

THE FORCE

NEWSLETTER

August 16, 2021

Volume 1, Issue 1

NTEU 73

LEAVE ACCOMMODATIONS AND POLICIES:

- Leave Under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) (Pg.4)
- General Family Care or Bereavement Leave (Pg. 3)

Welcome to our new newsletter

We hope you like our new newsletter! Every month, NTEU 73 will release a newsletter compiled by your very own Union Stewards. Each volume is designed to share the latest news impacting our workplace and how NTEU continues to fight and protect your rights. Inside you will find articles discussing pressing issues, changes in workplace policies, the benefits of joining NTEU 73, and the work our stewards are doing for you! For any suggestions on how NTEU 73 can better inform you, please feel free to contact any one of our Union Stewards directly, as listed on the *Stewards' Corner* on page 3 of this newsletter.

- NTEU 73 Board

COVID-19 CORNER:

President Biden's Mask Mandate, a Vaccine Mandate?
(Pg. 2)

Emergency Paid Leave (EPL) (Pg. 5)

Is Biden's Mask Mandate a Vaccine Mandate?

President Biden recently provided an updated vaccine policy for federal employees. While this policy will continue to evolve, here is what we know so far.

The new policy is **NOT** a mandate for vaccination. While it is highly encouraged for every qualifying individual, you are not required to get the vaccine. If you wish to abstain from the COVID vaccine testing, NTEU 73 will notify you of IRS' protocols as soon they are established.

According to the [White House Fact Sheet](#), "Anyone who does not attest to being fully vaccinated will be required to wear a mask on the job no matter their geographic location, physically distance from all other employees and visitors, comply with a weekly or twice weekly screening testing requirement, and be subject to restrictions on official travel."

With the rise in COVID cases, NTEU is calling on federal agencies to delay implementing any plans to return teleworking employees back to the building. Telework has been a proven benefit throughout the pandemic, keeping employees safe at home while continuing to get the

job done for their agencies and the American public.

For the employees who report regularly to their workplaces, NTEU is seeking information about the new policy. Among them are how employees will make their vaccination status known and how long vaccinated employees will be required to wear masks. Additionally, what accommodations will be provided to employees who cannot be vaccinated for medical or religious reasons.

For the testing protocol, there are additional questions about frequency, type of test, how the government plans to pay for the tests and what happens if an employee tests positive. Whatever protocols the IRS imposes, NTEU will work to ensure your rights are protected, that all employees are treated fairly, and that the testing protocols imposed do not create an undue burden on employees. As aforementioned, the vaccine policy is still evolving. NTEU is working diligently so that our members have the updated information they need as soon as they become available.

Alex Walker
NTEU 73 Steward



Photo By Associated Press, (AP Photo/LM Otero)

LITTLE KNOWN SICK LEAVE FOR GENERAL FAMILY CARE OR BEREAVEMENT THAT IS NOT FMLA

Let me preface this article by saying that this is not in reference to FMLA. On a secret page (236) in the National Agreement, there is a little-known leave type. Family Friendly Leave was codified in the 1990s. It had its own paragraph in the Contract, and a few Agreements ago, it was moved to Exhibit 34-1, where it is clearly outlined. It comes from your sick leave balance, but the parameters are different than plain sick and different than FMLA. For instance, you can use FFLA to take a family member, defined as, a "person related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship, to a medical/dental appointment." If your daycare won't let your child stay because they have a runny nose which might be transmissible, you

can use FFLA. If you have to take care of a close friend who falls down the steps and can't get off her couch, you can also use FFLA.

A full-time employee can use up to 104 hours per year, prorated for part timers. Employees must: (1) request the leave in oral, written or electronic format, within the required time limit and advance approval is required to *the extent possible*; and (2) self-certify or provide a doctor's note to support the request. In addition, Management may require medical documentation for leave in excess of 3 days.

If your manager is denying your sick leave, please read this very important part of the contract or contact NTEU 73 for assistance!

Debbie Mullikin
NTEU 73 President

NTEU:

The Strong Voice Fighting for You!

Members know the work NTEU does within the workplace, but did you know that there is so much more that NTEU does for you? NTEU sets the standard for workplace achievements in the federal sector. Without a negotiated contract, our workplace would be very different. NTEU has fought for programs like telework and alternative work schedules, performance awards, merit-based job opportunities, like details and promotions, and the newly negotiated childcare subsidy under the 2022 NTEU-IRS Contract. NTEU is a leading advocate for the resources and staffing the IRS badly needs.

