



## NTEU Chapter 49

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

January 2015

### CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By

Duncan Giles

President NTEU Chapter 49

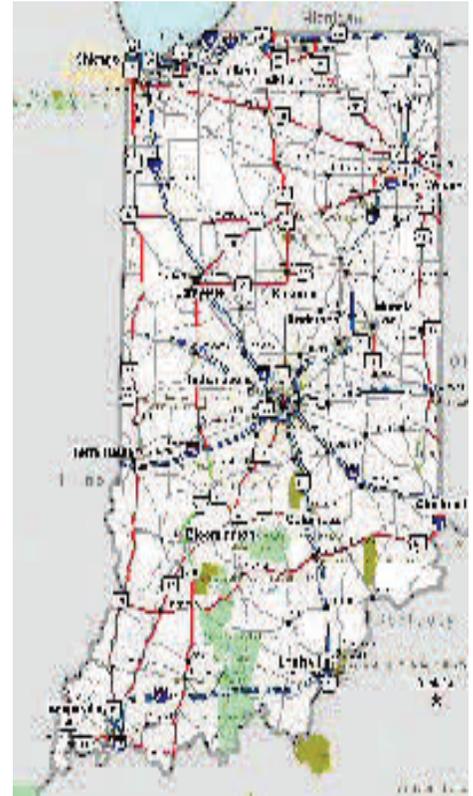


On this and that....

First off, I hope everyone had a great Holiday Season. It's a good time to get your batteries recharged for the coming year. I think 2015 is going to be a bumpy ride.

By now, I'm assuming everyone has seen Commissioner Koskinen & NTEU National President Kelley's messages on the budget. In a word, it's dire. When you factor in the massive (OK, I'm being sarcastic) 1% pay raise we got, the IRS budget is over 500 million dollars less than last year.

This budget impacts everything from the ability to do face to face training, award amounts, keeping equipment going, etc. There will be very little hiring done this year due to the budget. NTEU, both locally & nationally, has been VERY upfront with the Service, at all levels of management, that the employees who are still here can only do so much work. (Continued Page 2)



PRESIDENT

DUNCAN GILES

VICE PRESIDENT

SUSAN WRIGHT

TREASURER

SCOTT CARDER

SECRETARY

GAIL GROVES

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There is NO way we will be able to even come close to generating numbers like we did even a few years ago. This will be a long term fight. We need everyone in the management chain to understand some basic facts. There will be cases we can't get to. There will be calls we can't answer. There will be a LOT of money we can't collect. All of this is due to not being able to promote and hire properly due to the budget.

In the Commissioner's message, he talked about shutting down the IRS & furloughing everyone for possibly 2 days. It's way too early to know if anything like this will come to fruition. You can count in this - NTEU is working hard to ensure if furloughs must happen, they will be handled better than last time.

Here is one important fact to know. There has been no talk of any reduction in force (RIF). On the flip side, there has also been no talk of any buyouts or early outs. If they occur, and that's a very big if, they would probably be offered in the fall.

We just have to keep doing what we have been, sticking together & doing the best job possible under the circumstances.

I'm sure you also read, from the Commish & Colleen Kelley, their messages on the new agreement. I participated in this process with NTEU both at the Mediation/Arbitration sessions last February & again in front of the Federal Services Impasses Panel (FSIP) the week of January 5<sup>th</sup>. As always, these negotiations are an interesting process.

Until the exact language is agreed upon and then goes to the agency head for review (The Department of Treasury's attorneys) I can't go into specifics. What I can say is this - we've come a LONG way since this process started in October of 2013. Why did it take so long? Because NTEU did everything we could to retain your rights. Believe me when I say that management believed employees & NTEU had too many rights under our agreement and were going to do everything they could to gut it. They did not succeed.

Are there some changes in the Agreement? Absolutely, as is normal in the bargaining process. Some changes are better, some are not. Are the changes so substantial that it should have taken over 14 months to reach an agreement including a trip to the FSIP? Not in my opinion.

This negotiation was akin to a battlefield. We had to fight for every square inch. By the end, the most outlandish of management's proposals were finally moderated by IRS, with the assistance of the FSIP.

I will have much more on this in the coming weeks & months as more specifics are allowed out, but the contract that NTEU agreed to was the best we could get. You will be MUCH better off with it than if management's proposals had prevailed.

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Lastly, on a more upbeat note, I attended the W&I Business Improvement Committee (BIC) meeting in mid December. I say this is more upbeat because the head of W&I (Debra Holland) gets something that far too many in management don't. She believes you have to treat employees with respect & value their contributions.

W&I is WAY out in front of the other Divisions in what expectations will be for their managers. I'm hopeful that those managers who have leadership skills will thrive. I'm also hopeful managers that don't will either have to learn them fairly fast, or be held accountable, by management officials above them, if their workers are not treated right. This will not be a quick process.

