



Firebird 24

Reborn From Our Ashes

NTEU Chapter 24 Newsletter

Volume 2

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Chapter 24 Website

Chapter 24 has a newly redesigned website, www.nteu24.org. This website was awarded Best New Website of the Year at the National Convention in August of this year. By clicking on this website, you can access: -What's New--Firebird 24---Legislative News--Join Chapter 24---Officers (as in who are they...)--Stewards (by POD)--PODs (with maps!)--Grievance Process--If TIGTA Calls--Federal Holidays--Leave Calculators--Pay Tables--Local Agreements--National Agreements -Forms---Downloads---Government Links--Michigan Links---Congressional Links--Detroit District Benevolent Fund--Benefits---Insurance--Auto & Home--Other Benefits, and--Other Discounts. A few of these links are still under construction, but there is so much there, already, to make it worth your while to check it out. **Caroline Trinkwalder** deserves an extraordinary "Well Done!" for being the webmaster of our website. And, a very grateful, "Thank you," for providing me with the red Phoenix.

Election Results

The election results are in. As previously reported, Chapter President **Ronald Woytalewicz**, and Chapter Treasurer **John**

Copenhagen were unopposed. Of the other nominees, the results are: For the office of Vice President—**Jeri Burger** 199, **Henry Morrison** 85; for Secretary-- **Marianne Gordon** 153, **Catharine Kelly** 103; Members of the Board-- **Phyllis Vidler** 226, **Victor Jackson** 178, **Mary Cook** 166, **Carol Engelsman** 125, **Scott Whitehead** 119, **Kathy McHugh** 117, **Cynthia Harris** 110, **Zondra (Bradley) Rhim** 117, **Lillie Jones** 70, and **Mary Williams** 40. The top 5 vote winners become members of the board; however, as **Phyllis Vidler** was elected as a National Vice President, she cannot serve as a member of the board. This fifth seat will be selected by the newly elected board members.

763 notices of nomination were mailed to members based on the mailing list provided to the election committee in May 2005. Members who were on the rolls as of March 31, 2005 were eligible to receive a notice of nomination. 15 of these were returned by the post office unable to deliver, forwarding order expired. Three were returned unable to deliver as the members were deceased. As a result, 745 actual ballots were mailed out. Of these, nine were returned as undeliverable because the forwarding order had expired. Twenty members requested dupli-

cate ballots. All twenty declared that they never received the original ballots. Fourteen of those had addresses different than on the National NTEU mailing list. (Again, members are reminded that you must go the union website, www.nteu.org, to change your address with the union or contract your steward; doing so with IRS does not mean NTEU has been notified.) Of these 20, 13 did not vote. The post office misplaced five ballots.

The total number of ballots received was 300; one was disqualified because the voter cast a ballot for 6, not 5, members of the board. Tallying the votes took the election committee 4 hours; this was volunteered time, as Chapter elections cannot be conducted during duty hours.

The election committee members are: **Karen Johnson** (Steward and chairperson), **Peter Smiscik**, **Marilyn Gray**, **Donna Jones**, and **Sharon Sloan**. Invaluable service was also provided by **Ronald Patterson** during the mailing of the nomination notices.

Success Begins at Chapter 24

**-by Ronald Woytalewicz
Chapter President**

Chapter 24 has once again been in the forefront of fighting for our employees and scoring another victory. On August 23, 2005, Colleen Kelley announced that the IRS has finally agreed to reimburse Estate and Gift (E&G) attorneys for their bar dues. This issue has been in contention since 2002, when the new contract took effect and specifically provided for dues reimbursement. The agency has agreed to reimburse for bar dues retroactively from July 2, 2002. Chapter 24 Steward **Kathy McHugh** filed some of the initial grievances regarding this issue. Her fine work in conjunction with

that of other Stewards in other Chapters convinced the agency to honor the contract they had signed.

The monetary significance of this victory is substantial. The total for bar dues for each E&G attorney here in Michigan is \$1,150 for the last four years. Since we have seven E&G attorneys currently in Michigan, we have succeeded in winning as much as \$8,050 now plus bar dues for future years. The number of E&G attorneys across the nation is approximately 375, which results in a very significant monetary victory. NTEU has again stood up for the rights of our employees and Chapter 24 stands elbow to elbow in the first line of defense.

