

National Treasury Employees Union



WATCHDOG



Chapter 60

Protecting the rights of federal employees in NJ

Newsletter Date: February 2015

EDITORIAL

"The beatings will continue until morale improves!" I'm sure you're familiar with the old adage. According to the website *Wikipedia*, that phrase is "used sarcastically to indicate the counterproductive nature of such punishment." I think that this saying is apropos for how the IRS operates.

The Director of LB&I and two of her deputies recently hosted a conference call to discuss the results of the Employee Survey and try to find ways to improve communication between executives and field employees. In summary, the survey results were terrible and are trending to worsen every year. The numbers demonstrated that employees feel disengaged and that morale has sunk to an all time low. The results didn't surprise anyone, except perhaps for those running the show. They were looking for answers to reverse the downward spiral. Some employees remarked that the lack of any communication between those at the top and those doing the work is responsible for declining morale. Others mentioned the fact that they can no longer do their job independently due to consistently changing "priorities." Around here, priorities change more often than some people change their underwear.

In an effort to shed some light on the situation, I sent the following message to those hosting the meeting. It was not anonymous and read as follows: *"For full disclosure, I am a 32+ year employee and NTEU Chapter President who is proud to work at the IRS.*

Regarding the trust issues -or lack thereof - the low scores reflect the anger and dissatisfaction being shown as a result of the actions taken by IRS executives made public over the past several years. Your scores are just reflecting such negative sentiment.

It started with the manager's conference in California, which exploded and then was followed by the ill-advised and wasteful Trump, Gilligan's Island, Star Trek and Line Dance videos. Then, they were followed by the TEGE debacle, which was blamed on the rank and file workers who had no part in it.

Then, the topper was the unilateral canceling of performance awards for the bargaining unit, and it was revealed that many executives received five-figure bonuses and many of them were those who caused the problems mentioned above. And let's not forget the unpaid furlough days and government shutdown. While it is always a good idea to try to improve morale, unfortunately, I do not think it matters what you do. Most of the bargaining unit employees I represent and have talked to don't trust anyone at the top. I know Doug and Sergio and have worked with both. I want this Agency and LB&I (where I previously worked) to succeed.

Morale is very bad agency-wide and nationwide, but I don't believe this is directed at any of you. The damage was done before you attempted to rectify or improve it. Good luck in your endeavors."

Unfortunately, my comments were not addressed on the call. Guess the truth hurts.

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BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR “ROLLING ROSTERS”

The concept of the IRS establishing a “roster” for filling vacancy announcements is neither new nor uncommon. The agency has used rosters to establish a list of best qualified candidates for an indeterminate number of positions the agency needs to fill over a finite period of time. The contract allows the agency to post an announcement as a roster. Like all announcements, it must have a specified opening and closing date. After the closing date, the applicants are ranked, and those who make the Best Qualified (BQ) list are listed in order from highest score to lowest. The rosters are generally kept open for 6 months and in some cases a year. This has been the past practice for over 32 years since I have been employed at IRS. In fact, I have applied for many of those rosters, so I know what was required.

But an issue recently came to our attention in the Chapter 60 office. In one specific case, the agency posted a vacancy announcement as a roster for one or more temporary grade 14 Sr. Team Coordinator positions. The odd thing about this roster announcement was that it did not have the required open and closing date. It listed what was called “an open period” which began on August 18, 2014 and ended February 13, 2015. The roster was open for nearly six months. We have never seen this concept or terminology in previous vacancy announcements.

At the mid-term contract negotiations back in 2011, the agency proposed to change the way rosters were posted and how selections were made. They wanted to have a roster open for a certain period of time and then allow anyone to apply at any time before the announcement closed. We called this the “rolling roster.” NTEU rejected this proposal, and the agency later withdrew it. We objected to it for a few reasons. Firstly, there were no problems with the current roster system so why fix something that isn’t broken? Secondly, the new rolling roster was nothing more than an underhanded attempt by the agency to hand-pick their favorite employees without any regard to actual merit. The agency loves to do that whenever they can.

