

National Treasury Employees Union



WATCHDOG



Chapter 60

Protecting the rights of federal employees in NJ

Newsletter Date: May 2015

EDITORIAL

Representative Jody Hice (R-GA) recently offered an amendment to a Veteran’s Administration bill (HR 2029) as it made its way through the House of Representatives. This amendment prohibited the use of official time (i.e. union time) at the Veteran’s Administration. (Source: GovTrack, US, April 30, 2015).

This was a very serious, anti-union amendment intended to strip the rights of employees in the Veteran’s Administration by prohibiting union representatives from representing their employees while on official time. In other words, stewards would be forced to partake in representational activities on their own time.

Once informed of the amendment and its ramifications, NTEU joined forces with several other federal employee unions to defeat this ill-conceived, union busting amendment. The odds were not in our favor, as many elected representatives have no love lost for unions and would love to see them follow in the footsteps of the dinosaurs, especially federal sector unions.

You may wonder why NTEU cares about a bill that affects the rights of unions and employees at the VA, since we do not represent employees in that agency. Well, the answer is crystal clear. If they were successful at barring the use of official time at the VA, they would undoubtedly come after the Internal Revenue Service and all other federal agencies as well. It would be the classic “Domino Effect.” Once the first domino falls, the rest inevitably follow.

Luckily, thanks to the hard work of NTEU and other labor organizations, the House of Representatives defeated the Hice Amendment by a vote of 232 to 190. We thank National NTEU for their tireless efforts to defeat this punitive, unfair measure designed solely to score political points with some misguided and misinformed constituents back home. As IRS employees you should thank them as well. Think of what your workplace would be like without NTEU. They would eliminate your awards in a heartbeat, handpick their favorites for promotions and allow incompetent managers to run amok and do whatever they please without any recourse.

You may think that this amendment was much ado about nothing. Wrong! Every member of NTEU should be relieved that this punitive legislation was not approved. The consequences would be disastrous. Pay attention to what goes on in Congress. Every time a law is passed, someone’s rights are taken away. Yours may be next.

In closing, we would like to thank the following members of the New Jersey Congressional delegation for voting NO and killing this terrible amendment: Norcross (D), LoBiondo (R), Smith (R), Pallone (D), Lance (R), Pascrell (D), Payne (D), and Watson-Coleman (D). Your support is noted and appreciated.

To our other two NJ Congressmen McArthur (R) and Frelinghuysen (R) who voted to eliminate official time activities, we say, thanks for nothing.

NTEU 60 BLOOD DRIVE

June 12

See application on page 11

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Doing Less with Nothing

We're sure that everyone is sick and tired of hearing the mantra of doing more with less. Rarely does a day go by when you don't hear about another person retiring or moving onto greener pastures. The cold hard truth is that our coworkers are leaving in droves, and there is no one waiting in the wings to replace them. There seem to be almost as many acting managers as permanent managers because of the never ending attrition. It doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure out that the agency is being deliberately starved to death to satisfy a political agenda. At least, that's how it appears to those in the know. Unfortunately, those that do not care to know see it much differently. According to them, the problem isn't the lack of IRS funding. It's that the agency doesn't know how to properly allocate the table scraps that they give them. That's the opinion that appears in the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means Majority Staff Report entitled "Doing Less with Less: IRS's Spending Decisions Harm Taxpayers" (April 22, 2015).

The report claims that "while the IRS has been cutting services, it has continued to hand out bonuses, allow staff to conduct union activities on the taxpayer's dime, and failed to collect delinquent debt owed by federal employees. The agency has also refused to use its existing authority to use third-party debt collectors to increase revenue, even though it would recover billions of dollars for the agency."

Let's examine each of these assertions in greater detail. According to the report, "the decision (to pay performance bonuses) still cost taxpayers another \$60 million, at a time when the IRS did not yet know what its budget would be for fiscal year 2015". In other words, the report says that high performers do not deserve awards. What message does that send, especially in light of the fact that it comes from a group of people who demonize IRS employees at every turn? Work hard enough not to get fired, because there is no incentive to go the extra mile. In essence, you're encouraging everyone to be mediocre. Imagine a private employer telling its employees, "we offer no perks or potential for promotion. You are not going to be rewarded for your efforts. We just won't fire you." During his address at the NTEU Legislative Conference, Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) asked NTEU leaders for their assistance in helping agency management address the "bad apples" within the federal workforce. What about the "good apples"? Apparently, they get nothing but scorn and derision from those who allege that they appreciate their efforts.

