

February 19, 2015

A Strong America Starts with Us

Everything about the working life of a federal employee is decided by those elected to Congress. That is why NTEU kicks off each new year with a high-profile event on Capitol Hill. This year, more than 300 members converged for NTEU's 2015 Legislative Conference, visiting hundreds of congressional offices to share critical information on federal employee issues.

Grassroots legislative efforts are important to our democratic tradition. Our theme, "NTEU: Building a Stronger America," reflects how seriously NTEU and our members believe in our role as a powerful force for our nation.

At the conference opening session on Feb. 3, we heard from Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) who expressed strong support for the federal workforce, decrying the attacks federal workers have recently faced. She spoke of growing up with a single mother and the importance of unions to her life and her realization of the American dream.

NTEU National Executive Vice President Tony Reardon talked about the importance of being an active participant in our government, stating, "Your presence here serves to counterbalance the presence of those big firms on K Street. You are here to ensure that members of Congress have accurate information to inform their decision-making."

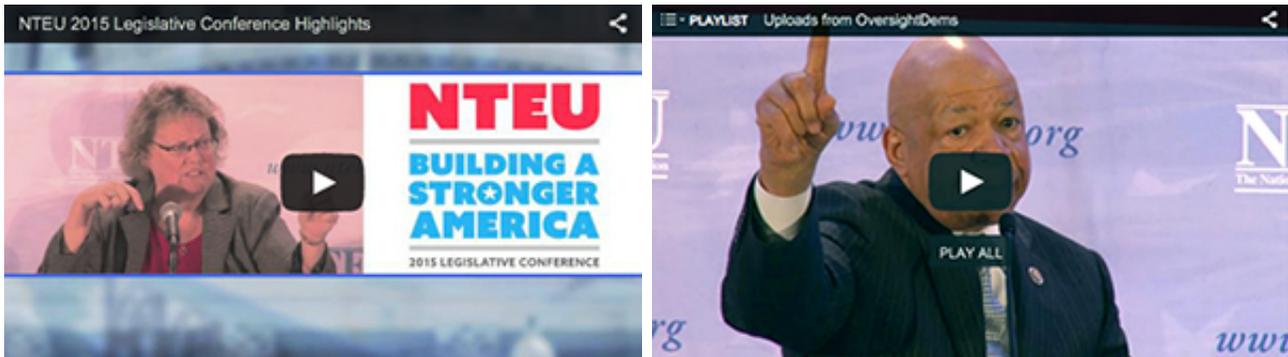
I shared with the delegates the long list of harmful proposals NTEU successfully blocked in the last Congress, including eliminating your pension annuity, abolishing FEHBP, and cutting the workforce. I emphasized three immediate dangers: sequestration, allowing funding to lapse at the Department of Homeland Security and underfunding the IRS. I also shared our legislative priorities for this year:

- [Adequate agency funding and stopping sequestration](#)
- [Fair federal pay](#)
- [Protecting federal employee retirement](#)
- [Customs and Border Protection staffing and funding](#)
- [Employee rights in the federal workplace](#)

Highlights from the conference can be seen on [NTEU's YouTube channel](#).

Top leaders from the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform were featured the following day during NTEU's congressional luncheon. Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah)

expressed support for a federal pay raise and promised an open door for NTEU. Ranking member Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) delivered an enthralling speech, pledging to continue to fight proposals that could negatively impact federal employees. The congressman acknowledged that sometimes federal workers get discouraged but he wanted them to know, "I got your back" and even posted the speech on his [website](#).



Armed with legislative information sheets and frontline stories to tell, NTEU members did an outstanding job of making our case to members of Congress and congressional staffers, giving them the straight scoop on federal employee issues.

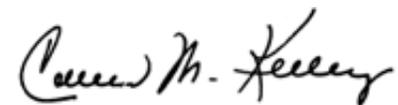
I am grateful to the NTEU chapters that sent delegates to our Legislative Conference. For me, the Legislative Conference is an opportunity to showcase for Congress and the media the work of our members, reminding them of the depth, breadth and tremendous talent of the people who serve America.

We were motivated. We were inspired and we were heard.

More than a dozen reporters from the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, and more covered the event, resulting in a flood of media coverage during the week. Headlines included "Federal employees seeking better pay and benefits from Congress" (Washington Post) and "Unions gather troops for battle over pay, sequestration" (Federal News Radio).

Our work has only begun. It continues every day here in Washington D.C., but there is also vital work to be done back in your hometown. We all need to make sure our voices are heard on the serious issues facing our workforce and our country in the months ahead. Your chapters will provide you with continual updates and information as Congress considers these vital issues. You can also find information at NTEU's [Legislative Action Center](#). I encourage you to read NTEU's priority issue materials and stay informed about how your working conditions will be impacted by actions taken by Congress.

Thank you for your efforts in sharing stories from the frontlines and ensuring that from coast to coast, NTEU members are sharing the facts.



National President

"...to ensure that every federal employee is treated with dignity and respect."