

## Taxpayers Employees and NTEU Win

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Internal Revenue Commissioner Doug Shulman announced on March 6th that the Internal Revenue Service was not renewing the contracts with the private collection agencies. Mr. Shulman stated "As I have conducted town hall meetings across the country, IRS employees have frequently asked me about the private debt collection program, which I know has received a lot of attention over the last several years. Today, I want to let you know that we have decided not to renew the private debt collection contracts with two private collection agencies." Mr. Shulman cited several reasons for this decision at the top of the list was the fact that IRS employees can do the collection work more efficiently and more cost effective than the private collectors. This is a Battle cry that NTEU has put forth on numerous occasions. Not only has NTEU



been voicing this message to Congress, but we have had a valuable ally in the Taxpayer Advocate on this crusade. For the last few years not only has Colleen Kelley gone to the hill with the message to end private debt collection, but so has the National Tax Advocate, Nina Olson. The message is that it is in the best interest of the taxpayer to have IRS employees do this work. Mr. Shulman also stated "In addition, in these challenging economic times, I have asked all IRS employees to go the extra mile to help financially distressed taxpayers. IRS employees have a much wider range of options available to them to resolve difficult collection cases. We will see more of these tough collection situations in the months ahead, and our employees are the best-positioned to work with people and resolve these issues in a fair, equitable manner." Colleen Kelley in a message to all Chapter Presidents said "This is excellent news and is the right decision for the IRS, employees, and most im-

portantly, for taxpayers. NTEU's work on this over the years was critical, and unquestionably made a difference. Thank you and congratulations!" Jackie Huff Chapter 73 President remarked "This announcement reinforces what I believe, that no one can do IRS work better than IRS employees. We have a group of dedicated employees in our Collection operations here in Covington who provide excellent service to the taxpayer while carrying out the IRS mission. This is a vote of confidence in

these employees and their abilities." This is the second time in less than a year we have seen work returned from the private contractors to IRS employees. It obviously speaks volumes against outsourcing of IRS work. The history of outsourcing has proven that the work of the American taxpayer is more cost

efficient and provides better service and security when that work is done by the IRS. These are hard economic times and the American taxpayer needs to get the biggest bang for their buck. It is logical that the work be performed by IRS employees.

Hopefully this Commissioner and the Administration will take a hard look at other outsourced work and return that work to the IRS employees.

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## Straight From The President's Desk

By Jackie Huff Chapter 73 President

The grievance process affords the employee an avenue to seek justice and a venue to have their concerns heard at the upper level of their chain of command. Yet it is becoming frustrating for the employee as well as the union steward. When an employee is dissatisfied with the decision rendered in Step 2, then the employee can appeal that decision to a resolution meeting. The Agency should be represented by the first line Executive. However, the contract does allow the Executive to delegate the third step to the level of management above the second step manager. (Article 41 Section 7F) If it is a one step grievance then the First line Executive (Director) can only delegate it if the Director has a personal or business emergency. (Article 41 Section 7L) When a Director delegates a grievance meeting what message is he or she sending to the employee? In a recent grievance an employee told her steward how disappointed she was that the Director didn't hear the grievance. She stated that she wanted the Director to hear her case and that she felt cheated. The employee wanted the Director to know what was happening. Without that personal touch the healing process is hindered.

What NTEU has known for years seemed to have escaped our Directors in that part of the process is so that the grievant feels that they have gotten their day in court. To most employees their Director is the ultimate authority. Any issue heard by a lower level of management when it should have been heard by the

Director undermines the process the employee's confidence and the employee's morale. It has been a long standing practice that the third step was heard by the Director. Each individual Director is different and some are better than others in attending these meetings. Recently, we had an agreement with the Directors to hear the Hurricane Ike grievances back to back at their level. In Accounts Management next thing anyone knew the Director wasn't hearing these grievances Mary Jo Williams was. In Compliance it was Steve Martin hearing these grievances. Submission Processing second string was Richard Stirman; and in Innocent Spouse it is Vivian Fox. For the employees it was like paying to see the Cincinnati Reds and when you get there you find out it will be the Louisville Bats playing. Both good teams, but not on the same plane. The message that is being sent and received by the employees is that the Directors could care less about the issues that are important to their employees. Remember Jim, Renee, Sue / Rick and the other first line Executives we deal with your actions speak volumes more than your words.