Union activity is a personal favorite for some of our distinguished representatives. The report states, in fiscal year 2014, the IRS spent \$23.5 million in salary and benefits expenses for employees to engage in union activities, instead of official duties. The report then claims that "eliminating discretionary time could save the IRS \$20.7 million per year, and free up employees to offer assistance to taxpayers...the amount of resources spent on discretionary union activity could have assisted nearly 2.5 million taxpayers." A closer look at this time demonstrates the numerous flaws in this argument. Firstly, the report says about "88 percent of union time is spent on 'general labor management relations'", which it claims falls under the umbrella of "discretionary time". However, the report never specifies what it classifies as discretionary time. There is no doubt that a union presence at 7114 meetings is a considerable portion of this so-called discretionary time. NTEU has pressed the agency to consolidate 7114 meetings for several years to reduce time spent on meetings. Even now, some managers still resist efforts to hold simultaneous 7114 meetings for multiple groups to reduce time. In addition, the report makes the giant supposition that every employee engaged in union activities answers telephone inquiries during filing season. Our stewards are revenue agents, appeals officers, secretaries and revenue officers. None of them answer taxpayer inquiries during filing season. Even if every steward in New Jersey spent no more than a nanosecond on union activities, it would not result in any additional taxpayers receiving assistance during filing season. We're sure that the same holds true for many chapters with field offices rather than campuses.

The report then revisits another one of Congress' pet projects — the use of private debt collectors. It states "if the IRS used its existing authority to contract with private debt collectors it would increase its own enforcement budget by more than \$100 million every year." Does anyone think it's a good idea to put confidential tax information in the hands of low paid private debt collectors who have one motive in mind — to squeeze out payments so that the company makes a profit and they get a bigger bonus? Could anyone imagine the outcry if the agency proposed to give revenue agents, TCO's and revenue officers commissions on the amount of money that they assess and/or collect? Congress would scream bloody murder, but it's okay to give commissions to private collectors browbeating taxpayers into paying. IRS has gone down that road before, and every trip turned into a multi-car pileup. It's about as bright as emptying the prisons of convicted criminals in exchange for their military service to save money on prison space and military benefits. But some politicians love the idea because these companies may be located in their districts, and unlike the agency, the corporate owners can fill their campaign war chests with generous donations and the support of PACs lobbying on their behalf.

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Doing Less with Nothing—continued

Let's put the blame for IRS' funding woes on those that hold the purse strings. The report unabashedly says "since its funding peak in 2010, the IRS's budget has been cut by \$1.2 billion. The intent of these cuts was to force the IRS to manage its resources more effectively, and immediately stop inappropriate activities." The plain talk translation is that we want to score some political points and punish IRS. Even if you add up all of the alleged potential savings, the bottom line is that IRS's budget has been cut by more than \$1 billion dollars since 2010 in spite of the fact that there are more taxpayers, more complex taxpayer entities and more loopholes in the tax code than all the Swiss cheese in the world. This is especially true when you look at Congress' lack of interest in reining in spending in other areas.

The best example is the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. This next generation fighter jet already cost \$400 billion and is still "riddled with problems...and remains years away from combat readiness. According to the GAO, the F-35 program—already plagued by cost overruns and delays — added an additional \$4.3 billion to its overall price tag last year...The F-35 is years away from being the unparalleled next-gen fighter promised by the Pentagon." (*Fortune*, March 18, 2015). Have you heard any outcry to skewer the CEO of Lockheed-Martin, the plane's builder, for cost overruns and wasteful spending? How about demands that he and Lockheed-Martin's other corporate officers repay their lavish bonuses?

