

Retirement: Reducing Delays

With the closing of Submission Processing swiftly approaching there are a lot of employees preparing for retirement. The process of applying for retirement can be a daunting task, here are some key points to keep in mind so that you avoid processing delays.

Per the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the average processing time is 102 days from the date they receive your final paperwork from the human resources office and the payroll office. The processing time can be completed quicker if employees ensure they include all required documentation and double check all paperwork for accuracy. An additional three to four weeks may be needed if OPM needs to contact you to make a benefit election, such as your decision on making a service credit deposit.

Interim payments are paid out in most cases to provide retirees income until their application is finished being processed.

Interim payments are a percentage of

the final benefit. The payments normally come out on the first business day of each month. When OPM is finished processing your application you'll receive a booklet titled "Your Federal Retirement Benefits". This booklet will let you know how much your monthly payments are, and confirm health and life insurance coverage.

The maximum benefit under Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) is 80 percent of your high-3 average salary, this does not include accumulated sick leave. Your high-3 average salary is the highest rate of basic pay in effect over any three consecutive years of service, this does not have to be the last three years of service.

OPM also advises that, "If you've served in the military and want to waive your military retired pay to receive credit for military service in the computation of your benefit, you should write the Retired Pay Operations Center at least 60 days before your planned retirement."

Health coverage can be carried over into retirement for both the retiree and their surviving spouse. Retirees retain eligibility at the same cost as current employees. To be entitled to these benefits you must retire on

an immediate annuity under a retirement system. You are also required to have been enrolled continuously for 5 years directly before the date your annuity starts.

Any debt owe to the agency needs to be taken into consideration. If you owe the agency for advanced leave or health insurance premiums arrangements should be made in advance to resolve these financial obligations. If you have advanced sick leave the agency will deduct that dollar amount from any pay due upon separation. However, if you retire for disability, the agency can waive the requirement to repay. The agency makes the determination as to whether an employee has separated or resigned because of disability and expectable medical documentation is required.

If you have an TSP account you'll need to submit your forms to the TSP Service Office and either request a full withdrawal or monthly payments. If you choose not to make a full withdrawal a designation form should be filled out so that your beneficiary can receive the funds after your death.

Tanesha McCants

NTEU Chapter 73

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Membership Advantages

With summer in full swing, don't forget to take advantage of our many discounts for summer fun. Not only do we have Coney Island, Cincinnati Zoo, and Kings Island discounts, we have a [Tickets at work](#) website to check out. These discounts are limited to members only. If you are not a member please stop by the NTEU office and fill out a FORM 1187. If you know anyone that you want to recruit as an NTEU73 member Please stop in, grab an 1187, and make sure that your name is listed as the recruiter on the bottom of the form. In exchange for an 1187, I would be happy to compensate you. Any new member will receive a check for \$50 and the recruiter will receive a check for \$30. This incentive ends September 27, 2019.



Inside This Issue:

- ◆ Retirement: Reducing Delays
- ◆ Membership
- ◆ Coney Island Celebration Pics
- ◆ 1040 in Submission Processing
- ◆ Contact Representative, Undesirable Job
- ◆ Assumed 3's
- ◆ Leave Usage During Training
- ◆ It's Not Easy Being a Steward
- ◆ Investigation Process

NTEU73 Celebrates Memorial Day at Coney Island.





IMF 1040 Tax Form Makes Special Appearance At Submission Processing.

IMF electronic forms 1040, 1040A and 1040EZ made a surprise reappearance in Submission Processing this tax season after an absence of 1 ½ years.

The programs that were pulled early from the Flattop site after the announcement of the closing of the service center ran into problems, in both Fresno and Kansas City. Along with the rocky start of the season due to the Government shutdown the remaining IRS sites were overwhelmed and had a huge backlog. ICO ERS in Covington came to the rescue and picked up the gauntlet once again clearing out the backlog and making millions of taxpayers happy.

Contact Representative, The Undesirable Job.

With the shutdown of 4Th street, many employees are looking for jobs in Gateway. My aunt asked me a few months ago if she should come to Gateway as a Contact Representative. I advised her not to do it because I think it would be too difficult of a transition for her. She worked in the receipt and control for over 20 years and is internet savvy. I am certain she would have done well with tax payers, but the constant scrutiny from management would've of caused her to regret not taking the buyout. I watched as the first training class started last year, filled with eager employees, in hopes they could succeed as contact representatives and possibly become grade 8 employees. After the first week of training we saw many employees who wanted to go back to 4th street. They were told that during training they could not use their leave and would be given L.W.O.P instead of paid leave. They were also told horror stories about how difficult their jobs as contact representatives would be. This was way too much for many employees, some who had been here close to 20 years and were not ready for the uphill battle in Accounts Management. When I was asked by a department manager after a grievance meeting a few months later, why are many 4th street employees unhappy in A.M., I answered candidly and said, "management." He did not appear to like that answer but he did not dispute my response.

