



Harbor Views

NTEU Chapter 23's Electronic Publication for October 2018

Government Funding Update

The IRS is under a continuing resolution until December 7. The House and the Senate will be returning from recess on November 13 which doesn't leave them much time to hammer out a deal. We could end up with a funding bill, another continuing resolution, or a shutdown. Rest assured that National President Tony Reardon and the rest of the NTEU team are working hard for proper funding and a pay raise for federal employees. Stay tuned for further information and make sure to update your contact information on NTEU.org in case we are shut down.



Benefit Highlight of the Month: Flexible Spending Account

Open season for FSAFEDS begins Monday, November 12. Remember, you have to re-enroll every year, especially if you have unused funds that you want to carry over. If interested, visit FSAFEDS.com for more information or to sign up.

Still Confused About Telework?

It's no wonder with conflicting messages coming out each week from upper management. Here's National President Tony Reardon's take on the negotiating process with the IRS and what the contract *actually* says:

“Two-day Reporting Requirement

There has been much discussion about the new language in Section 1A4 that requires Frequent teleworkers to report to their POD for a full day twice a pay period, but also authorizes managers to grant a waiver of the requirement to report. We raised the IRS's unilaterally-issued guidance to its supervisors which, among other things: instructs supervisors that they may grant one-day waivers only where there is an “emergency”; creates a “Frequent Telework/TOD Board” (FT/TOD) to approve waivers; and, suggests that an extended waiver request must be accompanied by a request for a reasonable accommodation.

As to one-day waivers of the requirement to report, we discussed with the IRS the fact that at the term table the parties did not agree that the waivers would be limited only to emergency situations. Under the express language of the contract, waivers could be sought by employees and granted for non-emergency reasons. The parties also never discussed the creation of a FT/TOD Board, and we have no idea how such a process would even work, e.g., who will sit on the Board, what criteria will the Board apply in reviewing requests for extended waivers, how often will the Board meet, and how long would an employee have to wait for a determination. We advised the IRS that the establishment of such a complex, bureaucratic process will cause confusion and slow down employees' waiver requests.

The IRS asserted that the purpose of the new reporting language is to require employees to report to the POD for their entire TOD; and it does not want managers to simply ignore the new rules. The IRS acknowledged that no bargaining unit employees must utilize a form to request a waiver. The form mentioned in its Supervisor Guidance (Form 15072) is for managers to fill out only. On one-day waiver requests, the IRS stated that managers do have the authority to grant waivers in non-emergency situations, which it described as “one-off” situations. As to extended waivers, the IRS stated that it has created the Board to ensure that extended waivers are granted in a uniform manner. The IRS acknowledged that no employees who seek an extended waiver are required to file a request for a reasonable accommodation, as SB/SE has instructed its managers. The IRS acknowledges there could be a number of reasons why an employee would not be able to report into the POD twice a pay period and simply wants employees and managers to be aware of various options that could address it. The IRS mentioned the use of the temporary hardship authority in Article 15

as a possibility.

Field Going (aka, Mobile) Employees

We discussed reports we were receiving from certain chapters that field-going employees were being told that under the new reporting requirements, they had a new obligation to be in the field at least twice a pay period for their entire TOD. The IRS agreed with us that the Section 1A4 language has absolutely no bearing on field-going employees; the rules concerning them have not changed. This means that such employees do not have to report to the POD twice a pay period or even report to the POD after a field visit that ends before their TOD ends. Whatever field visitation/office visitation practices that field-going employees have had in the past should continue.

We also raised with the IRS information we have become aware of that indicates managers are not being required to meet the new two-day reporting requirements. The IRS assured us that all employees — non-bargaining unit and bargaining unit — are going to be held to the new standard and required to report to their POD twice a pay period for their entire tour of duty. If anyone is aware of instances in which managers are not required to meet this standard, please let us know immediately.

Use of Skype

Lastly, we raised the fact that some of the guidance issued by business divisions (e.g., CFO) has been incorrect on the Skype online communication tool. In Article 50, Section 5A3, we agreed that managers may require employees who are teleworking to use “online communication tools” if it determines that it would be useful in performing their duties at the telework site. We did not agree that management has a right to direct all non-teleworking employees to utilize Skype and, in fact, we filed a national grievance over the agency’s unilateral rollout of Skype to all employees. In our discussion with the IRS, it maintains that the use of Skype has merely been a replacement for the (Microsoft) Office Communicator System (OCS), and that in the employees’ use of Skype, it will continue to abide by the OCS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and practices that were created under that MOU, namely that **non-teleworking** employees are not required to use the “Instant Messaging” or “Presence” functionality of Skype.”

Any of your chapter leaders are available to help with specific questions or issues you run across when exercising your right to telework.



Got Blood????

By Linda Candela, Chief Steward and VP of Exam and MITS

Halloween is one day a year when zombies and blood sucking vampires come out from hiding and threaten to take over the world! It is also a great time to think about sharing some of that red stuff! I don't mean letting a vampire bite you - I mean letting a nurse skillfully take a blood donation or better yet, a platelet donation that can be lifesaving to many recipients.

Did you know that you can use administrative leave to donate blood or platelets (a component of blood)? In addition, you can receive an additional 4 hours after the donation to recuperate! This is under Article 36 of the 2016 National Agreement.

What an excellent opportunity to help someone in need and take a break from your day to day work responsibilities. Blood and platelet donations save lives! Blood and platelet donor rooms are open in most hospitals and they are in dire need of eligible donors. Now is the time to make an appointment and request the administrative time! You will be screened to see if you can donate and then you can save a life on administrative time!

