

Awards Given to Employees: Many Have Questions

IRS has released awards to employees. The payouts occurred on November 23 and many have been coming to the union offices with

questions about how they were calculated.

The formula is really rather simple. The employee's pay grade is multiplied by their evaluation score to come up with the number of shares. The number of shares is multiplied by the Share Value to calculate the monetary amount of the award.

For those who have elected time off, the award amount is simply divided by the pay rate to come up with the number of hours for the time off award.

Many questions revolve around comparisons with other employee's awards and similar issues.

"The pay rate is the biggest factor," said Debbie Mullikin, who trained local stewards on the awards process so that they will be better able to answer employee questions. "If a person is a higher step, for instance, that can affect the number of hours they get compared to someone else. Generally, higher paid employees get less time off when it is calculated



Debbie Mullikin addresses stewards about awards issues during training.

because their hours cost more."

Many employees are also asking why they are getting smaller awards and time off than they have in the past.

"That is simply because the awards pool has gotten smaller," explained Ms. Mullikin. "It used to be a person could get a week of leave and some money. Now, a lot of times, they don't even get a week."

It will be remembered that IRS had tried to scrap the awards program, but because of NTEU National Office efforts, the awards system was retained.

"That is a very important point because without NTEU, employees might not even be receiving awards at all!" said Ms. Mullikin, who also serves as a National Vice President which makes her a member of the national executive board.

"Awards are sometimes looked at as if they are just automatic," she added. "It is just another example of how important NTEU is the work life and compensation of employees."



Accounts Management Hires More Internals

Accounts Management Director Karen Michaels, in response to an article in last month's *The Force*, and a grievance filed over the hiring of externals over internals, says has now hired roughly 30 more internal employees from Submission Processing to fill slots in Accounts Management located in the Gateway Center.

"Karen came to us in an effort to make this right," said NTEU73 President Rick Riley. "I am so happy because that is 30 or so people who are getting jobs and can be retained."

In the article in last month's issue it was stated that "someone knew" that the Flat Top was closing prior to the employees being selected for the Accounts Management positions. That should not have been taken to mean that Ms. Michaels herself knew. It was simply pointing out a lack of coordination on the part of the IRS. Karen Michaels, at the time of the selections, had not yet learned that the IRS planned to close Submission Processing.

About 160 employees started in Accounts Management on November 28. in the end, about 60 of them were internal hires.

"We are hoping that we can accomplish more things like this to help as many people as we can," added Mr. Riley.

The Accounts Management employees have now begun their new jobs and are currently being trained in the Gateway Center.

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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

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From the Desk of the President

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

Dear Santa,

This year, my wish list for Christmas is not for me, but for the employees of the Submission Processing Center in particular and the rest of the Cincinnati Service Center. You see Santa, the Grinch has stolen our Processing Center. These employees will not have a job after September 30, 2019.

Santa, I need your help! Please bring these employees the strength to survive this and the will to move on.

Please bring them early retirements, buyouts, CTAP letters, jobs and opportunities.

May you bring the spirit of giving to Congress to not only authorize those gifts now, but money for retraining and new jobs here.

Santa, may you bring buyouts and early retirements to everyone who qualifies.

Can you make those CTAP letters arrive soon, not a year from the end? Can we have a new building with lots of new jobs for these people?

So Santa, make all our members happy this Christmas!

If you can bring happiness to them, they will pay it forward ten times over!

*Merry
Christmas
Santa!*



*From the staff,
officers, stewards
and Executive
Board of NTEU
Chapter 73!*

*To all the members
of Chapter 73, may
you all have a Mer-
ry Christmas and a
Happy New Year.*

The Force

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Christmas Lunch Provided by NTEU73

Instead of doing the annual Christmas Party this year, NTEU73 has decided to do something more inclusive for the members. The union will be providing a free Christmas lunch in all the buildings for members.

“We are making some changes in light of the fact that we will be losing the Submission Processing members and we have had to adjust our budget accordingly,” explained NTEU73 Treasurer Laura Mitchell, who as an officer serves on the Chapter Executive Board.