I'm hoping we can start steering the ship away from the iceberg & other divisions will follow suit. It's all going to fall on the upper levels of IRS to ensure management, up & down the chain of command, follows the wishes of W & I headquarters. I also hope there will be consequences if poor behavior by managers below them is tolerated. With so few resources right now, the Service can't afford to alienate any employee by having a manager who does not treat them with courtesy & respect.

That's it for now.

## MORE ON THOSE IRS BUDGET CUTS

The massive IRS budget cuts Chapter 49 President Duncan Giles discussed in his commentary are also the subject of many editorials from well known publications. Here is part of a piece published by the New York Times Editorial Board, published on January 18th...

*For individual taxpayers, the latest \$346 million budget cut means the agency will resort to delayed refunds, fewer audits (a boon only to tax cheats) and severe cuts in services for citizens seeking guidance.*

*Less than half of the expected 100 million telephone queries are likely to be answered, and on-hold calls will average 30 minutes' wait time, according to the agency's independent taxpayer advocate, Nina Olson. This is no way to treat responsible citizens willing to pay their taxes.*

On January 14th, Washington Post Opinion Columnist Catherine Rampell wrote this...

*Frustration borne from such poor customer service is likely to wear on "tax morale" and hurt rates of voluntary compliance, which is the primary way our taxes are collected (98 percent of tax revenues are remitted voluntarily and in a timely manner; less than 2 percent is collected through enforcement actions). And meanwhile, individuals and companies hoping to play fast and loose with their interpretation of the tax code are likely able to get away with more, since budget cuts have also whittled down the IRS' ability to catch tax cheats. In short: Taxpayer disgruntlement*

NTEU will continue to highlight for the media the real impact on these budget cuts.

# PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

The United States has a dubious distinction among the developed nations of the world. We are one of only a few countries not offering paid parental leave. This is paid leave for both parents after a child is born or adopted.

President Obama has issued an executive memorandum directing agencies to ensure that their policies offer 240 hours of advanced sick leave in connection with the birth or adoption of a child or for other sick leave eligible uses. In addition, the memo directs agencies to offer the maximum amount of advanced annual leave permitted by law for bonding with a healthy newborn or newly adopted child. Sick and annual leave as described in the memo have generally been available at the discretion of the manager. The memo should make it easier for federal employees to take advantage of these flexibilities. OPM is tasked with issuing guidance on these directives within 60 days.

The memo also urges agencies to consider offering access to programs that provide affordable emergency backup dependent care. Finally, the memo directs agencies to use discretionary flexibilities to the maximum extent possible.

The White House also indicated that the President will be sending legislation on paid parental leave for federal employees to the Hill in the near future. While NTEU supports the President's memo on paid parental leave, those actions are limited by federal law. New law is needed for a paid parental leave program that will provide the same kind of benefit enjoyed by parents in the rest of the developed world. Since 2003, Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) has introduced bills, supported by NTEU, to provide paid parental leave to federal employees. We look forward to the President's version.

The bottom line is this. The president has used his executive authority as much as possible to allow federal employees paid time off for parental leave, and those policies should be implemented in the coming months. In order to have access to paid parental leave outside our sick leave and annual leave balances and advances, congress must act.

# SEASONAL WORK & THE BUDGET

IRS & NTEU have been holding high-level discussions about how the budget cuts will impact seasonal employees. Here's what IRS is telling us now.

Your seasonal contract this year should be the same as in previous years. You will work the minimum amount stated in your contract. For example, if your contract is for 6-8 months, you will be working a minimum of 6 months. You may work more if there is money available and there is work to be done. Seasonal to perm conversions should not be expected this year. In Field Assistance, seasonal workers will be kept in work status for six months. As for Accounts Management hiring, it will be down this year as you might expect. The IRS anticipates hiring about 1,800 CSRs, and 150 bilingual CSRs.

The IRS reaffirmed their commitment to comply with the new health insurance eligibility rules. As Chapter 49 explained in our last newsletter, seasonal employees who are expected to work at least three months in a year and 130 hours per month are now eligible for FEHB participation.

Given the IRS' dire budget situation, Chapter 49 appreciates W&I's pledge to honor their commitment to ensuring seasonal employees work at least the minimum time in work status that is spelled out in their seasonal agreements.



## SHE FOUND A WAY TO MAKE HER VOICE HEARD

Casey Cowherd has worked for IRS the last 6 years at the Indianapolis Accounts Management Call Center.

Casey says she volunteered to work on the NTEU Chapter 49 Legislative Committee because, "I wanted my voice heard and to become part of the solution."

Casey referred to a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King. "There comes a time when silence is betrayal."