I know the struggle first hand, as I came from receipt and control back in 2008. The first year of being a contact representative proved to be very difficult. I watched as several of my coworkers left or were escorted out. Many of them were probationary employees and did not meet the high demands. As you know probationary employees can be fired because management doesn't like the way they say hello. Having made it through the first year, things did not get easier. After several changes in management, the errors never seemed to cease. While one manager would urge you to put a caller on hold to do tasks like, prepare a letter. Others had different ideas,

Covington's Submission processing started doing the IMF 1040 series electronically in 2011 and quickly became the top site in both production efficiency and quality until the program was pulled.

This years backlog of forms due mostly to a computer program glitch in Fresno and Kansas City, and not being able to hire enough tax examiners to process the forms may lead to some serious problems arising over the next few years as the Fresno campus, who will begin its ramp down shortly and is expected to close in 2021.

Over 126,264,000 million tax returns were e-filed this year and that number is expected to grow.

Will Kohler

giving errors for misuse of hold times and lack of professionalism. The only reprieve a contact representative has is to get a steady manager who likes them enough to evaluate them fairly.

Now as a union steward and a contact representative I see things from a different perspective. I not only see the difficulty I have endured but I see what others are going through as contact representatives. I see many employees being denied leave for major life events. I have seen excellent employees leave A.M. for jobs away from the phones and take other government jobs. I worry about the future of contact representatives, since so many people want to leave, and many other employees would rather leave the service all together, than work on the phones. I want to see more contact representatives come to A.M. because the more employees on the phones helps lower the call volume and makes our jobs a little easier but I cannot recommend this position to my friends and family without telling them how difficult the road ahead will be.

Tonya Morris



Presumptive 3's

I met a new hire from Accounts Management who just came out of training. He had previously worked for his friend's port-o-let company "gotta potty" or something of the sort he did some suction work and manned the phones for the business for a number of years. Tom had definitely worked in the crapper, so to speak. This employee might give me insight into what it takes to keep up morale in a putrid environment. Since morale building in a miserable work environment is one of my current interests, I figured, "what a golden opportunity."

I will say his name is Tom in order to protect his identity and his family from any negative repercussions he might receive from Accounts Management for talking to me about what he might dislike about his new job and what it would take in his mind to improve morale in the workplace when things are down in the dumps. Tom began by pointing out that his employee's interests always came first and that made them feel respected and important to the company. He pointed out that he always gave awards to his employees to reward them for a job well done. He would throw company parties, give time off awards, and monetary awards usually for picking up new work for the organization. Tom always made sure his employees work life balance was considered and gave his employees ample time to deal with family issues and flexible schedules with no retaliation.

So, I asked Tom what he thought about his new position with the IRS. Tom seemed perplexed by the question. He was curious to know why there is so much tension in the air as he put it. Anxiety seemed to permeate the workplace. I respected Tom's expertise in the quality of air in a work environment. If anyone would know it would be him. Tom also mentioned a manager that had spoken in training and had informed him that no matter how hard he worked or however much effort he put into the quality of his work that his work would be considered, "presumptive threes" no matter how few, "errors" he received. The manager pointed out that for their first five years they received, "presumptive threes," and so will

every other employee under them and there wasn't a thing they could do about it. Tom once again was perplexed.

Tom went on to question, how can an organization function if it does not give employees what they are due. Who would work under such conditions? The IRS had a lot to learn from his previous employer. Now Tom did point out that the union had shown him the contract that covered him and from what he had read there is no such thing as, "presumptive threes" because of past practice in Cincinnati. How does this manager sleep at night? Maybe they don't sleep because there is no rest for the wicked? Tom also pointed out that this manager seemed angry and bitter and



seemed to detest employees in general, and seemed hell bent on taking out their misery on everyone around them. Tom had said he just doesn't get it; his friend's company would have been in the crapper if he treated his employees so poorly. To make a long story short, (Tom had to cut it short because his manager was constantly stalking him,) he said they would follow him to the restroom to observe his "behavior." Tom had commented, no one had ever followed him into a port-o-let for any reason.

Tom had given me a lot of insight. Tom had taught me the value of a clean urinal cake. There is an undeniable stench in accounts management and it's not coming from the duct work or the filthy restrooms. Happy employees are well respected employees. The upkeep of morale, much like a port-o-let, is the responsibility of management and means putting the employee's interest first. If not, their morale will be in the tank.