When TIGTA Calls -by Jeri Burger Chapter Vice President Elect And Chief Steward

The TIGTA agent will normally call your manager and have the manager inform you that you have a meeting scheduled with TIGTA. The meeting is usually planned within 24 hours, at the TIGTA agent's office. **The very first thing you should do is contact your NTEU steward.** It is your right to have union representation for any investigatory interview. For your protection, it is imperative that a steward accompany you to the meeting. If the scheduled time and place is not possible for you or your steward the meeting can be rescheduled. Either you or your steward can arrange a new time with the agent. Even if the meeting must be postponed, **do not go alone!**

Why do you need your steward? Your job, or worse, could be in jeopardy. Your steward is there to protect your rights and interest. It is normal for you to be anxious and nervous during a TIGTA interview. Your steward is there to be a calming influence and keep the meeting in check. Your steward will: prepare you for the interview,

clarify the reason for the interview, verify that you receive your rights, make sure that you understand your rights, make comments on the form of the questions, seek clarification of questions, assist you in clarifying answers or expressing your view, suggest other avenues of inquiry, point out facts favorable to you, requests breaks as necessary, and take notes. However, your steward does not have the right to turn the meeting into an adversarial proceeding.

TIGTA conducts interviews for different types of issues. The two basic categories are administrative matters and criminal matters. When contacted for an interview, you have the right to know whether the investigation involves criminal or administrative matters. You should also be told if you are the subject of the investigation, or a third party witness.

Administrative

Administrative matters deal with infractions of agency rules; i.e., alleged code of ethics or conduct violations. TIGTA investigates administrative matters and then sends their findings to management. Management then decides the appropriate disciplinary action, from no action to termination. You can be called as a third party or as the subject of the interview. You must attend a meeting regarding an administrative matter. You are also required to give truthful testimony, usually under oath. Your failure to respond could lead to disciplinary action, including termination.

Your steward will help prepare you for your interview. Some things to keep in mind:

- Be truthful at all times. You can be disciplined for false or misleading statements.
- Only make statements about facts that are known to you. Do not speculate or give hearsay information.
- Ask to clarify any question you do not completely understand.

-Give brief “yes” and “no” answers whenever possible. “I don’t know” or “I don’t remember” are legitimate answers.

-Be formal and professional. The TIGTA agents are not your friends and do not have your interests in mind.

-Try to remain calm. Be courteous; control your voice, temper, and speech.

-You are allowed to take breaks. Your steward will help you by calling breaks when appropriate.

-Confer with your steward before signing any documents.

-Remember that while you may be called as a 3rd party witness, your answers could lead to yourself becoming the subject of an investigation.

If you are the subject of an investigation and management decides that no disciplinary action is required, you are entitled to a clearance or closed without action letter within 30 days of when the case is closed.

Criminal

Criminal investigations involve alleged criminal conduct. Your job is not the only thing on the line—they are looking to charge you with a crime. There are different types of criminal investigations/interviews. Each type of interview entitles you to different statements of your rights. Your steward only enjoys a quasi-privilege of confidentiality. This means that your steward can be compelled to testify regarding anything you told him/her regarding an open criminal matter. This is why your steward will limit your conversations about any potential criminal matter and will refer you to an attorney when appropriate.

Custodial

The agent will be placing you under arrest and you will be given the Miranda warning. The Miranda warning gives you “the right to remain silent.” Your steward will advise you to remain silent and seek the counsel of a criminal attorney.

Non Custodial

You are the subject of an open criminal investigation, but are not being taken into custody. You will be given a “Beckwith” warning, which is similar to the Miranda in that you have the right to remain silent. Your steward will again advise you to use your right to remain silent and seek the counsel of a criminal attorney. Once you have retained an attorney, your attorney will arrange any further discussions with TIGTA or the US Attorney’s office.

Criminal Case Declined by the US Attorney

You are the subject of a criminal investigation, but your answers will not be used to prosecute you. This usually happens when the US Attorney’s office has declined to prosecute you. In this case, you will be given a “Kalkines” warning. This warning is to advise you that you must answer the questions and that the answers will not be used to prosecute you, unless your answers are not truthful. In this case, it is extremely important that you are completely truthful.

Again, it is extremely important that you rely upon your NTEU steward to represent you in any TIGTA investigation. We are trained to assist you, protect your rights during the interview, and advise you to retain an attorney when appropriate. Your steward will also be there to represent you if there is any resulting disciplinary action.

The above information is derived from the National Contract, and National NTEU training.