The strange thing in this case was that the agency made several selections off of this roster before the supposed closing date. The agency established a BQ List and made selections on October 22, 2014, four months before the alleged open period ended. The chapter office received several calls from employees inquiring about this, so we decided to look into it. And what we discovered was not pretty. It was in fact a violation of the contract. They stated that the cut-off date for ranking those selections was September 22, 2014. Neither of these dates appear anywhere in the vacancy announcement. Applicants had no idea this would happen.

The problems arose when other employees, believing that they had until February 13, 2015 to apply for this roster, submitted their applications after the “agency’s self-imposed cut-off date” of September 22, 2014. What is the problem you ask? The announcement clearly violated the contract in several critical areas.

If this were a true roster, where is the required closing date? If it was a vacancy announcement, how could any selections be made before the announcement closed? If the closing date was in fact February 13, 2015, they could not establish a BQ list until February 13, 2015, and make no selections until at least that date as they would have to consider every application submitted before the Feb. 13, 2014 closing date.

After many emails and inquiries to management and HR, the DFO and Territory Manager who were involved in the announcement admitted that “we (management) screwed up!” They realized their mistake and would try to repair the damage. So what did they do? They made things worse.

Instead of cancelling the announcement and starting over, they amended the announcement in question and added several new “cut-off dates.” Nice try, but there is nothing anywhere in the contract, or anywhere else for that matter that allows them to do that on rosters that last less than six months like this one. If the roster is in effect for over a year, they can update it quarterly, but not in this case.

So, after doing nothing, Chapter 60 worked with National NTEU and filed a national grievance over this issue. We found a total of three (3) cases, including ours, where the agency tried instituting a “rolling roster”. These violations occurred during the latter part of FY 2014. We held our grievance call about a week ago. There were three (3) NTEU reps on the phone and nine (9) IRS reps. We shall see how this plays out, but the facts are heavily on our side. Stay tuned for more updates on this situation. Those who received promotions from this announcement are safe. The agency cannot retroactively revoke their promotions. They deserved them based upon their performance, and we congratulate them.

However, we do want every employee and every NTEU representative to take a close look at every announcement that comes out and let us know if you see something fishy. Do not rely on the agency’s word but on what your gut tells you. If it doesn’t look right, it probably isn’t right. As we have seen many times before, the agency violates the contract whenever they get a chance and thinks they can get away with it. They need to be held accountable. The contract is not something to be violated, it is to be followed. Make sure they do.



PUB. 17 WILL COST YOU \$20

The IRS has issued several press releases to the public about obtaining forms and publications for this upcoming filing season. In part they have stated that “all IRS forms, instructions and publications are available on the IRS.gov website, which continues to be the best way to get the products you need. It's quick, easy, free and available 24/7. Tax products are usually available on IRS.gov six to eight weeks before the paper versions are available or shipped.”

In addition, the following has been published: “The 2015 Service Approach includes a greater emphasis on viewing, downloading, printing and ordering tax products from IRS.gov and a reduction of the paper tax products being made available this year. This business decision was based on IRS print, distribution, usage and web services data, and was further shaped by employee and partner feedback.

Publication 17 in English can be accessed at IRS.gov/pub17. In addition, it is also available for the first time as an eBook for downloading and viewing on most e-Readers and other mobile devices, from IRS.gov/forms. Publication 17 will be available online in Spanish at IRS.gov/pub17sp in late February. Publication 17 is largely a compilation of content from other publications that are generally available in print. Pub 17 is no longer stocked in the TACs and Tax Forms Outlet Program locations will receive only one copy for reference. The TFOP offers tax products to the public primarily through participating post offices and libraries. While not available from the IRS internally or externally, a paper copy of the Publication 17 can be ordered for a fee from the Government Publishing Office bookstore at Bookstore.GPO.gov.

While we are encouraging taxpayers to visit IRS.gov first, those visiting TAC locations will have access to limited numbers of forms while supplies last. These include those with the greatest demand such as the 1040 and 1040A. On the other hand, the Forms 1040EZ and 1099 MISC will not be available in the TACs.

