian, National Counsel.



Dennis Riel, National Rep.



# NTEU

The National Treasury Employees Union

Join us in building a stronger future for you, your agency and our country.

[www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org)

## There is Power in Numbers



**\$80** incentive for new members to join  
**NTEU** during our **Summer Membership Drive**.

This year's 2019 membership drive will run from **March 31** through **September 28 2019**.

When you join, you add your voice to the tens of thousands of federal employees fighting to protect our pay, workplace rights and retirement.

Your support also empowers us at the bargaining table to secure new and improved programs and benefits in our workplace.

**JOIN US**, so we can do more for you.

Come see us in the **Union Office**

or see your area **Steward** for assistance.

It's a challenging time for federal workers.

**Join today**. We've got you covered.

\*\*\*Campaign Rules available at the Union Office\*\*\*



## What to do when you've been wronged at IRS?

The agency and its employees, through its unions, agreed on procedures to challenge actions that we don't think are fair, appropriate, or accurate. We call that process a "grievance," and it's detailed in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), Article 41. IRS guarantees that a grievance filed by an employee "does not affect the employee's standing with the Agency." Employees are assured by IRS that they will be free from "restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination, intimidation or reprisal" for filing a grievance or participating in the grievance process. See CBA, Article 5, Section 1, A1,2.

Prior to filing a grievance, we typically try to reach out to your manager to discuss the matter, with your permission, of course. We find that we can sometimes resolve the issue informally prior to resorting to the formal grievance process. But where our informal contact bears no fruit, where you're uncomfortable with us reaching out informally to your manager, or where it is strategically disadvantageous to do so, we then move to a formal grievance.

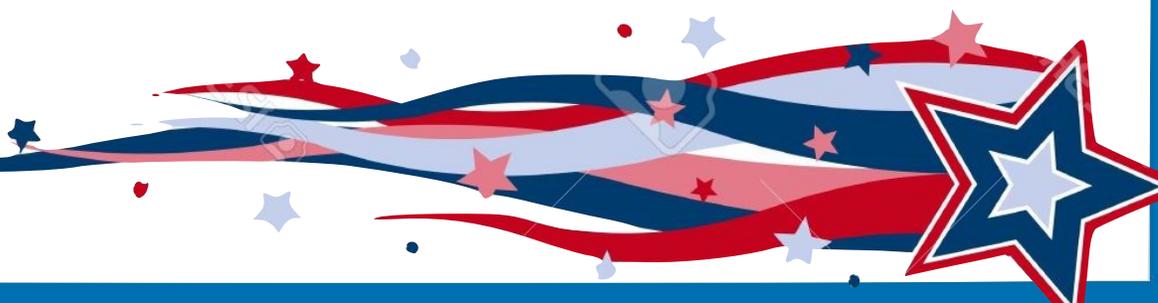
The grievance process is established to resolve issues at the lowest level possible. To accomplish this, the agency and NTEU agreed on a three-step process. The Theory is that you file the grievance at "Step 1" with your supervisor so that you can work out a mutually agreeable solution to the matter you're complaining about, and only move to Steps 2 and 3 if Step 1 doesn't resolve the issue. What we've found, however, is that Step 1 is largely a sham and a waste of time, but one we still need to go through on the way to later steps of the process, which are more likely to result in a solution.

**Process.** Frequently in a Step 1 grievance, the first-line supervisor works with the Labor and Employee Relations staff (the people who represent management) to justify the decision that was already made, not to resolve the grievance in a mutually-acceptable manner that works for both the employee and the manager. That is Chapter 68's goal: to craft solutions that work for both our members and the managers, whenever possible. Because of the problems we have at Step 1, you're nearly always going to proceed to Steps 2 and 3 of the process. Step 2 is with the "next level supervisor" over the supervisor who heard Step 1. See CBA, Article 34, Section 8. Step 3 is with the next level supervisor over Step 2.

We frequently find that the next-level Step 2 or Step 3 supervisors meet with the Step 1 supervisor and agree on a common justification of the bad actions of the Step 1 supervisor. We then receive a similar reason for denial at each step of the process. Managers stick together, even when they're wrong. The Step 2 and Step 3 supervisors are supposed to take a fresh look with fresh eyes at the situation and bring independent judgment. Unfortunately, most of them do not take this responsibility seriously and instead see the Step 2 and Step 3 process as another opportunity to validate and justify the actions of the Step 1 supervisor, no matter how problematic they are.

The Step 2 and Step 3 supervisors are supposed to take a fresh look with fresh eyes at the situation and bring independent judgment. Unfortunately, most of them do not take this responsibility seriously and instead see the Step 2 and Step 3 process as another opportunity to validate and justify the actions of the Step 1 supervisor, no matter how problematic they are. Nonetheless, we do resolve disagreements through the grievance process, and it's valuable to file the grievance to ensure your rights are protected. But if the grievance doesn't give you what you want, there are other options detailed below.