Where's the committee hearing blasting the Pentagon for throwing away nearly half a trillion dollars? Nope, that sound you hear is silence. Instead some lawmakers want to give the Pentagon an additional \$38 billion of funding in fiscal 2016, while slashing domestic agencies' spending to the bone. So Congress' demands for spending accountability are veiled excuses for political theater. If IRS officials had spent a fraction of this money, everyone involved would be wearing orange jump suits and leg irons as they were hauled in front of Congress.

CHAPTER GOLF TOURNAMENT ANOTHER BIG SUCCESS

On Thursday, May 21, NTEU Chapter 60 held its 18th Annual Barry Brett Charity Golf Tournament. The proceeds of this event are donated to the American Cancer Society. While the final proceeds have not yet been tallied, we know the amount will be very generous, thanks to our golfers, supporters and sponsors.

Prior to this year's event, we donated \$53,782 to the Cancer Society, a fact that makes us very proud. We owe all of our thanks to those who attend the event every year. Some of our golfers, in fact many of them, have been with us since the inception of this tournament and for that we are extremely grateful.

Luckily, we did not have any rain this year. Last year, we were hit with a deluge of rain along with thunder and lightning, but this year we got lucky in spite of the chilly temperatures.

Once again, we were delighted to have Ms. Karen Crawford as our special guest. Karen's brother, Barry Brett, was a revenue officer and a Chapter 60 member before his untimely death from cancer many years ago. The charity golf tournament is named in his honor. Karen is gracious to join us every year and makes a generous contribution to the ACS.

We were also happy to be joined by Susi Fryer and Agnes Kusack, two representatives from Liberty Mutual Insurance, whose company sponsored one of the holes this year.

We also want to thank our other very generous sponsors, the Lakewood Blue Claws baseball team and Mr. Jim DeAngelis, Justin Heatherly from VEBS, Andy Silbert from Colonial Life Insurance and our long-time friends from the Federal Employees (Newark) Federal Credit Union. Their friendship and support since this tournament started have been unwavering, and we salute them. We also want to thank our other donors who wish to remain anonymous but who are extremely generous.

We will have much more about the tournament in the *WatchDog* next month, but we wanted to say THANK YOU to everyone who played a part in once again making this event a very big success.



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Why Don't We Just Go Home?

According to a recent article, Heather Maloy, commissioner of the IRS Large Business and International Division, indicated that the IRS is moving away from continuous audits of large businesses and is in the early stages of rolling out a new process to replace the quality examination process (QEP). Speaking to the American Bar Association Section of Taxation in Washington, Maloy noted that the IRS is already skipping cycles for some of the 900 companies subject to continuous audit and that the companies have been risk-assessed. She stated that despite the change, some companies are likely to remain under continuous audit. (Source: *Tax Analysts*, May 8, 2015).

According to Maloy and history, continuous audits of large corporations have been the norm for 30 years. The process is described as "a rolling true-up of your tax liability." But some in the tax community argue that there should be a meaningful way outside the examination process for large corporations to true-up items that are outside their control, such as Schedules K-1 and other things that don't present an audit risk. She added that "The cycle of the company makes it such that they have to true-up, and filing amended returns is too burdensome." We agree that some companies feel this way, but there are also others out there who want the IRS to be abolished.

Maloy foresees controversy stemming from the IRS's new examination process to replace the QEP, but she said the QEP was not working well for taxpayers, who often didn't even recognize the name. The IRS is still incorporating the suggestions of taxpayers and employees regarding the new exam process and is laying out expectations of both parties for an efficient, effective process. Despite what Ms. Maloy says, it is our opinion that the majority of the delays on cases are caused by taxpayers who don't want to provide what is requested and many times won't provide it. Call it whatever you want, but audits are always controversial and by nature adversarial.

Maloy added that what is drawing interest right now are changes to the process regarding informal refund claims. In too many cases, examiners had to issue information document requests (IDRs) in order to decide whether to allow the claim -- a use of resources the exam function doesn't plan for at the start of an audit. Under the new process, within the first 30 days of the examination, the IRS will look at and risk assess those claims as long as they are fully documented and meet the requirements of the regulations. "We can't stop people from issuing claims, but after that period of time, the claims will then have to be formal and filed with the service center, and then we'll assign those in our queue the way we assign all other work," she said. Good idea, but we doubt it is going to work. After a while, taxpayers will revert back to doing it the old way. This has been tried before and failed every time.

