

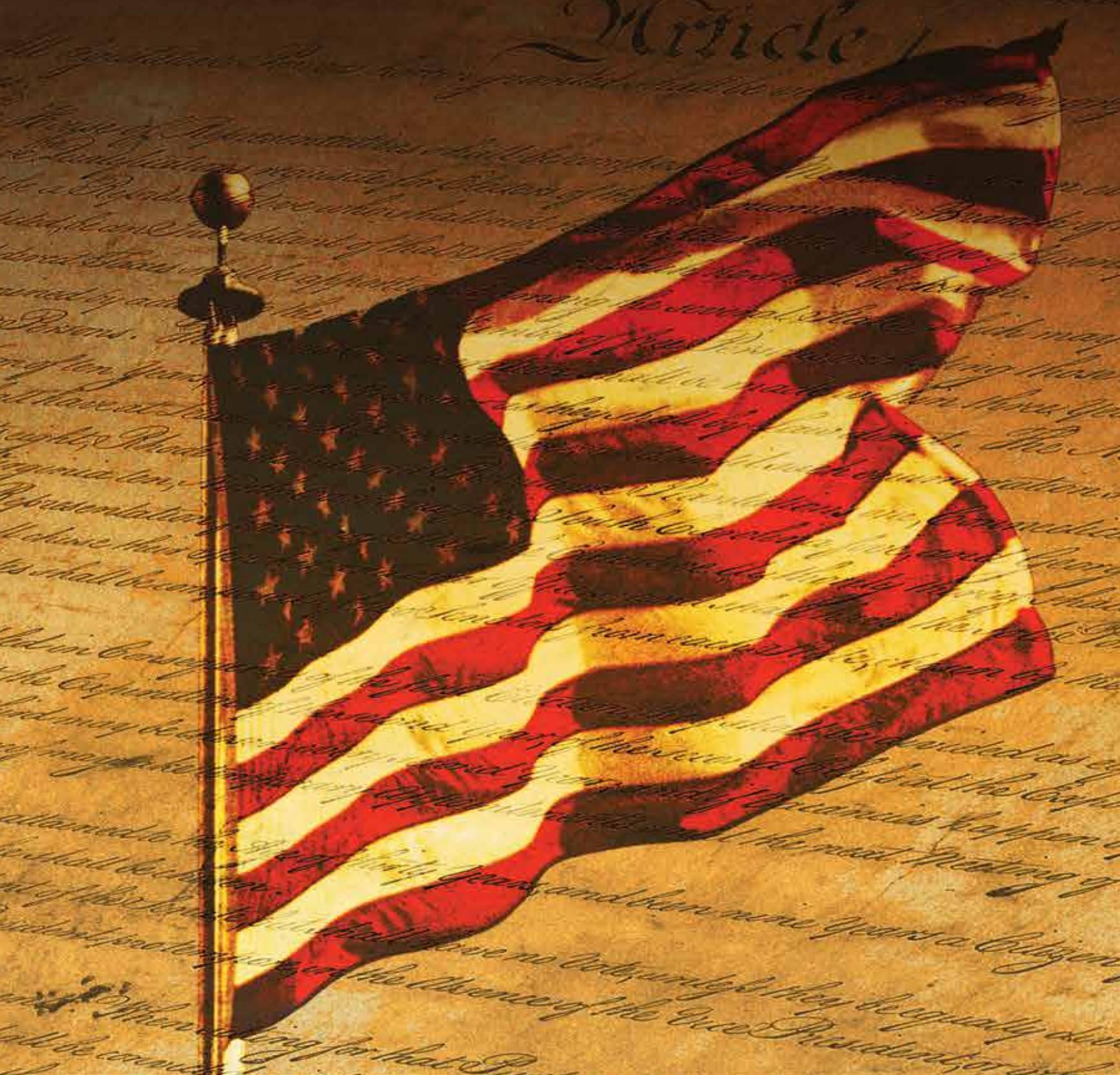
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February 2018

NTEU Bulletin

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News, issues and advocacy for federal employees



2018

LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

THE 115TH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

THE President's VIEW



Tony

Anthony M. Reardon
National President



Anthony M. Reardon
National President

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To organize federal employees to work together to ensure that every federal employee is treated with dignity and respect.