I AM  
NTEU



**Arbitration.** If we don't get satisfactory resolution of your grievance during the Step 1 - 3 process, we then can take the grievance to arbitration. Issues are arbitrated, or decided, in front of a neutral arbitrator from a panel of arbitrators jointly approved by the NTEU and IRS. Arbitrators are like judges who hear the information presented by both you and the manager and then make a decision. The process is, however, much less formal than a judge and court. Nonetheless, it gives us an independent decision from someone not controlled by management. Many of you have asked how the union uses your dues. Arbitration is one of the ways. Arbitration costs money and that cost is jointly split between the union and agency. See CBA, Article 43, Section 4.

**Time Limits.** Grievances must be filed within 15 workdays "of the notice of the matter, incident or issue out of which the grievance arose," or where there was no formal notice, 15 workdays after you "should have been aware of the matter, incident or issue." See CBA, Article 41, Section 6.

Once we file your grievance, management has 5 workdays to schedule a face-to-face meeting with you, if you request one. After your face-to-face meeting, management has another 10 workdays to send you a written decision. If management fails to meet the time frames specified and are not granted a delay by the union, then we can proceed to Step 2 at any time after passage of the 10-workday decision deadline. Steps 2 and 3 have similar time limits to Step 1.

If the matter is not settled by the three steps of the grievance process, the union has 30 calendar days after management issues its Step-3 decision to file a demand to arbitrate the issue. Once arbitration is requested, it takes roughly six months to receive an arbitration decision.

**Does the Union Have to Represent Me?** While federal law requires the union to provide certain basic representation to all employees in the bargaining unit regardless of membership, the union may decide not to represent you unless you are a dues-paying member on other optional activities. For example, the union does not have to represent an employee in an oral reply in connection with a proposed disciplinary action such as a suspension, removal, or an unacceptable performance action such as a demotion.

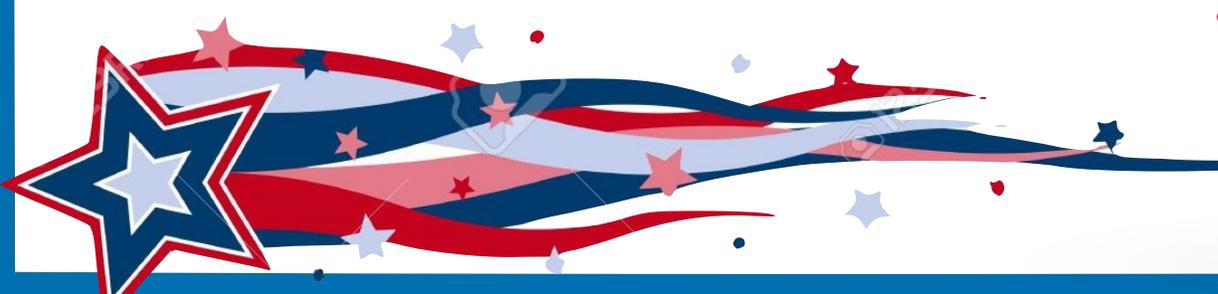
We are experts in the grievance process and IRS procedures. We have limited resources when it comes to optional activities. We also are stronger and more effective when we have a larger membership, so your dues-paying membership matters.

Improving the Grievance Process. NTEU Chapter 68 is committed to improving the grievance process and making it fair. As we mentioned, IRS management largely treats the process as a formality on the way to arbitration, rather than using it to resolve matters in mutually-beneficial ways at the lowest level possible. That's a waste of tax payer money as arbitration costs the agency.

We're committed to improving the process to bring meaning to the words in the CBA and resolving issues at the lowest level possible. As part of the commitment, we routinely meet informally with managers to discuss potential resolution and resort to the grievance process when management has given us no other options. Unfortunately, we've been forced to file grievances with some frequently lately.

**NTEU WORKING FOR YOU.**

**I AM  
NTEU**

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page features a large, stylized star on the left, composed of red, white, and blue stripes and stars. To the right of the star, there are several smaller stars and a wavy, ribbon-like shape in red, white, and blue, resembling the American flag.

## Why Legislation Action Matters?



Last month, Chapter Leaders canvassed the congressional delegations from NH and MA. We regularly meet with local key members of congress and their legislative staff because personal visits are the most effective way to make sure they know where federal employees stand on key issues that impact all of us. Our commitment is unwavering because we get that these meetings play a vital role in our every-day lives.

We bring first-hand knowledge of how legislation impacts the federal workplace, pay and benefits and the work lives of employees. Our understanding and familiarity with the “ins and outs” of government operations is incredibly valuable to helping lawmakers understand why NTEU might support or oppose pieces of legislation.