"We shouldn't have to issue IDRs on informal claims to figure out whether we should allow them, examine them, or disallow them," Maloy said. We agree, but when you can't get what you need to allow or deny the claim informally, what other options do you have but to go the IDR route? The answer? Not many.

Maloy cited the recent changes to LB&I's IDR process as an example of the exam function's ongoing review of its work for efficiencies and inefficiencies. Exam will begin surveying its own employees soon for more advice on how they can be more effective, especially given ongoing IRS resource constraints, she said.

"There was a lot of inefficiency in the IDR process. . . . There was a lot of wasted time and effort. We had IDRs in a number of places that were outstanding for 180 days, 240 days," Maloy said. Agents complained that they couldn't get requested information, she said, while taxpayers said that even after receiving an IDR, they had no idea what was being asked for. What? We guess they couldn't ask the agents for clarification immediately? They had to wait six to eight months? Come on, Commissioner, Really? We find these comments and assumptions especially troubling when those making these statements have most likely never issued an IDR during their IRS careers.

LB&I decided to make IDRs issue-focused and to have examiners discuss with taxpayers what information the IRS needed, and it changed the enforcement process, Maloy said. Our question here is what does she think has occurred for the past 30+ years? The exact same thing she is stating now. Just for the record agents on large case examinations do not sit around wasting time waiting for responses to come rolling in. This issue has been addressed and revised every few years since I've been working here and nothing has changed. Instead of forcing the taxpayers to submit complete responses in a timely manner, the agency changes the process and just stops auditing some of these companies. It appears they are caving in to those being audited.

If changing the entire examination process is the agency's answer to solving the decades old problem of long delays in IDR response times, why don't we just go home?



“WE HAVE A BIG PROBLEM...”

On April 20th, Rep. Peter J. Roskam (R-IL) visited IRS employees at the Cincinnati Federal Building. Rep. Roskam, whose district lies west of Chicago, serves on the U.S. House Ways & Means Committee and is chairman of the Committee’s sub-committee on Oversight. The sub-committee has oversight responsibility over the IRS. (Source: IRWeb).

Rep. Roskam met with approximately 150 employees and managers from Exempt Organizations: Determinations gathered on the fifth floor of the Federal Building and viewing via live Centra around the country. Rep. Roskam was candid in his opening remarks and throughout the 45 minutes he spent with EOD employees.

“We have a big problem, you and I,” Rep. Roskam said. “The big problem is that you and I work for organizations that the public does not like. If we continue in this trajectory it does not end well because people need confidence in their Congress and in the organization that is collecting taxes.”

Rep. Roskam, a trial attorney in his prior career, called for a “discussion and dialogue” between himself and EO Determinations that could help rebuild confidence among taxpayers that their tax matters are handled fairly.

“You and I have an incredible responsibility,” he said. “An incredible responsibility that we have to make sure that these things are done fairly and thoughtfully and that there is no politics to it because there is a robustness about the American political process but it only works if everybody feels like they can take it at face value.”

In a question and answer period, EO employees delivered some candor of their own with about a dozen comments and queries for their guest. Topics ranged from reduced IRS funding and requirements for social welfare organizations to EO’s new leadership and a feeling that “the past is the past. . .and let’s move forward.”

While we agree that the IRS has a perception problem with the general public, we are of the opinion that Rep. Roskam has perpetuated a lot of that ill-will and negativity. For proof, we have provide several examples of many recent public statements made by this elected official relating to the IRS and its employees:

◆ *“...Together with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, we have crafted a series of concrete reforms to rein in IRS and protect taxpayers from this government bureaucracy run amok.” (Cong. Roskam Press Release 4/15/15).*

◆ *“These common sense reforms will strengthen transparency and accountability at the IRS—an agency in desperate need of a complete makeover and cultural change. We need an IRS that works for—not against—the American people. With your help, House Republicans can succeed in reining in the IRS and restoring the American people’s trust..” (Source: Cong. Roskam Press Release).*

