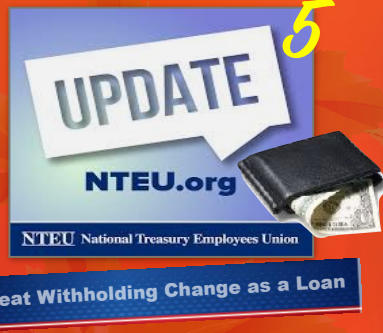


THE GUARDIAN

NTEU Chapter 68 Publication



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Chapter President's Memo

Hello NTEU Brothers and Sisters...

I think we can all officially say that 2020 needs to go... Between the coronavirus, the wild fires in the west, the multiple tropical storms/hurricanes in the south, Tom Brady leaving and the recent death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I think we can all agree that this year hasn't been our finest.

However, as Americans and as Federal Employees we must and will push forward and we will get through this. Whenever tragedy happens, we must try to find the positive. Just prior to the pandemic telework was nearly non-existent in most areas of the building. Negotiations for CSR's were on going but with limited numbers because the agency didn't have the technology to roll it out by the thousands in an expedited fashion. Then, of course the virus brought the nation to a standstill and very quickly, like other agencies and private businesses, the virtual world became our friend.

Within a couple of months after the offices were shut down, one operation after another started rolling out telework. At this point, most of our employees can telework. Of course, some areas have work that must be completed in the building, but most of our employees can telework at this point.

Some have asked whether telework will continue... while it's only speculation, at this point we do not see anyone being forced back to the building who has portable work and is successful with teleworking. There's simply no need for it. I can imagine a day where we will return to having to be in the building once a week, however, while employees are teleworking successfully, it is our hope that the agency will build off of this as opposed to tear it down.

What I can say is that early on in this pandemic we were literally "one minute at a time". This eventually changed to "one hour at a time" and I believe we are at least at "one day at a time". We are getting there... There are hopes that a vaccine will be available towards the middle of next year where we can begin to see more expansion of businesses and venues where our lives can get back to a semblance of normalcy. While I'm not sure if we will ever get back to the "old normal", we will create a new normal!

To start that process we will begin issuing our monthly newsletters again! Now that most people have access to work emails, it's time to get this going again!

Also, while we are not in the building full time, NTEU is here for you always! Do not hesitate to reach out to any of your chapter leaders or stewards for information!

Thank you all for being members! You make all of this possible!

In solidarity

Gary Karibian



Did You Know?? Can I Challenge a Performance Appraisal?

A 2016 survey by the Merit Systems Protection Board found that only 63 percent of federal employee respondents felt their appraisal was an accurate reflection of their performance. But do you have any recourse if you believe your performance appraisal is unfair or inaccurate? **The answer is yes.** Our contract spells out

procedures for performance appraisals and includes provisions to help make appraisals fair, transparent and objective. For example, your NTEU contract has provisions that requires a manager to consider an employee's workload, training and availability of resources when drafting an appraisal. Your contract also requires that your supervisor sets achievable goals and expectations — and clearly discusses those with you. Generally, employees who disagree with a performance appraisal can take admin time to prepare written comments that become part of the appraisal record. An NTEU representative can help you draft this. Your contract also establishes a grievance procedure that can be used to challenge performance appraisals. NTEU representatives have filed grievances in cases where they can clearly demonstrate that a rating was arbitrary, discriminatory, retaliatory or an abuse of discretion — or if a manager failed to follow negotiated procedures.

Don't underestimate the power of your NTEU Contract!

NTEU and IRS have been negotiating national-term contracts for nearly 50 years and each new agreement has improved upon the preceding one. These innovative contracts protect the rights of IRS employees, improve working conditions, enable employees to serve taxpayers more effectively and further the mission of the IRS. NTEU-negotiated contracts enhance the well-being of that talented, dedicated workforce. Over the years, the negotiations have resulted in worker-friendly provisions that set up alternative work schedules and telework, provided for transit subsidies and tuition reimbursement and established bilingual, time-off and performance award programs. This

National Agreement is a landmark six-year deal that protects and expands upon employee rights and benefits, and it has been nearly 50 years in the making. Some of the new benefits employees will find in this contract are:

- An annual awards program that recognizes employees even in tight budgetary times.
- Expansion of the Frequent Telework program with more occupations eligible.
- New call monitoring protections for call-site employees.
- New administrative leave policy for delayed openings or early office closures.



NTEU WORKING FOR YOU.



Can I Engage in Political Activities While Teleworking?

Social media is everywhere, and it has dramatically altered political communication. And in an election year, learn more about engaging in political activity while teleworking.

