

Federal Tickets Issued by Homeland Security to Steward Dismissed in Federal Court

A ticket issued to an NTEU73 union steward for “creating a disturbance in the work area” has been dismissed in Federal Court. The ticket, issued solely on the word of a manager, was given as the steward performed representational duties for an employee. The employee was also given a ticket and it was also dismissed. The cost of each ticket would have been \$270.

“This was a situation we were very concerned about,” said NTEU73 President Rick Riley. “Tickets should not be issued on the word of a manager, especially during a labor dispute. This incident was not what it was made out to be. We contacted United States Senators and Congressmen and the National President contacted the head of Homeland Security over these tickets. Hopefully we have seen the last of them.”

Homeland Security has had less of a presence in recent weeks. Prior to the union stepping in, tickets were being issued almost weekly. Some employees have paid tickets, others have fought them in court.



IRS Employees brought in canned goods for a food drive for the needy. We always step up for the community!

“It is unfortunate some people had to pay these tickets,” continued Mr. Riley. “But I really think Homeland Security is going back to doing what they should have been doing in the first place. And that is keeping

us safe from people who want to hurt us, not acting as a traffic cop in the parking lots and getting involved in management-employee relations.”

“I suggest that if an employee does get a ticket to go to Federal Court and fight it,” added Mr. Riley. “First, it may be dismissed. Secondly, I want the judge to see how frivolous these things are and if they are all thrown out, that will further discourage their issuance. But again, for now at least, this seems to be a problem of the past. But we will have to wait and see. No one has communicated with me.”



NTEU73 Financial Audit is Excellent Again!

An audit of the NTEU73 financial records has been conducted by an independent auditor, Melody Walsh, and once again the books have been found to be in excellent shape.

NTEU73 pays an independent auditor and accountant to check the records to make sure that everything is done properly and above board.

“The chapter has continued to improve its record keeping and is doing an excellent job in verifying and classifying

expenditures,” said Ms. Walsh in her report to the chapter.

NTEU73 Treasurer Laura Mitchell works closely with Ms. Walsh (no relation to the NTEU73 Vice President Karen Walsh) to assure that the financial records are in top shape.

“Nothing is more important to me than keeping these records in perfect order,” said Ms. Mitchell. “The members have to have confidence in the way the chapter handles the money!”

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NTEU Chapter 73

Fourth Street Office

Monday—Friday,
6 a.m. —1 a.m.
(859) 669-5370

Gateway Office Room 111

Monday—Friday,
6 a.m. —1 a.m.
(859) 669-5700

Industrial Road Retention Center

Monday—Friday,
8 a.m.—10 a.m.
(859) 594-6138

Facebook

Official NTEU Chapter 73
www.facebook.com/nteu73

Chapter Web Site nteu73.org

Twitter

www.twitter.com/nteu73

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From the Desk of NTEU73 President Rick Riley

**“As always, At Your Service”
— Rick Riley**

The Benefits of Membership

Are you a member? Do you realize all you get for your dues? There is now a benefit hub on nteu.org with many discounts. We have labor attorneys that provide legal advice to the Chapter all the time. You have access to a trained steward force not to mention a professional staff working for the members on campus and in Washington D. C. You have people in Washington D.C. that work daily with our elected officials to see that our best interests are represented. Without NTEU you don't have these great benefits, You would be in a non-union shop where management would be free to do what they want. We, as members, pay for that.

I know we all have friends here who we take break with, eat lunch with and sometimes see after hours. Are your friends members? If not, why not? Here is a great opportunity for you and them. Sign up your friend between now and the end of September and you get \$25 and your friend gets \$50. If they won't sign up, get a good reason from them why you are paying for their benefits? You see,

locality pay was negotiated and that makes up a large percentage of our pay. Did they get an award or will they? Did you know NTEU negotiated that?