◆ *“...This is too much, IRS. You’ve got too much power and the American people are going to push back against you.” (Source: Cong. Roskam Press Release).*

◆ *“The IRS is just too big, with too much power and too much discretion,” (Source: Daily Herald, 5/17/12).*

◆ *“I’m hoping that the bipartisan agreement of the IRS’s “outrageous abuse of power,” will propel lawmakers to find an agreement on the issue of tax reform.” (Source: Daily Caller, 6/3/13).*

Maybe if all heated rhetoric was tempered or even stopped, the IRS wouldn’t have half of the negative public perception problems it has. As they say in kindergarten, “words mean something.”

CAN I HAVE A WORD...OR TWO?

There was a recent article on the IRWeb that asked employees to describe the work that they do in one or two words. While many comments were repetitive, very few were extremely positive. We decided to reprint those that we thought captured the mood and morale of the workforce. These comments echo what we hear from our employees on a daily basis. They are as follows:

- ◆ **UNDERPAID WORKHORSE,**
- ◆ **EXTREMELY STRESSFUL,**
- ◆ **IMPOSSIBLE WORKLOAD,**
- ◆ **HAMSTER WHEEL,**
- ◆ **OVERWORKED AND UNDER APPRECIATED,**
- ◆ **UNIVERSALLY DISRESPECTED,**
- ◆ **UNPAID OVERTIME,**
- ◆ **USED AND ABUSED**



We could go on and on, but we think you get the point.

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BILL TO REDUCE FEHB DRUG COSTS

Legislation was recently introduced in the House of Representatives to reform prescription drug pricing and contracting within the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP).

Established in 1960, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program is the nation's largest employer-sponsored health program covering 8.2 million federal employees, retirees, and eligible family members, and provides approximately \$48 billion in health care benefits annually. Spending on prescription drugs accounts for approximately 30% of all FEHBP costs—roughly \$15 billion annually.

Under current law, FEHBP health plans contract directly with pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) who operate as middlemen to negotiate prescription drug prices with drug companies and pharmacies on behalf of individual FEHBP plans. While the initial purpose of FEHBP plans contracting with PBMs was to control drug costs; there is little evidence that this has been effective.

NTEU-supported legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Stephen Lynch (D-MA) that would reform FEHBP drug pricing and contracting requirements, resulting in reduced FEHBP costs, and lower premiums for enrollees. H.R. 2175, the FEHBP Prescription Drug Oversight & Cost Savings Act, would provide the Office of Personnel Management enhanced oversight and contracting authority to ensure that FEHBP participants are receiving the best possible drug prices. Under the bill, PBMs would be required to return any rebates, incentives, and other price discounts obtained from drug manufacturers to FEHBP, and to adopt new transparency and disclosure policies.

The President's FY 2016 budget to Congress proposes similar FEHBP PBM contracting reforms, estimated to save \$1.5 billion over ten years. Because FEHBP is not permitted to purchase drugs off the Federal Supply Schedule and therefore pays between 15 to 45% more for drugs than other government health care programs currently do (Veterans Administration, Defense, Medicare), NTEU views this legislation as a needed step in the right direction to better control prescription drug spending in FEHBP, and to reduce costs for federal employees and retirees.

The Clown Car

Listed below are more examples of wasteful managerial travel, which the agency claimed it had stopped.

A DFO in Appeals, whose POD is in Washington, DC, recently visited the Austin Appeals Office. He hosted a town hall meeting where he discussed general concerns and issues such as training, budget, AJAC and staffing. According to the IRWeb, "he kept the town hall very informal and wanted to hear what employees had to say." We hope they told him to stay home and stop wasting travel money the agency consistently says they don't have.

Another example is when the Acting ACIO travelled from Ogden to Detroit to talk to the employees. We aren't sure what she talked about what, but are sure it was stimulating and extraordinary. Just kidding.

Then, there was the Examination Executive located in Texas who went to Brookhaven Service Center to say, "Howdy" to the employees, among other things of utmost importance. Gotcha again.

