

September 2016

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I BELONG

NTEU



“I ask all of you to join our fight, to make your voices heard and make your actions count through our union. It is only by working together that we will have the power to make a difference and the power to change lives.”

Tony Reardon
NTEU National President

www.nteu.org

SAVE THE DATE

**Chapter 68 Bi-Annual
Membership Meeting**

Oct. 19th from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
(details on page # 3)

A graphic featuring white silhouettes of a group of people of various heights against a black background. Below this is a red horizontal bar with the word "Celebrate" in white. Underneath the red bar is the phrase "the work of our hands" in a white script font. At the bottom is a dark blue horizontal bar with the words "Labor Day" in white.

From the Chapter President's Desk ...

NTEU Members,

As we recently had a long weekend and celebrated the holiday called Labor Day, it makes me think about the many things that laborers and labor unions in particular brought to us. Before labor unions, like NTEU, 40 hour work weeks, overtime payments, minimum wage, and paid leave never existed.

I also think about what our union, NTEU, has brought us. Specifically, NTEU has negotiated a solid awards system. Remember, without NTEU, in 2013, management attempted to unilaterally cancel the awards program. You work for these awards and you deserve them, but it is **ONLY** through NTEU that we are able to receive these awards. I have recently been asked about the awards and we expect them to be paid out sometime during the 1st quarter of FY 2017, (aka; October, November or December 2016). I am optimistic that they will be paid out no later than November.

I also think about telework. Without NTEU, the opportunity for flexiplace and telework wouldn't exist! NTEU fought and won these opportunities and are still fighting to expand them. NTEU is optimistic that an agreement should be finalized soon and telework will be coming to CSR's. There was a deadlock on the negotiations which would have put CSR's at risk and NTEU was not willing to budge and sign a bad agreement. We are hopeful that this situation has been rectified and we will be hearing about this situation soon.

The contract is 263 pages in total and is representative of what your union does for you. Unfortunately, through additional scrutiny from Congress and the public, as well as falling budgets, things have gotten tough for Federal Employees. However, what is important to recognize is that without NTEU, and without the contract, management would be able to make unilateral decisions which could harm employees without any recourse.

The only way to have a stronger voice is to join hands and speak as one. Many people use NTEU negotiated benefits on a daily basis without being a member. Sadly though, if we all thought like that there wouldn't be a union and there wouldn't be benefits. As always, I ask you to join us and be part of the solution... without you we are weaker. With all of you, we could move mountains. See your area steward or come to the office. For just about \$1 a day you can be a part of making your benefits and your voice stronger.

I also want to recognize a date that has sadly become part of our nation's history, Sept. 11th. This year marks the 15th anniversary and many of us remember exactly where we were when the towers went down. In remembrance of 9-11, I ask all of you to think about the friends and loved ones lost on this tragic day. Even if you personally do not have someone who was lost, please remember those who may. I also want to take a second and remember the first responders... the Police, the Fire Dept., the EMT's, the doctors, our Military and any others who were activated or volunteered to help when our nation was in desperate need.

**In Solidarity,
Gary Karibian**



NTEU CHAPTER 68 BI-ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

WHEN: Wednesday, October 19, 2016

TIME: 5:00pm–9:00pm

Buffet dinner will be provided

WHERE: Longmeadow Golf & Country Club
165 Havilah St Lowell MA

MUST R.S.V.P. by Friday, October 7

by e-mail at nteu.chapter.68@irs.gov or

by phone at 978–783–8426

You must use your own time
for this meeting.



NTEU
The National Treasury Employees Union
Chapter 68

FEGLI Enrollment Period Open September 1st-30th

A rare open enrollment period for the federal government's group life insurance program is scheduled for the month of September. Through the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) program, employees can receive life insurance coverage at group rates. Generally, employees must enroll in FEGLI when first hired. There is not an annual open season for the life insurance benefit; the last open season was 12 years ago. While the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is charged with running the program and setting premium rates, OPM contracts with Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife) to provide the insurance coverage. In fiscal year 2013, more than 75,000 death and dismemberment claims were paid, totaling \$2.7 billion in benefit payments. The open season allows employees, including those who previously turned down the insurance, to enroll without a qualifying life event or taking a physical exam. Overall insurance levels can be adjusted during the open season as well.

