

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM NTEU for IRS Employees

July 14, 2006

The Straight Story about the IRS Contract Expiration ... Continued

Yesterday, the IRS told employees that it had no legal authority to continue to offer health benefits to seasonal employees who work less than six months. The IRS said NTEU



misrepresented the issue when I said that it was a “shameful decision on the agency’s part” to discontinue

health benefits for these employees, who often become permanent employees.

The IRS knew that by letting the contract expire the health benefits to seasonal employees would discontinue. The IRS insisted on removing the automatic contract extension clause in the last round of negotiations. Despite repeated requests by NTEU to rollover the current contract before our collective bargaining agreement expired on June 30, 2006, the IRS refused. The IRS had and continues to have the legal authority to extend the contract for another year and to continue to provide now-impacted seasonal employees with health insurance for each rollover period. Because the IRS willfully refused to continue the contract while the parties engaged in negotiations over a new agreement, the agency now must conform to OPM regulations and withhold health insurance from seasonal employees who are expected to work less than six months.

The IRS knew full well that if it let the contract expire, its employees

would be deprived of these important health benefits. Its action is just further evidence of how IRS management is using employees as pawns to try to gain leverage in the next round of contract negotiations. To add insult to injury, the IRS, rather than showing accountability for its own decision, is hiding behind OPM regulations to justify its actions.

Today, the IRS sent another message to employees announcing that it was “streamlining” the process by which you can withdraw from the union. This is an illegal action and NTEU will immediately be filing a

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national grievance. The IRS would like nothing better than to have complete control over your work lives without having to answer to NTEU. It is apparent that NTEU is too successful at representing you and IRS would like to curtail our success by attacking the hard-fought negotiated benefits we have won over the years. I am confident employees know which organization has their best interest at heart and will not be fooled by IRS’s transparent efforts to erode employees’ rights and undermine employee support of NTEU.

In other contract-related matters, we have heard that some managers are telling employees that because the contract has expired certain rights

and benefits have expired. All the important terms and conditions of your employment remain unchanged. If someone tells you otherwise, they are wrong. Your rights to an Alternative Work Schedule (AWS), a fair performance appraisal, sick leave and Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) remain intact. And, NTEU can and will continue to enforce your rights through the grievance process.

In early August, we are moving into a new round of contract negotiations with the IRS. IRS management would like nothing more to take away additional rights and benefits and send your work to private contractors. In spite of the damage it will do to the public confidence in the IRS, the IRS is moving full speed ahead to turn taxpayer cases over to private collection agencies next month. The IRS also continues to take actions that are harmful to employees such as the L&E redesign and RIF, the estate and gift reorganization, contracting out the Files work and eliminating instructor bonuses. At a time like this, your participation in NTEU is more important than ever. We need every IRS employee to stand with us. NTEU is here to protect your rights, your benefits and your job.

If you really want the straight story, talk to your NTEU officers or stewards and stand up for your rights by standing with NTEU.

Colleen M. Kelley
National President

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