An unprecedented number of federal employees are working from home, which can blur the lines between “on duty” and personal activities. However, the Hatch Act prohibiting employees from engaging in political activity while on duty still applies to teleworkers.

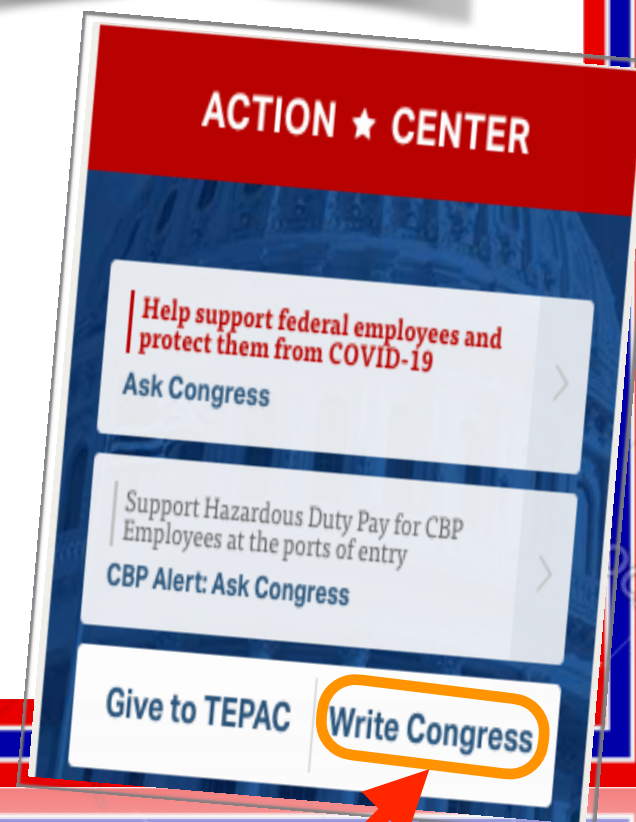
This was the message from the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) in guidance for teleworkers clarifying when they are considered “on duty” and how the Hatch Act applies during video conferences.

The definition of “on duty” at home is similar to what it would be for employees in an office. OSC considers federal employees on duty when they are “in a pay status other than paid leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, time off as an incentive award, or excused or authorized absence (including leave without pay).” Employees are also on duty if they are representing their agency in an official capacity. Unless agency policy says

NTEU Continues its Legislative Efforts NTEU follows pending legislation and tracks the voting records of your elected representatives on the matters that impact you as a federal employee. For more information on what is happening, voting records for members of Congress, and how you can become involved, please [visit the NTEU website https://www.nteu.org/legislative-action](https://www.nteu.org/legislative-action). ***Must be done on your own time. DO NOT USE government computer. Use personal computer, phone or tablet.***

otherwise, employees are not considered on duty during their lunch break.

Employees participating in virtual work-related conferences (such as Zoom, Skype or Teams) are considered on duty and subject to Hatch Act restrictions. This means employees should avoid wearing campaign T-shirts or hats while participating in a work-related video conference call and make sure partisan materials, like campaign signs or candidate pictures, are not visible during the call. Employees should also be careful not to use candidate images, campaign slogans or political party symbols for profile pictures associated with official accounts. *For more information, log in NTEU.org (Member’s Only).*



Treat Withholding Change as a Loan

Update on Payroll Tax Deferral



We are finally learning more information about the president's payroll tax deferral program and how it will affect federal employees.

First, the temporary deferral has already begun, and the change will be reflected in Pay Period 18. We join in your frustration with the imprecise and incomplete information provided by the administration because it appears this change has already been implemented without

full disclosure of the implications to federal workers. Based on what various federal payroll providers have told us, the deferral began in Pay Period 18, which started Aug. 30 and runs through Sept. 12. If you earn less than \$104,000 a year, this means the 6.2 percent payroll tax (which goes toward Social Security) will no longer be withheld from your paycheck for the remainder of 2020. Your paychecks will be larger.

Second, eligibility for the tax deferral will be determined each pay period. Employees with gross wages of less than \$4,000 per pay period are eligible. If a change increases gross wages above \$4,000, such as overtime, that paycheck will not be subject to the deferral.

Third, federal employees will not be able to opt-out of this deferral. Despite the requests from NTEU and many members of Congress, the administration is mandating this for all eligible federal workers.

Fourth, the deferred taxes must be paid back in 2021. The administration has not provided exact details, but it is likely the government will collect the deferred taxes by withholding them from paychecks between January 1, 2021, and April 30, 2021. The collection of the deferred taxes will be in addition to all normal tax withholdings, which will make your paycheck smaller during those four months.