Forms 1040, 1040A and 1040EZ, will be available at local libraries participating in the Tax Forms Outlet Program. Although we are not providing individual instruction booklets, we are providing libraries in the TFOP program a Publication 1132, Reproducible Copies of Federal Tax Forms and Instructions, which they can use to make copies of all or parts of instructions for several forms and schedules.

Tax products are being stocked in TACs and TFOPs as they arrive. Delivery varies depending on impact of late legislation, product development and even inclement weather.

IRS employees are encouraged to lead the way by using IRS.gov to view and download tax products. However employees or taxpayers who still require paper forms, instructions or publications can still order them, preferably online, at www.irs.gov/orderforms. Orders can also be placed by calling 1-800-829-3676. Generally product orders are filled within 10 days.” In essence what they were saying is that “if you want forms, get them off the web or order them as we will not have them at our offices.”

Fast forward to a message received in the chapter office about what is really going on in the field offices. One of the messages is below:

“Hi:

I just wanted to let you know that TPS in the Mountainside POD is charging \$20 for a Pub 17. Even for IRS employees. Some employees have decided to access the Pub 17 on the IRWeb and print it out rather than pay the \$20. It is 288 pages.

It seems to me that it will cost more in paper & ink & time to print out the Pub 17 than it would be to have the actual Publication in hand.”

We also received the following message from another chapter president about his issue. The message stated:

“I have been told that there will be NO Pub 17's for distribution to ANYONE from W & I. The TAC's will only have a few for the ITAS employees use. None for our IRS employees?”

It is amazing what has happened around here. We have managers traveling all over creation to hold Town Hall meetings and operational reviews, but if employees want some help when preparing their tax return, they have to either wait an hour on the telephone or shell out \$20 to get a copy of publication 17? Is it me, or is something seriously wrong with that scenario?

I guess to make any sense of it, you have to read the Editorial on the front page again. That sums it up.

And by the way, how much does a pack of copy paper cost? Less than \$20, I would presume.



NTEU WINS TRANSPORTATION SUBSIDY CASE

NTEU recently won a case before the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) that will result in employees receiving retroactive payment for agency violations relating to the Transit Subsidy Program. The decision in the case United States Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (Agency) and National Treasury Employees Union (Union), 68 FLRA No. 47, was issued February 9, 2015.

Under the Incentives Act, Congress authorized all federal agencies to establish transit-subsidy programs. The Incentives Act provides for cash reimbursements to employees if transit passes are not “readily available for direct distribution by the agency.” Executive Order 13,150 requires all federal agencies in the national capital area to implement transit-subsidy programs, and also requires that those agencies provide transit benefits to qualified employees in amounts equal to their commuting costs, not to exceed the maximum non-taxable amount allowed by 26 U.S.C. § 132(f)(2), which is part of the Internal Revenue Code. Additional language from the case is as follows:

Before the enactment of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (ATRA), the maximum non-taxable amount allowed by § 32(f)(2)(A) in 2012 was \$125 per month. On January 2, 2013, ATRA amended §132(f)(2)(A) to retroactively increase the maximum amount of non-taxable transit benefits from \$125 to \$240 per month for 2012, and, as relevant here, to increase the maximum amount of non-taxable transit benefits for January and February 2013 to \$245. Before ATRA’s enactment, the Agency provided eligible bargaining-unit employees with subsidies of up to \$125 per month for mass-transit expenses incurred from January 2012 through February 2013. After ATRA’s enactment, the Agency did not retroactively reimburse employees for transit expenses incurred over \$125 per month in 2012, up to the maximum non-taxable amount of \$240 per month, or for transit expenses over \$125 incurred in January and February 2013, up to the maximum non-taxable amount of \$245.

The Union filed a national, institutional grievance, alleging that the Agency violated Article 29, Section 17 of the parties’ agreement and ATRA because, according to the Union, the agreement required the Agency to pay employees subsidies in the amount of their actual commuting costs, up to the maximum non-taxable amounts set forth in § 132(f)(2)(A). The grievance went to arbitration. The Arbitrator found that Article 29, Section 17 of the parties’ agreement “requires [the Agency] to provide employees ‘with the maximum allowable transportation subsidy they qualify for based on their commute.’”

