



## Chapter 73's Award Winning Hard Hitting Newsletter

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### Snow Storm Hits Greater Cincinnati IRS Responds With Lack of Concern

January 27th and 28th saw over six inches of snow fall plus an over night ice storm. Road were dangerous and a check of the internet traffic saw accidents along I75, I71, I275 and I471. Traffic through the cut in the hill was at a stand still. Newscasters and highway treatment personnel were telling drivers to stay home if you can. Counties were either a level 2 or 3 emergency.

IRS Employees when calling the emergency hotline up until ten-thirty AM on the 28th they heard the mellow voice of Tom Miller stating that the IRS Service Center is open for business as usual today. No liberal

leave just the inference to get yourself to work at all costs. Pictured is the Doppler weather radar of the conditions at 6:38 AM on January 27th. It shows the area buried in the snow system with sleet and ice to our south. That front moved northeastward and brought the sleet and ice into our area. Behind that was another band of heavy snow.

The question is what would a reasonable and responsible person do? One may present the argument that the work needs to be processed. Is the movement of the inventory worth a human life? Is a shorter wait on the toll free number worth a human life? Obviously, IRS management votes against human life. That may be harsh, but their actions shout this at the top of their lungs. By not declaring

liberal leave, the Senior Commissioner Representative is applying pressure to employees to risk their lives and report to work. It is *The Force's* opinion that this action by management is reckless at the least if not negligent. The problem is that they can make these decisions without being held responsible for the consequences. That seems criminal.



If employees decide not to risk their lives in adverse weather conditions NTEU 73 recommends that the employee complete the "Request for Administrative Leave Due to Inclement Weather". Make sure you state all efforts you made in your attempts to

come to work. If your request is denied then if you can grieve management's decision. Remember that you only have 15 days to grieve the decision and the request for the administrative leave should be made within 48 hours after returning to work. Upon request, your manager must provide you with the form. Most of all be safe.

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## Straight From The President's Desk

By Jackie Huff Chapter 73 President

As a beloved local sports legend would have said we are rounding third and heading home. This describes where we are in the bargaining process of our new National Agreement. January 26th we began a three week hearing process before mediators and arbitrators. Even though we have spent seven weeks negotiating the new agreement almost 30 articles remained unsigned. Unfortunately, they are some of the most important issues.

### Awards

On top of the lists are the employee awards. NTEU made a strong case for increasing the money for employees' negotiated performance awards while simplifying the negotiated awards system to make it more equitable. Sadly, the management team could not explain how IRS is organized today. No one on the other side of the table could explain each division's organizational structure, who works for whom or even where all the IRS executives are located.

### Promotions

Discussions on the promotion system covered automating the system; giving employees equal access to computers to use it; and how much weight an employee's performance appraisal should have as part of his or her overall promotion scores. Management wants to limit the impact of your current appraisal to only 10 percent of your overall pro-

motion score and let the computer develop the other 90 percent of the score based on questions you answer online. Right now, an employee's appraisal score amounts to 60 percent of the total promotion score. NTEU's team pointed out that management's plan sends a message to employees that performing at a high level is not the basis for promotions—and that would be a disaster for everyone. It would also give an advantage to employees who were more proficient using computers and navigating through the application process.

### Schedules, Leave and More

The NTEU team also spent hours trying to more than double the number of employees eligible for Flexi place and AWS; improving employee rights to use leave; outlawing several pre-selection games some managers have implemented; increasing employees' rights to reassign to more desirable locations when vacancies arise; boosting the number of seasonal employees who get health benefits; and dozens of other issues.

This is very complicated, fast-moving, high-stakes collective bargaining that will set working conditions for nearly 90,000 employees. The arbitration hearing is going to last at least another week, maybe longer if needed. If talks continue beyond this week, a panel of three arbitrators will hear arguments and evidence from both sides and decide what the final contract should contain.

Fortunately, NTEU has more experience with this kind of bargaining than any other union in the nation. With team members from around the country and across the

IRS, we have a broad perspective on what needs to improve. Together with the legal skill and bargaining expertise from our Negotiations Department, NTEU is capable of achieving the best possible outcome for IRS employees.

