

**THE**






**GUARDIAN**

**Legislative Edition**



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**A Day's Work**

**What is Leave Restriction?**

Leave Restriction is a status that results from suspected leave abuse. Employees are generally notified in writing and placed in this status not to exceed six (6) months. They are notified of specific leave-requesting procedures, which must be followed during this status. Any violation of such procedure will result in an AWOL charge.

Leave Restriction is for employees that abuse the leave system. Not for employees whom have a chronic illness and run out of FMLA and leave. Sick leave restriction letters will be based on an employee's absences due to alleged illnesses. Sick leave restriction letters will not be based on an employee's use of approved annual leave (not including annual in lieu of sick leave) or leave approved under the Family Medical Leave Act. Employees on sick leave restriction letters may request annual leave and Family Medical Leave under the applicable Articles of this Agreement.

The employee may be placed on leave restriction after verbal counseling. There is a process before being placed on leave restriction:

1. Verbal Counseling
2. Written Counseling
3. Leave Restriction

Leave Restriction can be extend for just

reason. Leave Restriction can led to an employee removal from services:

1. AWOL
2. Disciplinary Actions
3. Removal from Service

**Questions: Can I be placed on sick leave restriction for using too much sick leave?**

**Answer:** The use of sick leave should be used appropriately and in most cases infrequently. You can be given a leave restriction letter if you are found to be using your sick leave frequently or in unusual patterns (the day after every holiday). If you find you are using sick leave frequently, you should speak with NTEU to see your options.

**Questions: If I am on sick leave restriction, how long will it last?**

**Answer:** The restriction must be reviewed at least every six months, and a written decision to continue or lift the restriction must be issued. If there is improvement, the restriction should be lifted. You may request to have the restriction reviewed at any time.

**Question: If I call in sick, may the supervisor question me about the nature of my illness?**

**Answer:** The supervisor may NOT ask you any personal particulars about your illness. The only information you are required to provide is the fact that you are requesting sick leave and your expected date of return to work. (See Article 34, Section 3C).

**Questions: Do I need a Doctor's note if I am out sick more than three days?**

**Answer:** Yes. Per the stipulations of the leave restriction letter, even if it's a simple headache, you must provide a doctor's note. The provision under Article 34 Section 3A which states that you may be required to furnish a doctor's note if you exceed 3 consecutive workdays of calling in sick, does not apply if you are subjected to a leave restriction letter. The only exception to this is if you are on FMLA. Approved FMLA is not subject to this provision and you will not be required to provide a doctor's note.

**Leave Restriction Letters**

In such cases where a supervisor believes that an employee is using sick leave inappropriately, the supervisor should be asking the employee about their pattern. Absent a reasonable explanation, a counseling will occur. After the counseling, if the pattern continues, a leave restriction letter could be furnished. A leave restriction letter will articulate the exact process the employee must follow to request leave.

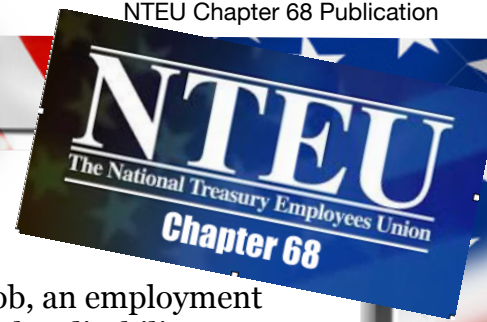
Employees who find that their patterns of use are increasing or if they believe they may need FMLA, they should immediately contact NTEU so we can discuss options. NTEU needs to be involved prior to the leave restriction letter to help. Often times employees come to NTEU after they receive the leave restriction letter and it's only then that we are able to tell them that they have an FMLA condition that, if filed properly, could have prevented the leave restriction letter. Always seek out NTEU guidance if you get spoken to by your manager about leave.

**Reference Article 34 Section 4 of the National Agreement.**





## Stewards Working For You



### ***Reasonable Accommodation in the Workplace***

A reasonable accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job, an employment practice, or the work environment that allows a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job. A qualified individual with a disability is an individual who: • satisfies the skill, experience, education, and other job-related requirements of the position can perform essential functions of the position, with or without reasonable accommodation.