Reading this contract language in conjunction with ATRA, the Arbitrator concluded that “the retroactive increase in the non-taxable subsidy set by . . . ATRA obligated the Agency to pay its employees retroactive transit subsidies up to the new ‘non-taxable amount set by . . . § 132(f)(2)(A).” To support his interpretation of ATRA, the Arbitrator cited a report by the Joint Committee on Taxation, “finding . . . that the legislative intent of ATRA . . . was to ‘make cash reimbursement for retroactive transit subsidies to employees for transit expenses incurred in 2012’ and [to make] ‘retroactive cash reimbursements . . . in addition to any monthly transit benefit in 2013.’” Specifically, he set forth the following wording from that report:

[E]xpenses incurred during 2012 by an employee for employer-provided . . . transit benefits may be reimbursed Further, Congress intends that reimbursements for expenses incurred for months during 2012 may be made in addition to the provision of benefits or reimbursements of up to \$245 per month for expenses incurred during 2013.

The Arbitrator concluded that the agency violated the parties’ agreement. As a remedy, he directed the agency to make affected employees whole for their improperly reduced transit benefits, with back pay under the BPA.

While this is a great win, it will have implications for IRS employees as well, as NTEU also filed a National Grievance over this issue alleging that this agency did the same thing.

This is just another example of how NTEU protects the rights, salaries and benefits of every employee that it represents. Once the IRS case is heard, and the decision issued, we will be sure to let you know. Those who were harmed by the agency’s actions may be entitled to retroactive transit subsidy benefits.

Hopefully those free riders who reap the benefits from NTEU’s hard work on their behalf finally see the light and get on the bus with the rest of us instead of jumping the turnstile for free. Stay tuned.

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LET US NEVER FORGET

The 2010 Austin suicide attack occurred on February 18, 2010, when a disgruntled taxpayer deliberately crashed his single-engine Piper Dakota light aircraft into Building I of the Echelon office complex in Austin, Texas, killing himself and Internal Revenue Service manager Vernon Hunter. The attack injured thirteen others, two seriously. The four-story office building housed an IRS field office along with other state and federal government agencies and some private businesses. Prior to the crash, the attacker posted a suicide note referring to "greed", "insanity", and the IRS, dated February 18, 2010 on his business website. He was also suspected of igniting a blaze in his two-story North Austin house earlier that morning. The fire nearly destroyed the home.

In the aftermath, there was increased debate over the policies of the IRS and appropriate forms of protest. In response to the attack, the IRS spent more than \$38.6 million, with \$6.4 million spent to recover and resume work at the building, and over \$32 million spent to increase security at other IRS sites in the U.S. The building was repaired by December 2011. **(Source:Wikipedia).**

Most of us still remember where we were that day when we learned what happened. We still mourn the loss of a fellow IRS worker. I also remember the words of one of our elected members of Congress. When he was asked if he thought the event was a terrorist attack motivated at all by a lot of the anti-tax rhetoric that was popular in America, King stated, "I think if we'd abolished the IRS back when I first advocated it, he wouldn't have a target for his airplane. And I'm still for abolishing the IRS, I've been for it for thirty years and I'm for a national sales tax. [...]" It's sad the incident in Texas happened, but by the same token, it's an agency that is unnecessary and when the day comes when that is over and we abolish the IRS, it's going to be a happy day for America. **(Source: DesMoines Register, February 23, 2010).**

Besides never forgetting Vernon Hunter in whose name and memory NTEU and FEEA created a Scholarship Fund, and the others hurt in this horrendous attack, I will also never forget what Congressman King said and his total lack of concern and regard for Mr. Hunter and all IRS employees. May you rest in peace Vernon.

