



## NTEU Chapter 49

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

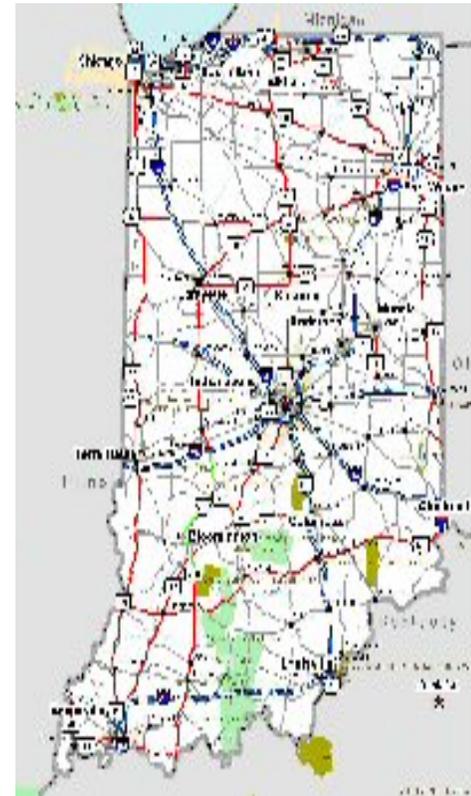
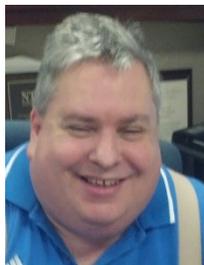
March 2016

### CHAPTER PRESIDENT’S CORNER

By

Duncan Giles

President NTEU Chapter 49



#### On this & that...

First off, the IRS has let National NTEU know that the award amount for 2016 will be at the same 1% level as last year. That means 1% of the total salaries for each pool will go towards awards. Much too early to know when the payout will be, but I’m hoping the money will be in your hands by the end of calendar 2016. Right now, with budget constraints being what they are, it’s about the best that employees (bargaining & non bargaining) could hope for.

Next, please make sure you are familiar with the law on what political activity is (and is not) permissible under the Hatch Act. We don’t want anyone getting into trouble for doing something they should not for any partisan political candidate. These cases are scrutinized a lot both inside as well as outside the agency. If you have a question over whether something is permitted, please ask your favorite Chapter 49 Steward or Officer. (Continued Page 2)

**PRESIDENT**

DUNCAN GILES

**VICE PRESIDENT**

(Vacant)

**TREASURER**

SCOTT CARDER

**SECRETARY**

GAIL GROVES

## CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S CORNER

(Continued from Page 1)

Speaking of elections, it will soon be that time of year for Chapter 49 again. Please make sure that NTEU has your correct address on file. You can check that at [www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org) or you can Contact the 2016 Election Chairwoman Susan Wright and she can make sure we have the right info for you on file.

As most of you know, when I can, I prefer to resolve things informally. It's almost always faster, less adversarial & works best in getting both the employees & management what they need. Most times that works. Other times we need to file a formal grievance. Chapter 49 has no problem doing it either way. Our underlying thought always is - what's the best way to assist those impacted? So if you have what you believe is a violation of the National Agreement, the Code of Federal Regulations or you feel something just isn't right, never be hesitant about seeking assistance from Chapter 49. That's why we are here.

Lastly, in that vein, I'm hammering at every level an important message - those in management positions need to be leaders. Whether it's working on national teams in cooperation, helping to negotiate stronger wording in Article 5 to make those who bully others be held accountable or filing a grievance over a manager's poor way of dealing with employees, I simply can't abide when someone in a management position has no clue how to lead people. The IRS **MUST** do a better job of promoting leaders, not just managers. If they don't know how to motivate their employees through positive reinforcement with constructive criticism, they have no business being in that role. I do believe there are changes coming to the IRS in this regard but they are never swift enough for my taste. So to the managers who get this newsletter from their employees, I say this. Treat your employees in a courteous manner. Lift them up. Help them correct mistakes, not look at it as a "gotcha" opportunity. Do the right thing. Be a leader. Or be swept out in the sea of change that is coming sooner rather than later.

To employees - be respectful. Try working with your manager but if they would rather not lead in the correct way, please see your favorite Steward or Chapter Officer. Let us assess the situation & see what we can do to protect your rights in working in an atmosphere that should be positive, not negative.

That's it for now.