Reasonable accommodations are Part III-a and Part III-B of Form 13661 is completed by a doctor. When this is submitted to management a non-licensed managerial individual cannot ignore or criticize the notes, description or comments authored by a doctor. If management doubts the accuracy of the doctor's comments they have a right to have a physician of their choice and at their sole expense to obtain a third-party evaluation. Management rarely exercises this option

The wording and comments determine and define your reasonable accommodation. An example would be if you are unable to concentrate, focus, or have difficulty in remembering or learning new material it means management must take these factors into consideration when assigning work. If this reduces your production capabilities your performance review cannot be lowered. If you need to create notes or steps that would relate to quality checks you have the right to do this during your tour of duty.

Reasonable accommodations may be permanent or temporary. If temporary you would commence your responsibilities after full resolution of your reasonable accommodation. If it is permanent no additional reports are necessary or required.

If management decides to ignore or arbitrarily deny your request informal meetings would be conducted on your behalf with front line managers, department managers and or Operation managers. Any denial or refusal would be challenged through the grievance process, EDI potential as well as EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) if you are being discriminated against.

It is well known, that carpal tunnel syndrome qualifies a person for a different keyboard to alleviate the ongoing conditions caused by carpal tunnel. Special chairs have been provided for individuals who require this item, handicap parking has been arranged on temporary or permanent basis, foot warmers, vision impaired devices have been supplied as well as many other items. Hearing and interpreter services are provided under certain circumstances.

The costs for any reasonable accommodations items is disbursed from an account not related to the IRS. There are NTEU members who may have up to three or more reasonable accommodations. These conditions range from simplistic well-known issues to complicated situations. ***NTEU has stewards who are experts in the issues pertaining to reasonable accommodations.***

*Sincerely, Mike McDonald, NTEU Chapter 68 Steward*

**I AM  
NTEU**

## A Day in the Life of a Federal Employee

***It's time to rethink advocacy. It's not a once a year, during the upcoming annual NTEU Legislative Conference on the Hill. It's not just when the members of congress are in session, and it's not only during the Spring or Summer recesses. Legislative Advocacy is a year-long activity. It's about building relationships and telling our stories to the Legislators about "A Day in the Life of a Federal Employee."***

***During the legislative interim, Legislators are back in their home districts. So, what does this mean to a federal employee? It means we have multiple opportunities to interact and visit one-on-one and educate them on "A Day in the Life of a Federal Employee."***

***You may have heard that a lot of legislation impacting federal employee's livelihoods are decided outside of the legislative session, when legislators are meeting with their constituents and listening to their ideas and concerns. This is true!***

***How can you influence legislators and help them understand that their decisions impact federal employees across the states? Meeting face-to-face and sharing your a day in the life of a federal employee story can be more impactful than you realize. Legislators share stories they hear from constituents just like you—stories about mediocre pay raises, higher pension contributions and lack of resources to do your daily job.***

***Upon meeting with legislators we know where they stand for and deliver for federal employees on issues such as pay, pension and union rights. We voice your concerns .We say "thank you" for protecting our backs. After all, Legislators love to see the positive impact of their work; supporting legislation for decent pay raises, crunching "bills" to change your pension, and keeping your union rights. We speak up, speak out and stand up for you everyday. We have a loud voice!***

***With that said, NTEU's legislative advisory committee set the legislative landscape for federal employees and recommended key priority issues that are driving our chapter's legislative efforts this year; Achieving Pay Equity, Ensuring Affordable Health & Family Benefits, Guaranteeing Workplace Fairness, Securing Agency Funding and Protecting Retirement. These are the issues that NTEU is sharply focused on this year and is on the front lines of the fight for you. Believing that we can and will make a difference, large or small, every day is a crucial stepping stone to the avenue of change in "A Day in a Federal Employee Life."***