—NTEU Mission

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An Unfortunate Turn at the State of the Union

On Jan. 30, I was honored to be an invited guest of Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., to watch President Trump's State of the Union address on Capitol Hill. It was an exciting opportunity to represent NTEU members and witness first-hand a historical event that I had only previously watched on television.

While I sat in the crowded House gallery with members of Congress gathered below, the president's remarks took an unfortunate turn. He used this widely-viewed speech to paint an unflattering and inaccurate portrait of federal employees. In calling for a reduction of your due process rights to make it easier to fire workers, he left an impression that federal employees are not dedicated to public service and not committed to the missions of their agencies.

We all know that is not the case, and I will fight back against any changes that allow politics to creep into our world-class institution. Reducing your rights and protections opens the door to unjust dismissals with limited options to fight spurious charges and retaliation.

Our elected officials should stop playing politics when it comes to the welfare of federal employees. It is my hope that by the time you are reading this we have not endured yet another government shutdown.

A series of continuing resolutions (CRs), punctuated by a government shutdown, demonstrates that Washington thinks it is okay for them to treat federal workers like pawns in a chess game.

That view reflects a serious misunderstanding of what you do. You are the backbone of this nation. When the government shuts down, the many things you contribute to this country fall apart—tax assistance is limited, our beautiful national parks are neglected, the approval process for lifesaving drugs is slowed and much more.

It has never and will never be okay with NTEU that our elected officials use civil servants to fight political wars. You are not a sound bite. You are middle-class Americans who choose to serve this country and you deserve the respect for your decision and support to actually do your job.

The president's comments at the State of the Union, ongoing proposals that threaten your pay, benefits and the missions of your agencies, and the government shutdown demonstrate that we must continue standing tall and making our voices heard. I ask every NTEU member to join our grassroots efforts and to take action. I encourage you to get your coworkers involved. For you, these fights are personal and impact your financial well-being now and into retirement.

This issue of the *Bulletin* outlines NTEU's priority legislative agenda for 2018. Our work on Capitol Hill will focus on four issues: workplace fairness, agency missions, fair pay and federal employee benefits,



Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., and National President Tony Reardon in the congressman's office before the State of the Union address.

including retirement, healthcare, paid parental leave and telework. In addition, our work will continue on passage of a full-year spending bill. You deserve to operate under a funding measure that provides adequate resources for the entire fiscal year and ends the stress and uncertainty of short-term CRs.

In 2018, we will draw from our 80-year history of success on behalf of federal employees and build on what we have achieved. We will grow our grassroots efforts so that every member of Congress understands that he or she has federal employee constituents who want the support of legislators.

I wish I could tell you that our only fight in 2018 will be advancing our legislative agenda, but after receiving updates on our members in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, it is apparent that more must be done to help them. They are still dealing with the aftermath of devastating natural disasters. Nearly five months after hurricanes ripped through the islands, our members have deplorable working conditions and many still do not have power or water in their homes. This is unacceptable.

After seeing the devastation firsthand in December and receiving constant updates, I know there is still much work to be done. I have personally reached out to top leadership at Customs and Border Protection and the Internal Revenue Service to report on what I saw and outline what needs to happen next.

Early this year, I planned a return visit to Puerto Rico and will head to the Virgin Islands to touch base with our members, see their working conditions, and learn about the continuing challenges these American citizens are still facing.

Thank you for coming together under the NTEU banner and standing up for federal employees. I look forward to fighting the good fights with you, marking our successes and celebrating our 80 years of this great union. 🇺🇸

NTEU Fights for Full Budget After January Shutdown

The first, and hopefully last, government shutdown of 2018 lasted only three days, but it was enough to disrupt government services, annoy taxpayers and cause chaos for federal employees and their families.