In addition to the lunch, members tickets will be put into a drawing for prizes.

“We feel like we can include every member in this, rather than just the few who came to the party,” said NTEU73 President Rick Riley. “We have always put on a very nice Christmas Party but

it was also very expensive.”

Flyers will be out in the lunch rooms explaining when the lunch will be held in your building! (See ad on page 7.)

This lunch is free to members only.

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

Chapter Visits Senator McConnell's Office

NTEU73 President Rick Riley met with Shane Noem of Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell's staff in late November to deliver the letters signed by members and have a discussion about what can be done to lessen the impact on employees who are facing the loss of their jobs in 2019.

Mr. Noem is handling the issue locally for the Senator and seemed very knowledgeable already on the issues.

Mr. Riley gave a brief presentation about bringing other types of work to the Service Center, including Identity Theft. He spent about an hour with Mr. Noem.

Among other things, the two discussed possible sites the IRS could use to do other work. Mr. Noem mentioned that he had toured the upper floors of the United States Post Office building in Covington, which he thought could be a possibility. Those floors are currently vacant.

Mr. Noem stated that our interests and Senator McConnell's interests are similar. Neither want to lose the jobs in Covington. Mr. Riley asked for help from the Senator in securing funding to bring

other work into the IRS. It is possible to have the money earmarked for that



NTEU73 President Rick Riley delivers letters to Shane Noem at Senator Mitch McConnell's office.

specific purpose, Mr. Noem said. With a new administration coming in, there is a degree of uncertainty moving forward. But

according to Mr. Noem, Senator McConnell is committed to helping these people facing unemployment in the future and to save those Kentucky jobs.

Mr. Riley also pointed out that there have been many jobs "outsourced" from the IRS which could be returned to the service. His contention was that those should always have been done by federal workers who, if given the proper tools, can do just as good a job or better than the contractors.

Over all, it was a very upbeat meeting and NTEU73 plans to stay in touch with Senator McConnell during this process.

A meeting is scheduled for early December with Congressman Massie's office in northern Kentucky. Several constituents will attend that meeting with Mr. Riley and will meet with Congressman Massie personally.

The union will be meeting with all local members of Congress over the next few weeks to be delivering letters from constituents and to open discussions about supporting efforts to keep the jobs in northern Kentucky.

NTEU Win Provides Hundreds in Retroactive Transit Subsidies

NTEU and the IRS have reached a global settlement that will result in hundreds of dollars in retroactive transit subsidies to individual eligible IRS bargaining unit employees for the time period of 2012 to 2014.

The transit subsidy had gone up and down since 2012. In some years, Congress raised it, while in others the subsidy stayed flat.

Sometimes it was at the same level as the parking benefit—other times it was far below. Last year, NTEU finally achieved its goal of permanent parity between the parking and transit benefit.

In 2013, NTEU filed a grievance alleging that the IRS violated the contract by refusing to pay employees retroactive subsidies up to the new non-taxable amount—established by an NTEU-supported legislative provision—for 2012 (\$240 per month) and January to February 2013 (\$245 per month). NTEU won that arbitration, which was upheld by the Federal Labor Relations Authority, but the award was held up by the IRS's appeal of

the Authority's decision, which it ultimately withdrew.

Two years later, NTEU filed a second grievance alleging the same violations when IRS refused to pay employees retroactive subsidies up to the new non-taxable amount of \$250 for 2014, established by another NTEU-supported legislative provision. NTEU was



successful in securing an agreement with the IRS to also pay those retroactive subsidies for 2014.

At the IRS Office of Chief Counsel, NTEU filed similar grievances and reached settlements over the agency's failure to pay retroactive transit subsidies for the same time periods.

The amount of retroactive transit subsidies that eligible employees are

entitled to receive is:

For 2012: Actual public-transit commuting costs in excess of \$125, but not to exceed \$240 for each month. For 2013: Actual public-transit commuting costs in excess of \$125, but not to exceed \$245 for January 2013 and February 2013. For 2014: Actual public-transit commuting costs in excess of \$130, but not to exceed \$250 for each month.

