

# The People's Voice

NTEU Ch. 67  
2018 Vol. 1



**2019 TAX  
SURPRISE?**

**QSI**  
changes

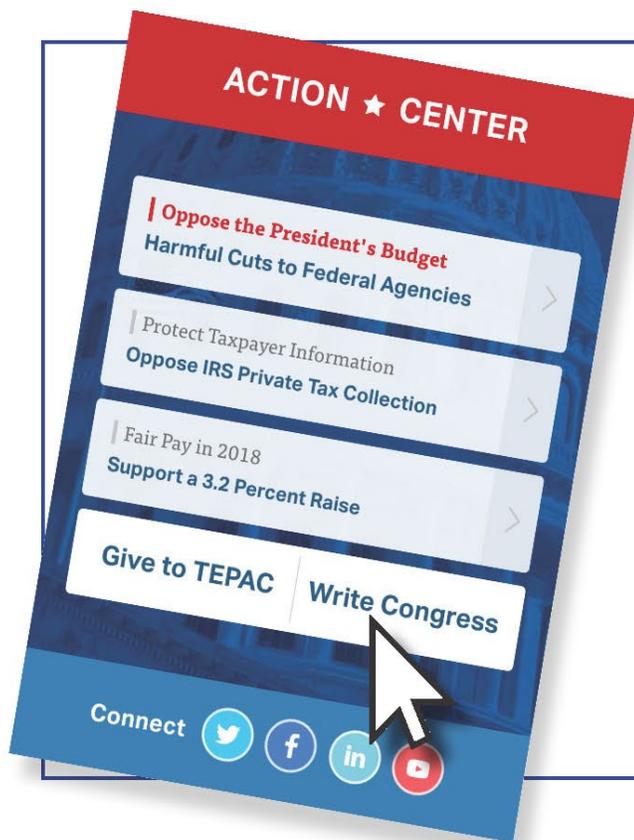
**HEALTH  
SAVINGS**

**LOCAL  
news**

*"Give me your tired, your poor,  
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free"*

# Worried about attacks on your **pay, benefits** and **workplace rights?**

## *Don't be silent.*



### Take these five steps to get your voice heard:

1. Visit [NTEU.org](http://NTEU.org) and click on "Write Congress" in the Action Center.
2. Choose an action alert.
3. Enter your ZIP code.
4. A pre-populated message will appear that you can customize by clicking inside the text box. The message will automatically be sent to your representative(s).
5. Scroll down to sign your name, enter your contact information and click submit.

**You're done!**

## Take action today for a better tomorrow.

**Visit [NTEU.org](http://NTEU.org)**

**MAKE IT  
FASTER & EASIER  
TO TAKE ACTION**

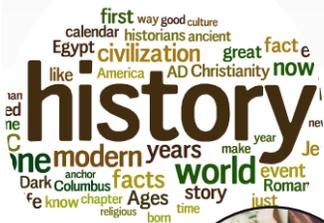
Check the  
"Remember Me" box  
and Bookmark  
[Action.NTEU.org](http://Action.NTEU.org).

Caution: Don't use your government email address to send a message through NTEU's Legislative Action Center.

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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# OUR HISTORY

NTEU began as a group of employees who banded together to improve their working conditions and their workplace. That is what we were from the beginning and what we remain today.

It all started back in 1938 when a group of Internal Revenue collectors organized to improve their working conditions. At the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the pay was low, the work dangerous and many had no civil service protections to protect them from the whims of political bosses. Other federal employee organizations were unwilling to represent these revenue collectors because they were in patronage positions.



Through NTEU's persistence over decades, those workers gained civil service protection, collective bargaining rights and contract rights. NTEU transitioned from a social club to a hard-fighting, professional union that would set the standard for bargaining achievements, workplace representation, advocacy on Capitol Hill and for challenging management in the court.

Today, NTEU has grown to represent 150,000 employees from 31 different government agencies. Our mission: to help create workplaces where every federal employee is treated with dignity and respect. Over the years, we have done this by advocating for fair pay and benefits, negotiating for telework and alternative work schedules, securing back pay for workers who were improperly paid, expanding federal employees' political rights and much more.

We are proud to represent a diverse group of federal employees who make America run. NTEU members collect the money to fund government agencies that help protect our border; ensure we have clean air and water; regulate financial services companies; make sure the airways are used in the public interest; and so much more.

