



NTEU Chapter 49

Representing most employees of the Internal Revenue Service in
the state of Indiana

October 2014

CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By

Duncan Giles

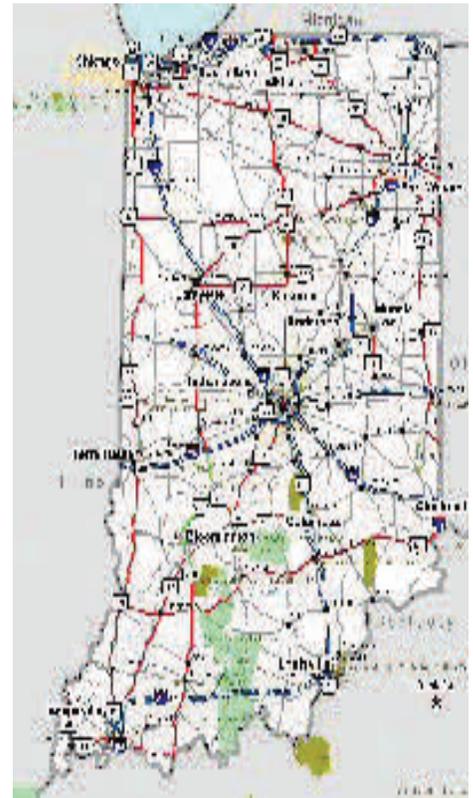
President NTEU Chapter 49



On this and that....

When talking to folks about NTEU, I often hear this—all we do is represent “bad” employees. I’m here to tell you that’s not accurate. NTEU represents all non-supervisory employees. Whether it’s negotiating a new contract, filing a national grievance, litigating an issue in court or lobbying Congress, NTEU is working on behalf of our members every single day. We also help individual members when they have a problem. The problem is quite often a condition of the workplace rather than someone in trouble (although that, of course, happens as well). We help employees with things like getting a fair appraisal, protecting them from bad policies in their workplace or assisting them with the maze of red tape that they may encounter when requesting FMLA or applying for disability retirement. We also work on issues that impact employees in their POD across the state of Indiana or on teams that impact your work nation-wide.

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PRESIDENT

DUNCAN GILES

VICE PRESIDENT

SUSAN WRIGHT

TREASURER

SCOTT CARDER

SECRETARY

GAIL GROVES

CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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I want to go a little further in depth as to where your dues money goes. Your dues run anywhere between \$13 and \$20 per pay period, depending on your grade or step. Chapter 49 receives 15% of those dues. The chapter's share goes to expenses such as arbitration costs, supplies and training. No officer or steward gets paid a dime of salary outside their IRS pay.

Where does the rest of the money go? To national NTEU where, in my opinion, it's put to very good use.

National dues pay for our attorneys who assist Chapter 49 with legal questions, provide training and represent employees in arbitrations. I can tell you from personal experience that the counsel we receive is absolutely outstanding.

National dues also go toward the salaries of our National Negotiators who bargain our national contracts, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), Letters of Understanding (LOUs) and are instrumental in handling national grievances. They bring a wealth of experience to the bargaining table. These are folks who are the point people when IRS is trying to rollback our hard-won rights and our NTEU negotiators are consistently pushing for more.