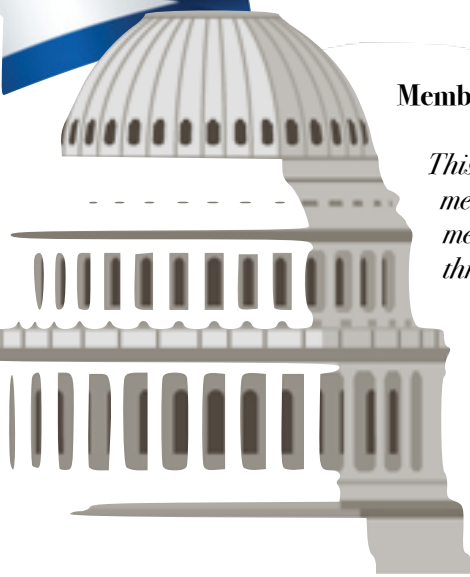
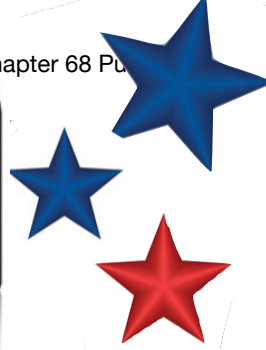
***Respectively yours,***

***Nell Arndt, Chapter 68 Legislative Coordinator***



2019  
LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

# NTEU United! 2019 Legislative Conference



## Members Energized for Legislative Conference

*This year's theme is NTEU United! With that said, NTEU leaders geared up to advocate directly with their members of Congress. Our annual Legislative Conference kicked off Wednesday when more than 400 NTEU members from around the country and a range of agencies convened in Washington, D.C., for the intensive three-day meeting. Members packed their comfortable shoes, because by the end of the event they would have logged many miles on Capitol Hill to meet with their members of congress or their staff to discuss NTEU's priority issues. They pressed for adequate pay, affordable health care, agency funding, protection of employee rights and retirement.*

*Chapter 68 leaders had scheduled visits with their respective Senators, Representatives and their staffs from the states of New Hampshire and Massachusetts. These scheduled visits were face-to-face contact to inform district officials on the issues that affect all federal workers. When Chapter Leaders shared personal stories, it took the key issues from the theoretical to the personal level.*



## 2019 Legislative Talking Points

### Achieving Pay Equity

Lagging federal pay rates have taken a toll on federal employees and their families over the last few years, with their pay raises trailing increases to private sector wages. Like all American workers and middle-class taxpayers, federal employees face ever-increasing utility, health care, food, and college bills, as well as rent and mortgage obligations. But unlike many in the private sector, federal employees have continued to see below market pay increases. Over the past 5 years, federal pay increases of 8.2 percent barely kept up with inflation, while, according to private-sector wage data from the Department of Labor's Employment Cost Index, private industry wages increased by an average 11.2 percent.

### Securing Agency Funding

One of the most critical issues facing the federal workforce is a lack of adequate and stable agency funding. Many agencies remain drastically understaffed due to funding reductions imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011, which has degraded their ability to carry out their missions on behalf of the American public. Agencies also being forced to operate under short-term funding measures. Without additional resources, federal employees are not able to perform the broad range of services the public relies on, including assisting American taxpayers, protecting consumers and investors, and securing our borders.

At the IRS, funding reductions of almost \$1 billion over the past eight years have severely strained its ability to respond to taxpayer inquiries in a timely manner and combat identity theft and other types of refund fraud. The cuts have forced the IRS to reduce the total number of full-time employees by almost 21,000, including many frontline personnel who provide the critical services taxpayers rely on to understand and meet their tax obligations. In order for the IRS to provide taxpayers with the assistance they need, collect revenue that funds the federal government and swiftly and successfully implement the biggest set of changes to the tax code in the past 30 years, it is imperative they be provided with additional funding.

*For more information, please contact Nell Arndt, NTEU Chapter 68 Legislative Coordinator  
email: [nteuchapter68legislative@gmail.com](mailto:nteuchapter68legislative@gmail.com)*





## 2019 Legislative Talking Points

### Protecting Retirement

Since 2010, Congress has twice increased employee contributions to the federal retirement program, essentially cutting take-home pay for those hired after 2012. Federal employees have contributed \$21 billion to deficit reduction solely through increased employee retirement contributions, and approximately \$200 billion overall from combined retirement and pay cuts. Recent administration and congressional proposals would dramatically dismantle the current retirement system and are expected to be recycled again this session, which could include: seeking the elimination of the FERS Supplement, moving from a high 3 to a high 5 pension calculation formula, further increasing employee contributions, reducing and eliminating the Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA), and eroding the TSP's G Fund. Also under consideration is completely eliminating the defined benefit pension part of FERS. Federal employees have earned their pensions. It is part of their employment contract with the American people. It would be unconscionable to change the system now. America is already facing a retirement crisis.