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Speaking of Hurricane Ike, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the stewards involved in researching, preparing and presenting these grievances. It was a true team effort. A special thank you to Darrell Clay who headed up the project.

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## NTEU Seeks Discussions with Administration on Federal Pay

From NTEU e-Bulletin

President Kelley expressed disappointment that the fiscal 2010 budget, released Thursday, does not reflect the long-standing tradition of parity in pay raises for federal civilian employees and members of the military. The administration proposed a military pay raise of 2.9 percent for next year, and an increase of 2 percent for the federal civilian workforce. NTEU is seeking discussions with the administration to learn how these numbers were decided and to begin a dialogue on broader issues about federal pay, along with other proposals that may impact federal employees in the coming year. Kelley recognized the country's difficult economic conditions but expressed confidence that the administration will engage in positive discussions with NTEU on ensuring fair federal pay and benefits for the entire federal workforce.

## John Berry Tapped to Head OPM

President Kelley voiced support for the nomination of John Berry to serve as the new director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). "Mr. Berry is an experienced and respected public servant, and I am confident that under his leadership, OPM will foster a collaborative labor-management environment," said Kelley. Berry has served as legislative director for House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and as Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget at the Department of the Interior.

### 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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### NTEU Swapper

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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 Heather Phillips & Tammy Donaldson on  
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."*

## The Davis Trap

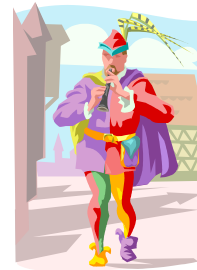
Heather Phillips  
Editor

His name is Todd Davis and his social security number is XXX-XX-XXXX. He is setting a trap for IRS employees who are curious enough to look it up to see if it is him. It is and he has caught you. It could cost you your job. The joke is on you. He is selling a service, Life Lock to protect people from identity theft. He has chosen the most dramatic means he can to promote it. He travels the country and advertises on television displaying his SSN on the side of a truck. He invites millions to check it out to see if it is him. Please don't fall for this. You do not have a business reason to access this man's account. His invitation does not

excuse an unauthorized access. What you are going to get for your trouble is a TIGTA investigation. This could be followed by an orange folder to management and then by proposed disciplinary or adverse action. You could be suspended or removed from the Service. You could ruin your life; all because of this temptation. This is not the Garden of Eden. However, Todd Davis is no less the tempting serpent offering you the apple. Don't be his Adam and Eve and go for that shining red apple. Some of your coworkers have reached for that apple and are facing tragic consequences. UNAX has been a major issue that IRS has guarded and educated against.

The Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 call for harsh punishment for violators. Once a year IRS has mandatory UNAX training to discourage its employees from accessing accounts they shouldn't be accessing.

Now, we are facing a new temptation to lure employees to the brink. The Pied Piper of Life Lock is playing his flute. Are you going to dance to his magical tune? Are you going to follow him as he leads you to the unemployment line? As usual, the choice is yours; just say no to the Davis trap.



## 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:

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**Guarantee Issue if actively at work full-time.  
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Nathan at American Insurnet 513-505-4488.



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## Treasure House Advisory Committee Report

Mary Bjelland  
NTEU73 Steward

On February 26, 2009 the Treasure House Advisory Committee, which includes steward Mary Bjelland, met after over a year's hiatus. This committee helps oversee that the Treasure House, our on-site childcare center, and IRS employees have an open forum for communication. During the meeting the Treasure House director, Cassie Young gave some information to the group that may be of some interest to employees.

As of the end of March, the Treasure House will have openings for new students. Montessori classes are now available for 3-6 yr. olds and the school is fully accredited by the State of Kentucky. If you are interested in enrolling your child, please contact Cassie Young at extension X2771 for more information and fee information.