NTEU continues to make history through its accomplishments even when times are tough. Whether we're fighting on Capitol Hill, at the bargaining table and in workplaces across the country, NTEU has emerged a powerful force for federal employees. Built by a small group of Internal Revenue employees—and fortified by our members and our mission to ensure that every federal employee is treated with dignity and respect.

## Have You Checked Your Withholding?

The new tax law contains significant changes to the tax code and the IRS is strongly encouraging every employee to check your withholding rates to see if you should make adjustments. Among other things, the new law increased the standard deduction, removed personal exemptions, increased the child tax credit, limited or discontinued certain deductions and changed the tax rates and brackets.

Take the time to check your tax withholdings using the IRS [Tax Withholding calculator](#).

# WITHHOLDING CALCULATOR TIPS



Access the  
calculator at  
[irs.gov/withholding](https://irs.gov/withholding)

### The new tax law impacts everyone.

Take advantage of the tools available so you have the right amount of taxes withheld and avoid any unwelcome surprises at tax time next year.

#### Tips for using the IRS Tax Withholding Calculator:

- You will need your most recent pay stubs and income tax return.
- The calculator is only as accurate as the information you provide.
- The Withholding Calculator DOES NOT ask you to provide sensitive personally-identifiable information, such as your name, Social Security number, address or bank account numbers.
- The IRS DOES NOT save or record the information you enter on the Calculator.



FSA FEDS

Or..



## Save money while saving for health expenses

If you are looking to lower your overall tax liability and save up for medical expenses, a Health Savings Plan (HSA) or Flexible Spending Account (FSA) may be right for you.

There are important differences between the two that need to be known in order to make the best selection, which are:

### Health Savings Plan (HSA):

- Requires a high deductible health plan (Minimum deductible of \$1,250 for an individual or \$2,500 for a family)
- Money invested into the plan rolls over year after year
- Higher contribution limits (\$3,300 a year individual or \$6,550 for a family)
- Enroll at My EPP website with qualifying high deductible plan

***“There is no greater calling than to serve your fellow men. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. There is no greater satisfaction than to have done it well.”***

**American Labor Union Leader**

**Walter Reuther**

## Flexible Spending Account (FSA):

- Money does *not* roll over year after year, don't contribute more than you'll use (FSA Feds allows up to \$500 to roll over, if you re-enroll during open season)
- Carefully calculate how much to set aside based off past reoccurring practices combined with upcoming known events
- Lower contribution limits (\$2,500 a year)
- Enroll at [FSAFEDS.com](http://FSAFEDS.com)

Both accounts have the benefit of putting away money before taxes and lowering your overall tax liability. Here is one example of how this works:

If you make \$2000 a month and set aside \$100 for an HSA or FSA your taxable income is only \$1900. Over the course of a year, this would lower your taxable income by \$1,200.

Assuming the individual is in the 25% tax bracket range for this scenario, they would have saved \$300 that year ( $\$1,200 \times 0.25 = \$300$ ). Costing them \$900 to save up \$1200 in a Health Savings Plan or Flexible Spending Account.

While a medical expense savings account may not be for everyone, if you have regular medical expenses that are fairly easy to predict this would be a good way to pay your bills while saving on your taxable income.

Congress decides every aspect of a federal employee's job, pay, benefits and retirement. If you want to make a difference in your everyday life, get involved. We live in a great democracy and it is tragic that a growing majority decide not to use our collective voices at the ballot boxes or with Congress.

Use the [NTEU ACTION CENTER](#) (Pg. 1) to contact congress regarding important issues to federal employees and **VOTE!**

**Become engaged and empowered**





# Changes to the QSI Program

Prior to the 2016 National Agreement, which went into effect on October 1, 2015, the parties had a negotiated QSI program (in the 2009 and 2012 National Agreements) under which the agency was obligated to grant QSIs to all employees who met defined eligibility criteria. Generally, the criteria were that employees had to have the following:

**(i)** an Outstanding rating on his/her most recent appraisal; **(ii)** an Outstanding rating in two of the three prior rating periods; and **(iii)** not have been granted a QSI in the last 78 pay periods (three years). If employees met those criteria, the agency had to grant them a QSI to meet a target percentage of ten (10) percent of bargaining unit employees each year that was contained in the 2012 National Agreement, Article 18, Section 2B4. Employees typically received the actual step increase within 1–2 pay periods of the issuance of their performance rating.