Did you know that the Awards Pool is actually a percentage of the salary pool, so we all sacrifice part of our pay for that. Answer this question; if I borrowed money from you weekly and never repaid you, would we still be friends? Would you talk to me and take me to lunch? Would you like to be seen as that type of person? I don't think so.

It is time for everyone to join NTEU. Federal workers continue to be targeted to reduce the Federal deficit. Politicians will take our pay and benefits and give them to their interests in order to influence their votes. Someday soon, the Federal Government will run out of money and won't be able to pay us. Oh, that has happened already and it was NTEU that stood up and got us paid when the government was shut down.

The old saying “united we stand, divided we fall” has never been more important than now. If you aren't a member join now and get \$50. Get your friend to sign you up and they get \$25. Or you can see your nearest steward or go to any union office to sign up now!



Union Opposes AMB Production

In the last issue of *The Force*, there was an article about Accounts Management Telephone Assistors being put on production. Some have taken this to mean that NTEU is in agreement that this should happen. That is not true.

NTEU73 President Rick Riley is opposed to this change. However, National NTEU and IRS, during the bargaining process, have begun a test program at various call sites. Both parties will use the data from these tests in further bargaining over the issue.

“I don't think anyone in the union wants to put telephone employees on production,” said NTEU73 President Rick Riley. “But it is something the IRS wants to do and the union is bargaining impact

and implementation. Unfortunately management has certain rights. But we will see how these tests go and go from there. There certainly are a lot of problems associated with it that we are going to have to take a look at.”

The Accounts Management Performance System (AMPS) is to be rolled out in Philadelphia, Austin and Ogden.

This is not something that is as of yet cut in stone, but it is likely that eventually AMB telephone assistors will be put on production.

“Again, this is not something I have agreed to or any of us wants to see, but we can only bargain the impact and implementation of this new IRS policy,” added Mr. Riley.

Labor Recognition Week Slated for September 21-22

The annual Labor Recognition celebration has been scheduled for September 21 and 22 at all locations. Like in recent years, members will be treated to hot dogs, metts and brauts as well as chips and soft drinks.

The Chapter has purchased a new commercial grill to be able to keep up with the demand. It also purchased four tents to provide protection from the weather.

There will be many local vendors in attendance to give employees an opportunity to take advantage of various deals and discounts. Included will be Cinfed, United Benefits, US Bank, All State, Fifth Third Bank, and Costco.

Thomascina Braswell, who is organizing the event, has contacted several others and is still finalizing arrangements.

"This is always well attended by the members," said Ms. Braswell. "We

provide a free lunch. It's a way to give a little bit back, but there are also a lot of vendors and activities going on."



Employees will also have a chance to talk to chapter officials, including NTEU73 President Rick Riley and Vice President Karen Walsh.

All employees receive an hour of time to attend the event and it can be used right before or after their half hour lunch time, giving them a total of an hour and half.

In the past there have been long lines for the food.

"We are hoping with the new grill, we will be able to keep up with the demand even better than ever before," added Ms. Braswell.

The first day, Wednesday, September 21, the union will set up in the Florence facility's parking lot from 11am-1pm. The next day it will be Covington's turn. It will be set up in the same place as usual; the Fourth Street building's parking lot between the flat top and the Gateway Center.

Again, the time will be 11am-1pm and 8-11pm for swing shift.

"We hope to see everybody out there to help celebrate the labor movement," commented NTEU73 President Rick Riley. "We have made great strides as a labor force because of unions and collective bargaining. We continue to work to make sure this is a great place to work!"

July Chapter Meeting Held at Molly Malone's

The July NTEU73 quarterly Chapter meeting was held at Molly Malone's in Covington in the upstairs meeting area. It was held off federal property because the Chapter hosted a TEPAC reception right after the meetings, with food and drinks.

TEPAC is the political action committee dedicated to lobbying Congress on behalf of federal employees and their issues. This type of activity cannot be done on federal property.

The meeting went extremely well and quickly. There was a very small turn out.

Julia Wiley, the Chapter Secretary, was not in attendance, so President Rick Riley waved the reading of the minutes.