Government appropriations lapsed at midnight on Friday, Jan. 19, and the shutdown lasted through the weekend and into Monday, Jan. 22. A new continuing resolution was signed into law by the president Monday evening—paving the way for the government to reopen the following morning.

In addition to keeping our members apprised of the daily developments during negotiations to resolve the standoff on Capitol Hill, NTEU played an important role in explaining to the public the damage a shutdown can do. President Reardon conducted multiple media interviews and talked with lawmakers, and chapter leaders told reporters their personal stories about how the shutdown interrupted their agency work and made them anxious about their next paycheck.

Duncan Giles, president of Chapter 49 (IRS Indiana), told Reuters that shutdowns force federal employees to adjust their spending habits.

“If you were planning on doing a dinner out or going to an event or something like that, those types of things are going to have to be postponed until you know that you’re going to be having those regular paychecks again,” Giles said.

Errick King, president of Chapter 202 (BFS HQ), told the Washington Post that the instability was leading career employees to retire early or choose a job in the private sector.

“People are fed up,” said King. “I think it hurts the government overall because you are losing that knowledge and skill. We are reliant on that to provide quality service.”

Reardon emphasized NTEU’s position that Congress resolve the dispute with a long-term funding agreement that provides agencies with adequate and stable funding for the remainder of the fiscal year, relief from sequestration, and that federal employees be compensated fully and quickly after the shutdown.

Reardon spoke with several members of the Maryland congressional delegation on the first day of the shutdown, and they committed to protecting the pay of federal workers in every state.

The pay issue was resolved when Congress—at the last minute—added a provision, supported by NTEU that federal employees would be paid in full.

The intense media coverage of federal employees during the shutdown was an opportunity to showcase the dedication and commitment of civil servants and the work that they perform. For example, those who had to work during the shutdown did so without any guarantee of when they would be paid. Those who were furloughed worried about the loss to their own paychecks in addition to taxpayer services.

“I hope the ultimate lesson here is that Congress and the administration agree to provide our federal agencies with the resources they need to carry out their missions, and restore a functional government for the American public,” Reardon said. 

“I hope the ultimate lesson here is that Congress and the administration agree to provide our federal agencies with the resources they need...”

—NATIONAL PRESIDENT TONY REARDON

We told your story and kept you informed

15,347

VISITS TO NTEU’S DEDICATED SHUTDOWN PAGE

NEWS STORIES WITH THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE AND NTEU PERSPECTIVE

26+

13

BLOG POSTS

MEMBER MESSAGES

8

6

NEWS RELEASES AND STATEMENTS

PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH 14 FACEBOOK UPDATES

53,600

New Numbers Show Private Tax Collection Failed Again

According to the National Taxpayer Advocate’s Annual Report to Congress, the IRS’ private debt collection program for the most recent two fiscal years totaled more than \$35.3 million, which includes \$16.5 million in recurring costs. In FY17 alone, the costs were more than \$20 million, and it only brought in \$7 million—less than 1.0 percent of the dollars assigned for collection.

“How many times must this program fail before the final nail is put in its coffin?” said National President Tony Reardon. “Congress has again forced this policy on the IRS, and the results are the same: it’s a money-loser that disregards taxpayer rights and disproportionately targets financially vulnerable households.”

The report was released in January, but its findings weren’t new or surprising. NTEU has long opposed the use of private collection agencies (PCAs) to chase delinquent taxpayers because the program has been proven inefficient, unfair to lower-income taxpayers and rife with abuse.

“The IRS’ implementation of this program unnecessarily harms taxpayers and constitutes an end-run around the significant taxpayer rights protections that Congress has enacted in the collection arena,” said Nina Olson, head of the Taxpayer Advocate Service, a nonpartisan and independent office within the IRS.

Despite concerns raised by the Taxpayer Advocate Service, privacy advocates, consumer groups and NTEU, the IRS re-started the outsourcing program again last April after a history of pointed failures.

“It’s a money-loser that disregards taxpayer rights and disproportionately targets financially vulnerable households.”

