

Cincinnati Campus Now Hiring New Employees But Unhappiness Continues in AMB

With the passing of the federal budget, which increased the IRS budget, the IRS has freed up a bit of money to begin hiring some badly needed new workers.

Here at the Cincinnati Service Center there have already been a few hired recently, a total of less than 30. In the future, there will be approximately 100 new Customer Service Representatives to help handle the phones.

"The bad news is that the IRS has agreed to meet phone goals for this year and the people they are hiring this year, after they are trained and ready to go, won't help during this filing season," said NTEU Will Igoe, who was visiting here recently.

Mr. Igoe said that even though there will be new employees, the target is high and that the pressure will likely increase for CSR's to meet goal.

NTEU73 President Rick Riley has made



Will Igoe, NTEU attorney, speaks to a group of new hires in Receipt & Control at an Orientation Session

Accounts Management a top priority.

"I continue to hear how employees are treated in Accounts Management and it's not good," said Mr. Riley. "We are trying to work proactively to get employees some relief."

In a private conversation with union officials Accounts Management Director Karen Michaels has already expressed a willingness to work with the union to try to address these employee concerns.

In a recent Meet & Greet session with the Chapter President Riley, employees complained about such things as being verbally abused for being off the phone for as little as 47 seconds. A couple night shift employees have even asked to get reassigned to day shift because their manager is so bad.

More bad news. It is not much better on day shift.

"With the budget being what it is, management is trying to meet goals by squeezing as much as they can out of the employees," continued Mr. Igoe. "We understand that work has to be done, but

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NTEU73 Membership is Slowly on the Rise

Last year, the membership numbers of NTEU73 had been in a steady decline for several years. NTEU73 is happy to report that under the new administration, the trend has been reversed and the membership numbers are increasing.

Since Rick Riley was elected President of the Chapter, there have been 70 new members added. While it is much slower than Mr. Riley would like to see, reversing the slide has been no easy task.

"We get them one member at a time and if we keep doing that, we will get there," said Mr. Riley. "I would like to see us get back to the 70% plateau. With the turn around we have seen with the chapter

communications and other areas, I think it is a matter of time, but it takes a lot of

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NTEU Chapter 73

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(859) 669-5370

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From the Desk of NTEU73 President Rick Riley

“As always, At Your Service”

• **Rick Riley**

Chapter 73 is growing! If you have a friend that isn't a member, ask them to join. We have a very important election upcoming in November. We have several issues that affect Federal Employees and we need your voices to be heard.

Since taking office we have been resolving employee's issues at a record pace. Generally speaking, resolving issues in a cooperative manner is the most efficient way to get things done. At times, filing a grievance is the most appropriate thing to do and must be done. The Chapter represents employees who are facing disciplinary or adverse actions. These cases are challenging at best, but the Chapter has been doing a great job with these!

Recently though, an Operations Chief has gone off the beaten path and her Director, Susan Quackenbush is so far standing behind her Ops Chief. The Ops Chief had a steward and employee cited by the Federal Protective Services Officer for creating a disturbance in the work place. This is an unacceptable action. As Federal Employees we are covered under Part 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations and as IRS employees we have a negotiated agreement guaranteeing our rights. What management did effectively was to bypass and negate those rights. If allowed to stand, the citations issued would go on the steward's record and the employee's record as misdemeanor crimes. In addition, they were cited for \$325 each! This allows for no IRS internal review or appeal. Instead, any challenge must be done through the

courts.
The Federal
Labor
Relations
Authority
has found
on several
occasions
that
Stewards
are allowed



to put up a vigorous defense of an employee. In short, a steward is allowed to be as loud, or louder than the manager in the heated discussion.

This arbitrary action by the Operations Chief has put the Chapter in the forefront of this conflict. We cannot allow this action to stand. Therefore, I have gone to the NTEU73 Executive Board and requested funds to provide a criminal lawyer to defend these employees. The Executive Board approved the money.

You see, if this stands, anytime a management official doesn't like the actions of a steward or an employee, they could go to the Federal Protective Services and have them criminally cited and send them to court instead of using the administrative procedures that have been in place for years and have worked.

We have filed a grievance and an Unfair Labor Practice against this Director and Operations Chief. I am hoping this goes to court, where, the evidence will show that the Operations Chief was just as loud or louder and actually threaten the steward saying "You have made a grave mistake! You will regret this!" This statement was heard by several employees. If this is proven in court, I hope management is so embarrassed that they relieve this Operations Chief of her duties. As it is, I continually hear of reports of bullying and intimidation by this Operations Chief. These have been brought to the attention of the Director who, thus far, has failed to do anything about it.