Next, Treasurer Laura Mitchell gave the financial report and all is well. She read the audit report and went over the financial records. Generally, the Chapter is well within the budget. As always, hard copies of the reports are available in the union offices.

President Rick Riley then gave a report to the chapter. Among the items discussed were preparations for Labor Recognition Week and the upcoming December NTEU73 Christmas Party.

Also discussed was the trans-shipment of work in Accounts Management. Mr. Riley said that the national level wants production for CSR's and that "we are not in agreement, period. We made it clear both nationally and locally that we are not in agreement one bit."

Mr. Riley reported that the Executive Board has balanced the budget for this coming year and that they are already working on next year's budget.

On the telework issues Mr. Riley reported that many cases are being sent to arbitration. Management has been pushing back that they cannot encrypt the aspect phone system and that is the reason for their denial of telework for some individuals, including all of Accounts Management. The union does not believe that explanation is valid and cases have been sent to arbitration to test it.

After the meeting, those in attendance were invited to stay for the TEPAC reception.

NTEU73 Legislative Coordinator Debbie Mullikin then briefed the members over actions that can be taken in the upcoming

election to influence legislation friendly to employee issues.

She explained how members can send letters on the nteu.org web site under "CapWiz" to members of Congress.

She also went over a list of bills that are detrimental to employee's interests that are being proposed on Capitol Hill. She termed them as "harmful bills."

The next NTEU73 Chapter Meeting will be the annual business meeting in October. That is when the new chapter budget will be introduced. Information about where and when will be forthcoming.

Address Change?

If you have recently changed your address, please let the union know so you can continue to get information from NTEU. IRS does not share changes you made with them, so you must also tell us!

Please send any address changes to
Jeff Seibert / NTEU73 Membership:
jeffrey.w.seibert@irs.gov.

This Political Season: Don't Violate the Hatch Act!

There was an IRS call site employee who was suspended for 100 days without pay in 2014 for violations of the Hatch Act, which governs federal employee conduct during elections. Amazingly, with all the education about the act in the workplace, the Office of Special Counsel found that she was urging taxpayers who called IRS to support the President and was actually reciting a chant to taxpayers.

An IRS supervisor received a 14-day suspension without pay for attending an Obama re-election rally while on official time. The Office of Special Counsel (OSC) confirmed, specifically, that this IRS manager was on official travel to perform official site visits with subordinates; canceled a scheduled site visit; asked a subordinate to drop her off at the location of the President's campaign rally; did not return to her place of duty for over four hours; and did not request leave for the period of time she was gone.

Most employees would know that these are clearly violations of the Hatch Act and could lead to dismissal. But many times, workers are confused about what they can and cannot do during an election season.

Included in the list of things employees

ARE allowed to do: register and vote as they choose; assist in voter registration drives; express opinions about all candidates, both publicly and privately; contribute money to political organizations and attend political fund raisers; sign petitions, including nominating petitions; wear political badges and buttons (except in federal buildings); run for office within party organizations and affiliate groups; attend conventions, rallies and meetings as an elected representative of a partisan organization; take an active part in the political management of campaigns and solicit funds for political action committees to which both employees belong provided that the contributor is not a subordinate employee.

Spouses and other family members may engage in all forms of partisan political activities.

Some things employees may NOT do are as follows: be a candidate for public office in partisan politics; use their official position to influence or coerce colleagues and election results; wear political buttons in the building; collect, solicit, receive, handle disburse or account for contributions received from the general

public; wear a government uniform or insignia while engaged in political activities, sell tickets to a political fundraising event to the general public.

There is also some confusion about the difference between political and legislative activities.

Basically, political activities are work directed at the success of a political candidate or party. It relates to elections, not actual governing. It includes everything you might do to help a candidate get elected to office. Merely expressing an opinion about a candidate is not considered political activity as long as it is not directed to influencing the success of a party or candidate.

