



# The People's Voice

NTEU Ch. 67  
2016 Vol. 2

**IRS closing SP**  
in 3 locations

**Health  
&  
Benefits**

**Your Jobs  
Outsourced**

**Excel-A-Gram**  
Stars of Excellence



# THIS WORKPLACE



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## **STRONGER TOGETHER**

Visit us at [www.NTEU67.org](http://www.NTEU67.org) to stay informed

To organize federal employees to work together to ensure that every federal employee is treated with dignity and respect.

~The National Treasury Employees Union Mission

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The National Treasury Employees Union

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# SUBMISSION PROCESSING CEASING IN 3 SITES



In 2008, 58% of taxpayers filed electronically; in 2015, E-file rose to 86%. Due to the decreased workload revolving around paper submissions, the IRS plans to close Submission Processing (SP) operations in three locations.

According to numbers provided by the IRS, the impact to employees is immense: 1,800 jobs lost in Covington (2019), 3,000 jobs in Fresno (2021) and 2,400 jobs in Austin (2024). NTEU is committed to standing by your side and ensuring employees affected by this are treated fairly with their rights and dignity intact. National NTEU released the following statement in response:

*“NTEU will aggressively pursue all available measures to avoid or mitigate the impact of these closings on affected employees in these three*

*locations. Their well-being is our top priority. We want to make sure our members are treated fairly and that all steps are taken to avoid actions that may harm them.”*

In reference to the IRS overall, Commissioner Koskinen has stated that we need more employees rather than less. Many of the affected employees may ultimately retire or get placed in similarly graded positions. Despite good faith efforts, there could be a larger portion than previously estimated that cannot retire or find another position. It is Congress and the decisions they make that ultimately decide the lives of federal employees.

At the end of 2015, Congress passed a law with a provision to out-source various debt collection jobs within IRS. This law and further harmful legislation by Congress can and will undercut the Commissioner’s promise to place employees during the SP closure transition (see Page 7 for more details).

That is why we need to stand together and make our voice be heard. Get involved and join democracy so it works for you. NTEU is standing with federal employees advocating for your benefits and rights during these closures and on Capitol Hill. If all federal employees would unite and make their voice heard, Congress would have to listen.



# Performance Awards

## **What's Up With Your Performance Awards?**

NTEU is pleased to announce that the FY 2016 performance awards will be distributed to eligible employees on Nov. 23, 2016 (an official pay date). These awards are a result of NTEU's hard fought negotiations that ensure the IRS will maintain an awards program that rewards employees due to their high performance and dedication to excellence. Quality Step Increases (QSIs) became effective in October and will be reflected in paychecks beginning with the official pay date of Nov. 10, 2016.

NTEU will continue to work to provide a strong and effective awards program to make sure IRS employees receive recognition and awards for the great work they do.

## **NTEU Reaches Agreement on Bilingual Awards**

Thanks to hard work at the bargaining table, NTEU and the IRS reached an agreement regarding employees' eligibility to receive bilingual awards for fiscal years (FY) 2016, 2017 and 2018.

A national grievance challenged IRS claims that employees using bilingual skills were not entitled to bilingual and performance awards in the same year. NTEU argued performance awards for employees who regularly use bilingual skills did not "otherwise compensate" them for the skills, only for high performance. Employees in bilingual positions still are eligible for bilingual awards, even if they receive Performance Awards or Superior Accomplishment Awards in the same fiscal year. Employees can expect their 2016 bilingual awards on the official pay date of Dec. 22, 2016.

NTEU plans to address bilingual-awards issues — as well as other awards issues — during the 2018 mid-term reopened negotiations.