During this phase of the negotiating process both sides will present their final proposals and present evidence to support their positions to the arbitrators and mediators. These will be marathon sessions generally lasting 12 hours a day, seven days per week.

### Locally

This also a busy time for your Chapter, as IRS is holding new employee orientations both in Covington and at the Florence IRRC building. A team of Chapter 73's office staff and stewards which is headed by myself, Debbie Wilson and Tammy Donaldson from the membership committee, are spending 45 minutes with the new hires showing them a video and explaining what NTEU is all about. This is a very important duty as these new members add to our strength and numbers. From these new members will come future stewards and Chapter leaders. These orientations are scheduled to go through March 9th.

We have recently added a number of new stewards on both day and nights. The Chapter's training coordinator, Heather Phillips has setup weekly training classes in February to give them intense initial training in order to provide you, the bargaining employee, with quality representation.

### **Writers Wanted**

Do you have writing skills?  
Do you have information that is newsworthy?

Submit your article to **The Force**. If your article is accepted, we will print it with or without your name attached; your choice.

Email your submission to [NTEU73mailbox@aol.com](mailto:NTEU73mailbox@aol.com) or bring it to the Union office. Identify it as "article for The Force" **The Force** reserves the right to edit all articles it prints.

### **NTEU73 Union Office Hours**

#### **Fourth Street Office**

Monday—Friday 7:30 A.M.—1:00 A.M.  
(859) 669-5370

#### **Gateway Center Office Room 511**

Monday—Friday 6:00 A.M.—4:00 P.M. & 7:30 P.M.—11:00 P.M.  
(859) 669-5700

#### **Industrial Road Retention Center**

Monday—Friday 7:00 AM.—3:30 P.M.  
(859) 669-5024

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Items For Sale, Trade, or FREE. Apartments and Houses for rent or sale along with vehicle sales, trades and anything else you would like to get rid of etc. Place your articles on the [www.NTEU73.org](http://www.NTEU73.org) for all members to see. Advertisements will be kept on the web site for 30 days. Get on the Web site and see what has already been posted or follow the instructions to place an ad of your own.

**Listen to Chapter 73 NTEU Minutes on Artists Club Radio**

**<http://artistsclub.tripod.com>**

### **The Force**

"NTEU73's Hard Hitting Newsletter"

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*"To Organize Employees to Work Together To Ensure That Every Federal Employee Is Treated With Dignity and Respect."*

## Smart ID Strikes Out

Heather Phillips

Strike 1, strike 2, strike 3 and strike 4 most batters get 3 strikes and they are out. IRS is still up at the plate after 4 strikes. The smart ID badges are not worth the trouble. I have gone four times at the IRS request to have my badge activated and four times I have gotten a sync error. What is the problem? Why are we using a system that doesn't meet our needs and is proving itself as unreliable?

The employees that work in areas that require additional security must wear two badges, the smart ID and the traditional badge with the yellow background. Why, because the smart ID does not currently have the capability to administer different levels of security. This is progress?

Then you have employees who are experiencing the same problem I am. We get an email then we have to take time from our day to trek to the badge room go through the activation process to get the red line appear and the immortal words "sync error". This just happened to me for the fourth time. It would be a joke if it wasn't typical of the IRS follies.

Then we have the employees who received their invitation to have their glamour shot session and the opportunity to submit their finger prints and answer the intrusive questions asked in the name of security. These employees are out there in limbo waiting to receive their badges. Maybe we need to tell them "we don't need no stinking badges."

Join NTEU

## Florence Office Elevated to Full time Status

NTEU Chapter 73's President Jackie Huff has announced that Heather Phillips will be stationed permanently at the Florence Union Office. Along with Assistant Chief Steward Peggi Liver and the Florence steward force will be available to address the issues of the bargaining unit employees at the Florence Industrial Road Retention Center and the Annex building. This was necessitated with the influx of bargaining employees due to the files function coming back under control of the IRS. NTEU strives to provide our members with the best service possible. If you are not currently a member please consider becoming one. This can be done as easily as see an NTEU steward or coming to the office.