During the negotiations on Article 18 for the 2016 National Agreement, which began in October 2013, the IRS (under the direction of the Department of the Treasury), proposed to eliminate any targeted QSI percentage in Article 18 for budgetary reasons. The IRS argued that pursuant to the applicable government-wide regulation (by law, unions cannot negotiate over these regulations), supervisors or managers have the discretion to determine whether an individual employee should receive a QSI for outstanding performance. In bargaining, NTEU pushed back hard against this change for nearly 18 months, and the parties reached an impasse on the issue. NTEU took the impasse to the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP/Panel) for resolution, but the Panel was unable to convince the IRS to continue the negotiated QSI program and percentage. At the end of the day, the parties agreed that the language in Article 18 would be changed to merely reflect the QSI regulation (5 C.F.R. § 531, Subpart E), which, as mentioned above, grants managers “discretion” as to whether an employee who is rated “Outstanding” will be granted a QSI in any performance year. Under the regulation, employees who are rated “Outstanding” in their current appraisals, and who have not had QSIs granted to them in the preceding 52-week period (and who are not already at Step 10), are eligible for QSIs.

The IRS issued its unilateral QSI policy (Interim Guidance) on June 14, 2016. Under that guidance, which is still in place, the IRS Chief Financial Officer allocates to each Business Unit its QSI spending limits by the end of April in each fiscal year. Each business unit will develop and issue nomination timelines and procedures to supervisors, and “supervisors may nominate employees at their discretion in accordance with IRS QSI Eligibility Criteria and Business Unit timelines and procedures.” If nominated and approved for a QSI, employees are then notified that they have five (5) business days to decide whether to accept the QSI offer. If they do not accept a QSI, they are eligible to receive an Article 18 performance award for that year.

One of the major changes in the new IRS policy was the decision to not approve QSIs when an employee becomes eligible to receive one. Instead, the IRS decided to withhold all QSIs in FY 2016, and only grant them at the beginning of FY 2017 along with the 2016 performance awards. As such, QSIs earned during the FY2016 performance cycle did not become effective until the first quarter of FY17. Based on OPM guidance, which states that a QSI should be “made effective as soon as practicable after it is approved, usually at the beginning of the next pay period, and as close as practicable to the rating of record upon which it is based.” NTEU believed the IRS’s actions in delaying QSIs (in some instances for up to 14 months) violated the government-wide regulation. NTEU filed a national grievance and went to hearing on that issue. An arbitrator agreed with NTEU that the language of the regulations does not give the IRS the right to delay QSIs to the following fiscal year. The agency appealed to the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), NTEU filed a response, and we are waiting for a decision. Until that decision is released, the IRS continues to delay the granting of QSIs.

NTEU has also filed information requests asking for data on QSIs granted since the IRS moved to a discretionary QSI policy, to ensure there is no disparate impact discrimination. The IRS refused to give NTEU all of the information we requested and NTEU filed an unfair labor practice with the FLRA, alleging the agency is violating the statute by not providing the requested information on QSI policies. The FLRA has recently indicated it will not issue a complaint against the IRS, but NTEU is waiting for official, written, confirmation of that fact before we decide on the proper course of action. There is no question that, under the agency’s unilateral QSI policy, fewer bargaining unit employees are being awarded QSIs. NTEU believes this is very unfortunate, as there are outstanding employees who should be rewarded; and, it is the reason we fought hard to continue the prior Article 18 QSI program.

***Hopefully, this information will address all concerns as to why the QSI program changed.***

# **NTEU MEMBER POOL PARTY**

**AUG. 11 AT THE ROY AQUATIC CENTER**

**STARTING AT 11AM AND ENDING AT 6PM**

**LUNCH INCLUDED & SERVED FROM 12:30-1:30PM**

**PRICE IS \$4 EACH FOR THE FIRST 5 TICKETS**

**ANY TICKET(S) BEYOND THE FIRST 5 IS \$6 EACH**

**\*NON-REFUNDABLE, PURCHASE BY COB AUG. 9**



# EMPOWER YOURSELF

## National Treasury Employee Union Chapter 67 Text Messaging Service

Make the most of your membership

Scan to like us  
on Facebook



facebook.com/NTEU-Chapter-67-134940939900007?ref=bookmarks

Scan to follow us  
on Twitter



@NTEU67

Event and benefit  
information via text  
to your phone

SMS to join our  
text list

Text: **NTEU67**

To: **41411**

No charge for subscribing.  
Expect approx 1 text msg per wk.  
To quit any time, reply STOP.  
Msg & Data Rates May Apply.  
Numbers never shared or sold.