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hard work by a lot of people. If we can get 100 new members each year, net, that is an increase of 300 over my term as President. That's nothing to sneeze at!" said Mr. Riley.

With the new budget being released, the IRS has gotten more money and here in Covington there will be about 100 CSR's

added to do telephone work.

"The result of that is that we will have a hundred opportunities to sign up new hires, which should easy get us to the one hundred goal for this first year."

"Also, I have had a lot of people say that they are really seeing a difference from the past and that is helping us get even more. I am very happy with the way it is going."

Here's the Scoop On Promotions!

by Will Igoe
NTEU Attorney

Over the last few years there have been fewer opportunities for promotion. This article covers how to increase your chances to get a permanent promotion by volunteering for temporary promotions and details. Volunteering for details and temporary promotion can increase your ranking when you apply for permanent promotions by increasing your score on the application.

There are three important factors in making the best qualified list to be considered for a permanent promotion: awards, appraisals, and the application.

Often all the best qualified employees get the maximum number of points for their awards and appraisal. In these cases, the application makes the difference between making the best qualified list, and not being considered for the promotion. When an employee applies for a job they can earn forty points based on their answer to questions on an application. There are up to eight (8) points each CJE (maximum of forty (40) points), and applicants earn points based on the answers to questions and/or groups of questions for each CJE. Points are often earned based on experience gained through details and non-competitive temporary promotions. Therefore, this article will address some of the ground rules covering non-competitive temporary promotions and details. Below are some frequently asked questions about the contractual rules for details and non-competitive temporary promotions:

What is a detail?

A detail is a temporary assignment of an employee to a different position for a specified period with the employee returning to regular duties at the end of the detail. Details may be to positions at higher, same or lower grades.

The main difference between a detail and a non-competitive temporary promotion is that for a detail, an employee is considered to be permanently occupying his/her regular position and is not required to meet the qualifications of the temporary position.

As in a non-competitive temporary promotion, if the detail is to a higher grade, the employee will be temporarily promoted for up to 120 days, if eligible

seasons.

When must a detail be posted?

If a detail is over 60 days it must be posted.

How a detail must be posted?

The Employer has to solicit for the detail using electronic media including, but not limited to e-mail and electronic bulletin boards and/ or other appropriate means for employees without computers (e.g.,

memorandums, desk drops).

How is selection made for details over 60 days?

If there are too many volunteers, selection will be made in descending order using IRS EOD date, unless competitive procedures are used to identify the best qualified candidate. If the most senior volunteer has had a similar opportunity in the past 12 months they are skipped.

What is a rotational

detail?

A rotational detail happens when the IRS offers a series of details for more than 30 days. In this case, the details will be filled by EOD. The next most senior volunteer will be selected for each successive detail.

How are non-competitive temporary promotions solicited and filled?

Volunteers for non-competitive temporary promotions of more than sixty (60) days, but less than 120 consecutive days, will be solicited from interested and qualified employees who meet minimum OPM qualifications for the non-competitive temporary promotion. If there are too many volunteers, selection will be made in descending order using IRS EOD.

What should I do if my rights are violated with respect to a detail?

You need to contact the union office at 5700, as soon as possible. No grievance can be filed after 15 workdays from the violation.



(time in grade).

What is a non-competitive temporary promotion?

A temporary assignment of an employee to a higher grade position for a specified period of time not to exceed 120 days, with the employee returning to his or her permanent position of record at the end of the non-competitive temporary promotion.

To receive a non-competitive temporary promotion an employee must meet OPM qualifications for the temporary position and any selective placement factors.

What are some of the benefits of working a detail or non-competitive temporary promotion?

Volunteering for these opportunities can help you when you are applying for a permanent promotion. For non-competitive temporary promotions and detail to a higher graded position you will be paid at the higher rate. For seasonal employees details can also extend your

Accounts Management International Team Blessed With a Series of Good Managers

I was reading *The Force* and came across the "Do you have a good manager?" column. I wanted to let you know that since I came to the Accounts Management International Team that I have had the best managers the IRS has ever had.

First, Rick Zoz was our manager. He was a very good manager. He was fair, let people do their work, and encouraged personal and professional development. We have a great team. With Rick Zoz as manager and Nancy Stephens as our lead, we were able to move International to a new level here at the IRS.

When Rick Zoz retired we were blessed to have Alisha Hillner as our manager. She, following in the shoes of Rick, was also a good manager. She now has a detail that she will be on for an indefinite amount of time. Not knowing anything about how the International department worked, she seemed to gain knowledge of the workings of the group and work.

