

# THE FORCE

## What is a Grievance?



NTEU has worked alongside IRS to compose our National Agreement for over 50 years. Each Agreement better protects us as employees to serve the American taxpayers and to promote the IRS mission more effectively. It is within the contract we strive to enhance our work culture to one that fosters fairness to our talented employees. NTEU 73 leaders and stewards work hard every day to address any issues and/or concerns. Article 5

explains those rights as employees and states “The initiation of grievances in good faith by employees will not cause any reflection on their standing with their managers or on their loyalty or desirability to the organization. Employees and Union stewards who have relevant information concerning any matter for which remedial relief is available under this Agreement will, in seeking resolution of such matter, be assured freedom from restraint, interference, coercion or discrimination, intimidation or reprisal.” We work these concerns by reaching out to management, and if needed, filing a grievance. A grievance is a formal complaint filed by the Union on behalf of a member or members alleging specific contract violations. Our National Agreement explains in detail the process for employee grievances in Article 41. It explains the types of grievances and the process including times frames to properly file those grievances.

If you would like to discuss any issues you may be facing or feel that the contract has been violated, the Union can file a grievance on your behalf. Please make sure to contact NTEU 73 at [ctr.cov.cirsc.nteu.73.covington@irs.gov](mailto:ctr.cov.cirsc.nteu.73.covington@irs.gov) for a steward to help!

By Rachel Lovins

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# Fun With NTEU 73



It's getting closer and closer to those warm sunny days, and we couldn't be happier. As we approach summer, NTEU 73 is gearing up for our Annual Memorial Day fun. So, save the date and tell your family Saturday May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022, we will be celebrating another year of outstanding work. By overwhelming request, we have rented out Stricker's Grove for NTEU 73 members and their family. We have the park to ourselves from the hours of 12-7pm to enjoy the rides, show off them babies, and hang with our favorite coworkers. We also hired a DJ to mix up the music for fun for all ages. Each member will be given 6 wrist bands but can purchase additional bands (if needed) for \$5 each. We do require you as the NTEU member to be present when all members of your party arrive. NTEU 73 will not be serving food, so make sure to pack a cooler. Food can also be purchased at the park. We will provide free drinks, popcorn, snow cones and cotton candy.

If you have any questions please reach out to NTEU 73 at [ctr.cov.cirsc.nteu.73.covington@irs.gov](mailto:ctr.cov.cirsc.nteu.73.covington@irs.gov) or me personally at [Rachel.m.lovins@irs.gov](mailto:Rachel.m.lovins@irs.gov)

Rachel Lovins

# STEWARDS' CORNER

Your NTEU Stewards are here to fight for you! We are available in person, by phone, email, or skype!

## GATEWAY STEWARDS

### President:

Debbie Mullikin

### Vice President:

Chris Pierce

### Secretary/Chief Steward:

Shannon Lovins

### Day Shift Full Time Stewards:

Loretha Hudson, Rachel Lovins,  
Angela Moore

### Day Shift Part Time Stewards:

Tonya Morris, Nicole Guethlein, Jennifer Smith,  
Hope Osborne, Thomas Bayer, Shonda Collins, Nichole  
Williams, Alistair Blair , Brandi Riggs

### Swing Shift Chief Steward:

Alex Walker

### Swing Shift Part Time Stewards:

Brandy Belew

## ISO BUILDING

### Treasurer/Full Time Steward:

Janet Colwell

## NTEU EMAIL

[ctr.cov.cirsc.nteu.73.covington@irs.gov](mailto:ctr.cov.cirsc.nteu.73.covington@irs.gov)

Rachel Lovins- Was able to get an employees eval raised from 3.6 to 5.0. She also got a 14 day suspension reduced to 7 days.



The Chapter is looking for NTEU members interested in serving as Union Stewards beginning October 1, 2021! Appointed stewards will serve as advocates on behalf of NTEU members in management-employee disputes, write newsletter articles regarding workplace issues, and attend NTEU events and trainings on labor law and various workplace issues and policies.

If interested, please send Chapter President, Debbie Mullikin and Chief Steward, Shannon Lovins a short statement of interest (5-8 sentences) at [Debora.j.Mullikin@irs.gov](mailto:Debora.j.Mullikin@irs.gov) and [Shannon.K.Lovins@irs.gov](mailto:Shannon.K.Lovins@irs.gov) expressing why you would like to be a Union Steward, how long you've been working for the IRS, and what building you are working in. Prior experience is not required. Stewards will be trained by the Chapter President, Chief Steward, and NTEU attorney prior to handling any cases.