—NATIONAL PRESIDENT TONY REARDON

A pilot program to use PCAs in 1996 was cancelled after 12 months and a net loss of \$17 million. The IRS tried again in 2006—and after recording a net loss of almost \$4.5 million cancelled it, again. The program was revived after Congress passed a provision in 2015 requiring the IRS to hire private debt collectors to close in on the tax gap.

Taxpayers who cannot both pay their taxes and ensure basic living expenses can work with an IRS employee to apply for a hardship, or “not collectible” status. Nonetheless, 44 percent of taxpayers who made payments when contacted by PCAs had incomes at or below the federal poverty level, including those who receive Social Security disability benefits. The IRS’ own data shows that many of these taxpayers entered into installment agreements that they couldn’t afford.

“While PCAs can only demand payment, IRS employees are positioned to assist taxpayers in paying their debts through a variety of tools and options,” said Reardon.

The report also underscored the dire need to adequately fund the IRS.

“I see daily the consequences of reduced funding of the IRS and the choices made by the agency in the face of these funding constraints,” said Olson. “These impacts are real and affect everything the IRS does. Funding cuts have rendered the IRS unable to provide acceptable levels of taxpayer service, unable to upgrade its technology to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, and unable to maintain compliance programs that both promote compliance and protect taxpayer rights.” 

Early in January, 11 NTEU members traveled to Washington, D.C., for a day-long session to review the upcoming legislative landscape and recommend to National President Tony Reardon the union's legislative priority issues for the year. After a day spent looking at what happened in the previous year and anticipating the challenges and opportunities that 2018 would bring, the group formed a consensus on the issues listed below.

Legislative Advisory Committee



(left to right)

Lesslie Clark
Chapter 98 (IRS Memphis Service Center)

Youssef Fawaz
Chapter 173 (CBP Detroit)

Marcella Gutierrez
Chapter 97 (IRS Fresno Service Center)

Guillermo Barragan
Chapter 105 (CBP San Diego)

Arthur Fisher
Chapter 154 (CBP Niagara Frontier)

Tony Reardon
NTEU National President

Duane Pulford
Chapter 29 (IRS Minnesota)

Ken Drew
Chapter 229 (HHS Headquarters)

Thomas Parise
Chapter 22 (IRS Philadelphia)

Sheena Eastman
Chapter 224 (OHO)

Angel Coleman
Chapter 78 (IRS Detroit Computing Center)

Eric Wiechert
Chapter 242 (FDIC-Chicago)

2018 Legislative Priority Issues

Workplace Fairness

- ▶ Ensuring members have access to representation
- ▶ Protecting due process and collective bargaining rights
- ▶ Backing legislation to reinstate the Federal Labor-Management Partnership Council

Agency Missions

- ▶ Demanding long-term funding for FY18 & FY19
- ▶ Promoting your specific agency funding and staffing needs
- ▶ Seeking relief from sequestration

Improving Pay

- ▶ Pushing back against possible pay freeze
- ▶ Fighting for higher pay adjustments
- ▶ Passing the Federal Adjustment of Income Rates

Preserving Benefits

- ▶ Opposing changes to retirement plans
- ▶ Increasing telework options
- ▶ Maintain FEHBP; address prescription drug costs
- ▶ Government-wide paid parental leave

GUIDE

A Look Back: 2017 Legislative Review

What's in store for us in 2018 on Capitol Hill? A quick rewind to 2017 provides some big clues. Last year there were a rash of proposals targeting federal pay, benefits, workplace fairness and collective bargaining rights, all which NTEU and our allies were able to prevent from becoming law. But these harmful proposals are not dead, and it is worth reviewing what federal employees were up against—the good and the bad—to prepare for 2018.