Now, when Alisha has moved to her new assignment, we have Ben Hogg as our manager. He is another good manager. He is learning the workings of International and is a fast learner. He works hard to resolve international issues that arises in

the team, helps with getting things done, and is a very good encourager. He is there when you need him and will help you get to places you want to go. He is a new



Alisha Hillner

manager with what it takes to be the best. He has learned some of the workings of International and has endured all the

quirkiness of International and has helped us to grow and get things done correctly in International. He will let you strive for greatness and encourages learning and

doing new things. He is not afraid to let someone grow in knowledge and encourages different things, like being lead or doing a class or whatever else that comes up. He comes up with special projects for people that will help the team and lets them present it to the team. Most of the time it will go to all the International teams.

Nancy, as lead, is a great person to work with as well. I know that this is supposed to be about the managers, but to have a great manager I believe a great lead is also needed, and Nancy is top notch in that department. She tries to help everyone, explains things so you understand it, and encourages thinking. When the manager is away, she steps in and covers for the manager. She does her best to make sure everything is done properly. She is a great team player and is an asset to the International team. Good managers and good leads are both great to have in the IRS.

After having been under a few not so good managers, I have to admit that it is great to have a manager, and lead, that is not on your back all the time, will be there for you when you have troubles, not look down on you, and will help when needed. Rick, Alisha, and Ben are all good managers, and Nancy is a Great Lead. I want to give Kudos to all of these great people.

These people are great examples of great managers! I am glad that I can let someone know of their goodness. I like positive! It always is nice to have something positive to read in *The Force* instead of all the negatives. I think this is a good idea.

Wanda Casson
AMB International Team

*If you think your manager should be featured in **The Force**, let us know why! Contact NTEU73 Director of Communications Jeff Seibert at jeffrey.w.seibert@irs.gov.*

FREE Employee Tax Assistance is here!!!



[Volunteer Income

Tax Assistance]

For appointment call: 859-669-4211

Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays

Tuesday, January 26, 2016 – Thursday, April 7, 2016

2:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

4th Street: Room 39

If an interpreter is needed, please see your manager.

Social Security CARDS are required for everyone listed on the return!!

IRS to Stop Talking to Taxpayers?

Taxpayers doing business with the IRS in the future could find it very frustrating. The agency apparently has a secret plan to all but eliminate personal contact with taxpayers. Everything will be done online: filing, confirmation, payments, questions and audits. Paper mail and in-person help will be a thing of the past, including telephone help.

The IRS says it has to keep up with the modern world, but the Congressionally appointed Taxpayer Advocate says that IRS plans will virtually wipe out personal contact, both in person and by phone.

"Based on our internal discussions with IRS officials (we) have been left with the impression that the IRS's goal is to 'get out of the business of talking to taxpayers,'" Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson wrote in her annual report to Congress.

Ms. Olson's expectation is that taxpayer contact will be dramatically scaled back. She also said that the public is not aware of the "secret plan" and that they have not been consulted.

And in light of recent cyber attacks, one must wonder at the ramifications of everything being filed online, which will include everyone's personal information. The IRS has demonstrated an inability to stop such attacks.

"Many taxpayers will find it much harder to resolve their problems and will have to pay a third party to assist them," Ms. Olson said. The result will be

"frustration and alienation" that could over time lead to more tax cheats, according to Ms. Olson.

Much of this planning on the IRS's part has been brought about by the limited budget they have been directed to work with and the plans are to be in place, theoretically, by 2019. Ms. Olson claims there has been a significant erosion of IRS

service because of five consecutive years of budget cuts.

"Our survey shows that this is what the taxpayers want," IRS Commissioner John Koskinen told the *Washington Post*. "Our problem today is that we have a whole lot of people who would rather not see us at all, who want to go online, transact business and move on."

"There's nothing in the 'future state' that says we're not going to have people answer the phones or have someone see an IRS agent in person," he said and claimed Ms. Olson is misunderstanding what is happening.

Ms. Olson's report, however, says that the IRS's gradual automation actually has resulted in more demands for in-person service. Taxpayers made 5.6 million visits to IRS offices in fiscal 2015 and made more than 100 million calls to IRS agents.



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

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Official NTEU
Chapter 73**

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that does not mean the employees do not have to be treated with respect and cordially. They are the front line people that do the real work for the IRS."

NTEU73 is in the process of getting an AMB petition together to persuade management to address these issues. Members are being asked to sign this petition in order to let management know how wide spread these problems are.

"If we can get over 50% of the employees to sign it, I think management will take this much more seriously. One of the things we are hoping to accomplish is to get a standing Union/Management committee in place that will deal with these issues," said Mr. Igoe.