The center also offers a Reading Program to interested IRS employees who apply and are accepted. This program allows an IRS employee or parent to come in during the workday to read to the children in one of the classes on a regular basis allows interaction between the adult and the children. The employee has to use their own leave for this visit. A background check has to be performed before a person is accepted into the program. New volunteers are welcome to call Cassie Young for more information or an application.



## Beware The Ides Of March

Heather Phillips  
Editor

The soothsayer's warning to [Julius Caesar](#), "Beware the Ides of March," has forever imbued that date with a sense of foreboding. But in Roman times the expression "Ides of March" did not necessarily evoke a dark mood—it was simply the standard way of saying "March 15." Surely such a fanciful expression must signify something more than merely another day of the year? Not so. Even in [Shakespeare's](#) time, sixteen centuries later, audiences attending his play *Julius Caesar* wouldn't have blinked twice upon hearing the date called the Ides. Yet it has lost its association with March 15 and since been associated with treachery and danger. How does the Ides of March apply to working at the IRS? This is a safe environment. Everyone here is here to help us. Right? One would think so, however, it is the time of year that inventory levels dramatically increase and the powers to be start eyeing that magical Program Completion Date (PCD). Pressure increases and taking leave somehow now management becomes more obtuse. Your manager, that nice friendly person, is now becoming demanding. You are late coming back from break. You got caught in a traffic situation and you were late for work. What was once "don't worry about it" is now a major felony. Beware of the Ides of March. No talking; get that work out. Beware of the Ides of March. Get out of idle and answer more calls. Beware of the Ides of March. You are spending too much time in wrap. Beware of the Ides of March.

Julius Caesar had his Brutus and he had his Marc Anthony. It is not all gloom and doom. There is a bright cloud on the horizon. It is NTEU 73. We are here to protect your rights fil-

ing season or no filing season. You don't have to Beware of the Ides of March. If you think your rights are being violated call 5370 for the Fourth Street Office or 5700 for the Gateway office or 5024 for the Florence office. Let NTEU protect you. To us, as a member of NTEU, you are a VIP. As a member you don't have to Beware of the Ides of March, we will send it packing back to the fifteenth.

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## NTEU Continues Fight Against Federal Hiring Program

*NTEU e-Bulletin  
Washington*

NTEU has taken a new step in its continued battle against agency misuse of the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP).

NTEU last week filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting a 30-percent disabled veteran who alleges the narrowly-targeted recruitment measures permitted by the FCIP made it impossible for him to learn of vacancies at a Montana office of the Social Security Administration. In this case before the Merit Systems Protection Board, SSA used the FCIP to fill four positions which it advertised exclusively on the state university career services web site. The postings were only accessible to students and alumni; the veteran was neither.

NTEU has a pending suit against the Office of Personnel Management challenging the legality of its rules implementing the FCIP, which has increasingly been used by federal agencies to undermine the longstanding merit-based competitive hiring process

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## TSP Fund Manager Arrested

The story the "TSP Fund Manager Arrested" has been revealed as untrue. In an email to all Chapter Presidents Colleen Kelley stated "I have contacted the TSP and have been assured that the entire story is false." TSP took the appropriate action and shut down the web site until the situation is resolved.

## Listen to the Best Kept Secret



What's going on with the Chapter? Do you like to be entertained? Would you like to be in on the best kept secret in the Greater