"It's time to let our voices be heard," said Casey.

If you are interested in joining the Chapter 49 Legislative Committee, contact Chapter President Duncan Giles at 317-685-7635.

## CONGRESS LOOKING AT 3.8% PAY HIKE IN 2016

I don't know about you, but after years of frozen pay and recent years of 1% pay increases, I would say federal employees are due for a raise.

NTEU agrees and so do some members of congress. Legislation has been introduced in the new 114th Congress that would provide a 3.8% pay raise for federal employees in calendar year 2016.

Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI), joined by Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), introduced S.164, the Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR) Act in the Senate, that would extend a 3.8 percent pay raise to both General Schedule and Wage Grade federal employees. Additionally, Representative Gerry Connolly (D-VA-11), with 33 House members signed on as original cosponsors, introduced identical legislation, H.R. 304, in the House of Representatives.

Before you get your hopes up too high, the 33 House members supporting this is a start, but we have a long way to go to enact a wage increase of this size. So, don't be counting your extra money yet. What you can do is contact your member of congress and both senators and express support for HR 304. Go to the Chapter 49 Web site ([www.nteu49.org](http://www.nteu49.org)), click on the left side of the page to the link "How to Contact Congress." The rest is easy. Only do this on your personal computer equipment and connection, and do this on your own time, not government time

Chapter 49 will keep you posted on the 2016 pay raise in this newsletter, on our Web site, on Twitter (@nteu49) and our Facebook page (NTEU Chapter 49 Indiana).

**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!**

## ABOUT THOSE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST IRS TE/GE EMPLOYEES

The Oversight and Government Reform Committee of the US House of Representatives issued a report just before Christmas all about those allegations that IRS employees played games with some tax exempt applications for political reasons.

There have been plenty of charges flying around about this. We at Chapter 49 like to stick with the facts on an issue as important as this one. The report, the sixth issued by the committee in the past 14 months, reiterates what NTEU has consistently emphasized. That is, frontline IRS employees did not engage in unauthorized initiatives or actions.

NTEU also believes IRS workers did not act with political motivation in reviewing requests for tax exempt status. This has been confirmed by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) findings and the 30-day review conducted by the then-acting head of IRS, Danny Werfel.

Despite that fact that there have been many investigations and reports from Congress, TIGTA and the IRS about this matter, misinformation continues to fly in some media circles and (of course) in some places on the Internet.

We at Chapter 49 want you all to know there continues to be no evidence that frontline IRS employees reviewing applications for tax exempt status engaged in any unauthorized actions. There is no evidence any rank-and-file IRS worker acted with any political motivation.

## THE AWARDS SETTLEMENT

By now, you have likely seen the messages from Commissioner Koskinen and NTEU National President Colleen Kelley describing the settlement on the awards dispute. Allow us at Chapter 49 to outline a few important facts surrounding this agreement.

First, this is not what NTEU wanted. It is a compromise. It will get awards money to those that have already earned the award. NTEU wanted the awards to be paid out before the end of 2014 and that was one of the last of the unresolved issues. If NTEU had not reached this settlement, there is no way to know how long employees would be required to wait for their money. The legal stalemate could have dragged for months, even years, with employees still waiting to be paid. Being paid in March for awards that should have been issued last September

is hard to swallow, but the alternative of waiting endlessly was much worse.

If you want someone to blame this the recent awards fiasco, put the blame squarely on Congress. The cuts in agency budgets, such as IRS. impacts us all. The agency was having trouble funding awards. We think management could have handled this in a better way, but the whole thing is centered on a simple lack of money to run the agency.

If you have questions about this awards agreement, contact any Chapter 49 steward or officer. If we don't know the answer right away, we will find it for you.

If you want to have an impact on Congress, Chapter 49 has formed a Legislative Committee to engage our local elected officials on Capitol Hill. If you are interested in participating in this effort, contact Chapter 49 President Duncan Giles.

**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](http://WWW.NTEU.ORG), GET YOUR USER NAME & PASSWORD, AND EXPLORE THE MANY BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP.**



IRS employees at the Carmel office held a holiday gathering. If you have pictures of special events in your office, send them to a Chapter 49 officer or steward. We might just feature your picture in our next newsletter.

## IF YOU NEED HELP

If you need help, or just have a question about your work place or NTEU, feel free to contact one of our officers or stewards. It is usually best to contact a steward in your office. The officers are listed on the first page of this newsletter. A listing of all officers and stewards is provided on our Web site, [www.nteu49.org](http://www.nteu49.org)

Our Chief Steward is Pam Clayton. You can contact her by phone at 317-685-7814. You can always contact the Chapter 49 Union Office in Indianapolis at 317-685-7635. If no one is in the office, leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

**STAY IN TOUCH WITH CHAPTER 49**

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