Attempts to make federal employees pay for increases in other types of federal spending by taking a blow to their take-home pay and retirement benefits



Proposals by the White House and Congress to cut IRS funding



Threats to dismantle the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau



Four continuing resolutions to keep the lights on



Threats from the White House to slash non-defense agencies by \$54 billion

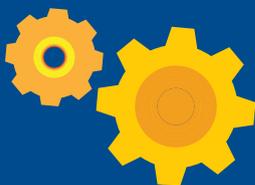


NTEU fought against proposals from Washington to cut agency funding:

- *Environmental Protection Agency by 31%*
- *Department of Health and Human Services by 18%*
- *Department of Energy by 6%*

NTEU heard loud and clear from members just how damaging these ideas would be to them and their families, and we successfully fought them off knowing full well that some in Congress would try again this year. 🇺🇸

The **ABCs** of Making Your Voice Heard!



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action.nteu.org

Union Backs 'FAIR' Pay Legislation

It is not too early to start working on a federal pay raise for 2019.

To that end, NTEU is supporting new legislation to provide federal employees a 3 percent pay hike next year.

Supporters in the House and Senate introduced the Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR) Act in early January, and National President Tony Reardon was featured in their press announcements.

"Economic forecasters estimate that wages in the private sector will rise an average of 3 percent in 2018, so it is perfectly reasonable for federal employees to expect the same modest increase in their paychecks," Reardon said.

The lead sponsors are Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, and Rep. Gerald Connolly, D-Va.

"We applaud Senator Schatz and Representative Connolly for introducing legislation that treats federal employees with respect and recognizes their contributions to national security, economic growth and public health," Reardon said.

The administration is reportedly considering a pay freeze for federal workers in 2019; this legislation is important to counter that effort.

"Federal employees living and working in all 50 states are just like everyone else in the middle

class, trying to pay their bills and save for retirement," Reardon said. "A 3 percent bump in pay is a modest but meaningful way to help them do that."

Schatz and Connolly have many constituents who work for the federal government, and both have a long record of backing pay raises for federal employees.

"They've endured three years of pay freezes, a government shutdown, sequestration cuts, furloughs, and a mindless across-the-board hiring freeze," Rep. Connolly said. "Yet, despite this increasingly challenging environment, our federal employees continue to serve with dedication and distinction every day. They deserve better. The FAIR Act is a step towards recognizing their contributions and providing fair and just compensation."

Sen. Schatz said the FAIR Act will "right the wrongs" caused by several years of zero or tiny pay increases.

The legislation has already attracted several cosponsors in the Senate and House.

In the Senate, the bill is S. 2295; the House version is H.R. 4775. Ask your members of Congress to support this legislation. Visit NTEU's Legislative Action Center at www.nteu.org. 🇺🇸

A Typical Day for CBP Employees at the Ports of Entry

PROCESSED

1,069,266

PASSENGERS AND PEDESTRIANS

326,723 INCOMING INTERNATIONAL AIR PASSENGERS AND CREW

53,786 PASSENGERS AND CREW ON ARRIVING SHIP/BOAT

688,757 INCOMING LAND TRAVELERS

282,350

INCOMING PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

74,417

TRUCK, RAIL AND SEA CONTAINERS

\$6.3 billion

WORTH OF IMPORTED PRODUCTS

CONDUCTED

1,140

APPREHENSIONS BETWEEN U.S. PORTS OF ENTRY

22

ARRESTS OF WANTED CRIMINALS AT U.S. PORTS OF ENTRY

752

REFUSALS OF INADMISSIBLE PERSONS AT U.S. PORTS OF ENTRY

DISCOVERED

404

PESTS AT U.S. PORTS OF ENTRY AND

4,638

MATERIALS FOR QUARANTINE: PLANT, MEAT, ANIMAL BYPRODUCT AND SOIL

SEIZED

7,910

POUNDS OF DRUGS

\$289,609

IN UNDECLARED OR ILLICIT CURRENCY

\$3.8 million

WORTH OF PRODUCTS WITH INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

IDENTIFIED

877

INDIVIDUALS WITH SUSPECTED NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS

INTERCEPTED

20

FRAUDULENT DOCUMENTS

FY 2016 numbers. Source: CBP

Congress Hears Toll of CBP Understaffing

Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle applauded NTEU's call for more and faster hiring at Customs and Border Protection after hearing testimony from National President Tony Reardon.