Legislative activity is directed towards the activities of government, rather than an election. It is directed at influencing an elected official to do something about an issue of importance to NTEU and its members. You should ask yourself; is what I am doing designed to affect policy or an election?

Engaging in legislative activity is generally not against the Hatch Act. But violating the Hatch Act can be serious, so be informed.

Union Saves Individual Employees Thousands!

Members of Congress have been proposing legislation that, if passed, would have cost federal employees thousands of dollars per year. And that means you!

One proposal would have forced federal workers to contribute roughly 6% more of their salaries toward their retirement with no increase to their benefits. As an example, for a grade nine-step one, it would have cost an additional \$2,500. Through NTEU's efforts, this legislation was stopped.

The bill would also have capped the government's share of health insurance premiums at the rate of inflation, rather than the current formula that reflects the actual amount of the premium increases. That would have cost each employee an average of about \$3,800 per year. Through NTEU's efforts, this legislation was stopped.

Another proposal would have calculated retirement benefits based on the average of the highest five years of an employee's salary, rather than a three year average,

costing employees about \$485 in retirement dollars per year. Through NTEU's efforts, this legislation was stopped.

Finally, another bill would have reduced the



rate of return of the Thrift Savings Plan's G-Fund as a way to help fund the measure. The cost of that would have been \$2,800 in earnings for the average FERS employee per year. Through NTEU's efforts, this legislation was stopped.

When it is totaled up, NTEU, by stopping all these proposals, saved the average employee about \$9,585 in total annual pay and retirement losses! And some people think the union does nothing for them!

What can you do to help? If you are not a member, you need to join! These things do not just accidentally happen. They are the result of intense efforts and finances provided by NTEU members! And that does not even count the things NTEU does on a daily basis in the work place.

The union has made AWS, telework and awards commonplace. Without the union, none of that would have happened. And if something happens that adversely affects you, the union is a place you can go for recourse. NTEU can help you get your problem straightened out; at least, you will be heard!

Join NTEU and help us keep your pay, benefits and financial future secure! It really does take all of us!

Fourth Street Center Flooded: Some Employees Are Unhappy

Early in the morning of July 28, the rain came down in torrents. Some ramps and roads around the city were closed due to high water, including Route 8 in Newport.

At the IRS Fourth Street Center, the floodwaters came up through the pipes creating a mess. Caution tape was put across hallways, making navigating the center difficult. Some areas were worse than others. Employees who worked near the break room closest to the Gateway Center could smell a strong stench. Some water fountains looked awful with dirt and grimes cascading down the wall from beneath the fountain.

Some offices near Mahogany Hall were flooded to various extents, including the union office. Workers spent the day airing them out, getting the water out and sanitizing them.

By nine o'clock most of the water had subsided and had been cleaned up. The water fountains looked normal and people were back in work areas that had been evacuated earlier.

By about ten o'clock, most of the center was back to normal. But many employees had serious complaints. One employee came to the union office with a paper she had written for **The Force**. Because it was a common theme among employees, we will print it here in its entirety:

Once again we are reminded of how much we mean to the government we work for. This is not the first time...kind of reminds you of the post office motto...neither rain nor snow nor dark of night. We come in, a good majority of us; because we need a paycheck and some of us even like our jobs. We get the feeling that all we are is a number. When the

snow falls so deep we have to shovel to even get to our car (those of us who can shovel). When the rain falls so hard the building floods causing our drinking fountains to look like something out of a horror film. Our restrooms back up: it's not bad enough that the cleaning people have to clean fecal matter off the walls, ceilings and doors where inconsiderate, dirty people have wiped it.

Bed Bugs run rampant...still, here we are. They spray, but how well? Not every place gets sprayed at one time, they spray one area and the bugs run to another. We risk taking them home to our friends and families and who pays to get rid of them? We do...the IRS does not give us one red cent. If they find a bug on someone they send us home with no pay.

Still, we come in and give our

all. I have many years to work. I am not happy about this and since I have been here so long I do not have the skills required to get another job. My body is not able to even be a cleaning person.