IRS COMMITS ANOTHER UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICE

In labor law, the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (the Statute) creates rights and obligations on the part of unions, agency management, and employees. If either labor or management fails to perform its obligation to the other party, an unfair labor practice (ULP) charge may be filed. A ULP charge may also be filed if either labor or management interferes with the rights each has been given under the Statute.

A recent article on the home page discussed how an administrative law judge with the Federal Labor Relations Authority ruled on Dec. 12, 2014 that the IRS's refusal to bargain emergency protocols with NTEU in 2011 was an unfair labor practice. In other words, the agency was found guilty of violating the union's rights. To comply with the judge's order, and to inform bargaining unit employees of their rights, the agency was required to post a notice about this situation. That notice is shown below. **(Source: IRWeb, Feb 2, 2015).**

"The Federal Labor Relations Authority has found that the Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, violated the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute (the Statute), and has ordered us to post and abide by this Notice.

WE HEREBY NOTIFY OUR EMPLOYEES THAT:

WE WILL NOT refuse to bargain with the National Treasury Employees Union (the Union) regarding the Union's June 3, 2011, initiative to establish protocols governing the manner in which the Respondent addresses emergencies.

WE WILL NOT in a like or related manner, interfere with, restrain, or coerce bargaining unit employees in the exercise of rights assured them by the Statute.

WE WILL, upon request, bargain with the Union, to the extent consistent with the Statute, over the Union's June 3, 2011, initiative to establish protocols governing the manner in which the Respondent addresses emergencies."

The agency has to understand that it can not operate in a vacuum and must respect the rights of NTEU. This is the federal equivalent of the "Scarlet Letter."

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CREDIT HOURS ARE A NEGOTIATED RIGHT

Flexitour with credit hours is an alternate work schedule available to all employees. Credit hours are hours worked outside the normal tour of duty, which an employee may work, and later take off, to vary their workday or work-week.

Contractually, an employee may earn and use credit hours with managerial approval. It should be obvious that credit hours are not extra hours. They are different hours. For example, if you stay an hour late today (earning 1 credit hour), you may show up an hour later tomorrow (using that earned credit hour). You have worked 9 hours today and 7 hours tomorrow, for a total of 16 hours. Had you not earned any credit hours, you would have worked 8 hours today and 8 hours tomorrow, for a total of 16 hours. This is not rocket science. It is rather straightforward.

Simple, right? Well, not in the Office of Chief Counsel (Newark, NJ). Clerical employees in Counsel are not being granted their negotiated right to work credit hours. Their manager has given them credit hour “rules”. One rule (given in an e-mail) states, *“Credit hours are not for ‘catching up’ with work. You must prioritize your work and decide what can be processed the next day.”* Another rule (given in the same e-mail) states, *“you need to reach out to fellow coworkers to see if you can get assistance.”*

The employees are required to request credit hours in advance with an exact description of what work they intend to perform during the credit hour(s), so the manager can either reassign that work or get them assistance thus making credit hours unnecessary. The manager has indicated that the work cited to request credit hours can be given to someone else, rather than approve credit hours.

These rules serve to deprive the employees of their right to work credit hours. The union contract states, “... Employees on flexitour are also eligible to earn and use credit hours.” That is a negotiated right. It goes on to define credit hours as hours the employee can use to vary the length of a workday or workweek. Clearly, they are designed to allow an employee to use them for their own scheduling. Since a member of Chapter 60 helped write the contract we know that the manager’s “unofficial rules” are not contained therein. We are wondering where this manager found these rules. We can only presume that she created them herself.

If you examine the example above of an employee working a credit hour at the end of the day, you can see how harmful the working of credit hours can be to the Office of Chief Counsel. That manager should drop everything immediately, immerse themselves in the closest possible monitoring of these “credit hour employees”, and save the government as we know it. Why would a manager use the approval authority to deny the right to work credit hours? Because they can — if you let them. Is it arrogance or ignorance? It doesn’t matter. Whichever “ance” it is, it is unacceptable. Besides the manager overstepping her authority, it is also a big annoyance.

APPROVED OVERTIME? REALLY?