## CONTACTING CONGRESS

There are plenty of reasons you may want to contact your member of Congress and both Senators. NTEU tries to make the process is easy as possible for you.

Chapter 49 provides easy access to your federal lawmakers. Here's how. Go to [www.nteu49.org](http://www.nteu49.org) and use the link in the upper left hand part of the page "How to Contact Congress." You will see a screen reminding you of the rules to observe as a federal employee in contacting your elected officials. After reviewing those rules, at the bottom of the page, access the link "Click here to find and contact your member of congress." You will then be sent to the national NTEU Web page. All you need to do is enter your zip code and you're on your way. You can generate an already-written e-mail or letter, or write your own. It's a simple system and we encourage all Chapter 49 members to use it. If you have any questions, contact any Chapter 49 officer or steward.

## CAN A LOSING TEAM HAVE A CHAMPION?

Chapter 60 has been highlighting all the deficiencies and perceived problems with the agency's newest "Dog and Pony Show". You know, the former "ConOps" initiative now known as THE FUTURE STATE. Doesn't it sound like the title for a dystopian novel? Recently Commissioner Koskinen put out the following message to all employees about this debacle:

*Changes are taking place across the nation and throughout the economy that affect taxpayers — and, in turn, us — in many ways. Earlier this year, I shared information with you about the road ahead and the Future State, which focuses on the taxpayer experience and more online and self-service options to build on our in-person options. Our path forward includes the challenges we face in the current environment of increased taxpayer expectations, rapid technology advances, a shrinking workforce and budget restrictions. All of this makes our situation even more challenging.*

*You may have heard about various discussions that have been taking place across the IRS over the past few years about how best to meet both current and future challenges. These discussions included developing a new "concepts of operations," or ConOps, for our major operating divisions to interact with taxpayers today and in the future. And workgroups from across the agency have been looking at changes that might be made in the near term that would allow us to become more efficient with the resources we have. This has been referred to as the Resource Roadmap Initiative, or RRI. Finally, some changes have already been made with valuable input from employees under the "help us get this right" framework. These may appear to be a series of separate activities, but it's important to understand they all fit under an overall umbrella we're calling the Future State. All of the discussions we're having focus on how we'll interact with taxpayers in the years ahead to meet their increasing expectations.*

*This isn't an abrupt change in perspective from the way we've been working together the past few years. For example, we've moved quickly to respond to taxpayer needs by adding more online services — innovations that you and your colleagues helped shape. You've also been working with us in other areas that help move us toward our Future State, including through town halls and in the following ways:*

- LB&I is using the data and feedback from their "Getting it Right Together" effort to restructure their operations to better meet taxpayers' evolving needs in a global environment while improving training and mentoring for all employees.
- W&I and SB/SE employees offered valuable input on a successful realignment of our compliance and collection activities.
- We've created a new organization, Research Applied Analytics and Statistics (RAAS), from two existing organizations (RAS and OCA), which will help us increase our capacity for data-driven decision making and innovation. Employee participation and advice helped us design and create a Research Planning and Coordination Council to link our overall research and analytics with Service priorities.
- TE/GE is "Moving Forward Together – The Road Ahead" in collaboration with their diverse taxpayer segments.
- We're realigning the Procurement organization to report directly to the Deputy Commissioner for Operations Support to ensure that our operating structure complies with underlying policies while helping streamline our operations.

*We're furthering rent reduction efforts as our workforce and office space demands shrink. We've already reduced our space by more than 2 million square feet since 2011, saving \$64 million -- with \$17.6 million of those savings generated by space reduction projects in FY15. This will help reduce our rent costs in FY16 and beyond. There are other initiatives that we will discuss with you in the days ahead, especially how we interact with taxpayers. For those taxpayers with the ability and interest, for example, we envision adding more self-service options and increasing technological and communications capabilities. We'll explore other ways to be even more efficient in our use of real estate. We'll also look at how we can better equip our employees through flexibilities like telework, connectivity and more strategic training. And we'll look at how we deliver shared services like human capital, information technology, office space and finance to be better able to support the entire IRS and, in turn, taxpayers.*

*It's important for you to stay informed about these and other Future State activities, and we'll do our best to update you as we go along. But as you've heard me discuss during the past two years, you're an important part of these efforts. We need you and your colleagues to continue to contribute your suggestions in response to specific "help us get this right" programs and in other forums like town halls and manager workgroup meetings. In addition, as we move forward to position IRS operations for the future, we'll also reach out to NTEU for discussion and participation.*