Every year, Congress makes proposals that attack your pay, benefits, and ability to support your family. NTEU is there every year fighting to stop them and to protect our pay and benefits. NTEU does so much more than defending the contract within the workplace. NTEU is on Capitol Hill fighting for all of us, and without the support of members, NTEU would not be able to do this. Membership is critical to ensuring that the IRS contract remains the best contract within the federal government.

If you are not yet a member of NTEU, please make your voice heard by joining us in fighting for our workplace rights!

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

Swing Shift Chief Steward: Alex Walker

Swing Shift Part Time Stewards: Brandy Belew

ANNEX BUILDING STEWARDS

Day Shift Full Time Steward: Hope Osborne

ISO BUILDING

Treasurer/Full Time Steward: Janet Colwell

STEWARD WINS!!!

Hope Osborne- was able to get a proposed removal for a 3-time offense for AWOL reduced to 15-day suspension and another proposed removal reduced to a 1-day suspension.

Angela Moore- was able to get an eval raised to 5.0 after being lowered to 3.8, she also got an employee back pay for EPL that was listed as AWOL.

Shannon Lovins- got 40 hours of AWOL changed to sick leave and was able to get an eval raised to 5.0

Loretha Hudson- Got EPL back pay to the start date for 2 employees, was also able to get an eval raised to 5.0

Rachel Lovins- was able to get a suspension changed to a letter of reprimand.

CAN I TAKE FMLA LEAVE? WHAT IS IT? HOW DOES IT WORK? WHO DO I TALK TO?

Among the many reasons I pursued a career with the Internal Revenue Service were the perks I would have as a federal employee—competitive pay, health and life insurance, the potential to advance within the service, retirement, and a generous leave program. It was important for me as a working parent, daughter, and partner to find a career that fit the needs of my family and demanding schedule. As we all know, life happens, and it is nice to know that your employer understands that. As a federal government employee, if you or a loved one have a serious health condition, or you need to care for a child following birth, adoption, or foster care, you can request FMLA Leave. FMLA stands for “Family Medical Leave Act.” Under the FMLA, employees are eligible to use unpaid leave after an employee has (1) completed twelve (12) months of consecutive or non-consecutive federal service and (2) has at least 1,250 hours of service for the employer during the 12-month period immediately preceding the leave. Unfortunately, because of the second requirement, those who are still in their probationary period are not eligible for leave under the FMLA.

An employee may take FMLA leave as either a single block of time or in multiple smaller blocks of time for the following reasons:

- Birth of a child and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth
- Child adoption or foster care within one year of the adoption or foster placement.
- To care for your spouse, child, or parent who has a serious medical condition.
- A serious condition that makes you unable to perform the essential functions of your job; A qualifying exigency that arises out the fact that your spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member or “covered active duty.”

FMLA leave begins on the date an employee takes leave for family or medical needs and continues for twelve (12) months. An employee would not be entitled to an additional twelve (12) weeks until the 12-month period has ended. For parents taking leave following birth, adoption, or foster care, FMLA leave expires twelve (12) months after the date of the birth of the child or placement of the child by adoption or foster care. You can choose to take your leave prior to or on the actual date of the big day, the 12-month period will start on that date specifically. FMLA is unpaid. Therefore, an employee taking FMLA leave will be charged LWOP (leave without pay) for the leave used. However, an employee may elect to substitute accrued or accumulated annual and/or sick leave, advanced annual and/or advanced sick leave granted under Articles 32 and 34 or leave under the Leave Transfer and Leave Bank programs consistent with Article 31. An employee may also substitute his or her Paid Parental Leave under FMLA. This requires the employee to invoke their FMLA leave to management, and request management to substitute any available leave the he or she may have under FMLA as Paid Parental Leave.

Lastly, remember that leave taken under FMLA will not impact an employee’s health insurance. An employee is entitled to maintain his or her health benefits as long as the employee makes arrangement to pay the employees’ share of costs on a current basis or upon return to pay and duty status.

Your immediate supervisor is the one that would approve this type of leave so please reach out to them to get everything started no less than 30 days before you intend to take FMLA leave unless the leave is unforeseeable. You as the employee can choose to submit the medical certification directly to your supervisor or a higher supervisor such as the DM or Ops Manager or directly to the Federal Occupational Health Services (FOH).