Here is what is available:

Basic coverage: life insurance coverage equal to your annual basic pay, plus \$2,000. The cost for this is shared between you and the government, with you paying 2/3 of the cost and the government picking up the remaining 1/3 of the premiums.

Optional coverage: additional options for higher levels of coverage and an option to cover eligible children. These options are paid fully by you at the group rates.

Things to consider:

Insurance coverage selected during the open season is not effective until Oct. 1, 2017. You must have FEGLI coverage for five years in order to carry it into retirement. So, if you elect coverage during this open season, and want to have it after you retire, you must stay employed with the federal government until 2022. Employees who enroll during the open season but retire or leave the federal government before the Oct. 1, 2017, effective coverage date are considered not covered. Retirees are not eligible for the open season; although some rehired annuitants may be.

Get additional information from your personnel office or the OPM website (www.opm.gov) to understand fully the coverage, rates and any restrictions. OPM has a FEGLI calculator that can help determine the costs of various amounts of coverage. FEGLI has been in existence since 1954. It is the largest group life insurance program in the world, covering more than 4 million federal employees and retirees, as well family members.

Quick tips

Probably everyone will need sick leave at one time or another. Some will need it unexpectedly, others will need it to cover long absences, and still others to cover short, repeated absences from chronic illnesses. Sick leave is one of your most important benefits! Do you know all your rights to use it

TRUE or FALSE Sick Leave Quiz: test your contract knowledge.

- 1) You can charge sick leave in as little as 15-minute increments?
Answer: True – (Article 34 Section 1)
- 2) If you become ill before your workday begins, you must notify your supervisor before your shift? Answer: False —Unless otherwise incapacitated, employees have up to 2 hours after the start of their TOD to call in sick. (Article 34 Section 2B)
- 3) I was out sick for 3 days, my manager needs medical documentation or a doctor's note.
Answer, False —Except in the instance of a leave restriction letter, doctor's notes or medical documentation is only required for more than 3 days. (Article 34 Section A, B & E)
- 4) I am vacationing in the Bahamas, I have been stung by a jellyfish and now bedridden in my hotel room. I can change my annual leave to sick leave. Answer: True —. However, you should contact management as soon as you become sick. (Article 34 Section 5)
- 5) Employees who do not have enough sick leave must be charged AWOL? Answer: False — if an employee needs more leave to cover their absence, he/she may receive advance sick leave if they meet the criteria. (Article 34 Section 6)



Membership Drive



There are a lot of good reasons to become an NTEU member.

Now, **extra cash** is one of them!

Through September 30th

New members receive **\$50** upon joining NTEU

New **AND** existing members will be entered into

a raffle for one of four **\$50** Visa Cash Cards!

ASL:

Sept. 21st and

Sept. 28th

12:30 - 1 pm

and

5 -5:30 pm

Join us! Our table is near the Café Area on Wednesdays.

Sept. 21st, and 28th from 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

and 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.



NTEU **WORKING FOR A BETTER FUTURE**

TOPSFIELD FAIR Tickets

...soon to be available in the NTEU office!

Discounted Tickets are \$8.00 per person.

Dates of the Fair are 9/30/16 thru 10/10/16.

Enjoy New England agriculture, entertainment, events, and great **“fair style foods and rides”**.

NTEU Working For You at the IRS

NTEU is continuing its work to make sure all members are treated equally and rewarded fairly for their efforts here at the Internal Revenue Service. We have an update to share on one long-standing issue: the Quality Step Increase Program.

The situation began in 2009, when NTEU brought forth grievances arguing that Quality Step Increases were being granted in a discriminatory manner. To settle these grievances, the IRS committed to a target rate of 10% for awarding QSI's. Recently, during negotiations for the current contract, the IRS exercised their reserved right to rescind that commitment and resume the use of their sole discretion in determining which eligible employees will receive QSIs.

NTEU leadership fought to have the commitment honored, reminding the IRS that the lack of objective standards for the distribution of these awards all but ensures discrimination will resume. NTEU leadership has already requested data on the current distribution of QSIs to determine if the old discriminatory practices are already back in play.

Further, NTEU has filed a grievance to challenge the IRS's decision to only grant QSIs during the first quarter of the fiscal year. NTEU believes that OPM's regulations on these awards make it clear that QSIs “should be made effective as soon as practicable after it is approved”, regardless of quarter. We expect this grievance to be arbitrated this winter.