Accounts Management Employees can contact any union steward in order to sign the petition. They can also stop in the Gateway Office on the first floor to sign it.

"I think maybe a lot of people have just given up," said Mr. Igoe. "They are unsure things can even be solved. But this is going to be the best way to get it done."

NTEU Chapter 73 Stewards

Day Shift:

4th Street - A. J. Allen, Dorothy Barry-Elliott, Tommie Braswell, Ron Cunningham, Kristina Fryam-Henry, Nicole Guethlein, Brenda Herrin, Bryan Jackson, Jessica Jacobs, William Kohler, Daniel McNamara, Laura Mitchell, Michelle Robinson, Michelle Ryan, Jeff Seibert.

GWC—Pat Breitenstein, Phillip Cargile, Steve Clark, Jamie Coffman, Tomeka Cottrell, Amanda Frazier, Loretha Hudson, Vicki King, Bob Krekeler, Staci Lee, Tonya Morris, Debbie Mullikin, Chris Pierce, Michelle Ryan, Rick Riley (President), John Selmeier, Melinda Smith, Debbie Steiner, Michele Townsend, Karen Walsh (Vice President-Chief Steward), Virginia Watson, Julia Wiley (Secretary).

IRRC - Florence - Miranda Antha, Jan Colwell, Sarah Corea, Michelle Hiles, Brandon Mikusa.

Swing Shift:

4th Street—Beverly Johnson, Stephanie Slayton, Torika Thompson.

GWC—William Dreier, Ron DuMoulin, Jim Gregory, Terri Hampton, Marlo Hodge-Hammond, Julie Orick, Robert Starks.

HOW YOUR SUPERVISOR



WATCHES YOU AT WORK

National NTEU Aggressive on Telework

NTEU73 President Rick Riley has been doing as much as possible to help make telework (working from home) a reality in the IRS here at the Cincinnati Service Center. Now NTEU National has filed a national grievance over the issue.

NTEU is aware of several alleged violations the agency is making in implementing the telework article in the 2016 contract. The union, which continues to gather information, has filed a grievance challenging several IRS actions.

For one, certain business divisions are requiring extra language in recurring telework agreements and weekly supervisor approval of the agreements. The 2016 contract does not require additional consents once a recurring telework agreement is approved. This an

obvious instance of managers fearing the loss of control over their employees.

NTEU has also learned that some employees at certain IRS locations are being denied recurring telework as a matter of course. Employees who meet eligibility criteria may request and be approved for recurring telework.

Here in Covington, as an example, employees who have requested telework in Accounts Management have had their requests virtually ignored. They have received neither approval nor a denial.

In addition, NTEU has heard of cases where managers have told employees that they must convert an ad hoc telework agreement to a "recurring" telework agreement because they work on the same type of matters every time they telework.

NTEU maintains that telework is voluntary, and managers have no authority to force an employee to change the type of requested telework that has been approved.

Locally, NTEU73 has had an arbitrator's decision upheld by the National Labor Relations Authority (NLRB) which ordered IRS to make telework available to employees working in Innocent Spouse in Florence.

Telework is an important benefit for many IRS employees. National and local NTEU is committed to ensuring that the program is properly implemented and will continue to monitor it carefully. Updates on the National NTEU grievance will be shared with employees as more information becomes available..

Sign Up to Make the Annual Bus Trip to Washington for Federal Workers!

The bus trip to Washington has been finalized and if you want to go, you can sign up to reserve your free seat on the bus.

The trip is being organized by Debbie Mullikin, the NTEU73 Legislative Coordinator. It is in conjunction with the annual National NTEU Legislative Conference.

"We are taking a full bus of people to Washington and we will be trying to make legislators aware of federal employee issues," said Ms. Mullikin. "It is a fun trip and an important trip with the

presidential election coming up."

On February 23, the bus will park by the Johnson Street lot at 8:45 p.m. Everyone should be on the bus and ready to leave by 9 p.m. A "box lunch" and beverages will be provided by NTEU73. Please bring your own special snacks or beverages if you wish or if you have a dietary restriction or preference.

The bus is scheduled to arrive in Washington D. C. before 10 A.M. and leave D.C around 2 P.M., arriving back at

Johnson Street between 9 and 10 p.m. February 24. So it is basically a one day, action packed trip

While in D.C., members will be participating in a rally at the capitol, so they must be on their own time for the entire trip. Please check the weather and dress appropriately. There may be some

walking involved in getting from the bus to the rally so be prepared to walk!