[Source: NTEU.ORG]



# **CHECKBOOK'S 2017 ONLINE GUIDE**

## **to Health Plans for Federal Employees and Retirees**

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**EXCLUSIVELY FOR NTEU MEMBERS!**  
**FEHBP, FSA, & FEDVIP OPEN SEASONS**  
**Nov. 14 - Dec. 12**

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NTEU is pleased to announce that CHECKBOOK's online *Guide to Health Plans for Federal Employees and Annuitants* is once again available to NTEU members at no cost. The online guide, found in the member benefits section of [www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org), provides:

- ✓ **Real Cost Comparisons** – Plans are ranked by estimates of actual out-of-pocket costs, providing a real dollars-and-cents comparison.
- ✓ **Quick Access to Answers** – CHECKBOOK has improved the guide to help you find answers quickly.
- ✓ **Dental & Vision Plans** – The guide will evaluate FEDVIP plans available to you.
- ✓ **Premium Conversion** – The guide takes into account the effects of premium conversion in its plan rankings, a significant factor when comparing plan deductibles.

Beginning Nov. 14, NTEU members may access the 2017 Guide online by:

- 1 Visiting the NTEU website, [www.nteu.org](http://www.nteu.org);
- 2 Logging in with your username and password (if you do not have them, you will have the chance to create them);
- 3 From the top-navigation, click on **Benefits** and then on the **Consumer's Checkbook** icon.

# 5 REASONS TO BE WARY OF PRIVATE TAX COLLECTION

## BEWARE OF PRIVATE TAX COLLECTION



The IRS announced it has contracted with four private collection agencies (PCA) to collect unpaid tax debt. If this sounds familiar, you're right, the IRS has tried it before. Two previous attempts in the past 20 years ended in failure and wasted millions of taxpayer dollars. So why is this doomed program back? After a five-year break, a highway bill Congress passed last year included a provision requiring the IRS to outsource tax collection.

NTEU opposes this program, Here are five reasons why you should too:

1. **The program was a bust.** The 2006–2009 program was projected to bring in up to \$2.2 billion in unpaid taxes. Instead, there was a net loss of almost \$4.5 million to the federal government, after subtracting program administration costs of \$86.2 million and more than \$16 million in commissions to the PCAs. What's more, the program was found to disproportionately target low-income taxpayers.
2. **There are IRS employees being laid off who can do the work.** More than 7,000 employees are slated to lose their jobs at sites that process paper tax returns. There's no need for Congress to outsource this work when there plenty of longtime federal employees who can be retrained to do it.