Reardon appeared before the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security the second week of January, where he described in vivid detail the hardships caused by the CBP staffing shortages at the ports.

"Involuntary overtime and involuntary work assignments far from home disrupt CBP Officers' family life and destroy morale," Reardon told the panel.

He described the case of one CBP Officer who worked 73 overtime hours in one pay period,

and chair of the subcommittee. "Unfortunately, they are in short supply these days, which has created a national security and economic vulnerability that this Congress must address."

Rep. Filemon Vela, D-Texas, is the ranking member of the committee and said the staffing crisis poses an "unacceptable self-inflicted risk."

"This situation is bad for the Officers and it is bad for border security as well as legitimate commerce and travel," he said.



National President Tony Reardon testified before Congress on January 9, describing the grueling long hours CBP staff have worked to make up for staffing shortages—causing compromises to border security. Reardon displayed photos of the port at San Ysidro, Calif., where 60,000 vehicles and 25,000 pedestrians apply for entry every day.

and how working back-to-back double shifts is all too common at some ports.

The Border and Port Security Act, sponsored by Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., would authorize the hiring of 500 new CBP Officers and support staff every year until the agency is fully staffed. There is an existing vacancy rate of about 1,200 CBP Officers, which have been funded by Congress but not filled. The agency's own 2018 workload staffing model calls for 2,500 more Officers and 731 more Agriculture Specialists to be added, as well.

During the hearing, Reardon displayed photos of the port at San Ysidro, Calif., where 60,000 vehicles and 25,000 pedestrians apply for entry every day. As the port prepares to expand that capacity, there are 200 CBP Officer vacancies and Congress has yet to appropriate the money to start filling vacancies and meeting the agency's staffing model.

"Imagine working up to 16 hours a day here for days on and with no relief in sight," Reardon said.

The hearing focused on staffing issues for CBP at the ports and also for Border Patrol agents.

"U.S. Border Patrol Agents and CBP Officers are, at the end of the day, the most important border security and trade facilitation resource we have," said Rep. Martha McSally, R-Ariz.,

Reardon said Congress and CBP can improve recruitment and retention of new Officers by making better use of existing pay incentives and improving pay and benefits enough to make it a more attractive career for law enforcement professionals. Reports that the administration is considering freezing federal pay in 2019 are a "non-starter," Reardon added.

In response, Rep. Will Hurd, R-Texas, said he heard Reardon "loud and clear."

There was also testimony about how the staffing shortages at more rural ports are affecting port operations around the country. For example, in January a new round of 175 CBP Officers were dispatched to Nogales, Ariz., from their normal duty stations because of a staffing shortage of 300 CBP Officers. This prompted Orlando International Airport officials to complain to their Florida members of Congress that losing 10 CBP Officers would disrupt the airport's operations.

Rep. Val Demings, D-Fla., thanked Reardon for focusing his testimony on the toll the shortage is taking on CBP employees and their families.

"It is not right for our country to do this to human beings," said Demings, a former police chief who was once stationed at the Orlando airport. 

Grievance Alleges Violation on Foreign Travel Assignments

NTEU filed a national grievance against the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for violating the process for assigning foreign travel, impacting nearly 900 eligible employees.

The union charges that the agency has continuously failed to make assignments fairly and equitably among qualified employees. NTEU found evidence that the agency had, on a number of occasions, pre-selected or mandated employees for foreign assignments before allowing volunteers to apply. NTEU also found evidence that the agency had improperly selected less senior employees over more senior employees for assignments and had improperly mandated assignments to employees, even as others volunteered.

Additionally, the agency violated the agreement with NTEU by requiring a valid passport for certain assignments—contrary to the requirements of the contract and the agency’s own policy that a valid passport is not required to make assignments.

“FDA employees are looking for a fair and transparent system for selecting foreign travelers, which they can understand and support. NTEU has already bargained such procedures, but they have not been properly implemented,” said Chapter 290 (FDA New York/New Jersey) President

Russell Glapion.