# Time to get your ducks in a row. Your income is Important - Protect it.

Don't miss out on our income protection plan.  
Enrolling now, you can qualify for:

- ◆ Up to 66% of your income - Max. \$2000 monthly.
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Nathan at American Insurnet 513-505-4488.



# Depression Or Recession?

By Heather Phillips  
Editor

Are we in a depression or a recession? There is an old joke that says the difference between a depression and a recession is when your neighbor is out of work it is a recession. When you are out of work it is a depression. There is some truth to that in that we judge events by how they affect us. Yet, the measuring stick most use is the Great Depression (1929 – 1939). So how do we stack up?

In 1929 the stock market was said to have crashed. What happened? In October 1929 the stock market crashed, wiping out 40 percent of the paper values of common stock. Even after the stock market collapse, however, politicians and industry leaders continued to issue optimistic predictions for the nation's economy. But the Depression deepened, confidence evaporated and many lost their life savings. By 1933 the value of stock on the New York Stock Exchange was less than a fifth of what it had been at its peak in 1929. Business houses closed their doors, factories shut down and banks failed. Farm income fell some 50 percent. By 1932 approximately one out of every four Americans was unemployed. Today, our economic woes saw investors lose 44% of the value of their portfolios in 2008.

The Dow Jones dropped from a high around 13,300 to a low of approximately 7,400. World markets fell accordingly. Why didn't the stock market crash? The U. S. government intervened and propped the market up to prevent that from happening with bailouts, something that wasn't done in 1929.

Unemployment in the Great depression saw millions of Americans were out of work by 1933. Bread lines were a common sight in most cities. Hundreds of thousands roamed the country in search

of food, work and shelter. "Brother, can you spare a dime?" went the refrain of a popular song. It was reported that one

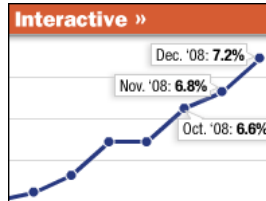
out of every four Americans were out of work. In December of

2008 the national unemployment rate was 7.2%, the highest since early 1993. The U.S. lost 2.6 million jobs. The problem with the way unemployment is measured is that it only takes into consideration those people who are drawing unemployment. Americans who either don't qualify or have drawn the benefit for the maximum number of weeks are not reflected in that rate. Does anyone actually know how many Americans are unemployed today?

During the Great Depression millions of Americans lost their homes unable to pay their mortgage payments. Americans were jobless, homeless and hungry. Compared to today? Foreclosures rose 81% in 2008, ensnaring 2.3 million U.S. households during the year, according to RealtyTrac Inc. Like in the 1930's many Americans are jobless, homeless and hungry.

So what is the prognosis? Call me an optimist but I believe the patient is critical, but not dead. We can be grateful that we have jobs, but with that we have responsibilities to our families and to those in need. We must be ready, willing and able to help those in need.

Finally, I have a prayer for our new President. I pray that God gives him the wisdom to know how to resolve our problems and the courage to walk the walk.



# This Shouldn't Happen Even to An IRS Employee

This morning I had a unique experience, I had to get a new decal. I knew I had to have one as I was selling my car. I acquired a new decal request form; I took it home. I trudged up the driveway with snow up to my ankles slipping and sliding on the ice. I swept the snow off the license plate; I got the number and slid back down the drive. I got in the old car and attempted to take the old decal off (I have been here a few years so I know they want this). It crumbled as I attempted to remove it. Thinking that the people in the badge room wouldn't want the tiny little pieces of paper. I fill out the form and the next morning I waited for the badge room to open. With my paper in my hot little hand, I was ready. Boy was I proud; I had it all the numbers, a completed form. WOW! I got down there and rang the bell. After waiting for several minutes while the badge room employees had their morning confab, the girl (who was HONESTLY NICE AND PLEASANT) asked me for the old decal. I told her in my nicest voice, that I had tried to take it off but it crumbled. She told me I should have gotten an envelope and held it under the decal while I scraped it off and let the pieces fall on the envelope and brought it in. Now, it is colder than a polar bear's nose out there and I risked life and limb to get the tag number now this one wanted me to bring an envelope to catch the pieces??? Who in the world is prepared for this one? Not me. To resolve the matter, I had to fill out a lost decal form, even though the decal wasn't lost. I was told to fill it out anyway. My concern turned to my car; it has no decal. I expressed this