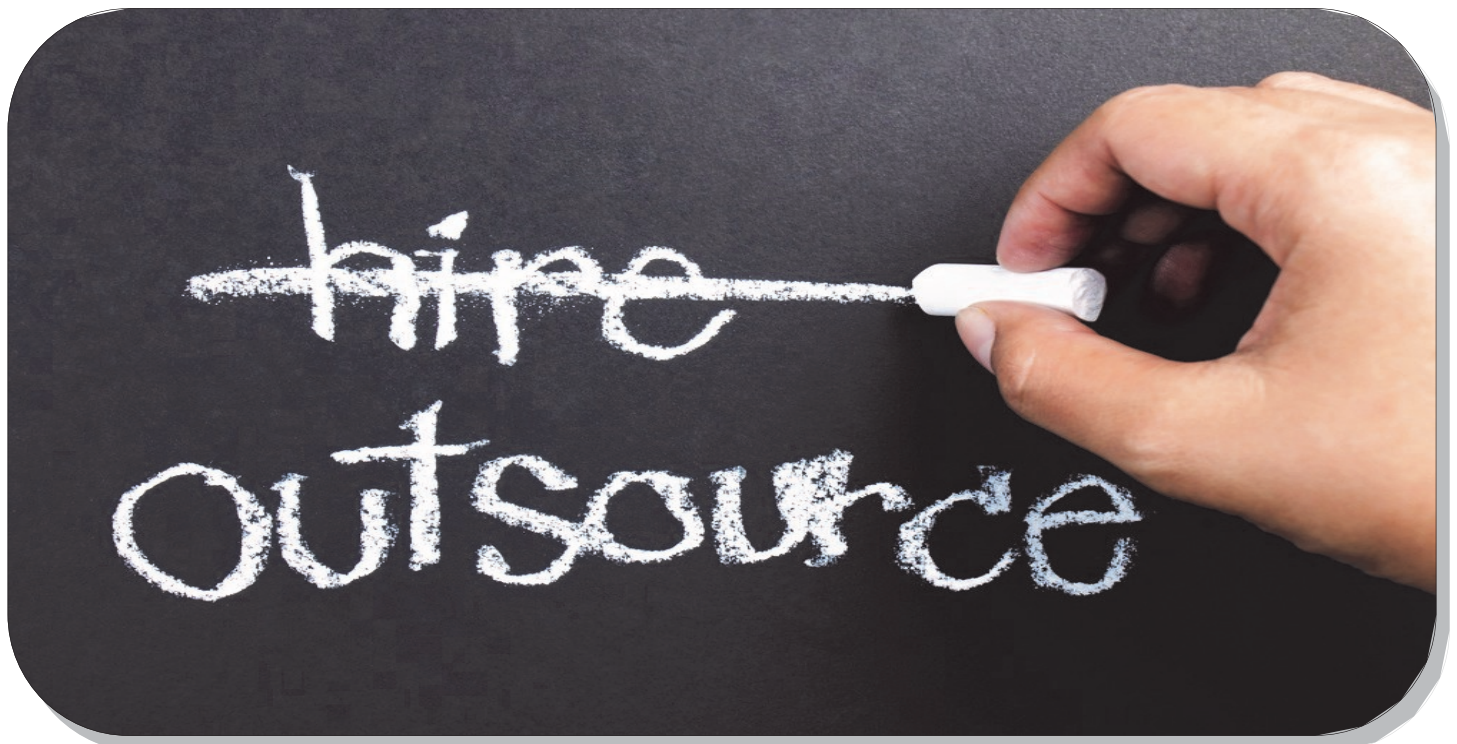
**3. IRS employees can help taxpayers in ways contractors can't.** Private collectors want to get paid as much and as soon as possible, while IRS employees have a variety of tools to help financially-struggling taxpayers. They include postponing or temporarily suspending debt collection, setting up flexible payment arrangements and waiving late-payment penalties.

**4. The program creates confusion exposing taxpayers to trouble.** Telephone scams are increasing in number with fraudsters calling taxpayer pretending to be the IRS. The IRS never cold calls taxpayers but the PCAs will be making calls to taxpayers creating confusion.

**5. NTEU is in good company in its opposition.** Opposition to the program has been voiced by a growing number of members of Congress, major public interest groups, tax experts, newspaper editorial boards as well as the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel, a volunteer federal advisory group—whose members are appointed by the IRS and the Treasury Department.

Tell Congress today that there are clear advantages to having IRS employees do tax collection work.

[Source: NTEU.org]





# Federal Employees Matter



**Let  
Your  
Voice  
Be  
Heard**

**WWW.CAPWIZ.COM/NTEU**

**Questions? Call NTEU at 801-620-6511**

## *NTEU Legislation Action Center*

### **Contact Congress in 3 easy steps**

- 1) Using your smart-phone or PC go to:  
[www.capwiz.com/NTEU](http://www.capwiz.com/NTEU)
- 2) Select a topic that concerns you
- 3) Fill in your contact information and click 'Submit'

Your letter will be sent to local representatives in Congress regarding the topic you selected

*Use your own device & time*

**NTEU IS WORKING FOR YOU**



# Excel-A-Gram / Stars of Excellence

## Program still operating despite claims

You may have heard that the Excel-A-Gram and Stars of Excellence agreements are no longer in effect, but the good news is they are.

Back in 1998, then NTEU Chapter 67 President Eileen Moore worked with the Director Deborah Decker to negotiate the Excel-A-Gram program on behalf of employees.