SMS

Important information regarding events, benefits and issues affecting federal employees



## **INFORMATION FROM NTEU**

## **HELP US, HELP YOU**

National NTEU and the local NTEU office send out information and materials to make the most of your membership and to keep you informed of important issues surrounding federal employees.

If you are not getting information from either source, please visit or call the local NTEU office at **801-620-6511** to make sure we have the correct information.

### **MEMBER BENEFITS**

Member benefits are intended to help you and your family save money and add value. Benefits range from discounts at local businesses to special member only events and activities.

Visit [www.NTEU.org](http://www.NTEU.org) for national benefits and [www.NTEU67.org](http://www.NTEU67.org) for local benefits, events and information.

Our members are the backbone of who we are. NTEU is working to retain or improve existing benefits, retirement and pay for federal employees. Our goal is to protect your rights while also working to improve every federal employee's life. The single easiest way to help yourself in your work life is by becoming an NTEU member.

If you know someone who isn't a member, let them know that NTEU is the one to thank for performance awards, pay raises, back pay on night differential, seasonal furloughs during the government shut-down and defending against harmful legislation targeting federal employees.

Potential members, please call the NTEU office at 801-620-6511 or talk to your steward.

Thank you to the members and stewards that support NTEU and enable us to help you.



# RETIREMENT BENEFITS TARGETED

Threats to federal pensions keep on coming, and NTEU continues to fight them.

**The House Budget Committee yesterday approved a fiscal year 2019 budget resolution outlining cuts of more than \$302 billion to federal programs and \$32 billion from federal retirement benefits over ten years.**

The House Budget Committee yesterday approved a fiscal year 2019 budget resolution outlining cuts of more than \$302 billion to federal programs and \$32 billion from federal retirement benefits over ten years.

Specifically, the House Budget Committee's Budget Blueprint calls for:

- Increasing required Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employee contributions by approximately 6 to 7 percent. Most FERS employees would absorb over a 6 percent pay cut.
- Eliminating the FERS supplement for employees who retire before they can collect Social Security benefits.
- Eliminating the FERS defined pension benefit.

In advance of the vote, [NTEU sent a letter](#) to Budget Committee members urging them to reject these cuts.

“The federal government should instead be acting to protect these benefit programs, as well as setting an example for the private sector, and devoting its resources to extending retirement security for all Americans,” wrote National President Tony Reardon. He reminded lawmakers that federal employees have already contributed approximately \$200 billion toward deficit reduction since 2010.

It's not clear whether there is enough support to bring the measure to the House floor.

NTEU continues to closely monitor the fiscal 2019 budget process and will work with congressional allies to block cuts to federal retirement programs.

[www.NTEU.org](http://www.NTEU.org)

**BENEFIT**

**SPOTLIGHT**

**NTEU Members**

**SALT LAKE BEES**  
77 West 1300 South • Salt Lake City, UT 84115

Tickets \$12  
@ the NTEU office

\*Not Refundable  
\*Voucher valid for 2018 season home games



**NTEU**  
The National Treasury Employees Union  
**Chapter 67**

**Main Office open 8:30am until 11pm Monday-Friday 801-620-6511**

**President:**  
Jenny Brown  
620-7021

**Secretary:**  
Shellee Gamble  
620-6223

**Chief Steward (Swing Shift):**  
Wendy Guerra  
620-6508

**1st Vice President:**  
Robert Lawrence  
620-6511

**Treasurer / Oral Reply:**  
Shelly Carver  
620-6000

**Oral Reply Specialist**  
Richard Smyka  
620-6000

**2nd Vice President:**  
Lori Roach  
620-6511

**Chief Steward (Day Shift):**  
Shannon Cook  
620-6222

**Communications:**  
Justin Greathouse  
620-6530