Finally, how can we omit the three (3), yes, three management executives from Work Force Relations in HQ who travelled all the way from Washington DC, to Ogden, Utah for some unknown reason. Not sure what the message was or why it took three of them to deliver it. Maybe they just needed help carrying the luggage?

On the bright side, we want to acknowledge innovation when it takes place. The unnamed executives in the picture on the right are a stellar example of employees cutting costs and bringing some light hearted humor to the workplace. We aren't entirely certain where they are from or where they are going, but according to the grapevine, there is some chatter about IRS managers cutting costs on their next traveling roadshow.



Sneak peek or just a coincidence? You decide.

Editor's Note: Any resemblance is strictly coincidental.

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NEW JERSEY CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

As you know by now, many in Congress wish that the IRS would just disappear one day never to be seen again. Some of those people are elected representatives from the state of New Jersey who represent us in the nation's capital.

Besides supporting bills to cut your pension, freeze your pay, increase your health and medical premiums, reduce the number of employees at the IRS and just about everything else but hacking off your arms and legs (that may be next), these individuals also vote on a myriad of other social, political and economic issues that may interest you.

As we have noted many times in the *WatchDog*, we don't endorse one party over another. All we do it present the facts about what is going on in Congress that may potentially impact your job and work life, both for the better and the worse. You can do what you wish with that information. We care about federal employee issues only!

Many NTEU members have contacted the chapter office to determine whom their elected representatives are so that they may contact them in order to express their concerns or opinions as they relate to various pieces of legislation. So, instead of handling each individual inquiry separately, we decided to provide a listing of all of the congressional representatives in this publication to make it easier to find.

The list below contains the names of all senators and representatives in the state. If you wish to find out who your representative is, go to www.house.gov and type in your zip code. That site will then provide you with the name of your elected representative.

With an important election coming up in about 18 months, and many proposed bills being put forth that will negatively affect your life if passed, I suggest you keep this list handy and contact your reps. to let them know how you feel.

Residents of New Jersey are represented in Congress by 2 Senators and 12 Representatives.

Member Name	DC Phone	DC FAX	Contact Form
Senator Robert Menendez (D- NJ)	202-224-4744	202-228-2197	http://www.menendez.senate.gov/contact/?i=OTH
Senator Cory A. Booker (D- NJ)	202-224-3224	202-224-8378	http://www.booker.senate.gov/?p=contact
Representative Donald Norcross (D - 01)	202-225-6501	202-225-6583	http://norcross.house.gov/contact/email-me
Representative Frank A. LoBiondo (R - 02)	202-225-6572	202-225-3318	https://lobiondo.house.gov/contact-me/email-me
Representative Tom MacArthur (R - 03)	202-225-4765	202-225-0778	https://macarthur.house.gov/contact/email
Representative Chris Smith (R - 04)	202-225-3765	202-225-7768	http://chris-smith.house.gov/contact/zipauth.htm
Representative Scott Garrett (R - 05)	202-225-4465	202-225-9048	http://garrettforms.house.gov/contact/
Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. (D - 06)	202-225-4671	202-225-9665	https://pallone.house.gov/contact-me/email-me
Representative Leonard Lance (R - 07)	202-225-5361	202-225-9460	http://lance.house.gov/contact/email-me
Representative Albio Sires (D - 08)	202-225-7919	202-226-0792	http://sires.house.gov/contact-me/email-me
Representative Bill Pascrell (D - 09)	202-225-5751	202-225-5782	https://pascrell.house.gov/contact/email-me
Representative Donald Payne, Jr. (D - 10)	202-225-3436	202-225-4160	http://payne.house.gov/contact/email-me
Representative Rodney P. Frelinghuysen (R - 11)	202-225-5034	202-225-3186	https://frelinghuysenforms.house.gov/index.cfm?sectio ...
Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman (D - 12)	202-225-5801	202-225-6025	https://watsoncoleman.house.gov/contact/email

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What Do You Need THAT for?

One of the biggest fiascos around here is when group secretaries attempt to order supplies for their groups. The process is flawed and in some cases it is impossible to get an order through. We use the example below as proof.