# 2022 National Agreement Commentaries



Every month as a steward, I am asked to write an Article of interest for our newsletter. This month I decided to write a 1 of a 5-part series re-

garding the 2022 National Agreement. For this month's series, I will review Article 1 through 10. During this review, I will write some word for word comments as it appears in the new contract. I give all credit for those quotes to the writers of the Contract.

## ***Article 1- Coverage and Definitions***

This Article covers the employees (bargaining unit employees) that are covered and the areas that are not covered by the contract, such as Criminal Investigation (CI). There are references to commonly used IRS jargon like EOD. Nothing is new in this Article.

## ***Article 2- Precedence of Law and Regulation***

There is really nothing new here, however, Section 2 states, "to the extent that provisions of the Internal Revenue Manual (IRM) of the Department of the Treasury policies are in specific conflict with this Agreement, the provisions of this Agreement will govern." This means that if you have an issue that is addressed by both the IRM and the National Agreement, the contract language prevails.

## ***Article 3- Employer Rights***

My favorite part about this Article is that it is less than a half of a page. The part that I highlighted in this Article is: "The Employer retains the right to assign work, to make determinations with respect to contracting out, and to determine the personnel by which operations shall be conducted." Many members are unaware of this part of the contract and want us to grieve that their

manager gave them a different. Since this is part of the contract, that aspect is not grievable, unless you are asked by your manager to perform higher graded duties or are asked to perform certain duties you are not able to because of a disability. If management is asking the employee to do a job that is a higher-grade duty, that will be covered under Article 16, Part 2 of my newsletter.

## ***Article 4- Protections Against Prohibited Personnel Practices***

The Article refers to equal pay for equal work. We all can see our salary on the grade scale. There should be no discrimination against age, sex, color, religion, race, and handicap condition, etc. The part of this Article that I found important was: "Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance." People learn differently and sometimes someone may need additional training for their duties. Maybe more On the Job Instruction (OJI) is required in some circumstances or make up time if someone had an emergency and did not get sufficient training because they had to miss class. It is essential to give taxpayers the right answers to their questions as well as following the guidelines of the Internal Revenue Manual (IRM).

## ***Article 5- Employee Rights***

This Article is about 5 1/2 pages. I would read the whole Article to be familiar with employee rights. Section 1 of this Article mandates that if you file a grievance, management will not interfere, discriminate, intimidate, or retaliate. If you feel this is happening, save your emails from your manager. It is important. Section 4 talks about misconduct investigations. This is the first time in the new contract they call TIG-TA, an employer representative. A rose by any other name is still a rose. Section 4 outlines your rights when the interview is scheduled.

You have the right to know the subject matter of the interview and if it is criminal or non-criminal. You also have the right to know if you are the subject matter or if you will be interviewed as a third party. You have the right to have union representation. You also have the right to have the interview scheduled when you can have your steward present. If it is criminal, you will be given your rights to answer the questions. The exact wording is found in Article 5. Section 9 Refers to the employer posting a complete list of employee rights on the bulletin board. Section 10 states you are not required to disclose any arrest or conviction to the employer that the court has purged from the employee's record.

### ***Article 6- Outside Employment***

I did an Article on the outside employment. Now that I am reading the Article, I realize I did not cover what happens if the request is denied. According to the Article, management has 10 days from the completed form to accept or deny. If it is denied, management needs to state a reason it was denied. At that point, a grievance can be filed within the 10 days of the denial.

### ***Article 7- Personnel Records***

What is new in Article 7 is that your drop file will be purged after 2 years instead of 3 years which was in the previous contract. You or the union on your behalf may request your drop file or your Employment Performance Folder (EPF). Management has 14 days to allow you or the union to review your folders.

### ***Article 8-Union Rights***

The only thing I will mention in this Article is Labor Recognition Week. In Section 3, employees are allowed 1 hour of time for Labor Rec. NTEU 73 contacts local vendors for giving IRS employees discounts, prizes, etc. The union stewards, collectively, receive 20 hours of Admin time to work this event. That means if 4 stewards or 10 stewards help there is only 20 hours of time given. We, the stewards, work the day shift and night shift serving about 2 or 3 days. We serve 2 times in Gateway, 2 times at the Annex, and 1 time in the Old Florence Files Building. Most of us take our own annual leave to serve you. We also have 2 other events that we try to do every

year. We have a Holiday party and a Union picnic. We give up our Saturdays to work those events. We don't get OT pay to do this. We do this because we care about our members.