Eligible employees include current, former and retired IRS and Chief Counsel employees who participated in the IRS Public Transportation Subsidy Program (PTSP) at any time from Jan. 1, 2012 through Feb. 28, 2013, and any month during 2014. Those eligible for payments are PTSP participants who received the maximum non-taxable transit subsidy that was in effect at any point during that time period.

The IRS will begin notifying eligible employees within 45 days after the date of the settlement.

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 - A. J. Allen, Brandy Belew, Tommie Braswell, Michelle Robinson-Cunningham, Ron Cunningham, Kristina Fryman-Henry, Leann Gosser, Nicole Guethlein, Brenda Herrin, Bryan Jackson, Will Kohler, Krystal Lear, Shannon Lovins, Laura Mitchell (Treasurer), Shawana Oliver, Lori Riedinger, Jeff Seibert.

GWC—Michael Bradford, Phillip Cargile, Steve Clark, Jamie Coffman, Tomeka Cottrell, 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), Julia Wiley (Secretary).

IRRC - Florence - Jan Colwell, Sarah Corea, Brandon Mikusa.

Night & Swing Shift

4th Street— Jim Gregory, Stephanie Slayton, Deborah Stoffel.

GWC—Alison Bower, William Dreier, John Gilliam, Teri Hampton, Julie Orick.

Terri Lackey is NTEU73 Good Manager of Month

Terri Lackey is this month's Good Manager of the Month!

Terri started at the IRS back in January of 1988 as a grade 2 mail clerk. Nearing her 30 year mark with IRS, she has come a long way since then!

She became a lead clerk and began her managerial career in 1994. Most of Terri's management career has been in Receipt & Control Branch.

She was nominated as Good Manager of the Month by her employees. She currently is a

manager in Accounting.

Terri has received numerous manager awards throughout her career and has always been viewed as very cooperative and helpful by her team-mates.

When asked if she had any advice for co-workers, she said, "Don't ever give up.

Stick to your goals."

"I very much enjoy working for Terri," commented one of her employees. "She has always been a stand up person and good manager too. She is very easy to work for!"

When asked about what advice she would give to employee's about the shut down, she said, "I don't think they should wait until the last minute. They need to try to get a job now."

"They should also check with other agencies in the government," she added.

Terri says she is "not going anywhere." She would like to work another six years before calling it quits at the IRS!

If you would like to nominate a manager for Good manager of the Month, e-mail Jeffrey.w.seibert@irs.gov.



Rick Riley Meets with IRS Commissioner

NTEU73 President Rick Riley met with IRS Commissioner John A. Koskinen The first week of December for thirty minutes. The two discussed issues involving the closing of the Submission Processing Center in Covington.

"The Commissioner wants to get things moving sooner rather than later," said Mr. Riley. "He wants to get the VERA/VISP and CTAP letters to employees as soon as possible so that they do not miss any opportunities. He does not want to wait until the last minute. And we agree on that."

Mr. Riley was accompanied by NTEU Chicago Filed Office Counsel Mike McAuley in the meeting. Mr. McAuley will be keeping a close eye on this process for NTEU National President Tony Reardon. He will also be helping with the local bargaining team that will be negotiating issues regarding the closure.

"I plan to appoint members to a local bargaining team that will include some impacted employees to work through these issues," explained Mr. Riley.

The team will likely include stewards and members, as well as Mr. Riley and Mr. McAuley.

Mr. Riley specifically asked about buyouts. The Commissioner assured him that he would like to see buyouts across the campus, meaning that employees in Gateway could get them as well to open up positions for those in Submission Processing. But Mr. Riley cautioned that the buyouts need approval from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and possibly Congress.

As far as what he thought of the Commissioner, Mr. Riley said, "I liked him. He was very smart and prepared. He did a great job with the employees he met with. I think he is committed to making this as painless as possible.