"I wanted you to know about a recent reject of a supply order I submitted. The total order came to less than \$150. It was for four items: scotch tape, correction tape, a 2 hole punch, and some blue pens. Does any of that sound like it needs "justification as to what the items are used for" ???? The Budget Analyst who goes on all our requests is a GS-12. In fact, most of the folks we deal with in the approval path on our requests are GS-12 and above. The category on the request is for "desktop supplies". These are regular office supplies found in our "desks". Does that need more clarification or justification?"

If the ordering catalog had only the supplies we are allowed to order, whether it's on-line or on paper, that would negate the need for any of the processes below. I'm sure Office Depot could do that but what do I know, huh? I would put in a suggestion but it would only get rejected or lost some where . I still have to correct, or reorder, the supplies above and resubmit the order. Hopefully it will get approved. How many days and money were wasted by this?" We have no comment other than this is unbelievable and a huge waste of time and resources.

'Squirrel' Threatens To Bomb IRS Building

Well, not really. It was actually a "Rabbit." From the "You can't make this stuff up file", we are relaying a recently published article sent in by a member. (**Source: Tax Girl Blog/Forbes: April 27, 2015**). While it was a very intriguing headline, the actual story was not as witty. In fact, it is quite scary.

The story started out by stating the obvious—that nowadays it seems that nobody likes the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Talk about accentuating the negative. That's not criminal, but taking steps to do something about it could be. The story then went on to talk about a man named Morris Whitehead of South Florida.

Evidently, Whitehead took things too far when he threatened to bomb the Miami IRS building, saying it would "go up in smoke" in two hours. Whitehead allegedly made the call on April 20, 2015.

As everyone should know, bomb threats are serious business – especially when they involve federal buildings. This threat was investigated and cell phone records traced the call to a woman who claimed that she loaned her cell phone to a man she knew only as "Rabbit." Yes, really. It seems that this woman gave her phone to a name she knew only by a nickname. You know whatever follows cannot be good.

And as it turns out, Whitehead wasn't really wedded to the name "Rabbit." He told the FBI his name was "Squirrel" and allegedly immediately confessed to making the bomb threat. No, we are not making this story up. Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction.

The United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida announced Whitehead's arrest, saying, "Threats to federal buildings are taken extremely seriously and we will continue to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law any attempts to disrupt the proper functioning of government and endanger the community." At least there is some sense injected into this story.

Whitehead was officially charged with willfully making a threat through the use of a telephone in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(e) which states:

Whoever, through the use of the mail, telephone, telegraph, or other instrument of interstate or foreign commerce, or in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce, willfully makes any threat, or maliciously conveys false information knowing the same to be false, concerning an attempt or alleged attempt being made, or to be made, to kill, injure or intimidate any individual or unlawfully to damage or destroy any building, vehicle, or other real or personal property by means of fire or an explosive shall be imprisoned for not more than 10 years or fined under this title, or both. The charge is punishable by a maximum sentence of ten years in prison. In this case, Whitehead a/k/a "Rabbit" a/k/a "Squirrel" currently remains in jail.

The moral of this harebrained story? We think it is obvious. Use common sense when dealing with others and at least get to know their full name before giving them your personal property. Luckily, none of these individuals worked for the IRS. If they did can you image the Congressional hearing? It would have been nuts.

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LUNCH AND LEARN SCHEDULE

In an effort to provide Chapter 60 members with options to lower their insurance costs, we have partnered with Liberty Mutual and Colonial Life Insurance Companies.

Chapter 60 will have representatives from both of these companies visit five posts of duties in the near future to address their insurance needs and to describe the options available to our members.

The listing of these sessions, which start at 12 noon and last about 30 minutes are as follows. Chapter 60 will provide lunch for all attendees:

- ◆ June 1 @ Trenton POD (contact Jagruti Patel)
- ◆ June 2 @ Springfield POD (contact the chapter office)
- ◆ June 3 @ Edison POD (contact Andrea Faust)
- ◆ June 4 @ Cherry Hill POD (contact Pat Taylor)
- ◆ June 5 @ Parsippany POD (contact Jackie Walter)

If interested in attending, please send an email to john.kelshaw@irs.gov or let your local stewards listed above know that you want to attend. We hope to see you there.