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## IRS At Night

By Kelley Loetscher  
NTEU Steward

As the New Year reigns in with a New President, we all have many hopes for better things to come in the future. I began thinking about my right to privacy, as a taxpayer and employee and an American. For purposes here, I will reflect only on the workplace concerning some thoughts I have had about safety and privacy.

As far as Safety is concerned, none of us are immune to a threat, a fall, becoming a victim of theft or worse, I don't want to dwell on the negativity, I just want to comment on the need to always knowing your surroundings and keeping a special eye out for your personal property, safety, and those of others. Yes, others. If you see a potentially dangerous situation and can diffuse by reporting it to someone, or simply reminding an employee to lock up their personal items when they leave and not to leave valuables out in the open. The worst, of course, would be seeing a weapon, or hearing of some violence through threats made, heard, or observed. It is our responsibility to be a watchdog to keep our safety as great as it is. Don't become lackadaisical -don't assume it can't happen to you-on the way to work, parking, walking or on the way home.

Privacy is a much more complicated issue. Not only do I want my privacy respected. Confidential personnel issues should NEVER be passed on through management to other employees. I am also concerned about the taxpayer-which includes all of us as well. We must remember to never leave information about a taxpayer on our desks when we leave work. This belongs on your shelf or locked up. This even pertains to phone messages con-

## PRIVACY AND SAFETY FOR YOU AND THE TAXPAYER

taining EIN numbers and Social Security numbers. We do not want to leave them out where anyone can read them. You never know. There is so much Identity Theft; we are ultimately responsible for taxpayer information when it is in our control. Turn documents over when leaving your desk. When leaving from work, empty your white paper box and lock up any sensitive information. Since I have been trying to do this, I realize how easy it is to violate. For example-I discarded a phone message in the trash after calling the taxpayer...WHOOPS-any one could get that information. It might seem a bit far reaching to you, but it is right here and right now.

TITGA visited a Phoenix site and a number of employees were suspended, fired, disciplined and embarrassed. TITGA was shocked when every cabinet and drawer was not locked, not realizing we all don't have keys. This is where our job SAFETY comes into play. Protect yourself, your property and those of the taxpayers. Just a reminder to all of you that place a value on your privacy, safety and that of others.

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## The NTEU SWAPPER

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310-1964 Available about 15 October  
2008.

Disk Jockey Wanted

NTEU is currently accepting bids from  
disk jockeys for the annual membership  
picnic at Stricker's Grove in Ross  
Ohio. If you are a professional disk  
jockey you may call (859) 669-5370  
for the details.

The NTEU Swapper is a part of NTEU  
73 website and offers members an op-  
portunity to advertize without charge.

## Our Readers Have Spoken

Heather Phillips  
Editor

Last month we asked you to vote Horse's Butt or the Contract Violator Devil. The over whelming choice was the Horse's Butt. However, this month I am departing from targeting managers who violate employee's rights to another serious matter. Recently in the news have been a number of nominees for National positions who have tax compliance issues. Most have withdrawn their names from consideration when their tax problem has come to light. However, one notable exception is Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner who was confirmed after admitting he owed \$34,000.00 in back taxes. At the IRS, from day one we are told that as employees we are held to a higher standard in regards to tax compliance. RRA 98 requires for stiff penalties for willful non filing or payment of taxes. Each year the IRS holds formal meetings to remind us of our obligation to file and pay our taxes. As union stewards we not only attend these meetings, but also we are

with employees when they are interviewed over their tax problems. Proposal letters are issued and we find ourselves defending employees from disciplinary or adverse actions which can be as severe as removal from the Service. How can the IRS act in good faith to discipline employees when the head of its parent department didn't pay his taxes. Is it double standards? No, it is hypocrisy. So Mr. Secretary this butt is for you.