**The National Convention
-by Ron Woytalewicz,
Chapter President**

From August 1 through August 4, I, as well as the Chapter Vice-President, Henry Morrison, attended the 50th NTEU National Convention, which was held in San Diego,

California, this time around. A National Convention is held every two years. Future sites will be New York in 2007, and San Francisco in 2009. At the Convention several things occur, such as reports from the National President; awards given for a variety of areas; contest winners (Chapter 24 won an award for Best New Web Site due to our total redesign [see page 1 article], and an additional award for having over 70% membership for 10 years); submission and discussion of Constitutional Amendments, Bylaw Amendments and Resolutions; some training; elections; appeals of Executive Board decisions; selection of the 2009 Convention Site; and the Installation of Officers. The elections mentioned above can consist of elections of National President (now **Colleen M. Kelly**) and National Executive Vice President (now **Frank D. Ferris**) as well as the National Vice Presidents. The President and Executive V.P. are four year terms, so they were not up for election this time. However, the National Vice Presidents have two year terms, so they have an election each convention. The National V.P.s are 15 in number and each represents one of the 15 districts the country is divided into. Each is elected by the respective Chapters in their district. Chapter 24 is part of District 6, which is the Northeast Region and consists of the IRS Chapters in the States of Michigan, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, Massachusetts, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut. The election for National V.P. was particularly significant to us because one of our own **Phyllis Vidler** had decided to run. Phyllis was at the Convention, did some campaigning, and presented her speech as part of the election process. She was one of four candidates for the position. She had full support of Chapter 24. At the first round of votes, Phyllis had the lead, but did not have the majority needed to win. Therefore, a

second vote was required between the two top vote winners. In that count, Phyl blew away her competitor and was elected to the position. She was installed in her new position on the last day of the Convention, Thursday, August 24.

CONGRATULATION, PHYLLIS!

Phyl's selection can only add a great deal of experience and expertise to the National Board of Directors, as well as reflect well upon Chapter 24. In her position, she will also be able to have some influence on National matters including some items that Chapter 24 may wish to accomplish. Unfortunately, per the National Constitution, a National Vice President cannot also serve in an elected position in a local Chapter. Therefore, Phyllis cannot be elected as member of the Board of Directors for Chapter 24. Her presence will be sorely missed. I will not hesitate to keep bugging her for advice and tapping her institutional knowledge whenever such is needed.

Where Went the Neighborhood?

When the Pontiac post of duty moved from the old post office in downtown Pontiac to the Pontiac Place building on Saginaw Street, the employees were told not to unpack everything; they would be moving again, soon. That took 30 years. The Pontiac post of duty has now moved to the northern edge of Pontiac, into what appears to be the worst section of the city. In the short 11 months of occupancy, there has been 1 murder next door, and a second murder just down the street. There has also been one break-in, and a second attempted break-in or act of vandalism. Monday mornings, the parking lot glistens with broken beer bottles. A church bus was stolen from its church 100 yards away, and a tow truck driver was held against his will next door, needing to be rescued by the Pontiac Police. On the opposite side of the building is the Social

Security building. They have an armed guard, private parking lot for the employees with iron bars, and 360 degree camera surveillance; IRS employees have their wits, and good looks. The building has an alarm system, but this is to protect furniture and equipment, not the employees. And, there is also the cockroach infestation. Well, at least the heating and air conditioning work. Chapter President **Ronald Woytalewicz** sent a letter to the Commissioner's Representative in Pontiac, **Robert Andrusyszyn**, requesting camera surveillance of the parking lot, or something similar. Mr. Andrusyszyn passed Ron's, and his, concerns on to the responsible parties. IRS Mission Assurance has now done a risk assessment, and perhaps improvements will be made, but will our nefarious neighbors wait?

This also begs the concern of employee safety throughout the state and country. IRS talks a good story, but do they really care about employee safety? Does Homeland Defense? GSA? Recently, there was a fire drill conducted on the 23rd floor of the PVM building. It was initiated by an announcement over the public address system. Unfortunately, the announcement was inaudible. Good thing it wasn't a real emergency.

Detroit District Benevolent Fund -Ronald Woytalewicz Chapter President

This year's CFC open season will soon be upon us. One of the charities that you will see listed is the Detroit District Benevolent Fund (the Fund). This fund was established in 1987, to collect donations from employees to be distributed to families of IRS employees who experience disasters and also to organizations that qualify as charitable organizations under 501I(3) of the Internal

Revenue Code.

A few years ago there was serious discussion about dissolving the Fund. I made the revitalization of the Fund one of my personal goals when I was considering running for Chapter President. I am happy to report that as a result of the dedicated work of our Fund Board of Directors, the Fund has been reenergized. The Fund was qualified and accepted last year as part of the CFC and will be so again this year. The Fund has been receiving contributions and has distributed monies to several needy families and some charitable organizations and will be making a contribution to assist in the Katrina hurricane relief effort. Please consider designating the Detroit District Benevolent Fund for all or part of this year's pledge if you are in the Southeast Michigan CFC area. Thanks and thank you on behalf of those who so desperately need your help.