Thanks Mr. Rogers for giving the building a walk thru and deciding it was safe and sanitary enough for us to work. We really appreciate it. How much longer before you retire?

The themes in this letter are heard repeatedly around the center. NTEU73 has been working with management to assure we have a safe environment which is in everyone's interest. OSHA has been called. If you have a specific concern that has not been addressed, let the union know.

*If you have comments for **The Force**, send them to any union office.*



NTEU73 keeps members informed with chapter news as well as national news.

Visit nteu73.org

**On Facebook:
Official NTEU
Chapter 73**

NTEU Chapter 73 Stewards

Day Shift:

4th Street - Dorothy Barry-Elliot, Brandy Belew, Tommie Braswell, Michelle Robinson-Cunningham, Ron Cunningham, Kristina Fryman-Henry, Nicole Guethlein, Brenda Herrin, Bryan Jackson, William Kohler, Shannon Lovins, Laura Mitchell (Treasurer), Shawana Oliver, Michelle Ryan, Jeff Seibert.

GWC—Michael Bradford, Phillip Cargile, Steve Clark, Jamie Coffman, Tomeka Cottrell, Amanda Frazier, Loretha Hudson, Bob Krekeler, Tanesha McCants, Tonya Morris, Debbie Mullikin, Chris Pierce, Rick Riley (President), John Selmeier, Melinda Smith, Debbie Steiner, Dennis Stone, Rebekah Taylor, Michele Townsend, Karen Walsh (Vice President-Chief Steward), Virginia Watson, Julia Wiley (Secretary).

IRRC - Florence - Sarah Corea, Brandon Mikusa.

Night Shift

4th Street— Daniel McNamara, Stephanie Slayton.

GWC—Alison Bower, William Dreier, Jim Gregory, Teri Hampton, Julie Orick, Deborah Stoffel.



NTEU73 Steward Spotlight

Working Hard for NTEU73 Members!



Nicole Guethlein

Nicole works day shift in Receipt and Control. She has worked for the IRS for 17 years and has been a steward for ten. She has worked full time in the union office and serves on the NTEU73 membership committee. She has worked on a variety of cases, including evaluations, AWOL and charity work.

"I love to help employees," says Nicole. "Making employees happy and knowing that I'm the one that helped makes all the headaches associated with it worthwhile."



Daniel McNamara

Daniel recently moved back to day shift in the Flat Top, working in Error Resolution (ERS). He has been a steward since 2012. Daniel has helped with negotiations, membership committees, has worked the picnics, and helped with a legislative trip to Washington, DC.

"When I was young I was picked on a lot," Daniel said, "and now I am a steward because I have no issue speaking up for what is right and being the shield for those bullied and harmed."



Virginia Watson

Virginia stepped up to help the union a little more than a year ago. Active in the union election, she was appointed as a full time steward in the Gateway Office and was appointed to the NTEU73 Executive Board. Among her duties she tracks grievances and steward's bank time.

"I love being a union steward because I feel that I am helping others that need the help," she says. "Until I worked in the union office, I did not realize all the problems that arise here at work. It is amazing at the number of employees that we assist with their problems."

NTEU Summer Membership Campaign!

From NOW until September 30th!

**GET YOUR FRIEND TO JOIN NTEU AND
YOU GET \$25: YOUR FRIEND, THE NEW
MEMBER, GETS \$50!!**

(Pick Up the form to sign up (1187) in any the union office. Just write your name at the bottom under "recruiter" and drop it off at any union office.)

Just one more reason everyone should be a member of NTEU!

Let's Make Our Union Strong!

60 Second Updates

Be Careful in the Parking Garage! Since part of the garage is closed, here is a safety tip. Please turn on your lights while you are in the garage! It is difficult to see cars in the mirrors. Cars that are gray or black tend to blend in with the concrete, even if the garage is well lit. With more traffic in the garage, we all need to pay attention!