Fifth, employees must be prepared to pay the deferred taxes next year. No president can unilaterally forgive this debt for federal workers; that power belongs solely to Congress. Congress *could* pass a law saying that employees do not have to pay the deferred taxes, but there is little support on Capitol Hill for putting an additional financial strain on the Social Security program.

Sixth, federal workers who retire or leave federal service during the deferral are still liable for repaying the tax after they depart. We are still waiting for information about how agencies may collect from employees who plan to leave federal service, which could include withholding the debt from final salary payments. There are still some important details that are missing. Some agencies have sent alerts to their employees about this deferral; some have not. And some of the alerts are downright misleading by failing to mention that the deferred taxes must be paid later.

NTEU put several questions in writing to Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought, but has not heard back yet. Members of the House and Senate have also peppered the administration with requests for more information on the implications for the federal workforce, especially as so many private sector employers are choosing not to force this deferral on their employees.

IRS employees can create a financial allotment at the Employee Personal Page allowing you to set aside this extra money. Watch for additional information on this from the IRS or call Ogden Payroll Center (866-743-5748, option 1 then option 2) for assistance.

What should you do? If you are eligible for the deferral, we are advising employees to be financially prepared for the additional tax debt you will face and be ready for smaller-than-expected paychecks in the first four months of 2021. We will keep you posted with information as we receive it.

For more information visit [NTEU.org](https://www.nteu.org) (member's only). If you are not a member, please consider joining by emailing NTEU Chapter 68: nteu.chapter.68@irs.gov

NTEU WORKING FOR YOU.

*Whether It's Ghosts, Goblins, Ghouls-or
Your Workplace...Don't Be Frightened...*

You're Protected by NTEU.

IT'S NICE TO WAKE UP AND FIND NTEU
HAS BEEN THERE ALL ALONG. LOOKING
OUT FOR OUR INTERESTS.

JOIN AND BE PART OF NTEU.

THE ANTIDOTE FOR A NIGHTMARE.



JOIN NTEU TODAY! For more information, or to JOIN NTEU, contact Chapter Union Office.

**YOUR VOTE
MATTERS!**

This year's election goes beyond who will be president. Your vote is your voice on issues affecting your pay, retirement and workplace safety. Also, you make a difference in your community during this crucial election.

Have you registered to vote? Here are a just a few reasons why federal workers should get registered and vote: **First**, Elections have consequences. You have the power to decide on the quality of your workplace and life. Voting is your chance to stand up for the issues you care about like pay raises, secure retirement, paid parental leave and agency funding to do your job every day. This is your life: Why not take the time to help decide what's best for you. **Second**, if you do not vote, you are giving up your voice. Elections are decided by the people who GO OUT and VOTE. **Third**, Voting is an opportunity for change. Do you want to make a positive impact? Voting gives you that chance! Support the candidates and ballot measures that can help your community, state, and even the nation for the greater good. Make your voice heard in these elections.

Election 2020 Resources and Guides

NTEU's state-by-state voter guide offers an overview of everything you need to know to vote in your area.

Your guide to NTEU's 2020 election program '**United We Vote**'.
Visit NTEU.org.

**HATCH
ACT
WARNING!**

NTEU
The National Treasury Employees Union

NTEU Chapter 68
P O BOX 4186 Ballardsvale
Station Andover, MA 01810

USA First

Dear Chapter 68 Member,

*As a fellow NTEU member,
we're counting on you to vote in
this election. Join us in standing
up for our jobs, pay and
workplace rights by voting on or
before Nov 3rd!*

Chapter 68 Officers

**UNITED
WE VOTE**



Fun Fall Activities for Families - Autumn Bucket List



TELL GHOST STORIES

Hit the lights, burn some candles, and gather in the living room to swap spooky stories. If you're having trouble thinking of your own, try reading from one of these Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark books.



CARVE PUMPKINS

Challenge your older kids with these silly pumpkin carving ideas and inspire your little ones to get involved with one of these painted pumpkin crafts.



TOAST PUMPKIN SEEDS

From savory Parmesan herb spiced seeds to sweet and sugary cinnamon seeds — there's a delicious seed snack for every craving



GO APPLE PICKING

Looking for a beautiful orchard or the best apples in your region? Check out the best apple-picking spots around the your area.



ROAM THROUGH A PUMPKIN PATCH

Stop by a local farm to pick your own pumpkins and stock up on gourds and squash for crafts and cooking while you're there.