We brought unique perspectives to those meetings and explained the challenges we are facing personally and professionally. We explained how the constant attacks on federal workers and below market pay raises are wearing us down. We told these lawmakers that we want to serve our country and do our jobs well, but that it gets tougher with every budget cut. We shared your personal struggles in making ends meet and providing for your families.

Internal Revenue Service employees collect 93 percent of our country’s revenue so we can provide vital services such as making sure our food and medicine is safe, provide clean energy and safe air and water and so forth. What we do is important, and our dedication and commitment are vital to securing a better future for our country. But we need fair pay, we need a secure retirement, we need workplace protections, and we need resources in our agencies to do our jobs. That all comes from Congress. So, what does this have to do with legislative action? Everything!



We need all NTEU members to build on our support on Capitol Hill. We must expand our grassroots efforts across the country and stand up to those in office who attack us. We need to ask our elected representatives to stop going after the federal workforce and push back against threats to our pay and benefits.

I know we are proud to be federal employees. I know we are proud of the work we do for our country. And, I know we are tired and disheartened by the continual attacks. But now is not the time to sit quietly. Now is the time to send an email, make a call, and pay a visit.

We are working for a better future and we will not reach that goal without a federal workforce that is respected, paid fairly, and provided with workplace rights that allow employees to focus on their jobs. That is why legislative action matters.

*Respectively yours,*

*Nell Arndt, NTEU Chapter 68 Legislative Coordinator*

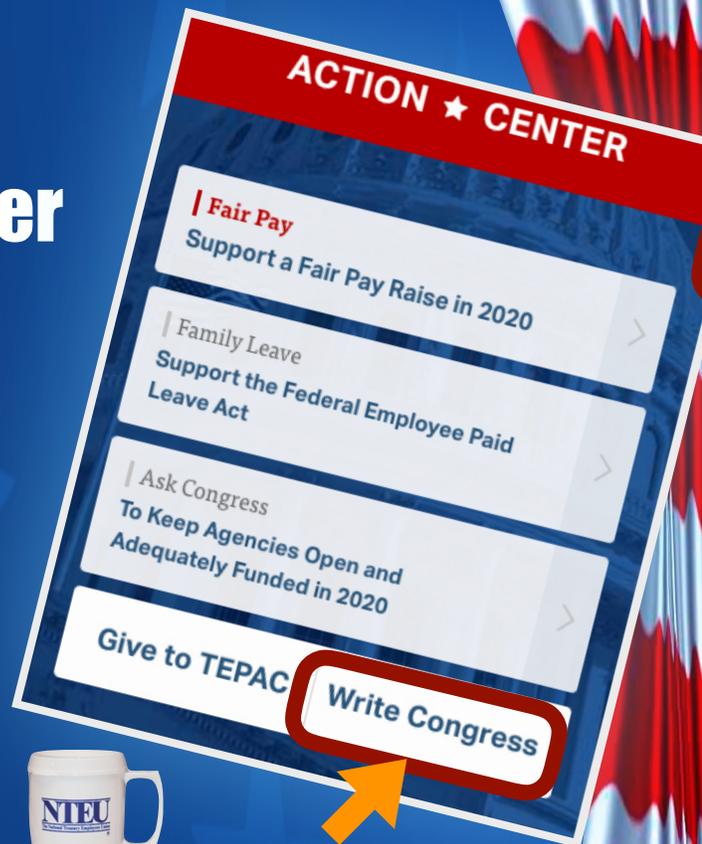


**NTEU Chapter 68  
presents**

# Summer Grassroots Contest

**July 1st thru August 31st**

**Take Action Today!**  
**Visit NTEU Action Center**  
**[action.nteu.org](http://action.nteu.org)**  
**All Employees Welcome!**





**P.O.W.E.R. - Each NTEU member contributes to positive change and progress in the workplace, and in that spirit, People Organized to Win Employee Rights - is one of the primary ways for NTEU to gather information from chapter 68 members about their legislative efforts to get them involved!**

**NTEU works to ensure that all Chapter 68 members are tuned in to real time legislative updates. We also want to ensure that members can be contacted at a moment's notice and are responding accordingly on NTEU's legislative calls to action.**

**In the Second Quarter of 2019, our chapter's grassroots legislative efforts included participation in letter writing campaign especially crucial in today's federal employee workplace environment and the top 3 issues on which members sent letters were:**

- ★ Ask your members of Congress to support a pay raise for federal workers for 2020.**
- ★ Ask your Members of Congress to support the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act.**
- ★ Asking Congress to reach a funding agreement to keep agencies open and adequately funded in 2020.**

**I will continue to send these letter updates out every quarter, so you can see the progress your chapter is making. If you have not done so already, I am asking that you personally engage and empower our membership today by taking action on the issues that affect your pay, benefits and agency funding.**