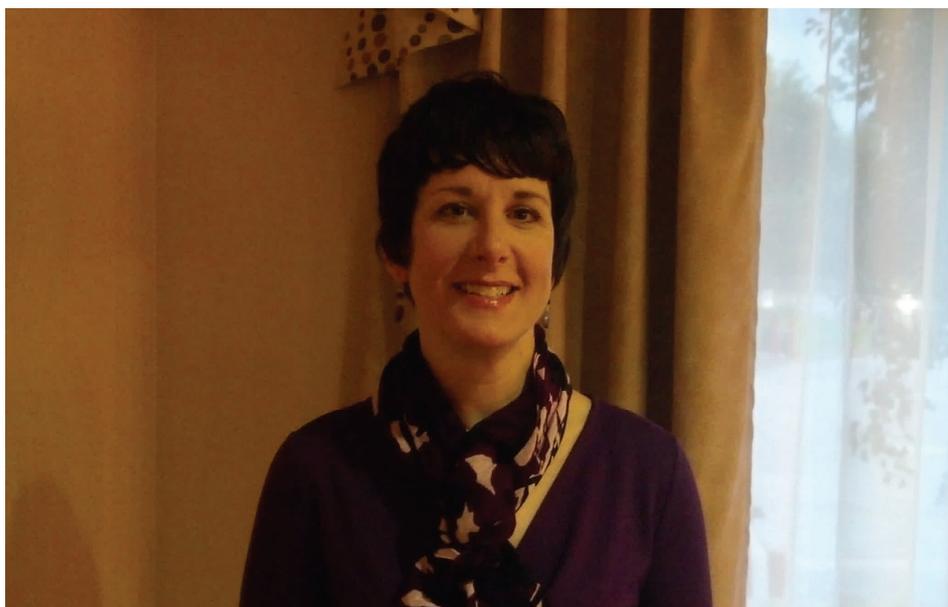
We also have a crack legal team arguing issues important to you in the courts. When we believe something is so "out there" it must be adjudicated, our NTEU General Counsel team heads to the courthouse with the goal of protecting us all. They argue in federal district courts, appeals courts and even before the United States Supreme Court.

Our Legislative Department is another place that puts your dues money to good work. These are folks who lobby congress tirelessly on issues impacting federal employee rights. They work with our elected officials on Capitol Hill on both sides of the aisle. These NTEU employees not only work to get good laws passed, but also fight legislation harmful to you as a federal worker. Trust me—every congressional office is familiar with NTEU. We are well known for being effective advocates. Allow me to make one very important point here—absolutely **no** dues money goes toward funding a political campaign.

At the very top, NTEU is represented by National Vice President Tony Reardon & National President Colleen Kelley. These 2 are not only a great team but do great work separately as well. Whether it's Tony heading up the team at the term bargaining table to try and get us a new contract that is fair, to Colleen testifying before Congress on any number of employee issues, they both have one goal. That goal is to make sure the federal employees NTEU represents are shown as they should be, in the best light possible.

So that is just a thumbnail of all the things NTEU does for you. I'm sure you will agree, that's more than just helping the "bad" employees. Together, we do all we can to help all the federal employees we represent in many different ways.

That's it for now.



ANNE DASOVIC: CHAPTER 49'S LEGAL EAGLE

Anne Dasovic hails from Detroit, but claims Indiana as a temporary home during her law school years at Indiana University in Bloomington. Anne is now a resident of Chicago and works out of the NTEU field office there to support employees of Chapter 49.

Anne has been the attorney out of the Chicago office supporting us for the past 19 years. During that time, she has handled a number of cases in Indiana.

The one case that stands out in her mind deals with an Indiana employee that was in the hospital battling a serious illness which caused her severe pain. Doctors treating her were not able to immediately diagnose her illness. The worker contacted her supervisor every morning to update management that she was still being treated in the hospital. The record shows the IRS was trying to play games with the employee's rights to Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and advanced sick leave. After 3 weeks in the hospital, IRS tried to fire her. Anne took the case developed by Chapter 49 stewards to an arbitrator (neutral third party). The arbitrator ruled IRS actions were egregious in suspending the employee and later trying to fire her for being in the hospital for treatment of a serious illness. This employee was not fired.

Anne tends to get involved with an individual employee's case once the matter is at the later stages of the grievance procedure. She often is talking to local Chapter 49 leaders on how to handle a specific case. Once the grievance steps have run their course, Anne will evaluate whether the arbitration article of the National Agreement should be invoked. If management proposes discipline, like a suspension or termination, Anne tends to get involved earlier in the process.

Anne is surprised many employees think she works for IRS. Her salary is paid by your union dues and she represents the interests of the union and IRS employees.

Anne has handled cases involving managers accused of being a "bully." These are hard cases, but if employees stick together and help the union with the case, bullying managers have been taken out of management. Anne's message is, work with your local Chapter 49 steward if you find a manager acting out of line.