Stay tuned for updates as they become available!

—Devon Mercer-DeFillippi
Steward & Account Management CSR

2017 PAY

STILL UNDECIDED

In moving forward the Financial Services and General Government funding measure, the Senate Appropriations Committee was silent on the amount of a federal



That bill sometimes includes specific language on the pay hike. Since it is silent, it allows the president's proposed 1.6 percent raise to go into effect unless Congress takes other actions. NTEU believes that the president's proposal is too low and is working to increase congressional support for a 5.3% pay raise in January. Federal employees have seen little to no increases over the past six years, while prices for goods and services continue to rise. Over the same time frame, the private sector has averaged a 10.6% increase in wages. Legislation providing a 5.3% increase in January is pending in the House (H.R. 4585) & Senate (S.2699). *“NTEU members should reach out to their elected members of Congress and ask for their support,”* said National President Tony Reardon. *“Those calls and emails do make a difference!”*

STEWARDS SPOTLIGHT!

Devon Mercer -DeFillippi

WHY DID YOU BECOME A STEWARD? It just makes sense to me to use my organizational abilities and communication skills to be the best ally I can be to my coworkers. We're all in this together!

WHERE (WHICH DEPT DO YOU WORK IN & HOW LONG)? I've been a Customer Service Representative in the Accounts Management department for almost five years, though I'm looking forward to becoming a certified instructor this fall and teaching a "new generation" of CSRs.

WHEN DID YOU JOIN THE UNION & WHY ? I signed up about ten minutes after getting the forms at new hire training! Both of my grandfathers and several aunts and uncles were unionized dockworkers and hospital employees. I know it's just good sense to organize for our common benefit.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER BU MEMBERS? Being a diligent, cooperative, excellent employee doesn't mean doing whatever your manager asks of you. It means listening carefully, chipping in when you can, and standing firm when something doesn't sound right or fair.

MOST MEMORABLE INCIDENT AS A UNION REP W/ EMPLOYEE? I love attending town halls and engagement days for other departments. It's always fun to learn how other functions work and where our jobs "fit together" in the grand scheme of things. There's always another side to the story, and I like to know what a taxpayer might experience after I transfer a call to Exam, AUR, or CSCO.

WHY SHOULD BU EMPLOYEES JOIN THE UNION? because every member on our rolls makes us a more formidable force! When we all stand together, management has to listen to us more closely, and we have more power to create the change, which is much needed.



UNITED BENEFITS

will be coming to **ANDOVER**

October 24th thru Oct 28th.

We will have more details on times and locations for their popular classes and when and where you can meet with them for one on one benefit and financial assistance.

You may receive up to 4 hours of Admin. Time (990-59300) per a calendar year with manager approval. (Read Article 36 Section 11)

Our Core Values

Our vision should reflect these core values of our union:

- * Ongoing active internal and external organizing to strengthen our voice.
- * The best representation in the federal sector.
- * Responsible stewardship of our union's resources.
- * Innovation and creativity.
- * Measured risks.
- * The encouragement of robust debate.
- * A transparent, efficient and ethical enterprise.
- * A diverse and inclusive Organization.
- * A highly talented and engaged workforce.
- * Integrity, hard work, quality and consistency.
- * A learning organization that taps the knowledge of the entire organization.

Maternity / Paternity

Leave and FMLA

It is not unusual for new and expecting parents who are working for the IRS to use FMLA leave during pregnancy, and during the first few months of their child's life. This is great, and it can certainly come in very handy for a great number of new parents, but it can also help to exhaust FMLA leave balances quickly. In a lot of these cases, the new moms and dads have FMLA needs beyond pregnancy and parenthood. That is why it is important to note that the NTEU/IRS contract allows for maternity and paternity leave outside of FMLA leave. For new mothers, the contract allows for "an additional six months of leave for maternity reasons" in addition to any leave under FMLA. For new fathers, the contract allows for "a reasonable period of time for the purpose of assisting or caring for his minor children or the mother of his newborn child while she is incapacitated for maternity reasons". We have seen many cases where employees have returned to work after bringing a new life into the world with their annual FMLA allotment exhausted, while they still have other underlying FMLA needs. It doesn't have to be this way. You can use the maternity or paternity leave that you are entitled to while preserving some of your FMLA balance. If you or your partner are expecting a child, and have leave concerns, please come to the NTEU office or seek your favorite steward for more information about it.