Of course, feel free to contact the Chapter if you have any questions. We are happy to assist you in any way we can!

Rachel Lovins
NTEU 73 Steward

Word Search

E	U	T	O	E	W	S	T	H	G	I	R	G	R
P	I	H	S	D	R	A	H	A	S	E	R	N	T
E	O	C	H	I	L	D	C	A	R	E	F	I	G
C	D	G	I	C	C	N	N	C	G	G	A	A	T
N	F	N	N	M	F	I	O	M	E	O	M	G	C
A	M	I	A	M	A	A	Y	I	E	I	I	R	A
V	L	Y	L	D	R	D	L	C	N	N	L	A	R
E	A	F	P	F	A	H	P	N	I	U	Y	B	T
I	A	I	E	P	R	O	T	E	C	T	I	O	N
R	E	L	U	S	T	I	F	E	N	E	B	S	O
G	F	A	C	A	N	N	U	A	L	N	R	I	C
A	A	U	S	T	E	L	E	W	O	R	K	F	C
S	H	Q	E	C	A	R	E	G	I	V	E	R	V
R	E	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	A	T	I	O	N

RESCUE PLAN
FAMILY
UNION
CAREGIVER
RIGHTS
GRIEVANCE
QUALIFYING
REPRESENTATION
CHILD CARE

FMLA
ANNUAL
BARGAIN
PROTECTION
HARDSHIP
TELEWORK
CONTRACT
BENEFITS

NEW BILL FOR ADDITIONAL PAID PERSONAL AND FAMILY LEAVE INTRODUCED AT CAPITOL HILL!

Over the strong objections of Republican members, the House Committee on Oversight and Reform advanced H.R. 564, the Comprehensive Paid Leave for Federal Employees Act that would give federal employees 12 weeks of paid leave for personal illness to care for an ill family member or for a military deployment. Currently, under the Family and Medical Leave Act, federal employees may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for those reasons. However, federal employees "should not have to deplete their sick or annual leave ... to deal with longer-term hardships...this bill will invest in the well-being, productivity, and morale of the professional, apolitical civil service," as AFGE President Everett Kelley said in a [statement](#). "The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for strong paid leave policies for workers to take care of themselves and their loved ones. No federal worker should have to choose between a paycheck and caring for their family."

Federal employees deserve this entitlement. Of course, however, even if the Bill is approved by the full House where the Democrats have a narrow majority, it has slim odds of passing in the

evenly divided Senate. This is where you come in. To support this bill, go to the NTEU website, action.nteu.org, where you will see a menu and prompt to enter your zip code so the system can identify your Congressmen. Undertake Action, you will notice various topics you can voice your opinion on. Pick one or pick them all, it is up to you. Once you enter your zip code the system will show the recipients of your correspondence and you will note the message subject, the message, and space to add your own personal commentary if you so desire. Next, enter your personal information, name, address, and cell phone number, then choose your union chapter and submit. That is all there is to it. In this case make sure to send your U.S. Senator the correspondence concerning H.R. 564. *Make sure you do not take action on a government device for any reason.*

You all deserve this additional benefit! You work hard for an important facet of society and deserve to be compensated as such; and one way to reap the benefits of your hard work is by getting your House Representatives and Senators to support this bill!

Chris Pierce
NTEU 73 Vice President

THINKING ABOUT TAKING EMERGENCY PAID LEAVE? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

Federal employees impacted by COVID are now able to use Emergency Paid Leave (EPL) as Part of the American Rescue Plan Act. If you are experiencing COVID symptoms, are subject to quarantine or isolation orders to stay home, or are having trouble finding child or immediate family care, you may submit an application to use EPL.

Full-time employees experiencing qualifying services are eligible to receive a maximum of 600 hours (15 weeks) of EPL, while part-time employees are eligible to receive hours on a pro-rated basis.

EPL is available only until September 30, 2021, unless the \$570 million Fund allocated by Congress is exhausted before then. Because of this, keep in mind that any approved EPL leave by management is conditional. This means that if the Fund runs out of money by the time OPM is able to process your EPL request, any leave you take under EPL will be cancelled and you will be obligated to substitute that time off for another type of leave (e.g. annual leave, sick leave, etc.).