Cincinnati Area? It is Chapter 73 NTEU Minutes on Artists Club radio. Each session is designed to convey information to our members who listen. "We try to provide entertainment around the information. There is nothing more boring than non stop monologue of facts." stated co-hostess Heather Phillips. Heather went on to say "recently we add bogus commercials delivered by one of our cast of characters." "We want to keep it light while still informing" chimed in Tammy Donaldson, the other half of the duo. Together Heather and Tammy line up guests, write the script and work with the Artist Club personnel to record it for broadcast. In talking about Artists Club radio Tammy said "We like being part of Artist Club radio. It is so diverse on any one session you may hear original music, poems or tales of the old west. We just sort of fit in." "The idea of the off beat characters came about one day when Tammy and I were discussing ways to improve the show." Heather went on to say "that so far we have Ethel , a crazy old lady, Louie the Lug used car salesman and a hippy dippy spokesperson for a fictitious drugstore or shopping mall we aren't sure yet." "Maybe both" Tammy added. Heather and Tammy work together well and hope that they can develop an on air chemistry like Tom and Bob. As Heather put it the show is a work in progress. Both Tammy and Heather are constantly looking for ways to improve the product. Listen to Artist Club radio on <http://Artistsclub.tripod.com>.

## Time In Grade Is Temporarily Still The Rule

The Office of Personnel Management decided to postpone issuing rules to abolish the one-year time-in-grade requirement for federal employee promotions.

The regulations, which allow federal employees to climb the career ladder faster, were scheduled to take effect March 9, but OPM's decision will delay their implementation until May 18. Under current rules, employees in competitive service General Schedule positions at grade levels 5 and above must serve 52 weeks in a grade before becoming eligible for promotion. The new rule eliminates the 52-week condition, provided employees meet occupational and job-related qualification requirements. The abolishment of the time in grade requirements is seen in some circles as a covert means to try to moved the Bargaining Unit closer to paybanding, a system that is unwanted even by most who are under it. The delay in executing the rules drew praise from the National Treasury Employees Union, which on Feb. 6 issued a letter to OPM asking it to comply with an Office of Management and Budget directive that suspended all pending federal rule changes issued by the previous administration. Colleen Kelley, president of NTEU, expressed concern that the rules were an effort by the former Bush administration to impose pay for performance on the civil service. "The merit system is vulnerable to manipulation and abuse," she said. "Many managers are not well-trained, and pay or promotion schemes instituted without training, objective criteria and adequate oversight can lead -- and have led -- to favoritism, nepotism and illegal discrimination."



## President Signs 2009 Budget

President Obama signed the 2009 fiscal year budget. IRS share is approximately 11.5 billion dollars. This is an increase of \$630 million over current funding levels. It has been several years since the IRS has received this type of investment in our workforce. As a result, we will be undertaking the largest hiring initiative in recent memory. By hiring thousands of new employees in mission-critical positions over the next several months, we will provide career opportunities for many people already within the IRS, promote stronger collaboration among all of our business units and work to enhance taxpayer compliance. This hiring initiative is different in another important way. New hires and the career movement that comes along with this initiative will reflect the values of teamwork and collaboration that are critical to our success. We want employees to see themselves as joining and serving the IRS as a whole – not just a specific business unit. We want our hiring process to reflect our strategy of looking after the overall interests of the IRS – and helping make us the best place to work in government. We'll be bringing new staff on board as quickly as possible, and we have many activities underway to help streamline our recruiting and orientation processes. The Appropriations bill contains a one-year government-wide moratorium on new public-private job competitions for federal work. Couple with the end of privatized collection activities it is quite a victory for the federal worker. These are two very positive steps for taxpayers," said President Colleen M. Kelley of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU), who has been leading the fight against the ballooning growth of federal contracting. "They are part of a welcome review of the entire government contracting process, including a much closer look at what work clearly should continue to be done by federal employees."

# Either Fish or Fowl

Heather Phillips  
Editor

Johnny Cash once sang a song that had a line in it "life ain't easy for a boy named Sue". Well Johnny life ain't easy for first read tax examiners in Innocent Spouse in Florence. Article 26 Section 3A states "The position description for each position will accurately reflect the actual duties, responsibilities, and the managerial relationships pertaining to the employee filling that position." It has been approximately two years since the ASPECT phone system and the associated toll free number has invaded Innocent Spouse Florence and the first read tax examiners are on a 0592 position description (PD). Some of these tax examiners are being told that they will spend 99% of their time on the phones answer cold calls from the 800 line.