~**Rob MacFarlane** *Night Shift Chief Steward and Executive Coordinator*



Under the Hatch Act, there are many ways that federal employees can engage in partisan political activity and only a handful of activities to avoid.

Federal employees may:

- **Register and vote as they choose.**
- **Wear political buttons (except in government buildings, wearing a government uniform or while on duty).**
- **Sign petitions, including nomination petitions.**
- **Assist in voter registration drives.**
- **Express opinions about all candidates and issues, privately and publicly.**
- **Display a political affiliation in their social media profile information.**
- **Display a political party, campaign logo, or candidate picture as their profile or cover picture on their personal Facebook or Twitter account.**
- **Run for election to a non-partisan office.**
- **Run for office within party organizations and affiliated groups.**
- **Attend political conventions, rallies, and meetings as an elected representative of a partisan organization.**
- **Contribute to TEPAC or other political organizations or attend a political fundraising function.**
- **Solicit contributions to TEPAC from another NTEU member provided that the contributor is not a subordinate employee.**

Take advantage of your rights!

NOTE: Spouses and other members of an employee's family may engage in all forms of partisan political activities.



A listing of the handful of political activities to avoid to be compliant with HATCH ACT!

Federal Employees ma not:

- Be candidates for partisan public office.
- Use their official position to influence election results.
- Use an official social media account to engage in political activity.
- Engage in political activity in government buildings or while on duty (including using government e-mail systems to distribute political messages or posting on social media).
- Collect, solicit or receive any financial contributions from the general public through written, oral, email, or social media communications.

Opportunities for federal employees to join in the political process were virtually non-existent until NTEU led the effort to expand ways for federal employees to participate in the nation’s civic life.

The union secured significant reforms to the Hatch Act and opened up the process to federal employees. The original statute prohibited nearly all partisan political activities for federal employees, outside of voting. NTEU-initiated reforms expanded the range of activities that federal employees can take part in to include participating in phone banks and sending endorsement mailings, as well as holding lunchtime meetings and voter registration drives.

All Members, stay informed! Please fill out this form and send to NTEU Stop 935.

GOT e-MAIL

Name: _____

Home e-mail: _____

Home mailing address: _____

Did you know that NTEU keeps all their members informed via home e-mail?

You will not be inundated with junk mail, nor will we share your information outside

Of NTEU. You can also log in to **NTEU.ORG or **NTEUCH68.ORG** to update your personnel info.**



Legislative Corner

As your chapter's legislative coordinator, part of my duties, is to be engaged by keeping members informed and motivated. You can make a significant impact on issues, through knowledge of the legislative process, as it affects your workplace, pay, benefits, and your every day working life.

Let's discuss facts on your pay. You may think that the proposed 2016 pay raise of 1.6% is paltry, and that there is nothing you can do about it. Well, you are Wrong!

So What Can You Do?... Visit www.NTEU.org's Legislative Action Center.

*NTEU's Legislative Action Center
5 Easy Steps at NTEU.org will make your voice heard!*

- 1) *Go to NTEU's Legislative Issues' page.*
- 2) *Select Action Alerts and choose the key issue.*
- 3) *Review and sign the available letter and feel free to add a personal note.*
- 4) *Complete your address information.*
- 5) *Send message.*

Warning: Do NOT use your government email address or government computers when sending a message through the Action Alerts. This must be done on your personal computer, IPAD, or Smartphone, and on your own time!

One side note: NTEU legislative is soliciting members to join their efforts in getting out the vote through activities such as making "member to member" phone calls in the NTEU's call program. You will be contacted by your chapter's legislative coordinator or the NTEU folks to engage in volunteer opportunities. If you are interested in volunteering, sign up today to volunteer by contacting,

***Nell Arndt, legislative coordinator**
@ nteuchapter68legislative@gmail.com.*



Do you know a non-member?