The FDA also violated the contract terms regarding its Program Alignment and Office of Regulatory Affairs’ Laboratory Optimization by failing to maintain a current and accurate qualified travelers list with complete information—such as entry on duty—to ensure that the employee assigned to a trip meets the appropriate technical and contractual requirements. As a result, the agency is making assignments unfairly, inequitably and in violation of the negotiated process agreed upon in the contract.

Requests have been made to the agency to eliminate these violations in the future and remedy past contractual violations against employees. NTEU requested the agency not only comply with the terms outlined in the contract immediately, but identify every volunteer who should have been selected for each vacancy announced in the Official Weekly Foreign Trip Notifications since Dec. 1, 2017, and grant them priority consideration for the next trip for which they volunteer. NTEU has also requested withdrawing any requirement for employees to have an official passport to be assigned foreign travel, and provide any appropriate remedy for bargaining unit employees who have been harmed by the agency’s violations. ☐

Members Benefit From New Contracts in New Year

NTEU-represented employees at three agencies are starting the year with expanded rights, benefits and protections thanks to new contracts at their agencies.

At the IRS Office of Chief Counsel, NTEU won a new gliding flexitour with credit hours schedule that allows employees to vary their start and stop times daily, within a 30-minute window. For even greater workplace flexibility, NTEU secured an increase in the maximum time employees can telework. After reaching an impasse on awards, NTEU won an arbitration victory bringing more transparency to awards procedures and ensuring no employee is excluded based on their job classification.

Employees at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) got double the good news in the form of a new compensation agreement and the rollout of expanded telework and work schedule options. The three-year compensation agreement brings CFTC employees more in line with the pay at other financial regulatory agencies. And while negotiations on a term agreement continue, NTEU successfully bargained separate agreements on articles that doubled

telework days from one to two a week and introduced new alternative work schedules.

“Our members are thrilled with these NTEU-negotiated changes, which will permit greater flexibility and improve work life balance,” said Chapter 337 (CFTC) President Mary Connelly. “We look forward to building on this agreement going forward.”

“Your contract is the most important document in your working life.”

—NATIONAL PRESIDENT TONY REARDON

Employees at the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) will also enjoy better work-life balance under their new contract. The agreement gives field employees an extra hour of travel time each way (for a total of four hours roundtrip) to return home on weekends between two-week assignments.

“This will allow employees to spend more time with family and friends on the weekends without

giving up more personal time,” said Chapter 303 (NCUA) President Heather Hammes. Employees on the road will also be authorized to have their own rental vehicles, when necessary.

To help NCUA employees fully demonstrate their knowledge and skills, NTEU negotiated an additional hour for employees to complete the simulation assessment for promotion to principal examiner. NTEU also convinced NCUA to eliminate the assessment’s writing exercise, which was evaluated by outside vendors unfamiliar with the examination process.

“Your contract is the most important document in your working life,” said National President Tony Reardon. “Negotiated by NTEU members with real frontline experience, contracts spell out your rights as an employee and restrictions on what managers can do, while also establishing programs that improve your work lives.”

NTEU’s work on a bargaining agreement doesn’t end after a contract is signed. Chapter officers and stewards are trained on the contract and employees are informed of the highlights. If management violates the contract, NTEU stands ready to fight back. ☐

IRS Backpedals on Telework Agreement; Eliminates Protections

Last month, the IRS unilaterally rolled out a telework pilot for approximately 300 bargaining unit employees in Philadelphia that does not include important provisions to protect teleworkers. Through employee messages and meetings, NTEU made sure that eligible employees in Chapter 71 (IRS Philadelphia Campus) were aware of the risks and potential negative impact on their performance appraisals should they choose to telework.

During bargaining over the first phase of telework for customer service representatives (CSRs) and contact representatives (CRs) in other sites, the IRS agreed it was bound by the language of the 2012 Customer Service Agreement’s (CSA) limitation on the use of ASPECT reports for evaluating employees. Despite this previous agreement, the IRS pivoted and decided that such protections would not be available for Philadelphia employees.