You will receive your time to travel to and from the donation site, the time required to screen you, and the time needed to make the donation. After that, you get 4 hours to recover at home. Even if you are found to be ineligible to donate, you still get the time it took you to travel back and forth to the donation site and the time it took to determine if you could donate.

If you haven't donated in a while, take the time to make an appointment. If you have never donated, now is the time to start! Find out if you are eligible and donate on a regular basis! Someone out there will be forever grateful!

NTEU Member Exclusive Benefits

Take a look at the “Member Benefits” page on NTEU.org for discounts on insurance, travel, CPA review courses, and more. You’ll need to create an account and log in for the necessary contact information, codes, or coupons.

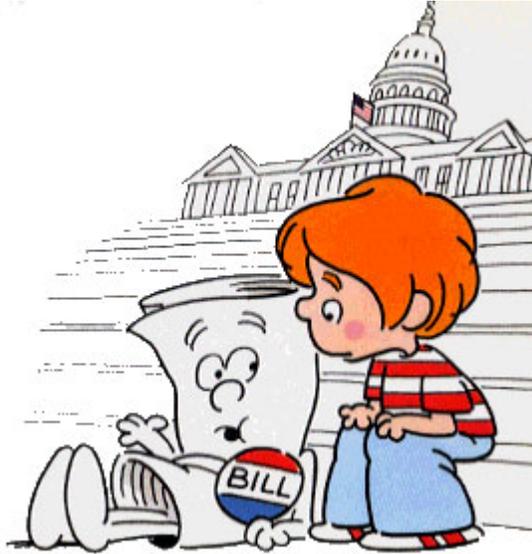


Image source: Schoolhouse Rock

“I’m Just a Bill”

While you’re on NTEU.org checking out the member benefits, it’s easy to navigate to NTEU’s [Legislative Action Center](#) and send pre-written messages to your senators and representatives urging them to support pro-IRS and pro-federal employee bills. You can also edit the message to include your own experiences. It’s a simple and quick way to participate in our democracy. Remember to do this on your personal time, such as lunch or after work, and to use your personal email address.

Currently, the Legislative Action page has alerts for a proposed 3% pay increase, providing sufficient funding for the IRS, and rescinding the anti-union Executive Orders issued by the White House. Take a few minutes to share your thoughts!

Don’t forget to vote on Tuesday, November 6 or take advantage of Early Voting today!

This Month in Labor History – NTEU’s Birthday, October 1939

Ever wonder how NTEU came into being? You can thank a group of Wisconsin Internal Revenue “Collectors”, as they were called at the time. At the time, the Bureau of Internal Revenue was plagued by favoritism and patronage jobs, leading to high turnover whenever administrations changed.

This brave group of employees formed the National Association of Employees of Collectors of the Internal Revenue (NAECIR) in 1938, seeking civil service protection, better salaries and working conditions, and a professional, non-partisan workplace. Looking to create a national movement, the first NAECIR convention was held in Milwaukee in October 1939.

Fortunately, NAECIR has changed its name to something less wordy but NTEU’s focus on job protection and benefits hasn’t changed since its first days.

Source: NTEU.org

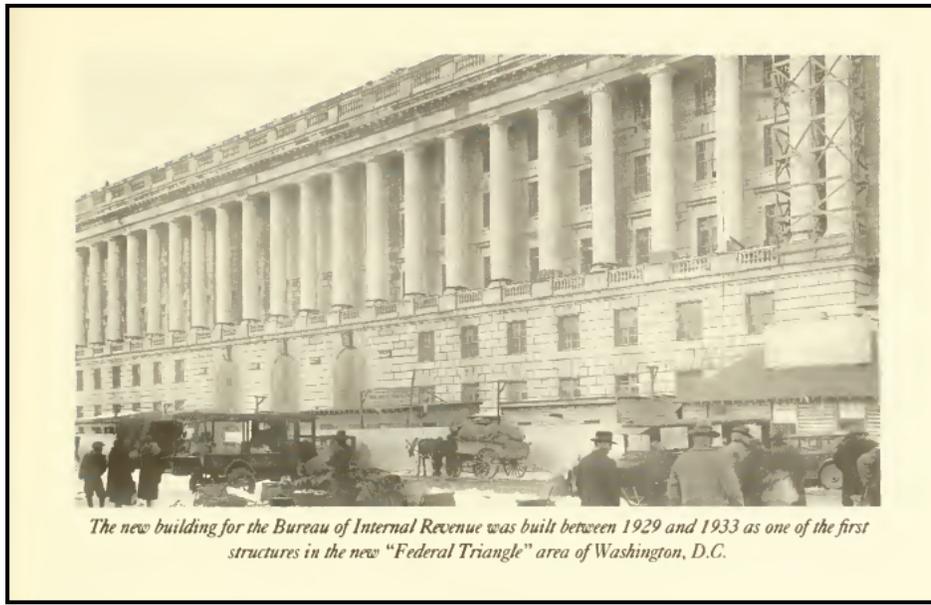


Image source: IRS Historical Library

What else was going on in October 1939?

- October 6-8 – Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union divide and annex Poland
- October 11 – President Roosevelt received the Einstein-Szilárd letter warning that Germany may begin its own nuclear program; leading to the creation of the Manhattan Project
- October 15 – The New York Municipal Airport was dedicated. You might know it better as LaGuardia.
- October 17 – *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* premiered in – where else? – Washington D.C.
- October 22 – The Brooklyn Dodgers beat the Philadelphia Eagles 23-14 in the first televised NFL game. Yes, there was a football team called the Brooklyn Dodgers!
- October 24 – The first nylon stockings went on sale - but were available only in Wilmington, Delaware, home of DuPont.

Source: Wikipedia

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