**Please note, that you may email your members of Congress while onsite through NTEU's Legislative Action Center as long as you are on your own time and use a personal email address. And, remember, you can always use your personal device to share your thoughts with Congress. See what you can do! Visit [NTEU.org](https://www.nteu.org) Action Center.**

**Every effort you make, large or small, to increase the number of letters being sent to Congress from your chapter matters and can make all the difference.**

**You have a Choice: Shrink with Fear or Soar with Courage.**

**Respectively yours,  
Nell Arndt, NTEU Chapter 68 Legislative Coordinator**



**CHAPTER 68 PRESENTS**

# P.O.W.E.R. L&L

*People Organized To Win Employee Rights.*

**It's a challenging time for federal workers...Join us for a power lunch & delve into what you need to know about Congress' agenda...Don't Face 2020 Alone. Join NTEU to Protect Your Job & Your Future. Learn how to use NTEU Action Center!**

**When: Tuesday, August 13th**

**Time: Days: 11:30 am – 1:00pm; Nights 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm**

**Where: CAFE ROOM 223**

*Every ½ hour; ASL to be determined*

**ALL EMPLOYEES WELCOME**

**In-Class Raffle – NTEU items**

## Action 68!

### Second Grassroots Contest Winners!



**JOE**



**ROCIO**



**SYREETA**

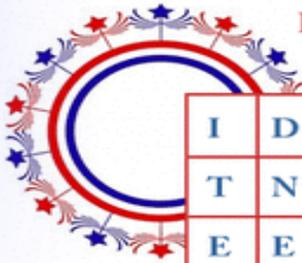




# 4th of July WORD SEARCH

INDEPENDENCE  
 FLAG  
 JULY  
 FIREWORKS  
 UNITED  
 FREEDOM  
 LIBERTY

RED  
 WHITE  
 BLUE  
 PARADE  
 CONSTITUTION  
 GEORGE  
 JEFFERSON



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# Refreshing Summer Recipes!

## Strawberry Agua Fresca

**Agua fresca**, Spanish for “fresh water” or “cool water” is made with water and fruit.

1. 4 cups fresh **strawberries**, hulled and quartered.
2. 1/2 cup + simple syrup\* (recipe in instructions)
3. 1/3 cup lime juice, freshly squeezed.
4. 8 cups cold water.
5. extra **strawberries** and limes for garnish, optional.

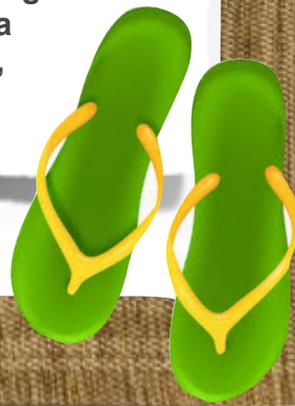


## Strawberry Peach Trifle

### Ingredients:

- 3 cups cold fat-free milk
- 2 packages (1 ounce each) instant sugar-free white chocolate pudding mix
- 1 prepared angel food cake (8 to 10 ounces), cut into 1-inch cubes
- 3 cups sliced fresh strawberries
- 2 cups fresh or frozen sliced unsweetened peaches
- 1 carton (8 ounces) frozen reduced-fat whipped topping, thawed
- Additional sliced fresh strawberries

**Directions:** In a mixing bowl, combine milk and pudding mixes. Beat on low speed for 2 minutes. Place a third of the cake cubes in a trifle bowl or 2-1/2-qt. glass serving bowl. Top with a third of the pudding, 1 cup strawberries, 1 cup peaches and a third of the whipped topping. Top with remaining cake, pudding, strawberries, peaches and whipped topping. Garnish with additional sliced strawberries.





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- Maria Zangari, Executive Vice President, (978)783-8423**
- Beth Willwerth, Secretary, (978)783-9636**
- Noelia Batista, D/S Chief Steward & Treasurer, (978)783-8424**
- Rob MacFarlane, N/S Chief Steward & Executive Coordinator, (978)783-8426**
- Nell Arndt, Membership Trustee & Legislative Coordinator, (978)783-9236**
- Barbara Thomas (Doumaney), Membership Trustee, (978)783-8426**
- Robert Harrington, National Vice President Dist. 9, (978)783-8426**

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

**Chapter 68 Website:** [www.nteuch68.org](http://www.nteuch68.org) **Facebook Page:** [www.facebook.com/NTEU-Chapter-68](http://www.facebook.com/NTEU-Chapter-68)



**NTEU website:** [www.NTEU.org](http://www.NTEU.org) **Facebook Page:** [www.facebook.com/NTEU/National](http://www.facebook.com/NTEU/National)



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### Chapter 68

Our mission is to organize federal employees to work together to ensure that every federal employee is treated with dignity

#### Quick Links