*We're committed to sharing information with you as plans develop in the months ahead, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts and contributions. Thanks again for your continued dedication to the nation's taxpayers."*

All we can say is nice try. The agency continually states that they are working with NTEU during this rollout, but unfortunately, what they say during the so-called briefings is very different from what they actually roll out to their frontline managers and employees. They give no definitive answers, no reliable information, no accurate timeline and no details about grade structures, realignments and or reassignments to impacted employees. Nothing. If they really want the employees to buy into this "new and improved" way of doing business, which was developed by and purchased from an outside firm, maybe they should try being upfront with NTEU and the employees. Stop playing games and stop playing fast and loose with the details. It is always better to be upfront with the employees if you want them to get involved and support agency decisions. Not being transparent only leads to anger and suspicion. The agency rushed into this mess and doesn't have any answers. And the LB&I Executive Champion just retired, making that three executives in charge of this program who have bailed out on it. Not a good or smart way to way to do business. So we want to know how you can call yourself a "Champion" if you are managing a losing team or program?

(Chapter 49 thanks John Kelshaw, President of NTEU Chapter 60 in Newark, New Jersey, for granting us permission to reprint articles from their award-winning newsletter "Watchdog")



Chapter 49 Secretary Gail Groves outside Senator Joe Donnelly's Washington office just before a scheduled meeting with a member of his staff



Chapter 49's Gail Groves prepares for the closing luncheon of the 2016 NTEU Legislative Conference in Washington

## CHAPTER 49 TELLS YOUR STORY ON CAPITOL HILL

Most of us never get the opportunity to visit the offices of our elected officials in Washington. Each year, NTEU has a legislative conference where local chapter officials from across the nation fan out all over the House and Senate offices, making the case for you, federal employees.

Chapter 49 sent two representatives to this year's conference, Chapter Secretary Gail Groves and Legislative Committee Member Larry Lannan. Indiana has 2 senators and 9 members of congress. Of those 11 elected officials, Gail & Larry visited 9 Indiana offices, meeting with the staff members of each elected official.

Here are the issues we presented to those staff members:

**Pay** — President Obama has recommended a 1.6% pay raise for federal workers in his 2017 budget proposal. We at NTEU firmly believe that federal workers deserve more. We urged each elected official to support a 5.3% wage hike in 2017. Pay freezes and meager pay raises in recent years have led to federal employees contributing \$182 billion toward deficit reduction in the past ten years. We've done more than enough already.

**Agency Funding** — Since Fiscal Year 2010, the IRS has absorbed \$1.2 billion in cuts which has undermined its ability to enforce our nation's tax laws and serve taxpayers efficiently. The funding reductions will have forced the IRS to reduce staffing by more than 17,000 employees by the end of 2016, including many frontline service and enforcement personnel. Without additional resources, the IRS has warned its ability to provide timely assistance to taxpayers,

including victims of identity theft and other types of tax refund fraud, will be further hampered. In addition, a lack of sufficient funding would impede IRS' ability to carry out its core enforcement activities designed to deter non-compliance and detect and prevent fraud, and could undermine taxpayers' confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the tax system, and result in the loss of billions in foregone revenue.

**Retirement** — Federal employees have contributed \$21 billion to deficit reduction through increased retirement contributions. Those hired after December 31, 2012 saw an increase of 2.3% of their salaries going toward retirement and those hired after December 31, 2013 saw an increase of an additional 1.3%. New employees now pay 3.6% more than other employees for the same retirement benefit. We urged our elected officials to stop attacks on our retirement system.

**Health Insurance** — We argued for no cost shifting to employees for health insurance expenses, and asked that consideration be given to lowering prescription drug costs by reforming the system.

**Employee Workplace Fairness** — There have been recent proposals by some in Washington to weaken the rights of your union to represent your interests. We asked Indiana's officials in Washington not to go along with those proposals.



Maryland Congressman Steny Hoyer, a long-time friend of the federal work force, gave the opening speech at this year's Legislative Conference



Tammy Duckworth, Congresswoman from Illinois, spoke at the closing luncheon. As a disabled veteran of the Iraq war, she gave a powerful presentation on the value and importance of public service.

## MY TRIP TO WASHINGTON

by

Gail Groves

The NTEU Legislative Conference was held this year from February 22nd thru 25th. It was the first time I have attended. We heard inspiring presentations from our National NTEU President, Tony Reardon, the Legislative staff and Senate Majority Whip Steny Hoyer.