Five Excel-A-Grams were worth one hour of time off in 1998. In 2002, it was reduced to four.

The thought behind the program was to use the Excel-A-Grams as a way for employees to award a co-worker for behaviors we value at the Ogden Service Center.

Everyone involved identified seven behaviors that qualified for an Excel-A-Gram:

- 1) Customer focus
- 2) Process improvement
- 3) Innovation
- 4) Embracing change
- 5) Workplace citizenship
- 6) Candid communication
- 7) Mentoring

Over the years, there have been a few modifications to the program. In 2005, the Compliance director ended the program without any attempt to negotiate the standing agreement.

NTEU brought the issue to arbitration and won. It was decided the program must remain in effect until proper negotiations have taken place.

Excel-A-Grams and Stars of Excellence should continue to be used and given.



# LOCAL



Bringing you information regarding the Ogden Campus

## **IMPROPER 5 DAY NOTICE OF FURLOUGH**

A group of seasonal employees in Ogden were not given adequate 5-day notice before being furloughed.

NTEU fought for the rights of these employees and won two days back pay (plus interest) and a half day of paid time off.

## **MASS GRIEVANCE OVER A DETAIL POSITION:**

Employees filed a mass grievance over incorrect ranking and evaluation of employees while applying for a detail position.

NTEU fought for the rights and equal treatment of these employees and got them either back pay or priority consideration for their next application.

## **MEET THE LAWYER PRESENTATION AND Q&A:**

The local NTEU field representative provided employees with a chance to ask a lawyer legal questions. During his visit, he answered questions for employees, and gave a presentation regarding alternate work schedules and employee rights.

NTEU is committed to assisting employees and answering any questions they have regarding their jobs or the National Agreement that governs them.

## **THE AVANTI MARKET:**

The Main Building has seen many vendors attempt to make a profitable business in the cafeteria and fail. Management has decided to use a source that has little overhead costs and can hopefully pass those savings to employees.

While NTEU did not implement the new Avanti Market in the Main Building, we were there during negotiations to ensure proper protections were in place for employees using the new market.

## **REAL ESTATE CONSOLIDATION AND YOU:**

The second highest cost to the IRS besides payroll is real estate. In order to cut costs for the Agency, management is trying to consolidate as much real estate as possible.





These types of moves can range from a very simple to a major inconvenience for employees. A typical move project includes many people, including Telecom, Information Technology, Security (EOPS), Facilities (FMSS), management and NTEU.

During the last ten months, there has been a lot of activity around the Ogden Campus as we consolidate and prepare to cut real estate costs. Since the scale of the move is large and affects many employees, it has been broken down into phases that must be complete before moving on to the next phase. The planning involved is immense and needs to be coordinated carefully.

The project teams need to move or change furniture, equipment and wiring for phones and computers. IT then ensures all the computers are functioning correctly with the proper software installed.

IRS will continue to cut real estate costs and they have a right to do so. NTEU will work with management to lessen the impact on the employees while ensuring their rights are upheld through this process.

NTEU also advocates on employees' behalf for telework and other opportunities that can cut overall costs to the Agency and provide more flexibilities in the work lives of employees.

Many of our Ogden employees have already moved, and many more will move within the next year. Just remember when it is your turn that this too shall pass.

**NTEU Chapter 67 will stand with you.  
Remember you are not alone.**

*Chapter 67 would like to invite our members to the  
annual NTEU Christmas party!*

*Join us Dec. 3 from 12-3pm at Boondocks Fun Center*

*525 Deseret Dr. Kaysville, UT 84037*

*Lunch will only be served from 12-1:30pm*

*Santa visits from 1-2:30pm*

*RSVP by Nov. 25 with a \$5 refundable deposit*

*Call NTEU at 801-620-6511 or email Shannon Cook*



# **NTEU Chapter 67 Contact Information**

**Main Office open 8:30am until 11pm Monday-Friday**

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