Chapter 49 appreciates all the work Anne Dasovic has done for Indiana employees of IRS.



NTEU Chapter 49 President Duncan Giles addresses local stewards
at the annual training class in Indianapolis

Chapter 49 Stewards Come to Indianapolis for Annual Training Session

Once a year, Chapter 49 stewards gather in Indianapolis for the annual training session. Stewards from as far away as Merrillville, Evansville, Fort Wayne and South Bend travel to Indy for the latest information on how to handle employee issues in the IRS workplace.

A few of the items on the agenda were: Handling Inclement Weather Issues, Hatch Act rules, The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Bullying in the Workplace and Workload Issues.

Attorney Anne Dasovic, Chapter President Duncan Giles, Vice President Susan Wright, Treasurer Scott Carder, Secretary Gail Groves, Chief Steward Pam Clayton and Legislative Coordinator Larry Lannan were among those instructing during the sessions. There was a special session for call site stewards.

The training took place October 8-10.



Chapter 49 Treasurer Scott Carder talks to the assembled stewards about how to handle bullies in the workplace.



WE NEED TO DO MORE THAN VOTE

Jon Hedges believes voting is important, but “it’s only part of the process.” That’s why Jon joined Casey Cowherd & Roxie Lomax to form the NTEU Chapter 49 Legislative Committee.

The local Legislative Committee is charged with monitoring measures in the Congress that can impact us as IRS employees. The group also plans to stay in contact with our Indiana elected officials on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Another reason Jon volunteered for the Legislative Committee is his desire to “put a face on the federal worker” when advocating our positions to elected officials.

Jon also sees it as in his interest to be involved in the chapter’s legislative efforts. “If I don’t personally try and help make my own work environment better, then how can I expect any positive change?”

If you are interested in serving on Chapter 49’s Legislative Committee, and are willing to work outside your work hours, contact NTEU Chapter 49 President Duncan Giles at 317-685-7635

MORE SEASONAL IRS WORKERS TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR HEALTH INSURANCE

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the federal government’s Human Resources Department, has issued regulations implementing parts of the Affordable Care Act in the federal workforce.

The biggest change you may see locally is more of our seasonal employees at IRS will now be eligible for health insurance. The new rules are effective November 16, 2014. All impacted employees will be able to enroll in a health insurance plan under the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP) in January, 2015.

Under this change, seasonal employees working less than 6 months per year, will be eligible both to enroll in FEHBP and to receive a government contribution for health insurance premiums, as long as the individual is working a full-time schedule of 130 hours or more in a calendar month, and is expected to work for at least 90 days.

As with any federal issue, there can be complications. If you are a seasonal employee and have questions about this new benefit, contact any Chapter 49 steward and we will work to find an answer to your question.

NTEU has been pushing very hard for OPM to issue these rules and allow more seasonal employees access to health insurance under the FEHBP system. We have always believed that more seasonal employees at IRS should be eligible for health insurance and now it is happening. This is very good news.

MEMBERSHIP HAS MANY BENEFITS. BEING A MEMBER OF NTEU CHAPTER PROVIDES YOU THE SUPPORT NEEDED IN THE FEDERAL WORK PLACE. JUST ASK SEASONAL WORKERS NOW WITH HEALTH INSURANCE!

HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS FOR FEDERAL WORKERS TO IN- CREASE AN AVERAGE OF 3.2% IN 2015

Health insurance premiums for federal workers participating in the Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP) program will see their premiums increase an average of 3.2%. This average takes all plans into account. Your plan could up be more or less than the average.

The most popular federal employee health plan from Blue Cross and Blue Shield will see premiums rise next year by 3.2% for individuals and 4.1% for family plans.

Rate increases for the 1.4 million participants in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) will be 1.7% for dental coverage, and vision benefit premiums, paid by approximately one million individuals, will increase by 1.5%.