Joint Safety Committee Looking Out for Employees

The Joint Union-IRS Safety Committee is being chaired this year by NTEU73 President Rick Riley. The group tries to insure that the IRS is a safe place to work. They do everything they can to see that the facility is safe and that employees are aware of things they can do to lead accident free lives. As a part of that, here are some tips to help cope with the coming winter weather.

Avoiding Winter Slips and Falls

Winter in Kentucky and Ohio can often mean periods of icy or snowy weather.

While our employees work swiftly to remove identified snow and ice from walkways and building entrances, you still may encounter slippery surfaces while walking from your vehicle into the building.

The Covington Territory

Safety Office offers the following tips for avoiding slips and falls during this winter season:

- Select appropriate footwear. There is no single shoe sole material that is

perfect under all conditions, however, footwear with rubber or neoprene composite soles provides better traction on ice and snow than leather or plastic.



- Think about the best route to your destination and plan on a little extra time to get there. Avoid rushing, taking shortcuts over snow piles or traversing areas where snow or ice

removal is incomplete.

- If you have no choice but to walk on a slippery surface, bend slightly forward and shorten your stride or shuffle your feet for better stability.

- Many slips and falls occur during entry or exit from vehicles. Be particularly careful and hold on to the vehicle for support.

When entering a building, be sure to:

- Take advantage of floor mats to remove moisture from the soles of your shoes. This will help protect you, as well as others who follow from having to walk on wet or slippery surfaces.
- Avoid walking on wet or slippery areas if possible.
- Take responsibility for immediately reporting slip and fall hazards.

Remember these tips and have a great Winter!

Phased Retirement Being Pushed by NTEU

NTEU is demanding face-to-face bargaining with the IRS over a phased retirement program for bargaining unit (BU) employees after the agency announced it is implementing a pilot program for non-bargaining unit employees starting in early fiscal 2017.

This disappointing move by the IRS shows it does not place a high priority on offering the program to BU employees.

NTEU fought for phased retirement and then pressed the Office of Personnel Management to write regulations after Congress passed legislation authorizing the program in 2012. NTEU requested to bargain with the IRS to make phased retirement available to BU employees.

In October 2014, NTEU initiated

bargaining over the program for BU employees and submitted its proposals one month later. The IRS responded by claiming it couldn't begin negotiations until the Treasury Department issued guidance to subordinate agencies and until testing of the payroll processing system needed for phased retirement was complete. In March 2015, the IRS completed payroll testing and in October, Treasury issued guidance to agencies.

NTEU repeatedly pressed the IRS to bargain, but the agency claimed it was working on program documents. Finally, in July, the IRS sent NTEU draft phased retirement program documents as a proposal, and the parties held bargaining over the phone. That same day, NTEU

submitted a list of questions about the program, and the IRS just recently responded. NTEU is now scheduling face-to-face bargaining with the IRS in an effort to finally secure a phased retirement program for BU employees.

NTEU and IRS are still far apart on the issues of the duration of phased retirement and how much time must be spent on mentoring activities. For example, the IRS proposed limiting participation in the program to one year with the possibility of a one-year extension. NTEU proposed no time limits on participation.

NTEU will continue to keep you updated as bargaining continues over this important program. Please visit your chapter president with questions.

60 Second Updates

Don't Forget About FSAs This Open Season

While you're busy deciding on your health insurance coverage, don't miss out on another thing you can do this open season: enroll in flexible spending accounts (FSA) under the FSAFEDS

program. Contributing money to a federal Flexible Spending Account (FSA) reduces your taxable income. You save money by paying less taxes.

In his new "Know Your Facts" column in GovLoop, National President Tony Reardon outlines the three different FSAs available and explains how they can save you hundreds of dollars each year.

Federal Employees Behind in Pay by 34 Percent Salary Council Says

Federal workers earn 34.07 percent on average less than private-sector employees doing comparable work, according to the government's official, although not



universally accepted, tally of how salaries compare.

"Federal pay needs to be substantially increased," said National Treasury Employees Union president Tony Reardon, a member of the council. "When you look at the private sector, what kind of pay increases they have had, it dwarfs what federal employees have received. It's time for Congress to step up and pay federal employees what they deserve to be paid."