### Ensuring Affordable Health & Family Benefits

As the nation's largest employer-sponsored health insurance program, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) provides 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 coverage because of the continued rise in overall medical costs and the limited federal employee pay raises in recent years. For 2018, FEHBP enrollee premiums increased an average of 6.1 percent, with some participating health insurance plans increasing their premiums by larger 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 prescription drugs.

### Guaranteeing Workplace Fairness

Starting in the 1800s, our nation purposely sought to replace the dysfunctional so-called "spoils system" with a merit-based, non-partisan civil service, and later granted both constitutional and statutory rights to ensure these goals. It is imperative that our nation uphold career civil servants who are charged with implementing complex federal programs on behalf of the American people with dedication and skill, regardless of changes in elected leadership. Proposals to eliminate or restrict due process rights for these employees would simply return the civil service to the spoils system driven by patronage and political favoritism rather than ability and merit. Maintaining current employee due process and requirements for independent reviews of agency personnel actions ensure a fair and transparent workplace, where frontline employees will not be afraid or unable to report and blow the whistle on waste or wrongdoing.

*For more information, please contact Nell Arndt, NTEU Chapter 68 Legislative Coordinator  
email: [nteuchapter68legislative@gmail.com](mailto:nteuchapter68legislative@gmail.com)*



2019

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

**Let's Speak Up, Speak Out ....  
 "I Deserve A Pay Raise?"**



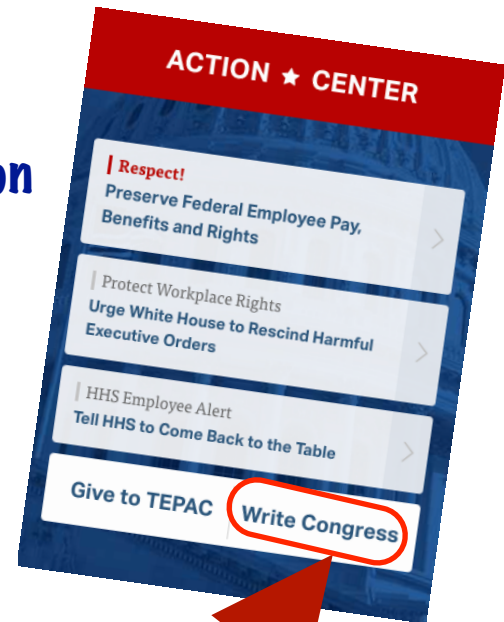
# **NTEU CHAPTER 68**

## **Legislative Grassroots Contest**

### **April 1st - June 30th**

**All Employees Welcome!**


**Please see pg. 9 "NTEU Action Center"  
 NTEU.org "Take Action" for participation**



**PRIZES**







**NTEU  
Action  
Center**

***NTEU is your voice. And remains your #1 advocate for federal employees on Capitol Hill.***

***NTEU is committed to stopping bad legislative from being enacted.***

***Let your voice be heard because our voice is more powerful if it is heard in unison.***

***What is the NTEU Action Center?***

Quickly contact Congress regarding issues that are critical to federal employees

It is an up-to-date legislative database regarding issues that directly affect the lives of federal employees.

***What is it used for?***

You can use the Action Center to quickly contact your local representative in Congress regarding issues that are important to you.

***How do I use the Action Center?***

Navigate to [www.NTEU.org](http://www.NTEU.org)  
Click on "Take Action"

***What matters to you?***

Select a topic that you agree with Topics are listed by when they were updated

***Contact Info***

- Enter your personal email address, and home address
- Don't use government email addresses

***Pre-written letters***

- There are separate letters to the House and Senate
- Modify them if you wish
- Scroll down and select your Chapter 68
- Click "Send Message" when finished

**NTEU ACTION CENTER**

**Let your voice be heard**

NTEU's system will make contacting Congress regarding critical issues quick and easy