In a published article relating to the IRS budget concerns, Commissioner Koskinen has made public statements about the budget problems at the IRS. One headline read as follows: **“IRS imposes hiring freeze, eliminates overtime to deal with budget cuts.”** (Source: Federal News Radio, December 19, 2014).

Due to the severity of the cuts and the scarcity of resources to do our jobs properly, we understand why the agency took these actions.

However, in early February, NTEU was notified by the agency that they would be approving and authorizing overtime for employees in the Taxpayer Advocate’s Office (TAS). Needless to say, we were a bit befuddled by this announcement. While TAS employees are swamped with work like everyone else around here, this edict is contrary to what the Commissioner had said publicly—although that would not be the first time that happened.

The Commissioner said they would have to cut overtime. He has also gone out publicly and indicated that he could not rule out unpaid furlough days for all employees. He has indicated that this place is ready to fall apart. We agree that the budget cuts are draconian and are strictly punitive, political penalties.

Our question is how and why are they approving overtime if our budget situation is so dire?

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DON'T WATCH PORN AT WORK - PERIOD!

The Congressional attacks on federal employees never seem to end. Here is another one. A bill introduced in the House of Representatives would prohibit federal employees from accessing or watching pornographic material on government computers or devices. **(Source: FedSmith, February 11, 2015).**

Before we go on, let us be very clear that it is our opinion that no federal employees should ever watch pornography while on duty and on his/her government computer. Doing so is a violation of the rules of conduct and generally results in severe discipline, including termination and/or permanent removal from telework. What employees do on their own time and on their personal computers is none of our business.

That said, Rep. Mark Meadows (North Carolina) is introducing the legislation, known as the Eliminating Pornography from Agencies Act (H.R. 901), in response to a report last year that an employee with the Environmental Protection Agency spent as much as 6 hours a day watching pornography on his work computer and also downloaded 7,000 pornographic files.

Lawmakers at the time expressed disbelief and outrage that the employee wasn't fired on the spot. The EPA deputy administrator said at the time that the agency needed to wait for the inspector general's report before any action could be taken.

In a press release from Rep. Meadows' office it stated: "It's appalling that it requires an act of Congress to ensure that federal agencies block access to these sites. While there are rules in place at most agencies to ban this kind of unprofessional and potentially hostile workplace behavior, it continues to take place. There is absolutely no excuse for federal employees to be viewing and downloading pornographic materials on the taxpayers' dime," Meadows added. We agree such activity should not be condoned.

The question here is should it take an act of Congress to deal with the very limited number of instances when this occurs, or should the agencies handle and monitor it? Most agencies already have rules in place to address this issue. While it is important and needs to be stopped, we think that there are some much more pressing issues that Congress should be addressing instead. An earlier version of this bill died in committee during a previous session of Congress.

Let's see how this plays out, but in closing, we just want to show you the headline that appeared in print after this bill was introduced: **"Congressman Wants To Make It Hard For Federal Employees To Access Porn"**

Source: Daily Caller, February 11, 2015) .

We have no further comment.

PRESIDENT KELLEY RESPONDS TO RIDICULOUS EDITORIAL

Recently, the Wall Street Journal ran an editorial, which talked about denying any pay increase for IRS employees until all of the alleged scandals have been fully investigated and the culprits' heads served to Congress on a silver platter (our interpretation). Thankfully, NTEU National President Colleen Kelley responded and laid the facts out on the table. We appreciate the fact that she once again defended the rank and file. Her letter to the WSJ is shown below in its entirety:

Your Feb. 7 editorial "End of the IRS Investigation?" urges against any pay increase for IRS employees until there is "a full accounting of who ordered the harassment of President Obama's critics." The editorial also takes some gratuitous and inaccurate shots at the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents rank-and-file nonsupervisory employees at the IRS and 30 other federal agencies. These employees aren't in a position to order anybody to do anything. During the IRS investigation led by Rep. Darrell Issa, numerous NTEU members provided voluntary, non-subpoenaed sworn statements. Two NTEU members voluntarily testified before the House Oversight Committee for several hours in a public hearing facing a bank of TV cameras and reporters. At the end, they were praised by then-Chairman Issa, current-Chairman Jason Chaffetz, Rep. Mark Meadows, Rep. Mike Turner and others for their bravery, honesty and professionalism. Since then, they and the other front-line employees represented by NTEU have seen their workloads dramatically increase because Congress is "punishing" the IRS by slashing its budget. Their pay, like the pay of all federal workers, has been stagnant. They did the right thing. Like other federal employees who work hard every day, they deserve a fair pay raise.

