



NTEU Chapter 282 Legislative Update

March 2006

NTEU 2006 Legislative Conference February 27th through March 2nd

Twenty stewards and officers from NTEU Chapter 282 joined 300 other NTEU leaders and activists for the annual Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Their mission was to lobby Congress on the legislative priorities for NTEU for this year.

The 2006 NTEU Legislative Priorities are –

- Fair and Equitable Pay for Federal Employees
- Health Care
- Government Privatization
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Personnel Issues
- The Working for America Act

The Chapter 282 stewards and officers met with Congressional representatives and their staff on the 2006 legislative priorities, as well as issues important to FDA employees such as proposed budget cuts.

Fair and Equitable Pay

NTEU worked hard for the current 3.1% pay raise and NTEU plans to fight just as hard for a pay raise for FY2007 that is fair and appropriate. The Bush Administration's proposed pay raise of 2.2% for federal civilian and military employees would be the lowest in almost 20 years. In addition, the Administration proposes to split the pay raise to cover base pay, locality pay and special rates pay. The inclusion of special rates pay in the split of the pay raise is a new twist from the Administration that would dilute it and highlights the unfairness of the proposal. The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act, enacted in 1990 to close the pay gap between federal and private sector pay, has never been fully implemented. This administration fails to recognize the important role of our nation's workforce in protecting our homeland security and providing services to the American public.

Health Care

NTEU is strongly supporting legislation that would help make health insurance more affordable for federal employees. Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD) has introduced a bill (H.R. 633) that would increase the government's share of premiums to the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP) from the present average of 72% to an average of 80%. NTEU also is focusing its initiative on health care at the Bush Administration's efforts to push "Health Savings Accounts" which threaten the stability of FEHBP by reducing the pool of employees who participate in the program. In addition, NTEU is closely monitoring the new dental/vision benefit that is scheduled to be made available to Federal employees this year. The benefit does not include a government contribution, but does require OPM to negotiate a favorable rate by utilizing the purchasing power of Federal employees.

Government Privatization

NTEU is leading the fight against an administrative initiative that seeks to turn over at least 850,000 federal jobs to private contractors. Last year, NTEU succeeded in getting legislation enacted that begins to level the playing field for federal employees. Congressman Chris Van Hollen's (D-MD) NTEU-supported amendment to prohibit the Office of Management and Budget from using its revised A-76 Circular as the guideline for competitive sourcing pass the House by 222-203. In addition, Senators Kit Bond and Barbara Mikulski authored, and fiercely fought for, language in a FY2006 appropriations bill that allowed federal employees to offer their own realistic best bid for job functions being performed by more than 10 federal employees, required a 10% or \$10 million cost savings for work to be contracted out, and permitted agencies to conduct their own competitions to bring work back in-house. NTEU will work toward including the same language in future legislation.

DHS Personnel Issues

NTEU is pushing for additional resources for front-line employees in DHS's Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) working at U.S. ports of entry. In addition, NTEU continues its efforts to achieve the, long-denied but well-deserved, designation of law enforcement officer (LEO) for CBP Officers. (The 20-year LEO retirement rule applies to other U.S. law enforcement officers such as Border Patrol, FBI, and Secret Service agents.) That denial is just one of the morale-busting issues impacting DHS employees; others, including the need to abandon the mismanaged and unwise 'One Face at the Border' initiative — which has sharply diluted inspectional expertise — is strongly opposed by NTEU.

Working for America Act

The Working for America Act would place significant limits on employee collective bargaining, due process and appeal rights, and would replace the General Schedule pay system with untested, subjective and complex pay rules. NTEU is strongly opposed to the Working for America Act, which (fortunately) has yet to attract a single Congressional sponsor.

FDA Issues

NTEU Chapter 282 attendees used the Legislative Conference to educate members of Congress and their staff to proposed budget cuts at FDA. NTEU is working with the FDA NTEU Chapters to assure that Congress appropriate funds for FDA employees to meet the mandates of their mission.

2005 Legislative Successes

- Achieved a 3.1% pay raise for 2006 — once again, more than the administration proposed
- Achieved favorable anti-contracting out language in Federal legislation
- Thwarted introduction of Working for America Act
- Final payment on the special salary rates case
- Stopped Homeland Security personnel rules
- Prevented closure of Taxpayer Assistance Centers
- Blocked a proposed federal pay freeze
- Took nearly twice as many cases to arbitration
- Won millions of dollars in back pay for agency overtime and other legal and contract violations
- Prevented a change in retirement calculations that would have hurt federal workers

Legislative Information Sources

- CapWiz (<http://capwiz.com/nteu/>): NTEU's website for Legislative Action. Subscribe to get Action Alerts from NTEU. Contact your Congressional representatives and instantly send them messages on issues effecting Federal employees.
- THOMAS (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>): Legislative information from the Library of Congress. The site provides access to current and former bills in Congress, the Congressional Record, historical documents, and links to government resources.
- U.S. Senate (<http://www.senate.gov/>)
- House of Representatives (<http://www.house.gov/>)