**Take action and select a topic!**

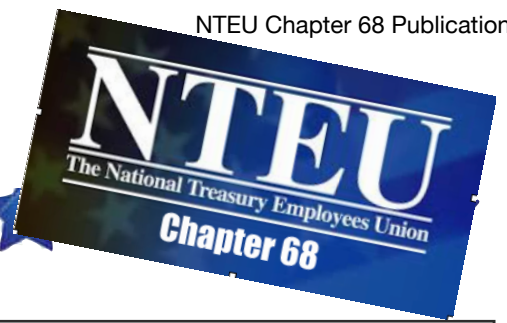
**Recent Topics Include:**

Safeguard federal employee information, fund the IRS, stop attacks on federal employee pay, benefits and retirement

***Disclaimer: Do not use your government email or computer. You must use your personal email home computer, tablet or phone. Must be on your own time.***

How Congress Works

The Path to Legislation



Annually, Congress addresses a host of important issues which directly affect NTEU members: federal health benefits, retirement and pay, travel and per diem rates, RIF procedures, contracting out, agency funding levels and many others. NTEU can most effectively influence the final form such legislation takes through the direct involvement of its members.

Chapter participation in the legislative process is key to NTEU's grassroots efforts on Capitol Hill. When devastating cuts in federal employee benefits and agency budgets are proposed, grass roots lobbying and political action on the part of NTEU Chapters is crucial to our success in protecting federal jobs and employee rights and benefits.

How Congress Works; The Path of Legislation

Proposed legislation typically travels the following route to becoming law:

A bill is drafted and introduced by a Member of Congress.

Once introduced, it is referred to one or more committees.

A subcommittee may conduct hearings in order to gather information and publicize or test support for a bill. The legislation may be amended in a subcommittee "markup session" and referred to the full committee for further action.

The full committee may also hold hearings and markup sessions on proposed legislation. If a bill is adopted, the committee favorably

reports the bill back to the House or Senate for floor action and usually issues a committee report to explain the intent of the legislation. (Committee report language can be important; NTEU has averted RIF's by having staffing levels specified in the committee report accompanying an agency appropriation bill.) A favorably reported bill is then placed on a legislative calendar to await floor action.

At this point, legislation is available to be brought to the House or Senate floor for action. In the House, the committee which reports a bill usually must request a "rule" for consideration of the bill from the Rules Committee before floor action can occur.

The Rules Committee sends a resolution to the floor that spells out the ground rules for debate of the bill. The House must approve the resolution, granting either an open, closed, or modified rule, which allows either unlimited amendments, no amendments, or a restricted number of amendments, respectively. Senate rules for bringing a bill to the floor for debate are much less restrictive.

During floor action, a bill may be debated and amended, delayed, or simply adopted or rejected.

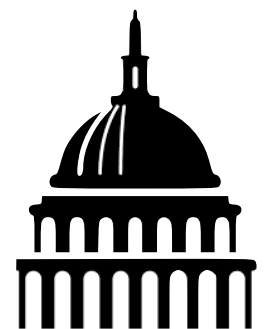
If a bill is adopted by one chamber, it is then referred to the other chamber for action.

Since the House and Senate must

pass identical versions of a bill before it can be sent to the President for signature, a conference committee comprised of members from both bodies is formed to iron out any differences in the two versions of the legislation.

The conference report, or final version of the legislation, is then sent to both chambers again for final approval.

If the conference agreement is passed by both houses of Congress, the measure is sent to the President for signature or veto.



# Why Should You Join?

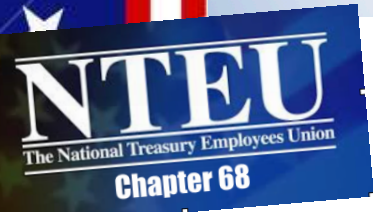
## NTEU is Fighting for You

- ▶ Successfully fought for the passage of legislation guaranteeing back pay for all federal employees after a government shutdown ends.
- ▶ Won a historic legal victory striking down key provisions of the president's executive orders stripping critical workplace rights and protections
- ▶ Fought for—and won—millions of dollars for employees denied the proper overtime pay
- ▶ Won significant reforms to the Hatch Act, opening up the political process to federal workers
- ▶ Advocated for the passage of the Telework Enhancement Law and secured agreements