SPECIAL SAVINGS FOR EMPLOYEES OF

NTEU - CHAPTER 68

Special New Member Offers	BJ's PERKS REWARDS® MEMBERSHIP — Just \$50* Save \$60 on a 12-Month BJ's Membership with BJ's Easy Renewal® Earn 2% cash back on most BJ's purchases**	or	BJ's INNER CIRCLE® MEMBERSHIP — Just \$25* Save \$30 on a 12-Month BJ's Membership with BJ's Easy Renewal
Renewing Member Offers	BJ's PERKS REWARDS® MEMBERSHIP — Just \$80* Save \$30 on a 13-Month BJ's Membership with BJ's Easy Renewal. Earn 2% cash back on most BJ's purchases**	or	BJ's INNER CIRCLE® MEMBERSHIP — Just \$40* Save \$15 on a 13-Month BJ's Membership with BJ's Easy Renewal

To qualify for this offer, please:

- Complete this application in full and return it to your Organization Rep at the address below. Please include a check or credit card payment for the full amount.
- New Members: Your Membership Activation letter will arrive in 3 – 4 weeks. Bring it, along with photo ID, to the Member Services Desk at a Club near you to receive your Membership Card.

Organization Rep: **Send to: Barbara Thomas** Contact Number: _____

Offer Expires: **November 30, 2020** Address: **Barbara.Thomas@irs.gov**

All BJ's Memberships are subject to BJ's current Membership Terms, ask in-Club or go to BJs.com/terms.

Choose Membership Level: BJ's Inner Circle® Membership \$25 NEW or \$40 RENEW BJ's Perks Rewards® Membership \$50 NEW or RENEW

Current Membership # (if applicable) _____ **THIS OFFER NOT ACCEPTED IN CLUB**

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____ Sex F M

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP Code _____

Phone # _____ Market Code (BJ's use only) **cfontana**

Email _____

Learn more about My BJ's Perks® Mastercard®, credit card by visiting Bjs.com/mybjperms

If you choose to receive the second Household Membership Card, please complete the following: (Note: Household Cardholder must reside at the same address as the Primary Cardholder.)

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

Primary Signature — I understand that I am responsible for any checks and actions of the second Cardholder.

Please choose your method of payment. (Sales tax may be added. Make checks payable to BJ's Wholesale Club, Inc.)

- Check My BJ's Perks® Mastercard® Mastercard® American Express®
 Discover® Network Visa®

Date of Membership Purchase
____ / ____ / **2020**
Month Day Year

Credit Card Account # _____ Expiration Date _____ Total Charge _____

BJ's Use Only

BJ's Sales Representative's Signature: **Cheryl Fontana** Digitally signed by Cheryl Fontana
DN: cn=Cheryl Fontana, o=BJ's, email=cfontana@bjs.com, c=US
Date: 2019.02.05 11:23:45 -0500 Club # **092**

All applications are sent to our Home Office; processing takes approximately 3 – 4 weeks.

Membership Expiration and Renewals: Your Membership expiration date is the last day of the month and year shown on your register receipts and on your "My Account" page on BJs.com. Paid Memberships renewed within two months after expiration will be extended 12 months from the expiration date.

*BJ's Inner Circle Membership fee is regularly \$55; BJ's Perks Rewards Membership fee is regularly \$110. Offer is valid in-Club only, may not be combined with other offers, not redeemable for cash and nontransferable. Plus sales tax where applicable. Offer is contingent upon your enrolling in BJ's Easy Renewal, and you authorize BJ's to charge the debit/credit card first used at BJ's after accepting this offer, an annual recurring charge in the amount of the then-current Membership fee for all active Memberships on your account, plus tax where applicable, on the first day of the month your Membership expires. **Expires: 5/4/19.**

**BJ's Perks Rewards Members earn 2% cash back on most BJ's purchases. Cash back is in the form of electronic Awards issued in \$20 increments that are used at checkout at BJ's and expire 6 months from the date issued. Cash back can be requested in the form of a check prior to Awards expiring by contacting Member Care at 800-BJS-CLUB. My BJ's Perks Program is provided by BJ's Wholesale Club, Inc. and its terms may change from time to time. Some exclusions may apply. Visit Bjs.com/perksterms for Program Terms.

†My BJ's Perks® Mastercard credit card is subject to credit approval.

My BJ's Perks® Mastercard is issued by Comenity Capital Bank, pursuant to a license by Mastercard International Incorporated. Mastercard is a registered trademark of Mastercard International Incorporated.

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NTEU CHAPTER 68



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DO YOU NEED A MASK?

Stop by the Union office
 open daily between
 10am-2:30pm. Night Shift email
Gary.H.Karibian@irs.gov



NTEU TRIVIA LET'S PLAY!

Employees represented by NTEU
 have a powerful set of rights and
 protections collected into one
 document.

What is that document?