Anyone who wants to go needs to notify NTEU73 Director of Communications Jeff Seibert. Email

(Jeffrey.W.Seibert@irs.gov) by COB February 10.

Seating is free, but once the bus is full, that's it! First come, first served.

The Chapter has made this an annual event and it has been very successful in the past. NTEU73 is also sending four people, including the Chapter President and Vice President to the conference and they will also be lobbying Congress, as well as attending National NTEU training classes.



NTEU Comments Filed on Proposed Ethics Changes

Proposed changes to the rules that govern the solicitation and acceptance of gifts from outside sources by employees of the executive branch drew two comments from NTEU. The changes were proposed the Office of Government Ethics (OGE).

One of the proposed changes would require an employee to obtain written authorization from an agency ethics official in all cases before accepting free attendance to a widely attended gathering. NTEU cautioned that, by imposing on employees the added burden of requesting and waiting for written authorization, this proposed rule could unnecessarily discourage employees from attending events that benefit employees and their agency employers alike. NTEU also questioned the broad application of a proposed amendment to the rule governing disposal of impermissible gifts. In the proposed rule, OGE suggests that if an employee receives, for example, a t-shirt that constitutes an impermissible gift, the employee must return the shirt to the donor, pay the donor the shirt's fair market value, or destroy the shirt by throwing it in the trash. In our comments, we suggest to OGE that allowing the employee to donate the shirt to a charity that would give it to someone in need would avoid waste and would not raise ethical concerns.

60 Second Updates

Employee Morale up? According to The Partnership for Public Service, who surveyed federal workers, they are a bit more satisfied now than over the past few years. NTEU73

President Tony Reardon does not buy it. "The overall satisfaction score may be up slightly, but make no mistake, federal employee morale remains low," said Mr. Reardon. "This is not surprising when federal employees face a barrage of unfair attacks from some in Congress on health care, retirement and workplace rights, inadequate pay raises that won't cover rising costs and the recurring possibility of yet another government shutdown," he told *Federal Times*.



Pay Raise Kicks In! Beginning with the first pay period of 2016, federal employees got an increase in locality pay

for the first time in six years. The total average increase is 1.3 percent with all employees receiving a 1.0 percent across-the-board hike, and the remaining 0.3 percent devoted to locality increases.

Underfunded Awards Pools! NTEU believes the IRS has not properly funded certain awards pools for fiscal year (FY) 2015 awards. After analyzing the awards data, the union filed a national grievance alleging a number of serious discrepancies. Funding for awards pools was outlined in a settlement agreement. That agreement requires the IRS to fund awards at 1.0 percent of the total bargaining unit salaries from the prior fiscal year. However, certain awards pools (for FY 2015) are significantly lower compared to the FY 2014 awards funding, even though the numbers of bargaining unit employees did not decrease at nearly the same level. Those award pools thus appear to NTEU to be underfunded.

Leave Record Cards Are in! Members can pick up their 2016 Leave Record cards in the union offices. They have finally arrived from NTEU National!

Office Depot Discounts! NTEU members get exclusive discounts on office supplies at Office Depot and Office Max. Save up to 80 percent on more than 93,000 products. Also enjoy FREE next-day delivery on online orders over \$50 (excludes furniture). Visit the Member Benefits section of nteu.org for more information.

Background Breach Notifications Complete! The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) reported last week that the initial mailing of notification letters to individuals impacted by the background investigation records breach is complete. The agency encourages all those who were notified to take advantage of the identity theft protection and credit monitoring services the government is providing. To date, about 2.4 million people have enrolled in the identity theft protection and credit monitoring services. NTEU successfully pushed Congress to order 10 years of protection for impacted individuals. OPM is working on putting that extension of protection in place.

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 **Bev Johnson** (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.

Bill Dreier got 44 hours of AWOL removed and replaced with advanced sick leave for an employee who submitted an FMLA.

Bev Johnson got an employee's evaluation reverted back fully successful after it had been improperly lowered and got the employee's step increase retroactive back to the date the 1st evaluation. Bev is also 100% signing up new hires to join the union!!

Will Kohler won 4 months back-pay and time in higher grade for an employee without arbitration. He helped a F/T Perm employee convert to P/T. and helped an employee get his SETR time changed to reflect a mistake in missing Annual time. He has helped a former employee return to her original position and grade and mentored 3 employees in the Merit Promotion Process. Will has also worked with management with the canvassing for 3 details within ICO ERS

Laura Mitchell got a manager to accept an employee's medical documentation after it was denied.

Tonya Morris got administrative time for an employee instead of her own time to talk to a doctor about surgery.