Colleen M. Kelley

National President

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Dumb as a Rock...But You Look Healthy!

A recent article on the *IRWeb* had the following headline: “**Want to Be a Leader? Cultivate a Healthy Look**”. It was talking about a recent Dutch study that found the appearance of being physically fit inspired more confidence than an appearance of being intelligent.

According to this study it is more important for potential business or political leaders to look healthy rather than intelligent. The study included 148 adults who were shown a series of two photos of men's faces and asked to pick which one they would choose as new CEOs for companies. When selecting between each pair of photos, the CEOs' main challenge was described to the participants. Each pair of photos actually featured the same man, but his face had been digitally altered to look more or less intelligent or more or less healthy. We are not sure how you make someone look less intelligent.

Overall, participants chose more healthy-looking faces over more intelligent-looking faces 69 percent of the time. More intelligent faces were preferred only when the participants were told the CEO would have to negotiate between groups or find new markets. (Source: *IRWeb and Frontiers in Human Neuroscience Journal*, Nov. 5, 2014).

The article went on to state that “it always pays for aspiring leaders to look healthy, which explains why politicians and executives often put great effort, time and money in their appearance.” The author added “If you want to be chosen for a leadership position, looking intelligent is an optional extra under context-specific situations whereas the appearance of health appears to be important in a more context-general way across a variety of situations.”

So “looking intelligent” is just an option for future leaders. Really? We are not sure what that even means or how you look more intelligent. Do you wear glasses or carry a calculator and a collection of pens in a pocket protector?

We guess they never heard the old saying, “never judge a book by its cover.” We don't know how you look intelligent, but we can usually tell when someone is not as smart as they allege to be. As the saying goes, “It is better to remain silent and let them think you the fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.”

We suggest you pick the best person for the job, despite what they look like. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen.

NTEU CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Every year, NTEU celebrates Black History Month and highlights the accomplishments of those who fought against slavery, educated young people, struggled for civil rights and broke business barriers. Many of those who made a difference were women. Of the untold numbers of African-American women who made a difference over the course of our nation's history, fourteen women made such impressive contributions that they were honored on the commemorative Black Heritage stamps, which the U.S. Postal Service has issued every February since 1978.

NTEU is focusing on those fourteen women as part of our union's 2015 Black History Month celebrations. Our theme for this February is, “Women Who Shaped Our History.” These fourteen women changed not just African-American history but the nation's history. They were not just African-American leaders. They were the nation's leaders. By improving the lives of their fellow African-Americans they improved the lives of all Americans.

NTEU encourages all Americans to learn more about these inspiring women and their impact on our history, our culture and our lives. You can start your journey at NTEU's Black History Month web page, at www.nteu.org/blackhistory. We hope that their stories encourage you to learn more about these historical figures — what they did, how they did it and how they overcame the mountainous obstacles society placed in their paths. Their stories inspire all of us.



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JOKE OF THE MONTH

A woman went into labor and the couple went to the hospital to have their baby delivered.

Upon arrival, the doctor said there was new technology that would transfer a portion of the mother's labor pain to the baby's father, via small machine.

He asked if they were willing to try it out. They were both very much in favor of it.

The doctor set the pain transfer ratio to 10% for starters, explaining that even 10% was probably more pain than the father had ever experienced before. However as the labor progressed, the husband felt fine and asked the doctor to go ahead and kick it up a notch. The doctor then adjusted the machine to 20% pain transfer. The husband was still feeling fine.