So, I explained to Tom the benefits of joining the chapter and he gladly signed his 1187 saying that he felt it was a valuable

commodity that provided security for him and his family. He had health and car insurance, work insurance made perfect sense. He wanted to succeed in his new career and a respectable fair annual appraisal was a means to that end. I referred him to Article 12. I explained the importance of a properly prepared evaluation which becomes the foundation of an employee's career development, performance improvement, and summary of record.

I told Tom that so called "presumptive threes," are a myth. An employee's annual performance appraisal is based upon the employee's actual work, not a manager's negative attitude toward newly hired bargaining unit employees. Performance appraisals will be made in a fair and objectionable manner. In selecting reviews, the employer will select a reasonable sample representation of the employee's work. Performance appraisals will provide for the uniform treatment of all employees. The application of standards to individual employees, the employer will take into mitigating circumstance such as availability of resources, lack of training, mix of work, collateral duties or frequent authorized interruptions of normal work duties. The fact that an employee assumes new tasks, receives new critical job elements, changes positions, is a trainee, and/or gets promoted to a new position does not create a presumption that his or her performance is only fully successful.

Chris Pierce

Leave Usage During Training

In the last couple of years there has been an alleged “crack down” on leave usage for new hires and veteran employees in training classes. We’ve noticed that management has assessed AWOL and restricted employee’s from using their accrued sick leave during their training period. The required training for all employees entering these new positions, whether probationary or experienced, need to adhere during those timeframes, unless situations occur that is beyond that employee’s control. We all get sick from time to time and an illness does not discriminate or wait for a day more convenient for it to happen. It happens, and per, Articles 32, 33 and 34, of the 2019 National Agreement clearly outlines such leave is allowed under specific circumstances. There is no exception to the rule or regulation that says anything short of “employees who are in training.”

Management has made their voice clear on where they stand by abusing and overly exerting their need to hand out AWOL. AWOL simply means Absent With-Out-Leave. Obviously, it does NOT say you may not utilize YOUR leave that YOU accrued. If you have available leave then you are entitled to use it, following the proper leave guidelines. Unfortunately, management is using AWOL as a disciplinary tool for those

employees who are legitimately ill. I would wonder if there is a time coming, when managers will start giving memorandum’s because the guy in the seat next to you in training was sick for a week and was told he couldn’t return to work until he gets well. Better yet, maybe we will see a Leave Restriction Letter for being accused of abusing your leave. NTEU is here to help protect its bargaining unit employees and fight on your behalf to get any irrational AWOL overturned.

Please note, this doesn’t mean that every case is the same, and it is best for those of you who are probationary employees, in this instance to be mindful of missing any days during training. This way, you would be at a lower risk of losing your job. We would like to see management help us continue to foster an environment that is not only professional and disciplined but more understanding when situations arise. Employees have been punished for being human, it is not what we need with the Agency’s ascending work load. The continuous dismissive behavior and the abusive AWOL trends need to be put to a halt.

United We Bargain, Divided We Beg.

Charlene Robinson

It is Not Easy Being a Steward.

I filed a grievance for a member, who is my friend. The member did not make the BQ list and an employee with a lower overall score was selected for the position. It was not fair and equitable treatment.

When I received the information back from Labor Relations, there were 4 other employees who made the BQ list that were not selected for the position. The employee who received the job had a C-TAP letter with their application due to the ramp down. I lost the grievance for my friend.

After the meeting, management realized that the employee that received the job did not qualify for the special consideration, because the position was a higher grade which made the C-TAP letter invalid for the position that was accepted. Management had to fix their mistake which harmed the employee that had been fully successful in

their new position for approximately 18 months.

My total experience was that the grievance did not help my friend and the outcome presented a hardship for another employee.

It is never the intent of NTEU to harm an employee. I have been to several meetings about the ramp down and management advises employees to include their C-TAP letter in all USA jobs application. It is important to know that the C-TAP letter is only for the same grade that you are applying.

Janet Colwell



Donations Needed

As you clean out your closet for this upcoming school year, consider donating:

lightly used or new coats

new gloves and hats

During The Labor Recognition Celebration NTEU73 will be accepting donations for The Brighton Center. Help NTEU73 provide warmth to those in our community in need.



NTEU73

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Any questions please contact NTEU73 @ 859-320-3617 or

ask@nteu73.org

IRS...What's next?!

Brighton Center in partnership with the Kentucky Career Center

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Do you need help to know what to do next?

Is finding a new career intimidating?

What if you need to brush up on some skills?

These FREE services that the Kentucky Career Center offers to all IRS employees will help you reach your overall goal of obtaining employment:

- Assessment of job skills and abilities
- Resume, Cover Letter, & Job Application Assistance
- Career Coaching, Job Search Assistance & Job Matching
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- Possible \$7,000 of grant funding for job training programs, including certificate, credential, and college degree programs



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