While OPM reported no significant benefit changes for health plans, starting in 2015 federal employees who enroll in a flexible spending account (FSAFEDS) will be able to establish an annual account as low as \$100, and will also be able to carry over up to \$500 of unused funds into the following year. Both of these benefit changes are designed to expand federal workers' participation in the FSAFEDS program.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

As most of you already know, we are operating the federal government under a continuing resolution. That means IRS is being funded by the same spending plan in place the previous fiscal year (our fiscal year ends September 30). Congress has decided to kick the budget can down the road once again, this time after the upcoming congressional midterm elections. The current continuing resolution expires on December 11th. Will the congress finally pass or annual budget before or after December 11th? No one knows for sure until after the November 4th elections. We are often asked if another government shutdown is likely. We hope not, don't think it's likely, but will watch developments closely. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and/or keep an eye on our Web site (www.nteu49.org) for the latest.

THE LATEST ON AWARDS

We at Chapter 49 sincerely wish we had good news to impart on the issue of your awards. Unfortunately, we don't. IRS Management continues to obstruct and delay the payment of your awards. NTEU continues to press hard for your award money.

NTEU maintains management shorted IRS employees by about 10% in 2013 award payments. The total amount paid was supposed to be 1% of total rank-and-file employee pay, which should be more than \$46 million. Management actually paid out about 90% of that, based on all the information NTEU has.

IRS management has denied NTEU's grievance over this, as expected. NTEU is wasting no time in invoking arbitration to have a neutral third party decide this dispute.

As NTEU Chapter 49 President Duncan Giles has said many times, you should be paid the money due to you on time. Management isn't doing that, in our view. NTEU will continue to fight for your money. We will keep you up to date on this important issue.

AS A MEMBER OF NTEU, YOU ARE ENTITLED TO SPECIAL DEALS ON JOINING COSTCO AS A MEMBER, AND RENTING A CAR FROM AVIS, BUDGET OR HERTZ. YOU ARE ALSO ELIGIBLE FOR A DISCOUNT ON LIBERTY MUTUAL AUTO, HOME AND RENTER'S INSURANCE. LOG-IN TO WWW.NTEU.ORG, GET YOUR USER NAME & PASSWORD, AND EXPLORE THE MANY BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP.

EXCUSED TIME FOR VOTING

November 4th is election day. This question always comes up—can I get administrative time to vote? The answer depends on your tour of duty. If polling places are not open at least three hours before or after their regular tour of duty on Nov. 4, Election Day, you may be granted a limited amount of excused absence. In Indiana, polls open at 6am and close at 6pm local time. If you are on a gliding schedule, talk to your manager about your planned schedule that day if you plan to request this administrative time off.

If your tour is 8am-4:45pm, in Indiana, you should be eligible for administrative time. Sometimes this can get very complicated and confusing, depending on your individual tour of duty. Contact any Chapter 49 steward well ahead of November 4th and we will make every effort to work through your situation.

Also, it's a good idea to be talking to your manager as soon as possible if you wish to take this leave.

For more information, See the National Agreement, Articles 23 & 36. Also see IRM 6.610.1.3.3 on voting.

CHAPTER 49 NEEDS YOU

Are you interested in getting involved with Chapter 49 to help yourself and your fellow IRS workers? If so, we have an idea for you.

We are looking for volunteers to serve on Chapter 49's Legislative Committee. Many of you have often complained (with good reason) about what some of our elected officials have been doing to us in Washington. This is a chance for you to do something about it.

You are required to do this activity outside of work hours. But the rewards are many. You get the chance to work with fellow members of Chapter 49 with the same interest in shaping our arguments before our elected officials. You will be meeting members of congress and their staff.

If you have any interest in getting involved with our Chapter 49 Legislative Committee, contact Chapter President Duncan Giles at 317-685-7635

Need Help? Have Questions?

NTEU Chapter 49 is here to help you. If you have questions about the work place or the contracts NTEU has negotiated for you, contact any steward. A list of stewards, their PODs and phone numbers is available at our Chapter 49 Web site, www.nteu49.org

If you are not certain which steward to contact, get in touch with Chapter 49's Chief Steward Pam Clayton. Feel free to contact any of the local elected chapter officials listed on page one of this newsletter. We will do our best to answer any questions and address any concerns you may have. We are here to help you.

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Web Site: www.nteu49.org