The doctor checked the husband over and was amazed at how well he was doing. At this point, they decided to try for 50%. The husband continued to feel quite well. Since the pain transfer was obviously helping out the wife considerably, the husband encouraged the doctor to transfer ALL the pain to him.

The wife delivered a healthy baby with virtually no pain. She and her husband both were ecstatic.

When they got home two days later, they found the mailman lying dead on the porch!



TCOs ARE ALREADY SWAMPED

Despite having to account for 8 hours of direct exam time everyday and somehow not including lunch and breaks in these calculations, stories began circling that the agency plans to dump more work on the Tax Compliance Officers (TCO's). NTEU is currently investigating reports from the chapters across the country concerning partnership training for Grade 9 Tax Compliance Officers (TCOs).

Several Chapter Presidents raised concerns that the IRS is training Grade 9 TCOs on partnership work, which is a duty they do not typically perform as it is considered a higher-graded duty.

NTEU has asked the IRS to explain why it is providing this training now, how it will impact the work of Grade 9 TCOs, and whether they are going to be asked to perform higher-graded duties.

Hopefully, this is just another false rumor and not one more giant nail in the coffin of employee morale. We will keep you posted as to the ultimate outcome of this situation.

CHAPTER 60 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

President: John T. Kelshaw

1st Vice-President: Richard D'Arcangelo

2nd Vice-President: Thomas Knauss

3rd Vice-President: Susan Meaney

Recording Secretary : Doreen Milazzo

Treasurer: Francine Ravaoli

Financial Secretary: William Kearney

Assistant Treasurer: Michael Ciavatta

Sergeant-At-Arms: Roy Tripaldi

Trustee: Christopher Nichols

Trustee: James Nelson

Trustee: Sharon Brewster

Trustee: Craig Connell

Trustee: John Carvalho

ANY NEWSLETTER IDEAS, LET US KNOW. SEND AN E-MAIL TO: John.Kelshaw@irs.gov



2013 NTEU CHAPTER 60

20TH BLOOD DRIVE

TO BENEFIT THE BLOOD CENTER OF NEW JERSEY

WHEN: March 6TH (FRIDAY)

PLACE: SPRINGFIELD P.O.D.

(MOBILE BUS-SPACE LIMITATIONS)

TIME: 9:00AM -- 2:00PM

YES, I WANT TO HELP !!!

NAME: _____

TELE: _____

POST OF DUTY: _____

PREFERRED TIME TO DONATE: _____

(*) WE WILL TRY VERY HARD TO ACCOMMODATE YOUR REQUESTED TIME, BUT IT MAY HAVE TO CHANGE, BASED UPON PARTICIPATION. (9:00am and 10:30 are full).

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, OR NEED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT NTEU AT (973) 921-4040 OR 4039.

THANKS IN ADVANCE FOR YOU HELP!

GIVE A COPY OF THIS FORM TO YOUR MANAGER AND SECURE APPROVAL BEFORE YOU SEND IT TO US!!!! TRAVEL EXPENSES CANNOT BE CLAIMED.





WE NEED YOUR HELP

Contract Ratification Vote – Chapter 60

Thursday, March 5, 2015 at 12:00 pm

MOUNTAINSIDE POD – LARGE TRAINING ROOM.

We are holding a meeting to ratify the new contract. Only NTEU members are eligible to vote. Please come to the meeting to learn about this new SIX-YEAR collective bargaining agreement. The contract covers the many rights, benefits, and protections that NTEU has fought for over the years. Once ratified, your new contract will take effect Oct. 1, 2015.

Lunch will be served during the meeting.

WE NEED 50 NTEU MEMBERS TO ATTEND THIS MEETING TO RATIFY THE CONTRACT. You may not claim travel or use government time to attend. That is why we are having it at lunchtime.

PLEASE RESPOND VIA EMAIL TO JOHN.KELSHAW@IRS.COM TO CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE OR CONFIRM WITH S STEWARD. THANKS IN ADVANCE. ANY QUESTIONS CALL THE CHAPTER OFFICE AT (973) 921-4040 OR 4039.