Government Funding

The current continuing resolution (CR) that is funding the federal government expires on Friday. NTEU expects another CR to be introduced shortly. Visit the national NTEU website (nteu.org) for continuing updates.

Open Season Closing

NTEU members have only a few days left to explore their health care options with the "Consumers' Checkbook." This exclusive benefit can help make sense of your choices in the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program (FEHBP). You will find:

- Real Cost Comparisons: Plans' costs and rankings, including out-of-pocket expenses, are available.

- Quick Access to Answers: Checkbook is your resource to find answers quickly.

- Dental and Vision Plans: Full guide to pick the best option for you.

Locality Pay by the Numbers

Setting the final—actual—amount of the federal pay increase effective each January is a multi-step process.

Eligible employees moved one step closer last week as the president sent a letter to Congress outlining a 0.6 percent average for locality pay raises for 2017. In an earlier transmittal to Congress, the president set an across-the-board raise for employees at 1 percent, bringing the total to an average of 1.6 percent.

The final step is for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to release the actual pay tables, by locality. The 0.6 percent figure is essentially an overall number, some areas will receive locality pay increases below this figure, while others will receive locality pay rate increases slightly above this figure.

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 **Sarah Corea** and **Debbie Mullikin**
- ◆ Night Shift Chief Steward **Bill Dreier**
- ◆ Night Shift Steward **Julie Orick**

Fourth Street Center (Flat-top):

- ◆ Stewards **Tommie Braswell**, **Michelle Robinson**, 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.

Jim Gregory got 8 hours of AWOL changed to LWOP for an employee.

Will Kohler got an employee's evaluation raised through the grievance process. He also got 5 weeks of pay due to lack of notice of detail and then furloughed to be PAID to grievant!

Shannon Lovins got documentation removed from an employee's folder.

Tanesha McCants had FMLA granted to an employee and 32.75 hours of AWOL removed from her file.

Laura Mitchell solved an awards issue for an employee.

Tonya Morris got two members evaluations raised and got a removal for another member reduced to a suspension! She saved the employee's job!!

Julie Orick has been named Acting Night Shift Chief Steward will **Bill Dreier** is on medical leave.

Rebekah Taylor won a grievant 6 months back pay for doing higher graded duties.



NTEU73 Steward Spotlight

Working Hard for NTEU73 Members!



LeAnn Gosser

LeAnn has worked for the IRS almost 15 years. She is currently assigned to ICO/Unpostables, Team 201, in the Flat Top. About three months ago, LeAnn stepped up to be an NTEU73 steward and is an up and comer. Her work experience will be helpful as she performs her steward duties.

"I like helping people and want to make sure people get the right information on a general bases and also with transition during the coming shutdown," LeAnn says.



Phillip Cargile

Phillip is an AMS Contact Rep and has worked as a union steward for a little over a year.

"The main reason I became a union steward was because I was suffering the stress and frustration of management that had generated a hostile environment for me," he says. "At that time I had never used the union. But their quick response in trying to resolve my issue inspired me to want to help others that might be undergoing the same issues in the work place."



Bill Dreier

Bill is the night shift Chief Steward and has been working at the IRS since 2001. and for the union since 2013.

"My father had been a Union Pipefitter," Bill says. "When he had a life-threatening motorcycle accident, the Unions support and insurance was vital in his recovery. I knew from my childhood the value of unions, so I didn't hesitate to sign up."

"I learned that you have to speak-up to defend your rights," he added. "That was when I asked about becoming a steward."

Merry
Christmas
luncheon

Florence 12/13/2016
Day Shift 11:00AM - 1:00PM

Gateway 12/14/2016
Day Shift 11:00AM - 1:00PM
Swing Shift 7:30PM - 10PM

Flat top 12/15/2016
Day Shift 11:00AM - 1:00PM
Swing Shift 7:30PM - 10PM
Night Shift 10:00PM - Midnight