Specifically, the IRS has said that it plans to ignore the CSA’s restrictions on the use of reports of average handle time, sign-in, sign-out, meal periods and other time reports to evaluate employees. The CSA allows such reports to be used as a “performance indicator,” but data from these reports alone cannot be the basis of negative evaluations.

NTEU strongly objects to this arbitrary move by the agency and filed a national grievance in late January.

“It is worth noting that the earlier telework pilots included the CSA protections and have been declared unqualified successes by everyone involved,” said National President Tony Reardon. “There is no reason to change the rules of the game and disadvantage employees.”

NTEU and the IRS originally agreed to these limitations on the use of ASPECT data by recognizing that many factors influence the use of reason codes and average handle time; and therefore, it would be unfair to employees to evaluate them on this data alone. In addition, we are concerned that the use of average handle time to evaluate employees will negatively affect customer service. Employees may be unfairly pressured to compromise the thoroughness and quality of their responses to shorten the length of calls.

Other issues with the pilot include partiality over which employees may participate in the telework plan. NTEU proposed a more expansive telework program in Philadelphia that would include more than the 300 employees identified by the agency. The IRS refused to negotiate on that point.

NTEU believes that the IRS’ actions are inconsistent with CSA and the law. As this issue moves through the grievance process, NTEU will continue to make employees aware of the risks. ☐

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February 2018

ShopTALK

House Bill Would Provide Short-Term Disability to Federal Workers
Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton, representing Washington, D.C., introduced H.R. 4806, a bill to help provide financial relief for federal employees who have a short-term injury or disability, become pregnant or develop a pregnancy-related illness. The legislation would require the Office of Personnel Management to establish and administer a program for short-term (up to 12 months) disability insurance coverage. Federal employees could then obtain short-term disability insurance at a lower group rate than if purchased individually, and employees would be responsible for 100 percent of their insurance premiums.



FEEA Scholarship Application Open

Federal employees and their family members can apply for Federal Employee Education and Assistance (FEEA) Fund scholarships now through March 21. This opportunity supports approximately 300 students with merit-based scholarships up to \$5,000. NTEU encourages all members to learn more about the various scholarships administered by FEEA, the nation's only charity exclusively for federal employees, by visiting www.feea.org.

NTEU Supports Restoring Federal Labor-Management Councils

Legislation introduced in the House and the Senate would restore the Federal Labor-Management Relations Council. It was revoked last year by Executive Order. The Council would convene top officials from the executive branch, senior agency executives and representatives from federal employee unions to promote constructive dialogue between frontline civil servants and their managers. Similar councils would also be estab-

lished within each agency. NTEU believes this is a commonsense way to solve problems and improve the delivery of services.



CBP Plays a Role in Combating the Opioid Crisis

NTEU went on the record recommending that Congress mandate a report of individuals and companies violating the Trade Act of 2002. Such a report would enhance the Customs and Border Protection's ability to prevent prohibited items from entering the U.S. The union also called for doubling CBP staffing at critical hubs that are, like many of the nation's ports of entry, extremely short-staffed. While the primary focus of the hearing centered on international mail interdiction, NTEU expressed members' concern over the accuracy of electronic reports submitted by operators and the staffing shortages at express consignment hubs.



OPM May Seek Proof of Eligibility for Health Plan

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has issued regulations instituting a process for the removal of individuals who are not eligible to be enrolled in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) as family members. Enrollees may be asked for documentation on eligibility, at any time, of an individual who is covered as a family member. There are approximately 4 million family members covered by FEHBP plans. While OPM does not have an estimate of how many ineligible family members are currently enrolled, data from similar commercial health plans indicate that these health plans typically find 1-3 percent of spouses and 4-12 percent of children ineligible for coverage.

Join NTEU in celebrating our 80th anniversary!

"Every NTEU member is part of a rich 80-year legacy of rewards, protection and recognition for federal employees."

-National President Tony Reardon

NTEU@80

PROTECTING FEDERAL WORKPLACES SINCE 1938