



December 10, 2008

NTEU continues to publish Newsletters containing past controversial subjects the agency would not distribute by email announcement as they are contractually obligated to do. The Union frequently has a different view-point than the agency on work-place issues and will re-double efforts to not let the agency obstruct a differing view. ---Dale Yeilding, NTEU Chapter President

December 10, 2008

Status of 2009 Pay Raise

Congress passed and the President signed legislation providing a 3.9 percent overall average pay increase for General Schedule employees in 2009. However, the statute authorizes the President to allocate the overall increase between an across-the-board increase and locality payments that vary by locality. OPM will publish pay tables and establishes locality pay rates for 2009 on its website, www.OPM.gov, soon after the President issues the Executive Order. The agency left egg on the Union's face, when they delayed an October-Union announcement so long that the outdated pay-raise status had actually become law. The Agency would not issue the Union's subsequent announcement explaining the mishap.

November 6, 2008

Childcare Subsidy May Increase and Be Given To More Employees

The agency has proposed changes to the Childcare Subsidy Program and NTEU will begin negotiations for further increases. Public Law 107-67, Sec 630 and [5 CFR 792](#) permit Federal agencies to assist lower income Federal employees with child care costs through a subsidy program. Last year less than \$10,000 of the budgeted \$40,000 was actually paid to employees due to the agency's limitation on who qualifies and the distribution structure. Employees near the old upper income limit of \$55,000 would only receive an agency subsidy of 10% of their actual costs each month. The agency is proposing to increase both the maximum salary and the maximum subsidy. NTEU will be further requesting the agency readjust the distribution chart so as to increase the 10%, such that more of the budgeted \$250,000 over the next five years is actually paid out to employees that qualify.

Employees with a combined family income of less than \$68,000 are asked to stop by the NTEU office (O1G22) to discuss options and help shape the Union proposal. Contact Dale Yeilding, NTEU Chapter President at 301-415-3600.

November 19, 2008

Union Claims Managers Cannot Terminate a Credit Hour Schedule to Discipline Employees

The credit hour program is just one of the many benefits the Union won for employees through negotiations. It came as a surprise to NTEU when management used it as a disciplinary tool. Specifically, management denied an employee's request to earn credit hours for alleged noncompliance with the office's Time and Attendance (T&A) policy. Regularly making T&A changes right before the 10AM certification-Monday deadline was viewed by management as non-compliance with the alleged RES policy that only permits changes at this late date as an "exception". Management responded to a grievance by claiming that the late changes interfered with operational requirements and resulted in an undue burden on the organization.

In response, the Union invoked arbitration to not only represent that employee but all employees so as to challenge this inappropriate practice at the onset. The Union is pleased to announce that soon after the arbitration was filed, the Agency returned the employee to the credit hour program and to date all of the employee's requests for credit hours have been approved. Additionally, we have not heard that any other supervisor has disciplined an employee by denying a request for credit hours. Time & Attendance changes are permitted on the last Friday and certification-Monday per MD 10.43 (Time and Labor Reporting). Employees should balance their own office T&A timeliness requirements with the need to maintain reporting accuracy. Contact Dale Yeilding in the NTEU Union office (301-415-3600) if you experience retribution for making T&A changes.

September 25, 2008

How Long Can the Agency Expect You to Travel in a Vehicle Versus Flying?

A group of 15 NRC employees were asked to ride in a government van from Maryland to North Carolina, i.e. 385 miles for 7+ hours. The manager had limited travel funds preventing the entire branch from flying and wanted to open the voluntary opportunity to everyone (only ~5 ended up making the trip) Under [301-10.4](#) of travel regulations, the agency has quite a large latitude to determine the mode of travel. NTEU was informed by the CFO travel office, that NRC normally permits flying for a trip of that distance and calls for driving short trips, for example from Headquarters to Region 1. NTEU may commend a manager for thinking outside the box when faced with a tightening budget, but opening burdensome but legal travel opportunities to a large group, might be balanced with the agency's past practice to keep this the best place to work.