



NTEU Chapter 282

Legislative Update

March 2004

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2004

**PAY -- CONTRACTING OUT --
FEDERAL HEALTH BENEFITS --
RETIREMENT ISSUES --
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND
SECURITY -- IRS RIFS**

Fair and Equitable Pay for Federal Employees

NTEU supports a 3.5% pay raise, the same pay raise that the Bush Administration is proposing for the military. Every year, the Bush Administration has proposed inequitable pay adjustment for federal employees; however, Congress has overridden the White House and mandated parity for federal employees. This year, the Administration seeks to change the procedural rules to make it more difficult for Congress to prevail over the White House on the issue of pay parity. NTEU opposes this procedural change.

Contracting Out

Last year OMB unveiled its new privatization initiative, which seeks to turn at least 850,000 federal employee jobs over to private contractors. Before contracting out more government work, taxpayers deserve to know exactly how their tax dollars are being spent on current contracts. Agencies need to implement reliable accounting and reporting systems and increase contract oversight. NTEU believes the TRAC Act would provide the costs and benefits needed to show whether current contracting efforts are saving money, whether contractors are delivering services on-time and efficiently, and that when a contractor is not living up to his or her end of the deal, the government work is being brought back in-house. The TRAC Act would also ensure that federal employees are given an

opportunity to compete in defense of their jobs before work is arbitrarily privatized.

Federal Health Benefits

NTEU supports efforts to make FEHBP health insurance premiums more affordable. Premiums have risen 45% since 2001. As premiums increase, plans have raised co-payments and deductibles, reduced covered services and increased prescription drug costs. Coverage for dental and vision needs is almost nonexistent. NTEU supports legislation to increase the federal government's share of the health insurance premium from 72% to 80%.

Retirement Issues

Federal employees continue to be impacted by two Social Security offsets that affect their retirement benefits – the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). There are several bills pending before Congress to address these offsets. NTEU supports these important bills and legislation to reform or repeal the GPO and WEP.

Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS)

The Secretary of DHS and the OPM Director propose regulations for a new DHS personnel system that would severely limit the collective bargaining rights of employees. The proposed regulations would also dismantle the General Schedule (GS) pay scale and would create a new internal DHS review board for disputes. Another initiative called "One Face at the Border" was created to combine duties of Customs, INS, and APHIS inspectors into a single front-line border security position. This will result in lost expertise and raises serious security concerns. NTEU urges Congress to oppose these major changes at DHS. NTEU continues to support law enforcement officer status for Customs inspectional personnel including 20-year retirement benefits.

IRS' Fire and Rehire Plan

IRS plans to conduct a reduction in force (RIF) of 1,600 IRS Case Processing and Insolvency support employees in 92 locations and then hire 1,200 new employees to do the same work in four consolidated IRS Service Centers. This is a waste of time and money. It is unfair to the current employees who are already trained and successfully performing the Case Processing and Insolvency work. NTEU urges Congress to take action to prevent these unwise layoffs at IRS.

Rally for Federal Employee Rights

During lunch on March 3, conference attendees rallied on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol. Numerous elected officials, including Reps. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), Tim Bishop (D-NY), and Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) as well as NTEU President Colleen Kelley spoke against contracting out federal jobs and spoke for pay parity and the TRAC Act (the Truthfulness, Responsibility, and Accountability in Contracting Out).

Closing Luncheon

A special member of Congress spoke during the closing luncheon. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) stressed the importance of voter registration and support for a 12 – 2 – 1 change on November 2! The House needs 12 newly elected officials and the Senate needs 2 newly elected officials to regain the party majority. Senator Mikulski thanked NTEU for leadership and support on behalf of federal employees and urged us to continue to protect federal jobs and federal workers.

Voter Registration

Voter registration for every state is available via www.capwiz.com/netu/e4. Also volunteering your time and money is important. Become educated and support the candidates who support federal workers.

Legislative Information Sources

THOMAS – U.S. Congress on the Internet (<http://thomas.loc.gov>) provides access to the following information – Bill information, text and index of the Congressional Record, Congressional committee information, Historical documents, how the legislative process works, and links to other U.S. government internet resources.

The Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com>) – users can search the database of the Washington Post for articles in the Post or on the AP newlines that have been printed within the last two weeks.

Official Website for the U.S. House of Representatives (<http://www.house.gov>) – information on individual Members' website and e-mail addresses; committee information; and other news.

Official Website for the U.S. Senate (<http://www.senate.gov>) – information on individual Senators' websites and email addresses; committee information; and other news.

Become familiar with the Dos and Don'ts of the Hatch Act.

Look for announcements and information on the NTEU at FDA Website: www.netu.282.org, then click on Chapter 282 – DC Metro.

**STAND UP
SPEAK OUT
FIGHT BACK**
NTEU 2004 slogan

NTEU Chapter 282 needs members who are willing to step up and work hard for their fellow employees. Sign an SF-1187 today and return it to Cathy Hobbs (ceh@CDRH.FDA.GOV) or Mike Theodorakis (THEODORAKIS@cder.fda.gov)

*OPM Federal Employee Satisfaction Survey – over 100,000 government employees responded to a survey conducted by OPM that ranged from job satisfaction to retirement benefits. It was the largest response OPM has ever elicited to any survey given to federal employees. The survey results: 91% said they do important work; 89% are satisfied with their vacation time; 82% like their work; 64% were satisfied with their pay; 60% said their agency was a good place to work; **but more than one third of the respondents said they were considering leaving their jobs due to the Bush administration's push to privatize federal jobs!***
Source: 2004 Federal Personnel Guide, page 4 'Other News from 2003'