### ***Article 9-Stewards and Official Time***

I would like to talk about Section 6- National Training. "Official time will be authorized for attendance of Union stewards at any training event conducted by the Union's National Office, provided that the content thereof is approved in accordance with this Article." This training place is set up by National. So for 20 hours I will be in a classroom discussing and getting ideas on how to solve our members' problems. We could get a better perspective on how to address issues from other Chapters. The weather at this wonderful desert destination could be over 100 degrees outside. Believe me, Debbie will keep us in line. I know that if you are late for class, Debbie will insist you take annual time for the time you missed. This is not just a paid vacation as some of you may think. Think of how the stewards help to support you and put training in the right perspective. This is an opportunity to work better for you.

### ***Article 10-Dues Withholding***

The amount of dues deducted from your paycheck is based on a dues withholding chart. For more information, please contact NTEU 73 at &CTR COV CIRSC NTEU 73 Covington  
ctr.cov.cirsc.nteu.73.covington@irs.gov.

Remember that filing a grievance involves certain deadlines that the Union has to meet for your grievance to be reviewed and sustained, so make sure to contact the Union immediately when you have an issue.

Janet Colwell

# Use of Medical Marijuana and CBD oil Products



Recent interest and the commercial availability of marijuana oils and marijuana-infused food products have prompted inquiries about their use. Other questions arise about the content of products labeled as “containing Cannabidiol (CBD).”

Bottom line: Federal employees shouldn’t use marijuana under any circumstances and should be very careful when using CBD oils.

The marijuana component tested in urine is tetrahydrocannabinol-carboxylic acid (THCA). THCA is a metabolite of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the primary psychoactive constituent of marijuana. CBD is a different chemical compound present in the marijuana plant.

Marijuana products, including CBD, are classified as Schedule I controlled substances under the Controlled Substances Act and, thus, are illegal under federal law. Schedule I substances have no acceptable medical application, so a legitimate medical explanation does not exist for a positive test.

Many CBD oils and other marijuana-derived products are sold over the internet or at dispensaries in states allowing marijuana use, either recreationally or medically. These products are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration for content and may be contaminated by a host of cannabinoid chemicals, including THC and CBD. CBD is chemically distinguishable from THC and will not cause a positive drug test result under the current drug testing panel but is a Schedule I drug. However, CBD products may contain other cannabinoids such as THC, therefore, use of CBD oils and marijuana-derived products may result in a positive urine drug test for THCA.

The Drug Free Workplace Program on IRS Source contains additional information and resources.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers free, confidential services to all IRS employees and their immediate family members. You have 24/7 access to trained, certified EAP counselors. They can help with personal and work concerns like:

Drug addiction

Stress, anxiety and depression

Child and elder care

Job pressures

Grief, loss and much more

You can use any of the following three convenient options below to contact EAP:

Call 800-977-7631 (TDD: 800-697-0353)

Visit the EAP online (first-time users should use organization code IRS 112)

Access GuidanceNow, the ComPsych mobile app

***(Submitted by HCO – Human Capital Office, to IRS SOURCE)***

## Becker Professional Education

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Sign up for the Becker CPA Exam Review and receive a reduced rate of \$1,930 (\$3,393 value).

In addition, take advantage of 0% financing for 18 months. Go to [Becker.com/NTEU](http://Becker.com/NTEU).

The first 30 NTEU members to register for Becker's CPA Exam Review each year (beginning each October) will also receive Becker Flashcards at no additional cost.



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NTEU members receive a 15 percent discount for all services at any participating Jiffy Lube® location, including a Jiffy Lube Signature Service® oil change or other preventive maintenance services. Just present your valid NTEU membership card and NTEU's fleet account number to receive the discount.

## ACAMS The Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists

The CAMS Certification is considered to be the gold standard certification in anti-money laundering and financial crime. CAMS is an excellent way to demonstrate your expertise in the field, and employers are seeking out people who are CAMS Certified. NTEU members that sign up for the CAMS Certification package can receive the hard copy textbook for CAMS preparation for free (\$99 value).

**In addition:** If you would like to take advantage of the CAMS preparation virtual classroom, NTEU members will receive a \$100 discount on top of the standard government discount (Retail price \$495, NTEU price \$295)

# New Life Insurance Program for Federal Employees

This policy provides up to **\$150,000 of coverage** for federal employees. In addition, there are options available to cover spouses, children, and grandchildren ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

## Life Insurance Policy Highlights

- Permanent coverage
- No physical required
- Dividend-paying policy
- Locked-in price with constant premiums that will never increase
- Payroll deducted

## Additional United Benefits Services

- Retirement Assistance
- Short Term Disability
- Accident
- Cancer
- Critical Illness
- Dental & Vision

## Get in Touch with Your Benefit Specialists

**Paul & Roxie Thornton**

paul@unitedbenefits.com

Call: 423-309-2758

**Christopher Lee**

chris@unitedbenefits.com

Call/Text: 256-740-2166



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