### With us, you have a voice.

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

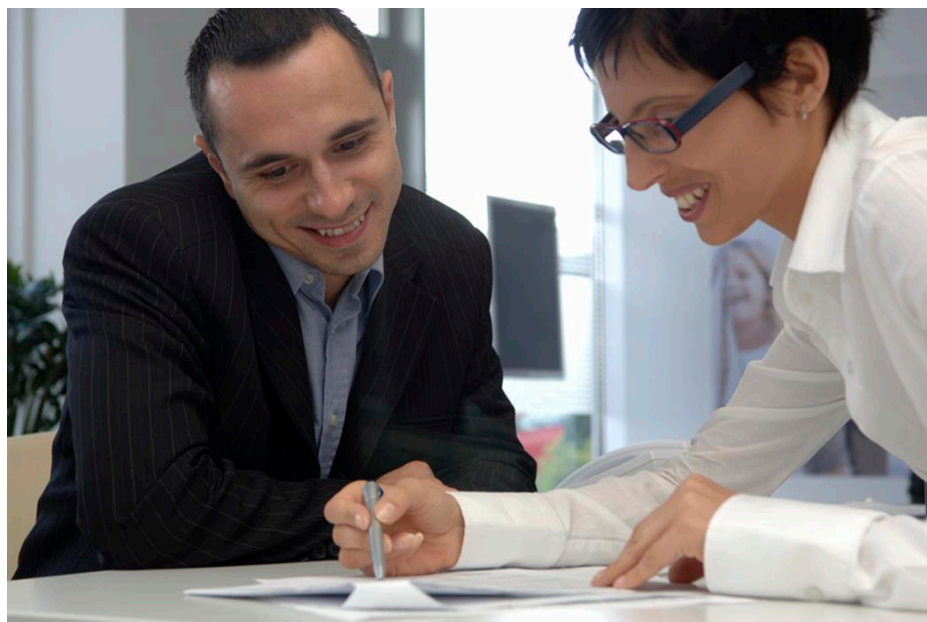
### There is Power in Numbers



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, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor Conf. Rm**

**Date:** Wednesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>

**Times:** 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM

**Andover – Café Function Room 224**

**Date:** Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup>

**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](mailto:nteu.chapter.68@irs.gov) or call 978-783-8426

## NTEU Sponsored Lunch and Learns

# Retirement Planning Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) and Medicare



### Planning to retire in next 5 years?

- **FEHB in Retirement:**
  - Eligibility
  - Government Contribution
  - Open Season and Qualifying Events
- **A, B, C, & Ds of Medicare:**
  - Medicare Eligibility
  - How and When to Enroll
  - Cost



**BlueCross  
BlueShield**

Federal Employee Program.

### CROSS POINT - Tower 3, 9<sup>th</sup> floor Conference Room

**Date:** Wednesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>

**Times:** 12:00 PM and 12:30 PM

### ANDOVER - Café Function Room 224

**Date:** Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>

**Times:** 11:30 AM, 12:00 PM and 12:30 PM

5:30 PM, 6:00 PM and 6:30 PM

*NTEU members only*

For questions, please contact NTEU office at [nteu.chapter.68@irs.gov](mailto:nteu.chapter.68@irs.gov)  
or call 978-783-8426

# Branches of Government

House



Senate



President



Judicial



Justice



Congress



Veto



Law



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

- EXECUTIVE
- LEGISLATIVE
- JUDICIAL
- SENATE
- REPRESENTATIVES
- PRESIDENT
- SUPREMECOURT
- VETO
- LAWS
- BILLS
- CONSTITUTION
- CONGRESS

## NTEU PARKING RAFFLE

Next drawing is for April and May



Enter by March 22nd @ NTEU Union Office/Stop 935 Union Office#: 978-783-8426

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

TOD: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

# Chapter 68 Officers

*Gary Karibian, President, (978)783-8425*

*Maria Zangari, Vice President, (978)783-8423*

*Alan Clark, Secretary, (978)783-9636*

*Nellie 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)783-9268*

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

*Bob Harrington, National Vice President (District 9), (978)783-8426*

*Union Office located at ANSC Stop 935, Room 1106*

*Mailing Address:*

*P.O. Box 4186 Ballardvale Station*

*Andover, MA 01810*

*Chapter 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/NTEUNational](http://www.facebook.com/NTEUNational)*