Additionally, NTEU Chapter 24 board members voted to contribute \$500.00 toward the FEEA Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund.

**Stan Lotzoff Memorial
Golf Outing
-Ronald Woytalewicz
Chapter President**

NTEU Chapter 24 is proud to sponsor the first annual Stan Lotzoff Memorial Golf Outing. This outing is in memory and honor of Stan, who was the Chapter's long time Treasurer and golf aficionado and who sadly passed away too early in September 2004. The outing will take place on *Friday, September 23, 2005*, at the Pontiac Country Club. At press time, more than 70 people had planned on turning out. Stan's wife, Lorraine, and son, Steven, plan on being present for the event. The Chapter has contributed prizes and a golf towel for each participant to memorialize the day. Mike Washenko has graciously volunteered

to coordinate and set up the outing. The Chapter thanks him for all his hard work in making this a success. Mike expects this annual event to replace what used to be called the Desedlo open.

Around the State

Bill Walsh, former IRS Engineer in Examination Division, passed away August 20, 2005.

Thomas Kunnumyalil, of the Finance Division, retired May 31.

Paul Przytulski, Tax Compliance Officer, and Chapter 24 Steward for the Jackson Post of Duty, retired August 3rd.

Mark Reeser (RA in Detroit) and **Therese Reeser** (RA in Farmington Hills) gave birth to a baby girl, **Megann Elizabeth**.

The East Lansing office (**Mary Cook**, Steward) had a lunch and learn with

Congressman Mike Rogers (Republican) August 2nd coordinated by **Chapter 24 Legislative Chair, Kathy McHugh**.

According to Mary, "The Congressman spoke for about 40 minutes and responded to questions, mostly about Government pension offset and contracting out. All who attended felt they came away with some additional insight about the issues and a good time was had by all."

Mt. Clemens Steward, **Karen Johnson**, reports that the office held their annual picnic September 1, 2005. Among the activities is a pie baking contest. **Carol Read** won first prize for a cranberry apple pie, while **Paul Brusseau** and **Roz Martin** were also awarded ribbons. **Bob Combs** was the picnic coordinator. Chapter 24 contributed funds toward the outing.

The Pontiac office held their annual office wide picnic for September 14th. Chapter Stewards **Daniel Itchue** and **David Hauenstein** were instrumental in its planning, along with the other picnic com-

mittee members, **Dail Hughes, Carol Kausch, Nancy Korch, Pat Quitter, and Bev Raines.** Chapter 24 contributed to this catered lunch, which was not dampened with the arrival of rain just at lunch time.

In Case You Missed It

From the [NTEU Bulletin](#), areas of contention between NTEU and IRS include, "...the agency studying thousands of IRS jobs for possible contracting to the private sector; conducting reductions-in-force (RIFs) that adversely impact hundreds of employees; ...*and reducing the number of employees by some 6000 over the past six years while continuing to employ the same number of managers.*"

Did You Know?

There is a way for you to alert emergency workers of any potential medical needs you might have; e.g., allergic reactions to drugs, pace-makers, epilepsy, etc. With your cell phone, make a listing for **ICE (In Case of Emergency)**, followed by the name of the person you would chose to talk with the emergency personnel, and using their phone number. Should something happen to you, an emergency worker can locate your phone, look under **ICE**, and call your spouse, relative, or whomever.

In Our Opinion

Isn't it interesting that the current administration, under the banners of accountability and cost savings, is attempting to outsource so may federal employee jobs. This includes a recent proposal to outsource the **Voice of America** to Hong Kong. And under A-76 studies, government employees have to demonstrate that they are more cost effective than outside contractors; and yet even having demonstrated such, they are still replaced or forced to concede benefits,

or have their staffing cut. And yet this same administration has continually awarded reconstruction contracts to private companies (all too often to Halliburton, Dick Cheney's old company) in Iraq and the Gulf Coast without having to bid against any competitors. And, they are done on a "cost plus" basis; that is, no matter how much the project cost these outside firms, the government will guarantee to pay the expense, and guarantee the company a profit, as well. No demand for accountability and cost-savings, there. Oh well, it's good to be king; apparently sauce for the goose is NOT gravy for the gander.

Follow-Up

In the first edition, we informed you of the perfume problem that was plaguing employees in a Post of Duty. We have been informed that as management has continued to ignore this problem, an EEO complaint has been filed over the issue. There's more than one way to make a big stink about it.

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Ronald Woytalewicz, Chapter President
David Hauenstein, Editor

Chapter 24 website, www.nteu24.org
Caroline Trinkwalder