NTEU to Launch New Web Site! NTEU National has redesigned its web site and it has been rolled out!

"I am pleased to inform you that we have launched the new NTEU.org," said NTEU President Tony Reardon in a memo to Chapter Presidents. "A great deal of work went into ensuring the website helps you in your role as a leader and serves as a valuable benefit for our members." Go to nteu.org and check it out! It is more user friendly. There is personalized content for NTEU members and a special section just

for stewards and other chapter leaders. This is a go-to resource for you on breaking news, legislative action, case research, and NTEU fliers and signs.

Also, check out nteu73.org, the local chapter web site. Webmaster **Bryan Jackson** has been making vast improvements on the site. The chapter goal is to have the best news magazine and web site in the country; awards the chapter has already won several years ago!

NTEU Responds to Heritage Report.

NTEU National President Tony Reardon responded forcefully to a report by the Heritage Foundation calling for the next administration to slash federal employee pay and benefits.

"Clearly, The Heritage Foundation's goal is to try to limit the effectiveness of government in any way possible," Mr. Reardon said.

The report calls for a 10 percent pay cut for federal employees, reductions in vacation and sick leave, phasing out a defined pension benefit and ending health coverage for retirees.

Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program Premium Rate Increases

U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) briefed NTEU on the upcoming premium rate increases for the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLCTIP). The majority of the current 274,000 enrollees will experience significant premium increases as of November 1, 2016. Federal employees will see the new amount deducted as of the first full pay period after November 1, and annuitants will first see the new higher premiums deducted starting with their December 1st annuities.

Guidance on QSI's. Recently, the IRS notified NTEU that it issued the attached "Interim Guidance on Quality Step Increase (QSI) Policy" to managers on July 12, 2016. The guidance provides procedures for management regarding the nominating and approval processes of QSIs. The guidance is effective for appraisal periods ending on or after September 30, 2015. If we see similar, arbitrary QSI distribution patterns of the type that led to NTEU's previous national grievances, we will pursue action again.

NTEU73 Stewards Working for the Members

Your NTEU Stewards work for you, and are available if not in person, by phone or email. There are multiple stewards located in most Cincinnati IRS Center location. Here is a list of stewards manning the current NTEU73 offices:

Gateway:

- ◆ Chapter President **Rick Riley**
- ◆ Vice President/Chief Steward **Karen Walsh**
- ◆ National Vice President **Debbie Mullikin**
- ◆ Chief of Staff **Steve Clark**
- ◆ Secretary **Julia Wiley**
- ◆ Stewards **Virginia Watson** and **Debbie Mullikin**
- ◆ Night Shift Chief Steward **Bill Drier**
- ◆ Night Shift Steward **Julie Orick**

Fourth Street Center (Flat-top):

- ◆ Stewards **Michelle Robinson**, **Tommie Braswell** and **Jim Gregory** (Night Shift).
- ◆ Treasurer **Laura Mitchell**
- ◆ Director of Communications **Jeff Seibert**

If you have any issues or concerns, call an NTEU73 office at 859-669-5700 or 859-669-5370.

Tommie Braswell has been working with RAIVS/IVES on a higher graded duty grievance and questions concerning their production numbers.

Bill Dreier got an employee's evaluation raised from 3.8 to 4.2! In addition he mitigated an employee removal to a 30 day suspension!

Jim Gregory was able to get an employee's evaluation raised to all fives! He also got AWOL changed to LWOP for an employee. In addition, he contacted building maintenance on behalf of an employee and got the condition of the bathrooms improved, including broken dispensers and towel racks.

Shannon Lovins has gotten 2 employees back pay for swing shift. She also helped two more with FMLA, got an employee a detail and helped someone with a hardship case.

Laura Mitchell has represented an employee on performance issues. She helped an employee who was actually being denied by her manager to go to the bathroom. She also represented an employee with an "improper use of email" issue.

Jeff Seibert sent several telework cases to the NTEU attorney to consider arbitration. Many have been invoked.