Along with Larry Lannan, I met with the staffs of Indiana members of Congress and the Senate. We presented very important issues regarding the federal workplace and federal workforce. Not only was it very informational but also very empowering to be able to talk about the issues facing our Federal Workforce today and for the future.

We all need to contact our representatives and let our voices be heard. There is power in numbers.

At NTEU we not only fight everyday for the rights of our employees, but also work on Capitol Hill to stop budget reductions, changes to retirement, and many more issues.

Nothing will change if you do not make your voices heard. I felt very proud to be in Washington DC representing the State of Indiana and all the Chapter 49 members that live here.

I thank Duncan for giving me the opportunity and Larry Lannan for teaching me so very much. It was truly a very educational and gratifying opportunity.

Get involved today....it is important to our workplace, workforce and the future. I am very proud to be an NTEU Officer and Steward for Chapter 49.

*(Gail is the Chapter 49 Secretary and works at the Accounts Management Call Center in Indianapolis)*

## SELF ASSESSMENTS—YOUR CHOICE

When NTEU found trouble in the City of Chicago, we were on it and solved the problem.

Self assessments have been a part of the National Agreement between NTEU and IRS for a long time. It's fairly simple and straight-forward...if any employee chooses to submit a self-assessment as their annual appraisal is being prepared by the manager, she/he could do that.

One important component of the self assessment system is the fact that it is a choice for the employee.

IRS management officials in Chicago tried to turn the concept on its head. They were requiring employees to affirmatively document their choice not to prepare self assessments.

We could find no contract language requiring this, so a grievance was filed in an effort to stop the process.

It didn't take long for management to realize it had goofed, big time. Chicago managers have now stopped requiring employee to document self assessment choices.

NTEU supports workers availing themselves of the self assessment opportunity we negotiated in the National Agreement. However, we don't believe employees are under any requirement to document a choice in the matter to their managers.

## TACs, LONG LINES & VOLUNTEERS

Speaking of choices, NTEU was notified in early March that Taxpayer Assistance Centers (TACs) in 28 cities (including Indianapolis) are in dire need of help. This goes beyond the normal tax filing season load.

IRS issued some 500,000 letters to taxpayers asking that they enroll in the "Taxpayer Protection Plan" because of identity theft issues. These taxpayers are instructed in the notice to visit a TAC.

IRS is asking that volunteers be solicited from another part of Wage & Investment (W&I), Senior Stakeholder Relationship Tax Consultants from the SPEC organization.

Here's part of a message sent to NTEU Chapter Presidents by National President Tony Reardon:

"We have been advised that no employees will be directed to assist at any TAC location; only those who volunteer will assist at the TAC sites. They will be asked to help FA 'triage' the lines. If Field Assistance does not get enough volunteers, it will advise us and seek volunteers from another Business Operating Division (BOD)."

In other words, no SPEC workers in Indy or anywhere else are to be drafted or required to handle this 3-week assignment....IRS is only to use true volunteers.

If SPEC does not get enough volunteers, management will need to go elsewhere for their volunteer help.

## MEMBERS GET OFFICE

### SUPPLY SAVINGS

NTEU members are eligible to save up to 80% on over 93,000 products sold online by Office Depot and in Office Depot and OfficeMax locations. Members can also enjoy FREE, next-day delivery on online orders over \$50 (excludes furniture). There is no cost or application to use this new member benefit. Members can visit...

<http://www.officediscounts.org/nteu.html>

...to shop online or to print a free store purchasing card. When visiting the link to shop online, members will be asked to create a username and password. There are Office Depot and/or OfficeMax locations in all states (including Indiana). Of course, you are still able to take advantage of the member benefit by ordering online.



NTEU National President Tony Reardon, speaking to the Legislative Conference



## NAKIA HICKS

We at Chapter 49 are greatly saddened by the untimely passing of long-time member Nakia Hicks. She was an outstanding employee in Field Assistance. More importantly, she was a loving wife and mother.

All of us mourn the death of this wonderful lady so many of us had the honor of knowing. Our sincere thoughts and prayers go to her family, including her husband and two beautiful young daughters.

## 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](http://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.

**Facebook:** NTEU Chapter 49 Indiana

**Twitter:** @nteu49

**Web Site:** [www.nteu49.org](http://www.nteu49.org)