AICPA SUPPORTS ACTIONS TO HELP IRS

The American Institute of CPAs kicked off its Spring Meeting of Council in Washington, D.C. on Sunday with a packed agenda of meetings with lawmakers to press for priorities, including improvements in taxpayer service by the Internal Revenue Service. The AICPA Council members passed a resolution calling on policy makers to “create an objective, bipartisan forum to engage stakeholders to expeditiously make recommendations that enable the Internal Revenue Service to achieve its stated mission and to transform it into a modern-functioning, evolutionary and respected federal agency for the 21st Century.” (Source: **Accounting Today**, 5/18/15).

Among the improvements the AICPA would like to see are balanced service and enforcement, sound tax administration, stakeholder engagement, technological advancement, empowered oversight by a congressionally empowered independent and transparent IRS Oversight Board, and protection of taxpayer rights.

AICPA Tax Executive Committee chair Troy Lewis understands that this resolution will not solve every problem, but what it does is make very clear to policy makers that the symptoms that we are suffering are not acceptable, and that if not corrected and not addressed in the short term, are going to have a long-lasting impact that will take generations to correct.” We agree. The damage being done by these severe budget cuts will take a long time to be rectified and corrected.

A poll conducted by the AICPA that found 64 percent of CPAs were not able to get through on the IRS’s Practitioner Priority Line, and a high proportion of them repeatedly received “courtesy disconnects” while on hold with the IRS during this year’s tax season. Additionally, the AICPA cited a report on the 2015 tax-filing season from the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), which found that only 38.5 percent of callers to the IRS received assistance this year, compared to 74.7 percent last year. “Additionally, the IRS hung up on 6.8 million callers (what the IRS calls a “courtesy disconnect”), which is an increase of more than seven times over the previous year,” the letter pointed out.

Several high ranking AICPA officials also said the AICPA also hopes Congress will lower the level of venom toward the IRS. We couldn’t agree more. The heated rhetoric must stop.

And while we are at it, can they stop referring to intentionally hanging up on someone a “courtesy disconnect”? In no way is terminating a call for help courteous. Call it what it is – really infuriating the taxpaying public.

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



JOKE OF THE MONTH

A Territory Manager, a DFO and an Area Director travelled cross country on a trip for another worthless town hall meeting with employees and were walking home from dinner one night.

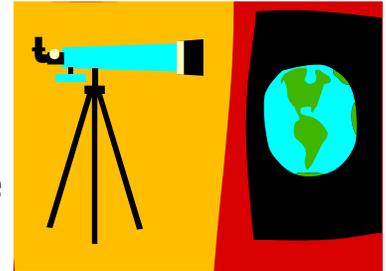
The TM says to the DFO "What a beautiful night, look at the moon."

The DFO stops and looks at the TM. "You are wrong, that's not the moon, that's the sun." Both started arguing for a while when they decided to ask the Area Director to settle the argument.

"Hey," they said. "Could you please help settle our argument?"

Tell us what that thing is up in the sky that's shining. Is it the moon or the sun?'

The Area Director looked at the sky and then looked at them, and said, "Sorry, I don't know.....I don't live around here."



RETIRED MEMBER IS NO FRAUD

With all the bad news we get every day, we wanted to share some good news with you.

One of Chapter 60's retired members, Jo-Ann Weiner recently passed the rigorous examination administered by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners to become a Certified Fraud Examiner.



The test was administered over several days, and she passed all parts on the first try.

Joanne has now started her own business, and we wish her all the best.

Congratulations, Jo-Ann, we are very proud of you. Good luck in your new career.

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

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NTEU CHAPTER 60
21st BLOOD DRIVE
TO BENEFIT COMMUNITY BLOOD SERVICES

WHEN: June 12, 2015 (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.**

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

THANKS IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR HELP!

**GIVE A COPY OF THIS FORM TO YOUR MANAGER AND SECURE AP-
PROVAL BEFORE YOU SEND IT TO US!!!!!!**

TRAVEL EXPENSES CANNOT BE CLAIMED.