To request EPL, you must complete the Employee Notification and Leave Request Form, along with the Employee Agreement attached to the Request Form. Make sure to carefully read the terms of the Employee Agreement Contract you are signing just in case the Fund runs out of money by the time you take your EPL leave.

Loretha Hudson
NTEU 73 Steward

Thoughts, comments, or suggestions?
Send us a message on facebook!

BE CAREFUL WHEN USING YOUR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SUBSIDY PROGRAM BENEFIT (PTSP)!

The Public Transportation Subsidy Program (PTSP) was established to encourage employees to use public transportation when commuting to and from their residence and official post of duty (POD). This helps improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion, and conserves energy by decreasing the number of single occupancy vehicles on the road. As with every benefit you receive, there are obligations for the PTSP. These benefits are monitored. In 2018 and 2019, there were several investigations involving employees that were enrolled in the program. A TRANServe credit card is loaded for your public transportation expenses. If you exceed the maximum amount of benefits, you will be responsible for the balance of the cost of taking the bus to work. If there is an excess of subsidy, return the unused transit subsidy, by using PTSP Participant Return of the Media, Form 11664-G and request fewer subsidy at the next distribution. If you are new to the IRS, you are required to take the PTSP Awareness Briefing (ITM course #19239) within 30 days from the date of your manager's approval. Failure to take the course could result in suspension of benefits. If you are completing your annual re-certification, take the training course before your re-certification.

Here are just a few points to remember:

- PTSP is only for your commute between your residents and work location.
- Parking stickers are not available for employees using PTSP.
- Benefits are nontransferable
- Ensure adjustments are made for situations as a new POD, work schedule, management, or home/work address.
- Parking expenses are not part of your commuting cost.
- You should not use PTSP on any day you are scheduled off or day you call off work.

To make any changes to your benefits, use the TRANServe web site so your request is timely and be sure to follow up with your manager. This is only a guide to using the PTSP. There is additional information on the intranet. You just need to type PTSP in the search bar. The PTSP Awareness Briefing is also a good source of needed information. I used the PTSP in the 1990's when we only had 1 car and 2 children. At that time, I lived in Kentucky and got a monthly pass. It was a life saver for me.

Happy Trails!

Janet Colwell
NTEU 73 Steward

NTEU 73 Day at Coney Island



When: August 29, 2021 from 10:00 am until 8:00 pm
Where: Coney Island 6201 Kellogg Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45230 GATE 1 ONLY
Who: Members and their family (**MAX of 4 Tickets per member**)
Cost: \$5.00 Cash per person will be collected at the Gate along with membership.

Member MUST be present to enter the park.

The End of the Summer Splash Day
Bring the family
Pack your lunch
Let's have some fun in the Sun!

Becker Professional Education

Special offers Only for NTEU Members

Receive a 40% discounted rate off the Becker CPE catalog subscription for CPA, CGFM, CIA, CFE, CMA, CDFM, DoD FM, Yellow Book and more.

With Becker CPE accounting, audit and finance professionals receive the timely and relevant knowledge needed to stay ahead. Take advantage of the subscription program for unlimited use of Becker CPE:

On-demand Course Format \$179.40 per person, per year, unlimited use subscription (list price \$299)

Live Webcast and On-demand \$239.40 per person, per year, unlimited use subscription (list price \$399)

All courses are NASBA approved providing CPE certificates

Includes over 300 On-demand courses, 120 Live Webcasts a year

Includes streaming video and audio courses

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.

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.

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)



- Retirement Questions
- Retirement Estimates
- FERS or CSRS Monthly Annuity
- Social Security—FERS Annuity Supplement
 - TSP options—optimize
- FEGLI (Federal Employee Group Term Life Insurance)
- Mass Mutual Whole Life Insurance (Employee, Spouse, Children, Grandchildren)
 - FEHB Health Insurance (While working and in Retirement)
 - Medicare Parts A, B
 - Medicare Advantage plans + FEHB
 - Allstate Short Term Disability
 - Allstate —Critical Illness
 - Allstate—Accident policy
 - Manhattan Life Cancer plans
 - Hospital indemnity plans
 - Dental and Vision Plans



Paul and Roxie Thornton
Phone: 423 309 2758 or 423 309 2768
FAX: 423 370 1296
Email : paul@unitedbenefits.com
United Benefits Office—Claims
Phone 866 558 2121