**NTEU Proudly  
Presents This  
Month's  
Horse's  
Award To**



**Secretary  
Timothy Geithner**

## What Employees Should Know

Too many times an employee comes to the union office with an issue, while we are getting the facts it becomes known that the time frames have expired. When this happens our hands become tied. Lets look at some of the more common areas and the time frames. Management presents the employee with a letter proposing a suspension, downgrade or removal. It will state that the proposed action will occur in 30 days of the date of the letter. You have one of two time frames that you must meet if you are to challenge this action. The First is 7 calendar days. This is for you or the union to request an oral reply. If that is missed, you or the union has 15 calendar days to request a written reply. Miss these and you are dead in the water. Grievances are 15 work days from the time you became aware that you were harmed. Another area of concern is when you receive a leave or counseling letter. Many of these are illegally or improperly drafted. Bring these letters to the union office immediately.

### Attention NTEU 73 Members!!!!

**The NTEU 73 Chapter election is in April of 2009. If you have moved please furnish us with your address to insure you will receive your ballot. If so, you should complete this address change form and return it to:**

**NTEU 73  
Union Office.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Home email**

\_\_\_\_\_

**(street)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**(city)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**(state)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**(zip)**

**Note: IRS Personnel does NOT inform NTEU when they are given a change of address form by an employee who is also an NTEU member. It is your responsibility to get your new address to the union so that you may continue to receive any mailings.**

# Where Should I Go?

Mike Murphy  
Safety Committee

Do you where your shelter in place is? Do you know what it is?

Shelter In Place, or in the vernacular of the Government SIP is defined as. A room or area designed for employees to go to in case of certain emergencies. Such an emergency could be: Biological or chemical related, civil disturbances or natural disasters. Locations should be away from windows and predestinated by your manager. PA announcements will direct the Area Wardens to take appropriate action and the employees to go to their Shelter In Place. (SIP)

Employees may want to have a personal emergency kit to cover 72 hours. The kit may include:  
Extra medicine that you may need  
A small amount of bottled water  
A small amount of food  
Other personal comfort items

The business unit office or somewhere in the work areas will have the following items on hand:  
Portable radio  
Flashlights

Extra batteries

If you do not know the location of your work units Shelter In Place Location ask your manager.

In the unlikely event of an actual emergency, it is the individual employee's responsibility to know where the SIP areas are and to have no less that two means of egress for your workplace. If an actual emergency were to arise there will be confusion, no matter how often we drill someone will inevitably ask "where do I go, what do I do?"

During an actual emergency is not the time to find out what to do, this type of hesitation can and will be the cause for injury or death.

Your safety Committee is in negotiating with management to see if we can get as many SIP drills a year as the fire drills. This will help cement in our minds of what to do if we do have to Shelter In Place.

So ask your manager where your SIP is located in your area and if the SIP Kit is ready available. Not locked up in a manager's office.



## *It Shouldn't happen* continued from Page 5

concerned to the girl in the badge room. She said "OH just tell the guard and they won't give you a ticket". I walked to the guard station and told him and he handed me a piece of paper and instructed me to write the tag number down. I remembered the first three numbers (HAPPY, HAPPY, JOY, JOY I REMEMBERED SOMETHING) not good enough. I needed the whole number. I tried to plea my case as I told him that I am the car parked in the ONLY space facing the bridge. It didn't matter he needed the entire number. Remember it is cold and icy, I was not about to go to the locker to get my coat and walk across the street to get the (&\*^&\*^ number, go back across the street, hang up the coat. I told the guard that it is ridiculous what you have to go through just to get a NEW DECAL. I think next time I'll just keep the old car.



Desk Coffee Mug  
\$5.00

Water Bottle  
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\$2.00

Available at your nearest NTEU Chapter 73 Office