When you read the PD, the duties do not mention the phones. In fact it talks about taxpayer contact. Traditionally this has been written correspondence, tax examiner initiated phone calls to taxpayers or the repre-

sentative and the associate return calls. The employees are claiming that they were never informed of the phone work when they accepted the positions. Management has the opposite point of view. It doesn't matter. When an employee applies for a position they go by the PD in the announcement. It states that they are tax examiners not customer service representatives. This bait and switch that Innocent Spouse is doing reminds me

of the guy on the street corner with the shells and the pea. In my opinion, it's the same kind of con. The way its now stands they are neither fish or fowl. These employees are being harmed everyday the come to work. Someday one or more of these employees may decide to apply for a grade 8 or 9 Customer Service position. Personnel will look at their series and maybe their PD and give the employees the old "lacks specialized experience". Don't tell me no harm, no foul. They are harmed and it is pretty foul. What should be done, is to move these employees to the proper PD even if it means a reorganization. So Vivian this butt is for you.

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



**Vivian Fox**  
**Innocent Spouse**  
**Operations Manager**

### 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.

### Florence Happenings

*Florence Stewards:*

A grievance was won concerning the fact that employees were not able to pick up their Public Transportation Subsidies (PTSP) in Florence. They had to travel to Covington to accomplish something that had previously been offered here on site. Management has now appointed Sandy Ellison the PTSP coordinator and she is now on the approved distributor list. So any employee in Florence can now pick up their PTSP subsidies in Florence. Another note on this issue if you have not done an on-line application this will need to be done by you before you can start getting the (PTSP). You will not receive reimbursement until your manager has approved the on-line application. If you are in the files are Brenda Whitaker is your point of contact for any issues and for you to receive your distribution. Peggi Liver had a leave restriction letter removed from an employee's file. Heather Phillips settled a case in the employee's favor to end a hostile work environment in the employee's team

increased. Leila also grieved for an employee to have their AWOL removed and their FLMA acknowledged. Marc Beatty negotiated the removal of AWOL on an employee in AM who was being denied their FMLA. All AWOL was removed and changed to FMLA. Linda Kelly was able to get an employee in processing a monetary award to cover the nights and Sunday differential when management moved the employee to days to correct a previous release/recall error. Pat Hamilton grieved an appraisal for a Compliance employee and got the evaluation raised. Pat Hamilton negotiated a disciplinary action of termination down to 30 days suspension for an employee in Processing. Pat Hamilton settled an institutional grievance with Compliance. It was acknowledged someone should have notified the union of the over time given in Liens on January 27th and 28th. It was also agreed that NTEU73 will be getting a formal apology, and the assurance that Compliance in the future will comply with the proper procedures.

Tammy Rackley had an employee come to her, the employee had submitted her own written reply to a proposal letter and the agency sustained a 5 day suspension. After filing a grievance and meeting with Rene Mitchell the Agency mitigated the penalty to a lesser penalty. NTEU was successful in getting another seasonal employee a permanent position. It was determined that Accounts Managements Officials erred in determining the eligibility of the employee in the recent mass conversion. Chapter 73 intervened and brought this error to management's attention. Heather Phillips had a leave letter removed from an employee's drop file. Tammy Donaldson had an employee's Annual evaluation raised from a 3.8 to the previous rating of 4.0. This on the heels of having an Annual Evaluation raised from a 2.8 to a 3.8. Good Job! Dwight Cornett had a leave letter removed from an employee's file. Pat B got letters removed from all employees in team 307 AM when all employees received a letter listing all their leave and was told the letter would stay in employees folder for 2 years.

### Covington Night Life

Swing Stewards:  
Leila Smith negotiated for an employee in Accounts management to get her step

### Covington In The Daylight

*Day Shift Stewards:*

**For some reason the Force is mysteriously disappearing from the racks. In that case pick one up in the Union Office**



Desk Coffee Mug \$5.00      Water Bottle \$1.00      Automobile Mug \$2.00

**Available at your nearest NTEU Chapter 73 Office**