They may tell you that they can't afford to join NTEU because it costs too much! *Here are a couple of reasons why they should change their mind and join us!*

- ◆ Over the years, federal employees have received thousands of dollars in pay increases because of NTEU's efforts. The lengthy and deep recession, however, has combined with SEQUESTRATION to put a different face on the pay fight. One of NTEU's top goals is to get the federal employee pay raise back on track.
- ◆ **Equate dues to buying insurance.** "You don't know when you will need it, but you don't wait until your house is burning to try to buy fire insurance. Hopefully, you'll never need it, but it's insurance just in case."



Religious Compensative Time

Employees whose personal religious beliefs require they abstain from work during certain periods may request time off to meet their religious obligations. Employees may elect to work religious compensatory time (RCT) to make up for their absence or they may request annual leave, leave without pay (LWOP), previously earned compensatory time earned in lieu of overtime, or previously earned credit hours. They may also request a change to their regularly scheduled tour of duty to accommodate their personal religious beliefs.

Religious compensatory hours approved and worked in lieu of the normal work schedule do not entitle employees to premium pay, e.g., overtime, Sunday pay, holiday pay, or night pay differential.

Advanced RCT will be repaid within a reasonable amount of time (generally 120 days). The employee and manager will establish a repayment plan and if the RCT is not repaid within the specified time period in the plan, the time outstanding will be converted to annual leave or LWOP, as appropriate. The time to repay will be extended if the failure to comply with the repayment plan was through no fault of the employee. The plan should be annotated with the revised dates and times the employee will work to repay the advanced RCT.

Lynne Allen

National Vice President – District 9
and Chief Steward – Day shift

BJ'S Wholesale Club

- ◆ Savings on:
- ◆ Gas
- ◆ Groceries
- ◆ Clothing
- ◆ Housewares
- ◆ Toys
- ◆ Appliances
- ◆ Mattresses
- ◆ Fresh Bakery
- ◆ Beer & Wine
- ◆ Electronics
- ◆ Watches
- ◆ Eye Glasses
- ◆ And so much more!

Would you like to become a member of
BJ's Wholesale Club?

If you are an NTEU Member, than you can
receive a discount offer.

**This offer is for NEW BJ's Memberships
and must be done through **Chapter 68,**
not the store.**

\$35.00 for 13 months regular club program.

\$75.00 for 13 months rewards program.

**Good Things happen when you join
NTEU and BJ's Wholesale Club!**

BJ's Wholesale Club has changed their renewal process
for corporations and group benefits.

They are offering a

one time renewal for all NTEU Chapter 68 Members.

It doesn't matter if your membership is up soon or next year.

You can renew NOW for this onetime offer.

Must be done through Chapter 68 for this offer, not at the store.

\$35.00 for 13 month regular club program (reg. \$50/12 mos)

\$75.00 for 13 month rewards program (reg. \$100.00/12 mos)

After this one time offer, all renewals will be done in the store or on
their website at their regular renewal prices.

We will let you know the dates and times a BJ's Rep will be here onsite.



NTEU

The National Treasury Employees Union

The Guardian Newsletter Committee

**Co-Editors: Gary Karibian and
Barbara Thomas**

**Committee: Beth Willerth
Josh Marcus
Elaine Renuad**

Phone: 978-783-8426

**E-mail: nteu.chapter.68@irs.gov
or**

Barbara.Thomas@irs.gov

**Or send your comments, topics,
or suggestions to
Barbara Thomas @ Stop 935**

Chapter 68 Officers

**Union Office located at:
ANSC Stop 935 (Room 1106)**

Gary Karibian, President 978-783-8425

Maria Zangari, Vice President 978-783-8423

Robert (Bob) Harrington, Secretary 978-783-8426

Noelia (Nellie) Batista, Treasurer 978-783-9425

**Rob MacFarlane, Exec. Coord & NIS Chief Steward
978-783-8426**

Nell Arndt, Membership Trustee 978-783-9268

Barbara Thomas (Doumaney), 978-783-8426

Lynne Allen, (District 9) National VP 978-684-4424

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 4186

**Ballardvale Station
Andover, MA 01810**

NEW OFFICE # 978-783-8426

NEW FAX # 978-783-8551

Chapter 68 Members Parking Raffle

**Next pass will be valid for October 01st through November 30th
Please fill in and send to STOP 935 before Sept 21st.**

Members

Name: _____

TOD: _____

Phone Extension: _____